

Your Child at Four Years

Page 1 of 2



DEVELOPMENT:

All kids develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice that your child:

- Hops on one foot
- Balances on one foot for two seconds
- Knows the names of four colors
- Pours liquids and cuts and mashes own food
- Dresses himself or herself, including buttons
- Knows his or her first and last name
- Sings a song from memory
- Speaks clearly
- Plays fantasy games
- Plays board or card games
- Draws a person with three parts
- Tells you what will happen next in a book

IMUNIZATIONS: Chickenpox (varicella), DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis), MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), Polio

Possible vaccine side effects include:

- Fever
- Redness or swelling at the site of the shot

Next visit: At age five

LABS: Your child may need tuberculosis, blood and urine tests.

Talk with your doctor.

NUTRITION:

By age four children should be able to eat on their own. Offer choices when possible and try to get your child to try new foods. This will help teach your child healthy eating habits as he or she grows up. Be a good role model by choosing healthy foods and avoiding soda and junk and fast food.

- Your child needs 800 milligrams of calcium every day. Low-fat dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese are good sources. Breads and cereals with calcium in them are good choices for children who do not eat or drink enough dairy products. If your child is not getting enough calcium, a calcium supplement may help. Talk with your provider.
- Your child also needs 400 international units (IU) of vitamin D every day. This can be given as part of a children's multivitamin.
- Limit juice to no more than four ounces a day. Do not allow your child to drink soda.
- Teach your child to choose healthy snacks. Avoid frozen or prepackaged treats that are high in sugar and fat. Fresh fruits, nuts, cheese and yogurt are healthy choices.
- Eat meals with the whole family. Do not eat in front of the TV.

If needed, you can give your baby acetaminophen (Tylenol). Ask your doctor for the correct dose. Contact your doctor if your child's symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.



PEDIATRIC HEALTH
PARTNERS

Your Child at Four Years

Page 2 of 2

SAFETY

- Check the height and weight limits on your child's car seat. Children who weigh more than 40 pounds should use a high-back booster seat. California law requires that children use these seats until they are six years old or weigh 60 pounds. But the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that if your child is too big for his or her car seat, you should put your child in a booster seat until he or she is at least eight years old or four feet nine inches tall. For more information, visit nhtsa.gov.
- Follow safety guidelines when your child is around water.
- Keep an eye on your child when he or she is near streets. Teach your child to not follow pets or balls into the road.
- Cook on the back burners of your stove to reduce the risk of burns. If your child gets burned, apply cold water (not ice) right away and call your doctor.
- Make sure that all chemicals, medications, cleaners, knives, matches and other hazardous materials are out of your child's reach.
- Put a hat on your child and apply sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when he or she is outdoors.
- Have your child wear a helmet, elbow guards and kneepads when riding a bike, scooter or skateboard.
- Remind your child not to go with strangers or take anything from them. Teach your child rules on how to be safe with all adults:
 - No adult should tell your child to keep secrets from you.
 - No adult should show interest in your child's private parts.
 - No adult should ask your child for help with his or her own private parts.
- Make sure that the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are working.
- If you have guns in your home, keep them unloaded, locked and stored away from ammunition.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, speak with your doctor or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or ndvh.org.
- Keep the Poison Control Hotline posted on your refrigerator: 1-800-222-1222.

SLEEP

- Your child may stop napping during the day.
- If your child has bedtime fears, talk about them and remind your child that you are nearby. Respond to nightmares right away and comfort your child.
- If your child snores heavily or you are having trouble with his or her sleep habits, ask your provider for help.

DISCIPLINE

With your child able to say more words, he or she may bargain with you often—"One more story, then I'll nap," for example. Keep consistent rules and limits. Remember, you are in charge. Do not let your child hit or bite. Stop hostile behavior from your child and talk about how those actions affect other people. Teach your child how to say sorry. Be a good role model for respectful behavior. Praise your child when he or she cares about other people's feelings.

TOILET TRAINING

Most children now stay dry during the day. Bedwetting is still common at this age. Allow your child to help change the sheets if he or she has an accident, but do not punish your child for wetting the bed. Teach your child to wash his or her hands after using the bathroom.

FOCUS ON FAMILY

- Make time for the whole family to be together. This may include mealtimes, bedtimes and family vacations. At mealtimes, include your child in the conversation.
- Spend time together being active—go for walks, play at the park or ride bikes.
- Encourage your child to explore, do things on his or her own and tell you what he or she wants. Children learn self-respect and love when they feel that their ideas are important to you. Have your child tell you about his or her friends and activities at school. Listen to what your child has to say.
- If you let your child watch TV, limit it to less than two hours a day and watch it together. Do not watch TV during mealtimes. And do not put a TV in your child's bedroom.

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

- Think about enrolling your child in preschool. This can help build learning and social skills such as sharing and taking turns. If your child is not in school, give him or her a lot of chances to play with other kids.
- Children at this age ask many questions. Keep your answers short and tell the truth.
- Encourage daily exercise by taking your child to the playground or park.
- Supervise as your child eats, bathes and dresses, but let your child do more on his or her own.
- Read to your child every day. Let him or her tell you the story. Point out letters and play rhyming games together. Visit the library and help your child choose books that he or she likes.
- Help your child brush his or her teeth twice a day. If your child spits out the paste and does not swallow it, you can switch to toothpaste that has fluoride in it. Take your child to the dentist regularly.
- Speak to your child slowly, clearly and in adult language. Do not hurry his or her speech or speak for your child.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: aap.org; American Academy of Family Physicians: aafp.org; Immunization information: immunize.org, cdc.gov/vaccines, vaccine.chop.edu, familydoctor.org and vaccineinformation.org
- Suggested reading:
 - *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age Five* by American Academy of Pediatrics, Stephen Shelov, M.D.
 - *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Elyn Satter
 - *Positive Discipline A–Z: From Toddlers to Teens, 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems* by Jane Nelsen, et al.
- Other books are available at aap.org/bookstore.