

6 Years



6 YEARS



Safety for Your Child

Did you know that injuries are the greatest threat to the life and health of your child? Injuries are the leading cause of death of school-aged children. **Yet you can prevent most major injuries!**

At age 6, your child will become more independent. He or she will be able to do more things that are dangerous. Your child will try to prove that he or she is grown up. But children still aren't good at judging sound, distance, or the speed of a moving car at this age. Your child can learn a few simple things to do for protection, but **you must still be in charge of his or her safety.**

Fire Safety

Make an escape plan in case of fire in your home. Your fire department can tell you how. Teach your child what to do when the smoke alarm rings. Practice what you and your child would do if you had a fire.

Do not smoke in your home. Many home fires are caused by a lit cigarette that has not been put out completely.

Install smoke alarms on every level in your house, especially in furnace and sleeping areas, and test the alarm every month. It is best to use smoke alarms that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries once a year.

Firearm Hazards

Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than of being injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. **Handguns are especially dangerous.** If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with the ammunition locked separately. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Bike Safety

Protect your child from bad head injuries or even death. **Make sure your child wears a properly fitted, approved helmet every time she rides a bike.** Never let your child ride in the street. Your child is too young to ride in the street safely!

Street Safety

Never let your child play near the street. Your child may dart out into traffic without thinking. The park or playground is the best place to play. Begin to teach your child safe street habits. **Teach your child to stop at the curb,** then look to the left, to the right, and back to the left again. Teach your child never to cross the street without a grown-up.



(over)

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And Remember Car Safety

Your child must now use a **booster seat** in the car. Always check to be sure that he or she is correctly restrained in the booster seat before you start the car. Your child should use a booster seat until the lap belt can be worn low and flat on the hips and the shoulder belt can be worn across the shoulder rather than the face or neck (usually at about 4 feet 9 inches tall and between 8 and 12 years old). The safest place for all children, even through school age, is in the back seat of the car. Set a good example.

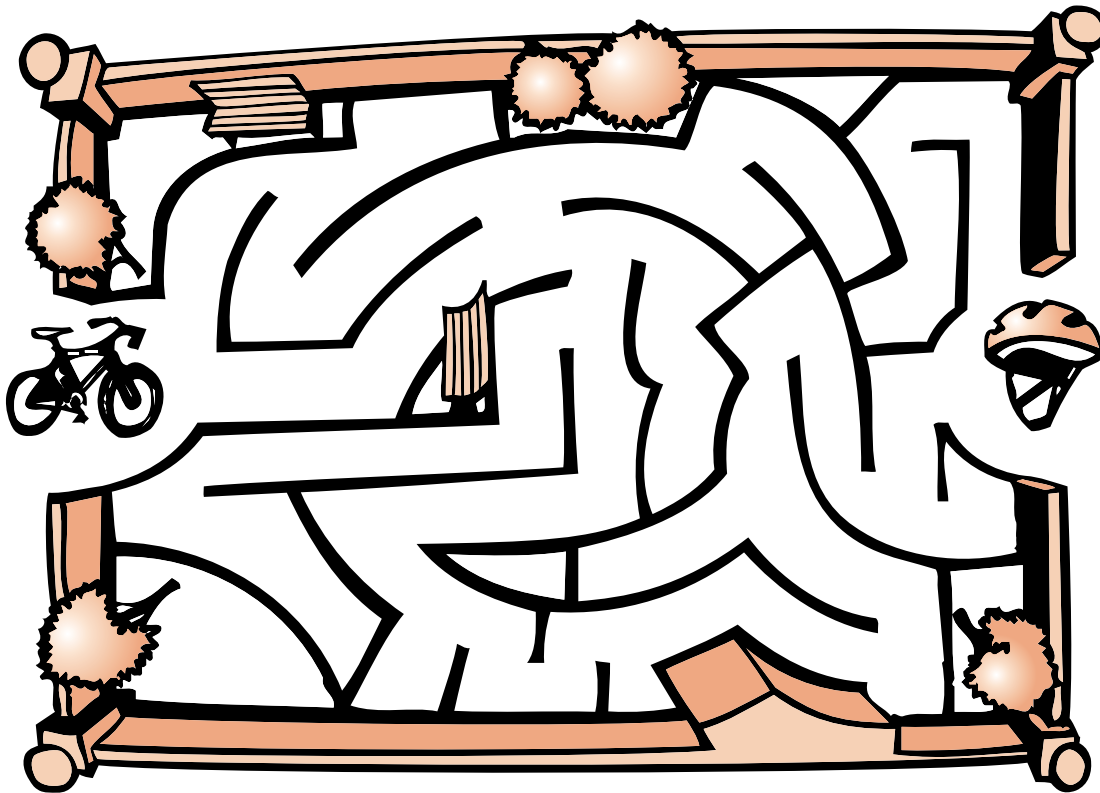
Make sure you and other adults buckle up, too!



