

## School Success

Your child's success in school will influence all aspects of his development at this age. It is not only critical to intellectual growth, but to self-esteem, social interaction, and even physical development. Upper elementary school provides less structured and supervised instruction. Your child will be required to work more independently and be self-motivated. This can be very difficult for some children and problems with grades often begin to arise at this age. Try to encourage autonomy with homework as much as possible (while silently hovering and secretly checking to see if she really did it right). Create a structure where he does homework at a consistent time and place and make sure he is not overscheduled with extra-curricular activities. Quickly contact teachers for any classes where she seems to be struggling, but let us know if attempts to help are not successful.

### Vaccines:

-*Flu vaccine* is recommended for all children October to February.

Otherwise, your child should be up to date on all recommended vaccines. We will discuss if any are missing today!

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## Nine Years

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## Independence

Your nine year old is beginning to grow more independent. Playing sports, participating in community activities and service organizations, listening to his favorite music or choosing her own clothes help fulfill your child's need for independence. Your child has become part of a peer group that is usually of the same gender, and these friends have become very important in his life. It is important to focus on self-esteem and self-confidence at this age as peers begin to have increasing influence over the next few years. Children who feel good about themselves are better able to handle negative peer pressure than those with a lot of self-doubt. Encourage your child to feel proud of his accomplishments but praise good efforts, even if he doesn't win the trophy! Your nine year old is likely ready to have more responsibility at home. Give him the opportunity to earn privileges through successful completion of chores.



## Body Changes

With nine year old body changes come hygiene issues. Pre-pubertal hormones begin at this age and cause increased glandular secretion which translates to stinky underarms or body odor. This is normal! Unfortunately, they don't really care as much as you do about this, so you will likely have to remind him to wash ALL over and, yes, go back and wash your hair *with* shampoo this time! Some girls will begin with breast buds at nine (or earlier). This is normal as well, so don't panic, Dad, she's not grown up yet!

# HEALTHY HABITS

## Nutrition

You may notice that your child's body shape is beginning to change. Pre-pubertal changes (gasp!, yes, puberty is coming) will begin to happen soon and this is an age where many children start to have weight issues. Making healthy food choices is an important skill for nine year olds to learn. Don't be surprised to find them raiding the pantry to find that bag of Double Stuff Oreos you thought you had cleverly hidden behind the high fiber cereal! Make sure you keep healthy snack foods, like fruit or nuts, easily available. Most importantly, be an example for your child. If they see you scarfing down that bag of chips when you get home, she will think that is permission for her to do it! Many empty calories come from sugary drinks. Strive to eliminate any sugared drinks from your home like soda, or "juice" bags that are really corn syrup and water. Sports drinks should never be consumed unless your child is participating in an exercise involving sweating. These beverages are not made for children's bodies and are too high in sugar, sodium and potassium for drinking outside of exercise. Encourage milk at each meal— children this age need 3 servings of a calcium rich food daily and milk is an excellent source! Try to get him to try new foods. Take her to the store with you to pick out an interesting new fruit or vegetable for "Try-It Tuesday". Educate yourself on appropriate serving sizes and see that he is not over-indulging— even on healthy foods.



**Busy schedules often make family dinner difficult, but pick at least one or two nights a week to have dinner as a family. Turn off the TV, clear off the dining room table and sit together and talk!**

*Keeping your child active is another key element to a healthy lifestyle. If your child is not into sports, encourage outside play— riding a bike, walking the dog or kicking a ball around are all activities any child can do and don't require athletic skill. Limit screen time (computers, iPads, Xbox, etc.) to less than two hours a day. These should be a privilege and not a normal daily "given".*

## Exercise

## Safety

Accidents are the #1 cause of death in children. Your child should still be in a booster seat until the lap belt fits properly— usually around 4'9" tall. Insist on helmet use while skating, biking, riding motorized vehicles, etc. Never allow your child to swim unsupervised alone or with other children, even if you think he is a good swimmer.

Your child may begin spending the night with peers, so know her friend's parents and what they allow and don't allow. Let her know your rules apply at others' homes as well. Discuss with your child personal body safety and always be open to questions he may have. Let him know it's OK to ask an adult for help or ask to go home if he is uncomfortable.