



Good Health Care Will Help Your Child Learn

A healthy child is able to start school ready to learn. That is why keeping your child healthy from birth matters so much. To keep your child healthy:

HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE

- Have health insurance for your child. If you don't, you may have problems getting health care and paying medical bills. For information on low-cost or free health care coverage through the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), call 877-KIDS-NOW! (877-543-7669).

WORK WITH YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR

- Choose a pediatrician—a doctor who has special training in caring for children—before your child is born. You and your child's doctor are partners, so be sure to pick a doctor you feel comfortable with. Ask friends, family and neighbors for the names of their doctors. Be sure that the doctor's office location and hours are convenient for you.
- Take your child to the doctor. Your child needs regular checkups (well visits) so the doctor can see if your child is growing. Well visits are usually at: 2-4 days, 1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months (1 year), 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, and then yearly. Your child may get immunizations or shots at well visits to keep him healthy.
- Prepare for your child's visits. Write down your questions before the visit and take them with you so you don't forget to ask them.
- Speak up. Discuss any concerns you have about your child's health or the things your child can do and can't do. As the doctor examines your child, don't be afraid to ask what he is checking and why.
- Ask for results of the hearing test that was done when the baby was born. If your baby has hearing problems, he may need special help as soon as possible so he can learn to talk and read. As your child gets older, be sure the doctor checks hearing and vision at well visits.
- Know your rights. The doctor should give you easy-to-understand information. If you don't understand something, ask questions or ask for help. Be sure to know all treatment options so you make the decisions about your child's care.
- Before your child can start kindergarten, he will need to visit the doctor for a physical exam. You will need to have your child's doctor complete kindergarten enrollment forms at the visit.

KEEP YOUR CHILD'S TEETH HEALTHY

- Take good care of your baby's gums, so he can learn to eat and speak properly. Gently wipe the gums with a clean, wet, soft cloth. When teeth come in, wipe them, too.
- As your child gets older, begin brushing his teeth at least two times every day with a small soft toothbrush. Use only a small (pea-sized) amount of toothpaste. Help your child brush until age 8.
- Take your child to the dentist by age 1. Schedule dental appointments every 6 months.

PRACTICE HEALTHY HABITS

- Set up good health habits for your child. To grow well your child needs to eat healthy foods every day, he needs regular exercise (walking, running, play), and he needs a good night's sleep (10-12 hours) every night.
- Take care of your own health. Your child can learn from you. Learn to relax, exercise, eat healthy foods, have fun with family and friends, laugh, and avoid smoking, drugs and alcohol.
- Keep your home lead free. Remove lead hazards, like chipping paint from your home.