SAFETY IN A KID'S WORLD

Dear Parent: Your child is old enough to learn how to prevent injuries. The game below is designed to help your child think about safety. Read the messages with your child and talk about them together. Then take this safety sheet home and post it where everyone can see it.

It takes time to form a safety habit. Remind each other what it says. Make safety a big part of your lives.



Bike Safety

Always wear a 

when you ride your



Get the Helmet Habit!

Directions: Find your way through this maze. Connect the helmet with the bicycle.

From Your Doctor

The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on the individual facts and circumstances.



Lawn Mower Safety

The power lawn mower is one of the most dangerous tools around the home. Each year, approximately 68,000 persons with injuries caused by power mowers were treated in emergency departments. More than 9,000 of the people hurt were younger than 18 years. Older children and adolescents were most often hurt while cutting lawns as chores or as a way to earn money.

Lawn mower injuries include deep cuts, loss of fingers and toes, broken and dislocated bones, burns, and eye and other injuries. Some injuries are very serious. Both users of mowers and those who are nearby can be hurt.

To prevent lawn mower injuries to children, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following:

- Try to use a mower with a control that stops the mower from moving forward if the handle is let go.
- Children younger than 16 years should not be allowed to use ride-on mowers. Children younger than 12 years should not use walk-behind mowers.
- Make sure that sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) are worn while mowing.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins. Use a collection bag for grass clippings or a plate that covers the opening where grass is released. Have anyone who uses a mower wear hearing and eye protection.
- Make sure that children are indoors or at a safe distance well away from the area that you plan to mow.
- Start and refuel mowers outdoors, not in a garage or shed. Mowers should be refueled with the motor turned off and cool.
- Make sure that blade settings (to set the wheel height or dislodge debris) are done by an adult, with the mower off and the spark plug removed or disconnected.
- Do not pull the mower backward or mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary, and carefully look for children behind you when you mow in reverse.
- Always turn off the mower and wait for the blades to stop completely before removing the grass catcher, unclogging the discharge chute, or crossing gravel paths, roads, or other areas.
- Do not allow children to ride as passengers on ride-on mowers.

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Bicycle Safety: Myths and Facts

Learning to ride a bike is a developmental milestone in the life of a child. The bicycle, a child's first vehicle, is a source of pride and a symbol of independence and freedom. Yet all too often children are seriously injured, or even killed, when they fail to follow basic bicycle safety rules. The following is a list of common bicycle safety myths, coupled with the correct information you need to teach your children about safe bike riding. These facts will help you and your children make every bike ride safe.

Myth: My child doesn't need to wear a helmet on short rides around the neighborhood.

Fact: Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short or how close to home. Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. In fact, most bike crashes happen near home. A helmet protects your child from serious injury, and should always be worn. And remember, wearing a helmet at all times helps children develop the helmet habit.

Myth: A football helmet will work just as well as a bicycle helmet.

Fact: Only a bicycle helmet is made specifically to protect the head from any fall that may occur while biking. Other helmets or hard hats are made to protect the head from other types of injury. Never allow your child to wear another type of helmet when riding a bike, unless it is a multisport helmet certified for bicycle use by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Myth: I need to buy a bicycle for my child to grow into.

Fact: Oversized bikes are especially dangerous. Your child does not have the skills and coordination needed to handle a bigger bike and may lose control. Your child should be able to sit on the seat, with hands on the handlebars, and place the balls of both feet on the ground. Your child's first bike should also be equipped with footbrakes because your child's hand muscles and coordination are not mature enough to control hand brakes.

Myth: It's safer for my child to ride facing traffic.

Fact: Your child should always ride on the right, with traffic. Riding against traffic confuses or surprises drivers. Almost one fourth of bicycle-car collisions result from bicyclists riding against traffic.

Myth: Children shouldn't use hand signals, because signaling may cause them to lose control of their bikes.

