



## Children's Healthcare Medical Associates

550 Washington St., Suite 300

San Diego, CA 92103

(619) 297-KIDS • Fax (619) 297-4567

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

# Well Child Care at 3 Years

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**Nutrition:** Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. Your child should be feeding himself completely on his own now. Buy and serve healthy foods and limit junk foods. If you are having problems at mealtime, ask for advice. The USDA, the agency in charge of nutrition, has switched from the food pyramid to a new symbol: a colorful plate – called MyPlate – with some of the same messages:

Eat a variety of foods.

Eat less of some foods and more of others.

Limit liquids to water and non-fat milk.

The plate is the size of a salad plate and features four sections (vegetable, fruits, grains, and protein) plus a side order of dairy. The big message is that fruits and vegetables take up half the plate, with the vegetable portion being a little bigger than the fruit section. In addition, the plate has been divided so that the grain section is bigger than the protein section. Why? Because nutrition experts recommend you eat more vegetables than fruit and more grains than protein foods.

### What are Proteins, Grains and Dairy?

You know what fruits and vegetables are, but here's a reminder about what's included in the three other food groups: proteins, grains, and dairy:

**Protein:** Beef; poultry; fish; eggs; nuts and seeds; and beans and peas like black beans, split peas, lentils, tofu and veggie burgers. Protein builds up, maintains, and replaces the tissue in your body.

**Grains:** Bread, cereal, rice, tortillas, and pasta. Whole-grain products such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, and brown rice are recommended because they have more fiber and help you feel full.

**Dairy:** Milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy milk. With MyPlate, the dairy circle could be a cup of milk, but you also can get your dairy servings from yogurt or cheese. Choose low-fat yogurt and cheese and non-fat or 1% milk most of the time. Over a 24 hour period, your child should be taking in 8 to 12 ounces of dairy.

The plate can be used for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That may make you wonder: Do I really have to eat vegetables with breakfast? The answer is no, but aim to eat a variety of food groups at each meal. And if your breakfast doesn't include a veggie,

consider a vegetable at snack time. Healthy, portion-controlled snacks are still OK.

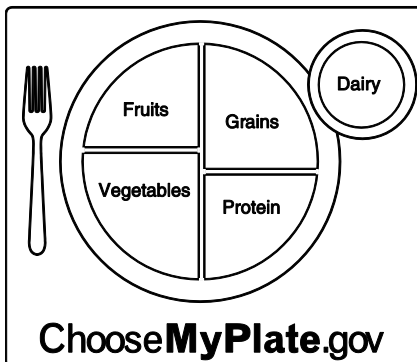
**Eating more fruits and vegetables will help you eat fewer calories** overall, which helps you keep a healthy weight.

Eating fruits and veggies also gives you lots of vitamins and minerals.

**Development and Discipline:** Children at this age often want to do things by themselves; this is normal. Patience and encouragement will help 3-year-olds develop new skills and build self-confidence. Many 3-year-olds still require diapers during the day or night. Avoid putting too many demands on the child or shaming him about wearing diapers. Let your child know how proud and happy you are as toilet training progresses. For behavior that you would like to encourage in your child, try to "catch your child being good." That is, tell your child how proud you are when he does what you want him to do.

Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe.

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that the child enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say "no."
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important to the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit for 3 minutes. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.



4. Make consequences as logical as possible. For example, if you don't stay in your car seat, the car doesn't go. If you throw your food, you don't get any more and may be hungry.
5. Be consistent with discipline. Don't make threats that you cannot carry out. If you say you're going to do something, do it.
6. Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think up a good game and make brushing fun.
7. Make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

**Safety Tips:** Injuries are the leading cause of death in children above 1 year of age in the U.S. Most of these injuries can be prevented.

#### **Prevent Fires and Burns**

- Practice a fire escape plan.
- Check smoke detectors. Replace the batteries if necessary.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn your water heater down to 120°F (50°C)
- The kitchen is a dangerous place for children. When you are cooking, your child should be out of the kitchen or strapped into a chair.

#### **Car, Pedestrian, and Play Safety**

- Never leave your child alone in a car.
- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts or be in an appropriate booster or car seat. The safest place for your child is in the backseat.
- Hold onto your child's hand when you are near traffic.
- Do not allow riding of a tricycle or other riding toys on driveways or near traffic.
- All family members should use a bicycle helmet.
- Practice crossing the street. Make sure your child stays right with you.

#### **Prevent Drowning**

- Watch your child constantly when he is around any water.
- Scrub buckets are a drowning hazard for 3 year olds.

#### **Poisons**

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc. locked away.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not put toxic substances into drink bottles, glasses or jars.
- Store the phone number to the Poison Help Line 1-800-222-1222 into all your phones.

