



# PEARLAND PEDIATRICS

& SPORTS MEDICINE

FOR YOUR 3-4 YEAR OLD

## **FEEDING**

Your job as a parent is to choose the best foods for your child. Offer three regular meals and healthy snacks. Make mealtime happy. Eat meals as a family. Model healthy eating in your own diet.

Growth in pre-schooler's is sporadic and their appetites follow. Expect appetite slumps and food jags (preference for the same foods at every meal). Do not force-feed your toddler. Offer healthy choices. Limit fatty foods, sweets, and juice intake.

During these appetite slumps, do not play short order cook and prepare another meal in hopes your toddler will eat it. Wait until the next scheduled meal to feed him again.

Your child should drink 16-20 oz. of skim or 1% milk each day. Too much milk can lead to picky eating and anemia.

Multivitamins may be used if your child's diet is consistently inadequate. Your child does need 400 IU/day of Vitamin D in their diet or as a supplement.

If you are a vegetarian or vegan, it may be necessary to consult a nutritionist to ensure your child gets enough protein and zinc.

Use caution when giving your child nuts, popcorn, hard candies, or chewing gum.

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## **DEVELOPMENT (3-4 YEARS)**

Most 3 year-olds can jump, walk up & down stairs, pedal a tricycle, kick a ball, copy a circle, put on some clothing, use sentences, ask "what's that?" and "why?", say some ABC's, colors & shapes, play pretend games

Most 4 year-olds can hop & balance on 1 foot, draw a square & a person with 3-6 body parts, have a large vocabulary, use full sentences with 6 or more words, use scissors, play games and take turns, dress without help, zip & button, may have an imaginary friend.

## **SLEEP**

A regular bedtime routine is very important to children. The average 3 year-old sleeps 12 hours per day, including 1 nap. By age 4, some children stop napping, but sleep about 12 hours a night. Typical bedtime at this age is 7-8pm.

If your child refuses to nap, it is still important to have a quiet period of rest at a scheduled time each day.

Nighttime fears and resistance to stay in bed are common problems.

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## **ELIMINATION**

By age 3, about 90% of children are bowel-trained & 85% of children are dry during the day. It is normal that only 60% are dry at night.

By age 4, about 95% of children are bowel-trained & 90% of children are dry during the day. It is normal that 75% are dry at night.

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## **SAFETY**

Children under 8 years or 57 inches tall must be secured in a car seat or booster seat. Always read the manufacturer's instructions for use. Note the weight limits and use the appropriate size for your child. Children should always ride in the back seat.

Guns are dangerous! Keep guns and ammunition locked in separate places. Knives should be stored out of reach.

Teach your child the dangers of cars in the street, and always closely supervise your child when near a street.

Teach children to be careful around dogs, especially when the dog is eating.

Use PABA-free sunscreen with SPF > 15. Reapply frequently.

This is the earliest age to begin organized swimming lessons. Knowing how to “swim” does not ensure the child’s safety in or near water at this age. Use an age/weight appropriate “Type 1 or 2” life jacket whenever around any water.

Use a properly fitted bicycle helmet whenever your child is on a bicycle or a tricycle. Start young to promote good habits!

Start discussing stranger safety, privacy, name, address, and phone number.

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#### **OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

Dental care – Schedule dental visits every 6 months. Use a small soft toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste to clean your child’s teeth at least twice per day. By age 3, a child has all 20 primary teeth.

Limit the amount of TV to less than 2 hours a day and monitor the types of shows your child watches.

Spend time with your child everyday – read books, do crafts, pretend play to encourage the active imagination, show love and affection.

Answer questions about body parts and babies in a simple and honest way. Use correct terms for body parts.

Encourage your child’s independence. Offer acceptable choices when possible while retaining your parental authority and rules.

Be consistent. Praise good behavior. Avoid too many rules. Do not yell or spank. Be a good role model.

Use time-outs for disruptive tantrums or unacceptable behavior. A minute per age is a good guideline.

If your child is not already involved, consider finding a preschool or playgroup to develop social skills.

You are your child’s biggest role model! Make healthy and safe choices to encourage your child to do the same!

#### **SUGGESTED READING**

*“123 Magic”*

*“Parenting the Strong Willed Child”*

*Positive Parenting Solutions*

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#### **WEBSITES**

[www.pearlandpediatrics.com](http://www.pearlandpediatrics.com)

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

[www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

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#### **AT TODAY’S & THE NEXT CHECK-UP**

Your child will have a physical exam and your questions and concerns will be answered. If your child is already 4 years old, immunizations for school may be started.

Your child should receive an annual flu vaccine.