Fact: Hand signals are an important part of the "Rules of the Road" and should be taught to all children before they begin to ride in the street. They are an important communication link between cyclists and motorists. Any child who does not have the skills necessary to use hand signals without falling or swerving shouldn't be riding in the street. Many crashes involving older children occur when they fail to signal motorists as to their intended actions.

(over)



Myth: Bike reflectors and a reflective vest will make it safe for my child to ride at night.

Fact: It's never safe for your child to ride a bike at night. Night riding requires special skills and special equipment. Few youngsters are equipped with either. Never allow your child to ride at dusk or after dark.

Myth: I don't need to teach my child all of this bicycle safety stuff. I was never injured as a child. Biking is just meant to be fun.

Fact: Riding a bike is fun — if it's done safely. Unfortunately, most people don't realize hundreds of thousands of children are seriously injured each year in bicycle falls. Worse still, hundreds of children die from them each year. Although you may have been lucky enough to survive childhood without a serious bicycle-related injury, you shouldn't count on luck to protect your child.

Teach your child these basic safety rules

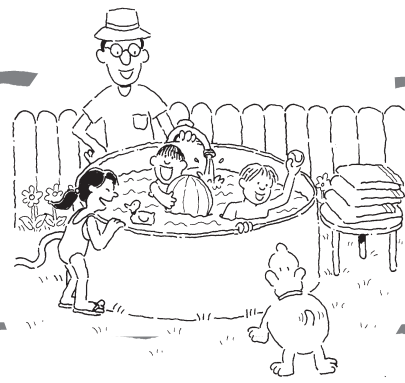
1. Wear a helmet.
2. Ride on the right side, with traffic.
3. Use appropriate hand signals.
4. Respect traffic signals.

Basic safety measures like these can keep bicycle riding enjoyable and safe for your child.

From Your Doctor

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A Parent's Guide to Water Safety



Drowning is one of the top causes of injury and death in children. Children can drown in pools, rivers, ponds, lakes, or oceans. They can even drown in a few inches of water in bathtubs, toilets, and large buckets. Read more about how to help keep your children safe around water.

Water safety at home

Parents need to keep a close eye on infants and young children, especially as they learn to crawl. *To keep your child safe, make sure you*

- **Always stay within arm's reach of your child when she is in the bathtub.** Many bathtub drownings happen (even in a few inches of water) when a parent leaves a small child alone or with another young child. Your child is always more important than answering the telephone or taking care of household chores.
- **Empty all buckets and other large containers.** The weight of a bucket filled with liquid can be heavy, and a child may not be able to tip it over and get out if she falls in.
- **Keep bathroom doors closed.** Install doorknob covers or a hook-and-eye latch or other lock that is out of the reach of your small child.
- **Keep toilets closed.** Always close the toilet lid, and consider using a toilet lid latch.
- **Watch your child when using a bath seat or ring.** Bath seats and rings are meant to be bathing aids. They are not substitutes for adult supervision and will not keep your child from drowning.

Water safety at the pool

An adult should actively watch children at all times while they are in a pool. Use "touch supervision." This means an adult is never more than an arm's length away, or is able to touch the child, at all times. Remember, supervision by an older child, and even the presence of a pool lifeguard, isn't a safe substitute for adult supervision.

Pool rules

If you have a pool, insist that the following rules are followed:

- Keep toys away from the pool when the pool is not in use.
- Empty blow-up pools after each use.
- No tricycles or other riding toys at poolside.
- No electrical appliances near the pool.
- No diving in a pool that is not deep enough.
- No running on the pool deck.

Pool fences

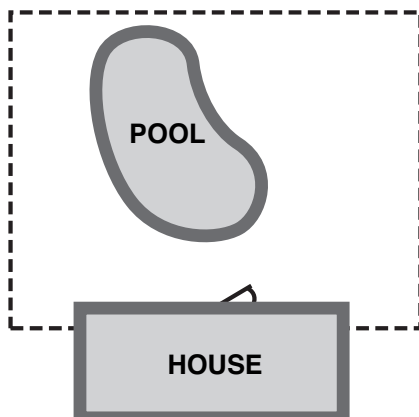
To prevent a small child from entering the pool area on his own, there should be a fence that completely surrounds the pool or spa. Combined with the watchful eyes of an adult, a fence is the best way to protect your child *and* other children who may visit or live nearby.

