

3-4 YEAR CHECK UP

DIET

Vitamins are only necessary if your child does not get a balanced diet. Many children, who don't seem to get a balanced diet, actually do get one if you average what they eat over a few days. In other words, they eat meat well one day, and fruits and vegetables well the next. You may still give a vitamin if you wish.

COMMON ILLNESSES & PROBLEMS

Temper tantrums and **behavior problems** are a common complaint at this age. There are probably more opinions on the subject than there are grandparents in the world. I will give you some basic pointers, but ultimately, you should listen to all those opinions (mine included) and as parents, decide how you want to proceed with the child rearing. The pointers:

- **Never hit a child.** 70 % of pediatricians advocate corporal punishment only as a last resort or when safety is a concern.
- **Be as consistent as possible.** This is the absolute key to raising a good child. If you cannot be consistent in how you react to your child's behavior problems, then you are going to have problems. This is probably more important than what you actually decide to do.
- **Try redirecting the child's attention.** A child's attention span is very limited, and they are easily moved to another area of interest when they are getting into something that you don't want them into.
- **Don't expect more than your child is capable of.** You can't expect a 9 month old to be potty trained anymore than you can expect a 3 year old to stop something they are doing, and take out the trash.
- **Don't let your anger guide your decisions.** It is very easy to turn a spanking into abuse, even by the best of parents.
- **You can reason with a child, just don't try to over-reason with them.** As the child's speech improves, you can bargain with them about expected behavior and punishments. Expect the child to live up to his or her expectations, and apply the punishment you both decided on. Don't expect perfection.
- **Try to ignore what you can.** Just as a child learning how to speak will say something again if you respond; they will misbehave again if they think you like it. Children often misinterpret "no" or anger for attention, and will still misbehave.
- **Praise them when they are good.** Children obviously need much love and attention. Children are like clay that is easily molded by a parent's love. While children are often born with a

certain temperament, they can definitely be shaped by your love. Also, ignoring will not be effective unless the child knows the difference between this and attention.

- **Pick your battles.** When you ignore a child, they grow a bigger fit, and then you give in, you are only teaching that child that bigger fits gets them what they want. I have patients that can vomit at will to get what they want. It's very difficult to be consistent when you know the item you are fighting about is not important. The child innately knows this, and will simply push you. If it's not important, than give it to them. If it is important, then you had better send them a consistent message.

Most parents start **potty training** their children at about 2 years of age. There are many methods and which one you use probably doesn't matter much, just stick with one. I do have some basic pointers you should always follow:

- **Never make your child fearful of the toilet**
- **Never chastise a child about potty training.** If any tension arises regarding potty training, then back off. If you chastise your child or push when there is tension, then your child will not like to go potty and will hold it. This will lead to constipation, then pain, then holding, then constipation, and so on.
- **Purchase a potty chair and allow your child to play and get acquainted with it.**
- **When your child indicates that he or she would like to use the chair, then place your child on the chair for a set period of time, or until something happens.**
- **If your child goes in the chair, then reward him or her with praise**
- **To get your child to tell you when he or she HAS GONE.** Simply reward them when they only tell you they have gone. Once they are telling you well enough, only reward them when they actually have gone. Do the same with telling you they HAVE TO GO.
- **Most children will urinate on the potty up to 6 months before they start having bowel movements on it.**
- **Your child is already trying to be independent in many ways.** Every time they do this, let them know that "big boys and girls get to do the things they want and big boys and girls also wear big boy or girl underwear and go potty in the big potty". This backfires when they want to be a baby, but it works for most kids.
- **Pull-ups and the new very absorbent diapers prevent your child from feeling urine on their skin.** While this prevents rashes well, it has led to later potty training. You can get around this by putting underwear on under the diaper pr pull-up. This will allow them to feel the urine while preventing messes.

SAFETY

Remember to buy a helmet with the first tricycle. Children have had surprisingly bad head injuries from even falling off a tricycle. Please don't let this message prevent you from buying a tricycle, just buy a helmet also, and be careful. Booster seats are meant to raise your child's hips so that the seatbelt works as lap belt like it should, instead of a waist belt. If the belt is above the hips, then it could tear into the abdominal organs or aorta with even a mild crash.

NEXT VISIT

We give checkups every year starting at 3 years of age. The vaccines given at the 4 year check must be given on or after the 4th birthday, not earlier, and are also known as the school boosters. The vaccinations are:

- aDPT: Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough), Tetanus
- MMR: Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Polio

The tuberculosis test (TB, 4 pronged test on the forearm) is no longer required. The DPT includes the Tetanus, and your child will not need Tetanus for at least 5 years from the 4 year check up DPT, no matter what kind of wound they have. After 5 years from the last Tetanus shot, they only need a tetanus shot for a wound, then at 7 years from the last one, they need a Tetanus shot anyway. We try to move checkups to the summer after the 4th one. Having checkups in the summer prevents missed school, allows us to fill out school/sports forms on the spot, and leaves space for the younger kids and sick visits in the winter.

Please remember yearly checkups are necessary, not optional. When a pediatrician does a check up and the parent says absolutely nothing is wrong, we find significant problems in every 20-50 kids. Good parents always bring their kids when they feel something is wrong. Good pediatricians just find significant things earlier, when they are easier to treat.