#### **Safety Around Strangers**

- Teach your child the first and last names of family members.
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

**Falls:** *Because your child's abilities are so great now, he will find an endless variety of dangerous situations at home and in the neighborhood. Your child can fall off play equipment, out of windows, down stairs, off a bike or tricycle, and off anything that can be climbed on.*

- Be sure the surface area under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall.
- Lock the doors to any dangerous areas.
- Use gates on stairwells.
- Install operable window guards above the first floor.
- Fence in the play yard.

#### **Bicycle Safety**

- Set limits on where your child can ride based on age and maturity.
- Children should be taught to wear a helmet properly, even with the first tricycle.

#### **Firearm Hazards**

- It is best to keep all firearms out of the home. However, if you choose to keep a gun in the house, keep it unloaded and in a locked place. Ammunition should also be locked and in a separate location.

**Toilet Training Resistance:** Children who refuse to be toilet trained tend to wet themselves, soil themselves, or try to hold back their bowel movements (thus becoming constipated). Many of these children also refuse to sit on the toilet or will use the toilet only if a parent brings up the subject and marches them into the bathroom. Any child who is over 3 years old, healthy, and not toilet trained after several months of trying can be assumed to be resistant to the process rather than undertrained. Consider how capable your child is at delaying a bowel movement (BM) until he or she is off the toilet and has a chance to hide. More practice runs (such as used in toilet training) will not help. Instead, your child needs full responsibility and some incentives to spark her motivation.

The most common cause of resistance to toilet training is that a child has been reminded or lectured too much. Some children have been forced to sit on the toilet against their will, occasionally for long periods of time. A few have been spanked or punished in other ways for not cooperating. Many well meaning parents make these mistakes, especially if

they have a strong-willed child. Many children who are resistant to toilet training are simply engaged with you in a power struggle. If your child holds back BMs and becomes constipated, medicines will also be needed.

**Tips for working with children who are resistant:**

**1. Transfer all responsibility to your child.**

Your child will decide to use the toilet only after he has nothing left to resist. Have one last talk with him about the subject. Tell your child that his body makes “pee” and “poop” every day and it belongs to him. Tell him that his “poop” wants to be in the toilet and his job is to help the “poop” come out. Tell your child you’re sorry you punished him, forced him to sit on the toilet, or reminded him too much. Tell him from now on he doesn’t need any help. Then stop all talk about this subject (“potty talk”). Pretend you’re not worried about this subject. When your child stops hearing conversation about not going, she will eventually decide to go to the bathroom for attention.

**2. Stop all reminders about using the toilet.**

Let your child decide when she needs to go to the bathroom. Don’t remind her to go to the bathroom or ask her if she needs to go. She knows what it feels like when she has to “poop” or “pee” and where the bathroom is. Reminders are a form of pressure, and pressure keeps the power struggle going. Stop all practice runs and never make her sit on the toilet against her will because this always increases the resistance. Don’t accompany your child into the bathroom or stand with her by the potty chair unless she asks you to. She needs to gain the feeling of success that comes from doing it her way.

**3. Give incentives.**

Your main job is to find the right incentive. Special incentives, such as favorite sweets or video time, are useful. For using the toilet for BMs, initially err on the side of giving her too much (for example, several food treats each time). Remember that incentives work even better if it is a special treat that your child doesn’t get every day. If you want a breakthrough, make your child an offer she can’t refuse (such as going somewhere special). In addition, give positive feedback, such as praise and hugs every time your child uses the toilet. On successful days consider taking 20 extra minutes to play a special game with your child or take her to her favorite playground.

**4. Give stars for using the toilet.**

Get a calendar for your child and post it in a conspicuous location. Have her place a star on it every time she uses the toilet. Keep this record of progress until your child has gone 1 month without any accidents.

**5. Make the potty chair convenient.**

Be sure to keep the potty chair in the room your child usually plays in. This gives her a convenient visual reminder about her options whenever she feels the need to go to the bathroom. For urinating, the presence of the chair and the promise of treats will usually bring about a change in behavior. Don’t remind her even if she’s squirming and dancing to hold back the urine.

**6. Diapers, Pull-ups, or underwear.**

Whenever possible, replace pull-ups or diapers with underwear. Help your child pick out some underwear with favorite characters on them. Then remind her “they don’t like poop or pee in them.” This usually precipitates the correct decision on the part of the child. Even if your child wets the underwear, persist with this plan. If your child holds back BMs, allow selective access to diapers or pull-ups for BMs only. Preventing stool-holding is very important.

**7. Remind your child to change his clothes if he wets or soils himself.**

As soon as you notice that your child has wet or messy pants, tell her to clean herself up. The main role you have in this program is to enforce the rule: “people can’t walk around with messy pants.” If your child is wet, she can probably change into dry clothes by herself. If she is soiled, she will probably need your help with the cleanup. If your child refuses to let you change her, ground her in her bedroom until she is ready.

**8. Don’t punish or criticize your child for accidents.**

Respond gently to accidents, and do not allow siblings to tease the child. Pressure will only delay successful training, and could cause secondary emotional problems. Your child needs you to be her ally.