A pool fence should be climb-resistant and should not have anything alongside it (such as lawn furniture) that can be used to climb it.

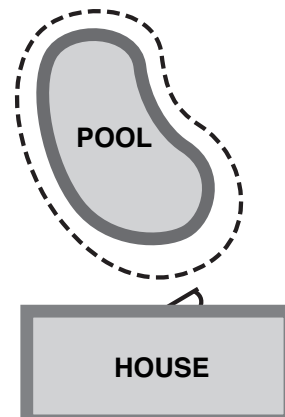
Pool fences should also

- Completely surround the pool, separating it from the house and the rest of the yard.
- Be at least 4 feet high and have no footholds or handholds that could help a child climb it.
- Have no more than 4 inches between vertical slats. Chain-link fences are very easy to climb and are not recommended as pool fences. If they must be used, the diamond shape should not be bigger than 1¾ inches.
- Have a gate that is well maintained and is self-closing and self-latching. It should only open away from the pool. The latches should be higher than a child can reach.
- Keep children away from steps or ladders (for above-ground pools). If not, the steps or ladders should be locked or removed to prevent access by children.

WRONG!



RIGHT!



In an emergency

The following are ways to be ready for an emergency:

- **Learn CPR.** Anyone caring for or watching children should know CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). CPR can save a life and help reduce injury after a near drowning. The American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, and your local hospital or fire department offer CPR training.
- **Always have a phone near the pool.** Clearly post your local emergency phone number (usually 911).
- **Post safety and CPR instructions at poolside.**
- **Make sure all rescue equipment is nearby.** This includes a shepherd's hook, safety ring, and rope.

The following are things to do in an emergency:

- **Yell for help.** Carefully lift the child out of the water.
- **Start CPR right away.** Have someone call the emergency medical service (911).
- **Call your pediatrician.** Even if the child seems normal when revived, call your pediatrician right away.

Additional protection products, when used with a 4-sided fence, are also important; however, these are not substitutes for adequate fencing. These may include the following:

- Automatic pool covers (motorized covers operated by a switch). Pool covers should cover the entire pool so that a child can't slip under them. Make sure there is no standing water on top of the pool cover. Be aware that floating solar covers are *not* safety covers.
- Door alarms
- Doors to the house that are self-closing/self-latching
- Window guards
- Pool alarms

Swimming lessons

Children are generally not developmentally ready for formal swimming lessons until after their fourth birthday. Also, swimming lessons for infants and toddlers do not necessarily make them safer in or around the water and are not a recommended means of drowning prevention at these ages.

If you want to put your small child in a swimming program, choose one that doesn't require him to put his head under water (swallowing too much water can make your child sick). Also, find a program that lets you swim with your child. Once your child is ready (generally after his fourth birthday) he should be taught how to swim. However, remember that teaching your child to swim does not mean he is safe in the water. Even a child who knows how to swim can drown a few feet from safety. Also remember that even a child who knows how to swim needs to be watched at all times. No one, adult or child, should ever swim alone.

Older children and teens are also at risk from drowning, even if they know how to swim. They often drown while swimming in unsupervised places such as water-filled quarries, rivers, or ponds. Although many teens can swim well, they often encounter risky situations that they might not recognize, such as rough currents, surf, and sharp rocks. Alcohol is also a factor in many drownings among teens.

Diving

Serious spinal cord injuries, permanent brain damage, and death can occur to swimmers who dive into shallow water or spring upward on the diving board and hit it on the way down.

Keep safe by following these simple common-sense diving rules.

- Check how deep the water is. Enter the water feet first, especially when going in for the first time.
- Never dive into above-ground pools; they are usually not deep enough.
- Never dive into the shallow end of a pool.
- Never dive through inner tubes or other pool toys.
- Learn how to dive properly by taking classes.

Water safety in other bodies of water

Swimming in a pool is different from swimming in other bodies of water. In addition to rules for pool safety, parents and children should know the rules for swimming in oceans, lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. *These include*

- Never swim without adult supervision.
- Never dive into water unless an adult who knows the depth of the water says it's OK.
- Never try water sports such as skiing, scuba diving, or snorkeling without instructions from a qualified teacher.
- Always use an approved personal flotation device (life jacket) when boating, riding on a personal watercraft, fishing, waterskiing, or playing in a river or stream.
- Never swim around anchored boats, in motor boat lanes, or where people are water skiing.
- Never swim during electrical storms.
- If you swim or drift far from shore, stay calm and tread water, or float on your back until help arrives.
- Water wings and other blow-up swimming aids should not be used in place of life vests.
- Other water hazards found near many homes include canals, ditches, post holes, wells, fish ponds, and fountains. Watch your child closely if your child is playing near any of these areas.

