



## Immunizations

Today your child will probably receive required booster doses of **DTaP, MMR, Polio, and Varicella**, or chicken pox, vaccines. Annual Flu vaccine is recommended for all children from October to March. Help your child prepare for the vaccines by explaining to him what will be involved. It is best to let him know it will hurt a little, but explain it will quickly be over. Side effects are usually limited to minimal discomfort at the injection sites and fever rarely occurs. A pain reliever can be given if necessary.

Next well  
check-up is  
at FIVE  
years old!!



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# Four Years

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## Development

Your four year old is becoming more independent and able to communicate well. He should be able to engage in a conversation and enjoy a joke. He frequently asks the meaning of words, as well as perpetually asks “how”, “why”, and “when”. He can match three or four primary colors, can count to ten, and can sing a song. She should be able to use a pencil with good control, being able to copy a cross, a circle, and progressing to a square by five years of age. She should also be able to draw a person with a face, arms and legs. She should be able to cut and paste, wash and dry her hands, and brush her teeth. Four year olds can dress and undress with minimal help and may become vocal about what they want to wear. He should be able to alternate his feet when climbing down stairs, hop, jump forward, and stand on one foot for three to five seconds. He should enjoy playing with other children, being able to share and take turns, and may be ready for some card and board games. Encourage activities which require her to “figure things out” and allow her to assist in simple household chores, praising her for a job well done.



*Your child should be ready for some type of social and educational interaction with other children his age. If he is not to be enrolled in a preschool setting, try reading groups at the library or enrolling him in Sunday school. Learning to sit and follow directions in a group of peers is a critical milestone for the four year old. Read interactively with your child and as she shows interest in words, engage her by pointing out letters, especially the ones that begins her name, and by making rhymes of real and nonsense words (silly willy nilly filly!). Encourage drawing and “pretending” to write— these are the building blocks of learning to form letters and sentences. Limit television and video/computer time to no more than two hours per day, making sure the programs are appropriate. Watch together and discuss what you see. Finally, get outside together and spend some active family time!*

## Discipline

Provide appropriate and clearly stated limits and explain the consequences if the rules are broken. Do not give meaningless threats. Prompt follow-through when the rules are broken lets your child know you are to be taken seriously. Keep in mind the awesome power of **positive reinforcement** at this age. This involves rewarding your child with praise and/or encouragement when he/she is exhibiting those behaviors you want instead of constantly punishing for those you don't. If you need suggestions on how to use positive reinforcement to mold certain behaviors, just ask!

*Fluoride supplement is still important to healthy teeth, as are regularly scheduled dental visits!*

## Nutrition

Create a pleasant atmosphere at mealtimes. Have meals together as a family as often as possible and encourage table conversation. Four year olds love to help set the table or toss the salad— give her a job! Avoid television during meals. Encourage healthy choices and avoid junk food and carbonated beverages. Do not fall into the trap of fixing special meals— continue to place a serving of each item on his plate and encourage sampling new foods. You are your child's best example!



## Safety

Auto safety is vital to your child's well being. All four year olds should be restrained in a proper car seat for every trip. Your child may be ready for a belt-positioning booster seat if her shoulders are above the top harness slots, or her ears come to the top of the car safety seat. Current recommendations extend the use of these seats until your child is 80 pounds and/or 58 inches tall— the weight and height of an average eleven year old. Your child should never ride in the front seat if at all possible— this alone increases by 30% the chance your child will die in an accident. Properly fitting helmets should be worn by all bicycle and motorized vehicle riders. Helmets, elbow, wrist and knee pads should be worn by all children using scooters and skates/skateboards. Insist your child wear it every time— serious injuries are a real threat and always happen at the least predictable times. Four year olds are not ready to cross the street on their own— do not allow unsupervised outside play. Death from firearms occurs all too often. Children are curious despite your warnings. Don't be afraid to ask if there are guns in homes where your child plays. Make sure all firearms are stored unloaded and locked, with ammunition locked separately in any home your child plays.

*Most four year olds are bowel trained and dry during the day. A significant number, however may still be having nighttime bladder accidents. Be patient, as this is normal. Ask about things you can do to help decrease the chance your child will have bed-wetting accidents.*