



What to Expect as Your Child Grows: Well Child Care at 8 Years

Nutrition

- With supervision, your child may enjoy choosing and preparing the family meals. This should teach your child good food habits. Bring healthy foods home from the grocery store.
- Choose meals that have foods from all food groups: meats, dairy products, fruits, vegetable, and cereals and grains.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand. Most children should limit the intake of fatty foods.
- Milk is a healthier choice than soda pop. Kids should rarely drink soda pop or juice.

Development

- Growth in height and weight during this year should remain steady.
- Children usually have a lot of energy at this age. Make sure there is ample opportunity to run and play outdoors.
- Physical skills vary widely at age 8. Find activities that fit the physical aptitudes of your child. Ask your doctor for more information about choosing a sport that fits your child's interest and body type.
- Fine motor skills improve greatly during this age. Children often develop improved writing. Let your child know that you see how she is improving.

Social Skills

- Finding compatible friends is very important. Children at this age are imaginative and get along well with friends their own age.
- They are beginning to understand that the emotions others experience are similar to their own.
 - Talk with your child about helping people “save face” when they are angry or embarrassed.
 - Talk with your child about both the enjoyable and difficult aspects of friendships.
 - Be sure your child has the opportunity to learn about leadership. Group activities allow your child the chance to learn leadership skills.

Behavior Control

- The ingredients to build a strong conscience include a warm and caring family, a strict code of conduct, and consistent and firm enforcement of the rules. Model how you wish your child to behave.
- Use more encouraging than discouraging words when speaking with your child. Kids have a strong need to feel like they are valued in the family and with their friends.
 - Tell your child every day that you love her.
 - Find words that encourage schoolwork and friendships. Tell your child you notice when she is on time or getting her work done on schedule.
 - Try to keep the rules to a minimum. Keep rules that are fair and consistently enforced. The role of peers in the life of children at this age increases, and children may resist adult authority at times.
 - Teach your child to apologize and require that your child help people whom they have hurt.

- Help your child develop a strong sense of right and wrong.
- Do not make demands upon your child that are above her ability.
- Allow your child some choices when alternatives exist.
- Do not allow competition to get out of hand. Allow a child to compete against herself and set personal best records.

Reading and Electronic Media

- The elementary school years are a period when parents and children can enjoy reading together. Reading will promote learning in school. Make reading a part of the pre-bedtime routine.
- Limit TV, computers, and electronic game time to a total of one or two hours per day. Encourage participation in family games and other activities. Carefully select the programs you allow your child to view. Be sure to watch some of the programs with your child and discuss the show. Avoid violent programming, and do not use the TV as an electronic baby-sitter. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom.

Dental Care

- Your child should brush and floss her teeth at least twice a day and should have regular visits to the dentist.
- Parents need to check their children's teeth after they have brushed.
- The grooves on the permanent teeth are prone to cavities. Parents and dentists need to watch the teeth carefully and consider whether sealants (plastic coatings that adhere to the chewing surface of the molar teeth) may help prevent tooth decay.

Safety Tips

- **Fires and Burns**
 - Practice a home fire escape plan.
 - Keep a fire extinguisher in or near the kitchen.
 - Tell your child about the dangers of playing with matches and lighters.
 - Teach your child the emergency phone numbers and to leave the house if a fire breaks out.
 - Turn your water heater down to 120° Fahrenheit.
 - Check your smoke detector batteries.
- **Falls**
 - Do not let your child use outdoor trampolines unsupervised.
 - Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.
 - Do not allow your child to play in areas where a fall could lead to a serious injury.
- **Car Safety**
 - Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster seat.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety**
 - Supervise street crossing. Children at this age will generally look in both directions, but they do not reliably look over their shoulders for oncoming cars.
 - All family members should ride with bicycle helmets.
 - Do not allow your child to ride a bicycle near busy roads; however, begin to teach your child about riding a bicycle where cars are present.
 - Children who ride bicycles that are too big for them are more likely to be in bicycle accidents. Make sure the size of the bicycle your child rides is right for your child. Your child's feet should touch the

ground when your child stands over the bicycle. The top tube of the bicycle should be at least two inches below your child's pelvis.

- **Strangers**
 - Discuss safety outside the home with your child.
 - Be sure your child knows her home address, phone number, and the name of her parents' places of work.
 - Remind your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.
- **Water Safety**
 - Even children who are good swimmers need to be closely supervised around swimming pools and open water.

Smoking

- Children who live in a house where someone smokes have more respiratory infections. Their symptoms are also more severe and last longer than those of children who live in a smoke-free home.
- If you smoke, set a quit date and stop. Set a good example for your child.

What to Expect at This Visit

- Your child may already be current on all recommended vaccinations.
- Children over six months of age should receive an annual flu vaccine.
- We will be checking your child's hearing and vision.

Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child's next routine check-up be at nine years of age.