Life jackets and life preservers

If your family enjoys spending time on the water, make sure everyone wears an approved personal flotation device or life jacket. Some people think life jackets are hot, bulky, and ugly. However, today's models look and feel better and protect better. Many states require the use of life jackets and life preservers. They must be present on all boats traveling in water supervised by

Don't drink and swim

Swimmers are at serious risk of drowning when they drink alcohol or use other drugs while swimming, diving, and playing water sports. These activities require clear thinking, coordination, and the ability to judge distance, depth, speed, and direction. Alcohol impairs all of these skills. People who are supervising other swimmers should not be using alcohol or drugs.

the US Coast Guard. Remember, without wearing a life jacket, your child is not protected.

Keep the following tips in mind:

- A life jacket should not be used in place of adult supervision.
- Choose a life jacket that fits your child's weight and age. It should be approved by the US Coast Guard and tested by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check the label to be sure. The label should also say whether the jacket is made for an adult or a child.
- Teach your child how to put on her own life jacket and make sure it is worn the right way.
- Blow-up water wings, toys, rafts, and air mattresses should never be used as life jackets or life preservers.

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From your doctor

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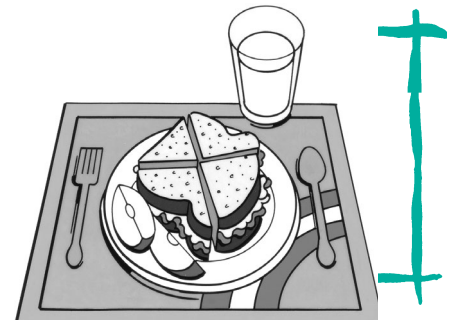
The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

American Academy of Pediatrics
Web site—www.aap.org

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What's to Eat?

Healthy Foods For Hungry Children



The Food Guide Pyramid—A Menu for Good Health

Ask anyone who cares for children—feeding kids can be challenging! The Food Guide Pyramid is a tool for helping you plan meals and snacks for your family. The advice is given for one day*. This brochure gives meal suggestions that are tasty, convenient and nutritious. From breakfast through dinner, these ideas will please even the fussiest eater. For specific food and nutrition advice, talk to your child's pediatrician or a registered dietitian.

*The amount of food and number of servings children need daily from each food group depends on their age and how active they are.

Active Play is Important, Too!

Physical activity, along with proper nutrition, promotes lifelong health. Active play is the best exercise for kids! Parents can join their children and have fun while being active, too. Some fun activities for parents and kids to do together include playing on swings, riding tricycles or bicycles, jumping rope, flying a kite, making a snowman, swimming or dancing.

Off to a Good Start...The Breakfast Bonus

Breakfast provides energy to carry a child through an active morning. Children who skip breakfast may not concentrate well at school or may lack energy to play. Not everyone enjoys traditional breakfast foods, such as cereal and toast. These breakfast ideas are a little different:

- Breakfast shake: combine skim or 1% milk*, fruit and ice in a blender.
- Frozen banana: dip a banana in yogurt, then roll it in crushed cereal. Freeze.
- Peanut butter spread on crackers, a tortilla, apple slices or jicama slices.
- Leftover spaghetti, chicken or pizza: serve hot or cold!

* Skim and 1% milk are recommended for children over two years old. Children under two years of age should only drink whole milk.

Cereal Choices

Cereal with milk is the number-one breakfast favorite. Check the Nutrition Facts label—found on most packaged foods—for the amount of iron, other nutrients and fiber. Look at the % Daily Values to find how much.

If your child prefers a sweet taste, you might jazz up unsweetened cereal with sliced peaches or bananas, strawberries, or blueberries.

Lunches Worth Munchin'

Children who help make their own lunches are more likely to eat them. Include these brown bag perks to make lunches fun!

- Use cookie cutters to cut sandwiches in fun, interesting shapes.
- Decorate lunch bags with colorful stickers.
- Put a new twist on a sandwich favorite. Top peanut butter with raisins, bananas or apple slices.
- For color and crunch, use a variety of veggies as "sandwich toppers": cucumber slices, sprouts, grated carrots or zucchini.

