4 Year Old Well Child Care

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:

The child at 4 can hop on one foot, skip, alternate feet while walking down stairs, ride a tricycle, and dress self with little assistance using zippers and buttons. They can brush their teeth and eat with a fork and spoon. They are able to throw a ball overhand and catch a ball. They enjoy swinging, running, climbing, and sliding. They can build a tower of 10 blocks.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

The 4 year old may have an imaginary friend, believe that dreams are real, and be aggressive during group play.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Your child should be able to play interactive games with others, share, and take turns.
- Your child will likely engage in pretend play.
- Rules in a social game setting are often only important when they provide an advantage to the child, otherwise, they are likely to ignore them or make their own.
- Masturbation is normal and as long as it is done privately and is not always preferred over other activities.
- The 4 year old child may frequently touch breasts and genitalia of their parents.

MENTAL DEVELOPMENT:

The 4 year old knows colors and can recite a rhyme or sing a song. They have a fairly extensive vocabulary. Strangers should be able to understand the child's speech. The child can usually draw a cross, as well as a picture of a person with at least three parts. They can state their first and last names.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

Before starting school, your child should have the 5th DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis-whooping cough) injection, the 4th dose of the inactivated polio virus (IPV) and the 2nd MMR-V (measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella or "chicken pox") injection. Annual influenza or "flu" vaccination is recommended during flu season.

Medication may be given prior to the visit, in the office, or as soon as you return home to help reduce the possibility of fever and discomfort with the DTaP injection. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

TESTING:

Hearing and vision should be tested. The child may be screened for anemia, lead poisoning, high cholesterol, and tuberculosis, depending upon risk factors. You should discuss the needs and reasons with your caregiver.

NUTRITION

- Decreased appetite and food "jags" are common at this age. A food jag is a period of time where the child tends to focus on a limited number of food likes and wants to eat the same thing over and over.
- Avoid high fat, high salt and high sugar choices.
- Encourage low fat milk and dairy products.
- Limit juice to 4-6 ounces per day of a vitamin C containing juice.
- Encourage conversation at mealtime to create a more social experience without focusing a certain quantity of food to be consumed.

ELIMINATION

- The majority of 4 year olds are able to be potty trained, but nighttime wetting may occasionally occur and is still considered normal.

SLEEP

- The child should sleep in their own bed.
- Nightmares and night terrors are common at this age. You should discuss these with your caregiver.
- Reading before bedtime provides both a social bonding experience as well as a way to calm your child before bedtime.
- Sleep disturbances may be related to family stress and should be discussed with your physician if they become frequent.

PARENTING TIPS

- Try to balance the child's need for independence and the enforcement of social rules.
- Encourage social activities outside the home in play groups or outings.
- The child should be given some chores to do around the house.
- Allow the child to make choices and try to minimize telling the child "no" to everything.
- Allow there are many opinions about discipline, the choice show be humane, limited, and fair. You should discuss your options with your physician. You should try to be mindful to correct or discipline your child in private. Providing clear boundaries and limits with consequences discussed before hand should be encouraged.
- Positive behaviors should be praised.
- Nursery or pre-school is a common and effective way to encourage social development in this age group.
- **Minimize television time!** Such passive activities take away from the child's opportunities to develop in conversation and social interaction.

SAFETY

- Provide a tobacco-free and drug-free environment for your child.
- Always put a helmet on your child when they are riding a bicycle or tricycle.
- Use gates at the top of stairs to prevent help prevent falls.
- Use car seats or booster seats until the age of 5.
- **Your home should be equipped with smoke detectors!**
- Discuss fire escape plans with your child should a fire happen.
- Keep medications and poisons capped and out of reach.
- If firearms are kept in the home, both guns and ammunition should be locked separately.
- Be careful with hot liquids ensuring that handles on the stove are turned inward rather than out over the edge of the stove to prevent little hands from pulling on them. Knives should be put away and out of reach of children.
- Street and water safety should be discussed with your children. Use close adult supervision at all times when a child is playing near a street or body of water.
- Discuss not going with strangers or accepting gifts/candies from strangers. Encourage the child to tell you if someone touches them in an inappropriate way or place.
- Warn your child about walking up on unfamiliar dogs, especially when dog are eating.
- Make sure that your child is wearing sunscreen when out in the sun to minimize early sun burning. This can leads to more serious skin trouble later in life.
- Your child can be instructed on how to dial 911 in case of an emergency
- **Know the number to poison control in your area and keep it by the phone.**
- Consider how you can provide consent for emergency treatment if you are unavailable. You may want to discuss options with your caregiver.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your next visit should be when your child is 5 years old.

This is a common time for parents to consider having additional children. Your child should be made aware of

any plans concerning a new brother or sister. Special attention and care should be given to the 4 year old child around the time of the new baby's arrival with special time devoted just to the child. Visitors should also be encouraged to focus some attention of the 4 year old when visiting the new baby. Time should be spent, prior to bringing home a new baby; defining what the 4 year old's space is and what will be the newborn's space.

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