

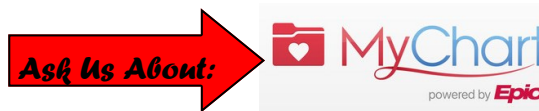


Success in school is an important milestone at this age. Learning to follow rules, play successfully with others and controlling disruptive behavior are all skills your child should be mastering. If your six year old is having difficulty with this, we should discuss this today.

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▶ Vaccines:

-Flu vaccine is recommended for *all* children annually. Ask about a shot-free option!



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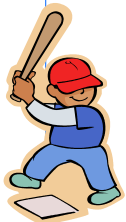
▶ **SIX
YEARS**

Shelley M Martin, MD, FAAP

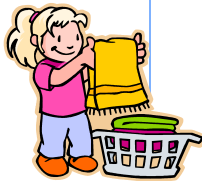
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Development

Your six year old is entering a time of change where she is learning the skills she will need in adolescence and adulthood. This is a time of learning to communicate with others, becoming aware of others' feelings, learning to form good relationships with peers, developing a sense of self and building self-esteem, and experiencing independent thoughts and actions. It is our job as parents to provide support and guidance!



As your six year old's strength and motor coordination continue to improve over the next few years, participation in team sports, dance, gymnastics or other physical activities help to reinforce self esteem and interactions with peers and adults. Choosing situations that emphasize playing over competitiveness is best at this age. Your child is old enough to begin helping with simple household chores and responsibilities. They often are eager to help at this age, so take advantage of it while you can!



Healthy Habits

As six-year olds begin to embrace independence, they are more likely to be faced with making their own choices about what to eat. Teaching him what an appropriate well-balanced diet is will reinforce his choices when he is away from you, and help to ensure that he is maintaining a healthy weight. Focus on eating more fruits, vegetables and whole-grains, while limiting candy, salty snacks, fast foods and sodas. Children learn by example, so having good food habits as a family is essential. Have dinner together as a family at least three times a week. Make sure she is getting enough calcium on a daily basis and a multivitamin may be given if necessary.

Healthy children should be physically active at least 60 minutes of every day. Find activities your family enjoys doing together and incorporate this into your daily lives.



Limit TV and computer time/games to no more than 2 hours *total*/each day. Children should not have televisions in their bedrooms. Be aware of the content of the music, video games and TV your child is exposed to, at home and at friends' homes, being alert for violence or age-inappropriate material.



Your child should be seeing a dentist for routine semi-annual check-ups! Don't forget about fluoride!

Safety

Always keep in mind that accidents are the leading cause of death in children of all ages. The back seat is always the safest place for children to ride until age 13. A *belt-positioning booster* should be used until she is at least 4'8" tall and the car safety belt fits correctly. Always use a helmet when biking, skateboarding, etc. Children this age lack the nerve development to see cars in their peripheral vision and judge an object's speed. They should *never* be allowed to cross the street alone, play around a street alone, or operate motorized vehicles alone. Now is the time to teach your child how to swim, but never let him swim alone or in fast-moving water. Always place your child in a life jacket when on any boat, whether she knows how to swim or not. Teach children the importance of staying away from matches or lighters and develop a fire escape plan for your home.

Six year olds are naturally curious about the human body and it's functions. They often find "potty humor" hilarious at this age and talk about body parts. As they begin to spend more time with other adults, now is the time to discuss the importance of privacy and personal possession regarding their bodies. Explain to him that it is never okay for an older child or adult to tell him to keep secrets from his parents, express an interest in his private parts or show him their private parts. Be aware that most victims of sexual abuse are victimized by someone well known to the child, so avoid using the word "stranger".