Brown Bag Food Safety

Remember the golden rule for food safety:

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold.

When there's no refrigerator to store a bag lunch, keep food safe by:

- Tucking an ice- or freezer-pack into the lunch bag. Or use an insulated container to keep hot foods hot.
- Adding a box of frozen fruit juice.
- Freezing the sandwich bread and filling—or other freezable foods—the night before.

You may also help prevent food-borne illness by:

- Encouraging your child to wash his or her hands thoroughly before meals.

Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children

A Daily Guide for 2- to 6-Year-Olds



Did You Know That...

Most regular deli meats, such as salami and bologna, are very high in fat. Try reduced-fat deli meats. Turkey breast, ham and roast beef are usually lower-fat choices. Check the Nutrition Facts label on packaged meats to learn the fat content.

Pretzels, baked tortilla chips and baked potato chips are virtually fat-free and make a good alternative for potato chips and other high-fat snacks.

The Meal Dilemma... Dealing with Picky Eaters

Even the most nutritious meal won't do any good if a child refuses to eat it. Some youngsters are naturally finicky eaters. Others eat only certain foods—or refuse food—as a way to assert themselves. If your child refuses one food from a group, try offering a substitute from the same food group of the Food Guide Pyramid. Try these ideas to make your family meals happy ones:

If Your Child Refuses... Instead Try...

Green vegetables
Milk
Beef

Deep-yellow or orange vegetables
Chocolate milk, cheese, yogurt
Chicken, turkey, fish, pork

- Boost the nutritional value of prepared dishes with extra ingredients. Perhaps add nonfat dry milk to cream soups, milkshakes and puddings. Or mix grated zucchini and carrots into quick breads, muffins, meatloaf, lasagna and soups.
- Serve a food your child enjoys along with a food that he or she has refused to eat in the past.
- Try serving a food again if it was refused before. It may take many tries before a child likes it.
- Let children help with food preparation. It can make eating a food more fun.
- Add eye appeal. Cut foods into interesting shapes. Or create a smiling face on top of a casserole with cheese, vegetables or fruit strips.
- Set a good example by eating well yourself. Whenever possible, eat meals as a family.

How Much Food Is Enough?

Some parents worry because young children seem to eat small amounts of food, especially when compared with adult portions. Don't worry about how little a child eats. A child who is growing well is getting enough to eat.

Hungry And In a Hurry? Food for Fast Times

When it comes to food, families want convenience. It's no surprise that fast-food restaurants are so popular. However, some fast foods supply a lot of fat and calories. These tips help you get the most from foods that are fast:

- Most fast foods can fit within a healthful eating plan. Children and adults can afford to eat these foods every once in a while if other food choices are sensible. Try these ways to enjoy them:
 - Share:* split an order of fries with other family members.
 - Choose food-group foods:* in combination meals, substitute fruit juice or skim or 1% milk* for soft drinks.
 - Balance high-fat choices with low-fat choices:* order a small hamburger and the salad bar for your child. Kids like the fresh fruit, carrot sticks and broccoli florets.

- Most fast-food spots offer lower-fat choices: salad bar (low-fat dressing), plain baked potatoes (topped with salad bar veggies), chili, skim or 1% milk*, low-fat frozen yogurt, English muffins, fruit juice and grilled (non-fried) chicken sandwiches.
- Supermarkets offer a variety of nutritious foods that are fast. Ready-made deli sandwiches (made with reduced-fat deli meats), fresh fruits and the salad bar are some "fast foods" from the grocery store.

* Children under two years of age should *only* drink whole milk.

Microwave Magic—Safely!

A microwave oven can help you cook in a healthful way. Vegetables cooked in a microwave oven stay nutrient-rich. For one reason, nutrients don't dissolve in any cooking water; short cooking time is another factor. Meat, fish and poultry dishes can be cooked or reheated with little or no added fat.

Microwaving also can help you cook faster and easier. But it can pose potential hazards—especially when children cook with the microwave oven. BURNS are the most common microwave injury. Children can be burned by:

- Removing dishes from the microwave oven—*make sure they use a pot holder.*
- Spilling hot foods—*keep the oven out of a young child's reach.*
- Opening microwave popcorn packages and other containers—*show older children how to open the container so steam escapes away from their hands and face.*
- Eating food that is cooked unevenly or has "hot spots"—*show older children how to stir food well before tasting it, or let food "rest" so that heat distributes evenly.*

Here's a common sense rule for microwave ovens: *If children are too young to read or follow written directions, they are too young to use a microwave oven without supervision.*

This brochure was developed as part of the **HEALTHY START...Food to Grow On** program, an information and education campaign that promotes healthful food choices and eating habits for healthy children ages two years and over. The **HEALTHY START** program was produced as a cooperative effort by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), The American Dietetic Association (ADA), and the Food Marketing Institute (FMI).

