



Help Your Child To Grow Healthy & Strong!

Your child's health is the most important thing she has! When your child is healthy, she is ready to learn. There is a lot you as a parent can do to keep it that way:

YOUR INFANT:

- Breast is best! Breastfeed your infant when possible. Research has shown that breast milk is the best food for your baby. It contains everything your baby needs, it's easier to digest, and it helps protect your baby against disease. And it's free!
- If you cannot breast feed, give your baby formula – never cow's milk – until age one.
- Set up regular visits to a pediatrician – a doctor with special training in caring for children – to keep your child well. Be sure your child gets all the necessary shots to fight diseases.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Make eating healthy foods fun. Offer your child fruit as a snack. You can freeze fruit juice cubes for a summer treat, or make cookies sweetened with honey rather than sugar. Children who eat too many sugars and fats are likelier to develop health problems later.
- Protect your child against lead poisoning. Many homes more than 30 years old have paint containing lead, which can cause brain damage and behavior problems. Small children sometimes like to chew the chipping lead paint because it tastes sweet. Call the Maryland Lead Hotline for information at 1-800-370-5323.
- Teach your child to brush his teeth in the morning, after meals, and before bed. By the time your child reaches 3 years of age, take him to start seeing a dentist. Before then, have the doctor check his teeth regularly.
- Run and play! Go to a playground, play ball, jump rope or take a walk in a park.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Have regular times for meals and snacks, so that your child will grow up eating on a healthy schedule. Eat healthy foods yourself as an example for your child.
- Keep an eye on your child's vision. It can be hard to tell if a young child is having trouble seeing. Watch for signs such as stumbling, squinting, or holding books too close. If you think there might be a problem, see an eye doctor.
- Help your child to do things that are more fun than TV. Let her draw, make up rhymes, read stories that she likes, or make a pretend house or car or space ship from an empty cardboard box. Don't let a child under age 2 watch TV at all; after age 2, have her take a break after 30 minutes of TV.
- Take your child for a hearing test at age 4. Protect your child's hearing: check the volume of TV and headphones, and teach your child to cover his ears when there is a loud noise such as a siren.

It is important to have health insurance so that you can afford the care your child needs. If you don't, call Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) for help at 1-877-KIDS-NOW.

ParentTips is a monthly resource for parents with young children.
Want more Suggestions? Visit www.readyatfive.org or call 410-727-6290.