**9. Ask the preschool or day care staff to use the same strategy.**

Ask your child’s teacher or day care provider to let your child go to the bathroom any time he wants to. Keep an extra set of clean underwear at the school or with the day care provider.

**Call our office if:**

- Your child holds back his or her bowel movements or becomes constipated.
- Pain or burning occurs when your child urinates.
- Your child is afraid to sit on the potty chair.
- Your child’s resistance has not improved after 1 month on this program.
- The resistance has not stopped completely after 3 months.

**Helping Your Child Learn to Read:** Reading books aloud is one of the best ways you can help your child learn to read. This can be fun for you, too. The more excitement you show when you read a book, the more your child will enjoy it. The most important thing to remember is to let your child set her own pace and have fun at whatever she is doing. Do the following when reading to your child:

- Run your finger under the words as you read to show your child that the print carries the story.
- Use funny voices and animal noises will help your child get excited about the story. Don’t be afraid to ham it up.

- Stop to look at the pictures; ask your child to name things she sees in the pictures. Talk about how the pictures relate to the story.
- Invite your child to join in whenever there is a repeated phrase in the text.
- Show your child how events in the book are similar to events in your child's life.
- If your child asks a question, stop and answer it. The book may help your child express her thoughts and solve her own problems.
- Keep reading to your child even after she learns to read. A child can listen and understand more difficult stories than she can read on her own.
- Leave books in your child's room for her to enjoy on her own. Make sure her room is reading-friendly with a comfortable bed or chair, bookshelf, and reading lamp
- Read books that your child enjoys. After a while, your child may learn the words to her favorite book. When this happens, let your child complete the sentences or take turns reciting the words.
- Do not drill your child on letters, numbers, colors, shapes, or words. Instead, make a game out of it and find ways to encourage your child's curiosity and interests.
- By 3 years of age, most children are beginning to learn the alphabet – singing their ABCs, knowing the letters of their names. Read alphabet books with your child and point out letters as you read.
- Help your child recognize whole words as well as letters. Learning and remembering what words look like are the first steps to learning to read. Point out common, everyday things like the letters on a stop sign or the logo on a favorite restaurant.
- As you read together, ask your child to make up his own story about what is happening in the book. Keep reading a part of your child's bedtime routine.
- Some educational television shows, videos, and computer programs can help your child learn to read. They can also make learning fun. But you need to be involved, too. If your child is watching educational TV such as *Sesame Street*, for example, sit and talk about what the program is trying to teach. Limit screen time to no more than 1 hour per day of educational, nonviolent programs.

**Television: Reducing the Negative Impact** Television has a tremendous influence on how children view our world. Many children spend more hours watching TV from birth to age 18 than they spend in a classroom. A positive aspect of TV viewing is the opportunity to see different lifestyles and cultures. Children today are entering school more knowledgeable than children before the era of TV. In addition, TV has great entertainment value. While TV can be a good teacher, many children watch TV excessively and experience some of the negative consequences described below.

**What are the harmful aspects of TV?**

- 1. TV displaces active types of recreation:** It decreases time spent playing with peers. A child has less time for self-directed daydreaming and thinking. It takes away from participating in sports, music, art, or other activities that require practice to achieve competence.
- 2. TV interferes with conversation and discussion time:** It reduces social interactions with family and friends.
- 3. TV discourages reading:** Reading requires much more thinking than television. Reading improves a child's vocabulary. A decrease in reading scores may be related to too much time in front of the TV.
- 4. TV discourages exercise:** An inactive lifestyle leads to poor physical fitness. If accompanied by frequent snacking, watching TV may contribute to weight problems.
- 5. TV advertising encourages a demand for material possessions:** Young children will pressure their parents to buy the toys they see advertised.
- 6. TV violence can affect how a child feels towards life and other people:** Viewing excessive violence may cause a child to be overly fearful about personal safety. TV violence may numb the sympathy a child normally feels toward victims of human suffering. Young children may be more aggressive in their play after seeing violent television shows. While TV violence does not increase aggressive behavior toward people in most children, it may do so in impulsive children.

**How do I prevent TV addiction?** Avoid TV for children less than 2 years of age.

- 1. Encourage active recreation:** Help your child become interested in sports, games, hobbies, and music. Occasionally turn off the television and take a walk or play a game with your child.
- 2. Read to your children:** Begin reading to your child by 1 year of age and encourage him to read on his own as he becomes older. Some parents help children to earn TV or video game time by doing the same amount of reading time. Help your child improve his conversational skills by spending more of your time talking with him.
- 3. Limit TV time:** An alternative is to limit TV to 30 minutes on school nights and one hour a day on weekends. Occasionally you may want to allow extra viewing time for special educational programs.
- 4. Don't use TV as a distraction for preschool children:** Preschooler's viewing should be limited to special TV shows and videos that are produced for young children. Because the difference between fantasy and reality is not clear for this age group, regular TV shows may cause fear.

**Next Visit:** A once-a-year check-up is recommended. Before starting kindergarten your child will need vaccinations.