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Food pyramid courtesy of USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

From your doctor

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

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LETTING GO IS HARD TO DO

Dealing With Separation Anxieties in Young Children

Separation anxiety is the distress that young children often experience when they are separated from a familiar caregiver or loved one. This often intense distress is a normal process of development for children ages 8 months to about 30 months. For children who are going off to daycare or school for the first time, this can be an extremely difficult transition. Although stressful for the child, parent, and new caregiver, this is a signal that the child is going through a healthy attachment process.

What can parents do?

- Practice separating from your child for short periods of time, so that your child can get used to being away from you. Begin to introduce your child to new people, events and experiences gradually.
- To help ease separation anxieties, it is important to sit down and talk with your child in an effort to prepare them for what they can expect in school.
- Parents need to make every effort to reassure their children that this is a good thing. Respect and acknowledge their fears and distress about separating from you.
- Parents need to make every effort to visit the new school, so that the child can become familiar with his or her new school environment. This will also allow the child an opportunity to have a personal contact with the teacher before the first day of school.
- Parents need to make every effort to show a positive attitude toward going to school and learning new things. First impressions and experiences are important to children and help determine how their brains will be wired.

What should parents not do?

- This time should not be a time for parents to pass on their apprehensions or insecurities about their children leaving home. It should be a time that is used to create excitement about getting older and going off to school.
- Do not sneak away while the child is not looking, this will further compound their fears that you have disappeared. Remember that some children do not yet have object permanence and do not realize that you exist even when you are out of sight.
- Do not linger too long. Give your child a kiss, reassure him or her that you will be back, say good-bye, and then leave.

What can teachers do?

- Teachers should make the child feel comfortable by introducing himself or herself to the child in the presence of the parent. Invite the child to come and play, sit, or eat a snack.
- Allow the child to have a stuffed animal, toy, pictures, or something that will remind them of home and be a source of comfort.
- Develop a routine or transition activity that will aid both the child and parent in separating from each other. Redirecting the child to an activity is often very helpful.
- Provide a supportive, nurturing environment that will help the child to feel loved and cared for. This is important for brain development and to ensure healthy self-esteem.
- Assure parents their child will be well taken care of, and that they can call or stop by to see how their child is doing. Ensure that parents are careful not to be seen by their children, to avoid causing further distress.

What should teachers not do?

- Never scold or criticize a child for crying, feeling sad, or anxious. This is a normal process of development.
- Do not ignore the child's distress, hoping it would just go away. Respect how the child feels.
- Do not tell the child that their parents will be "right back." Although the child does not have a good concept of time, they will come to distrust what you say when their parents do not come "right back."

Going away to school is a major milestone for children, and is the beginning of new relationships that will form outside the home. Children will learn how to communicate and how to get along with other people outside of their families. Helping children to embrace this new experience will be a combined effort between the parents and the teachers.

READY, SET, READ

The Importance of Reading to Young Children

“As parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning.”

-Laura Bush-

Learning how to read begins in infancy when we talk, read, and listen to our babies. Through this process, infants and children learn what words have meanings and are important. Taking time out to engage in these learning activities with your child will definitely shape the future of your child's success. It is important to remember that not all children will learn at the same pace, and to follow their lead.

Reading a book more than once to a child will help them remember the story, and allow them to actively participate in the story. Sometimes it is important to ask the child to tell you the story, or what they think the story is about. This will encourage active thinking. Learning to read will take time and lots of patience.

Here are some things to consider when reading with your child:

Babies (6 weeks to 1 year)

- Find a comfortable place to read to your child, where he or she will be happy.
- Try to point out the pictures in a book, instead of reading all the words in a book.
- Help your baby to use his or her hands to touch the pictures named in a book. This will help to encourage joint attention and learning.
- Pay attention to how your child is responding, and recognize when the child is tired or becomes over stimulated.

Toddlers (1 to 3 years)

- Find a book your child enjoys and encourage the child to actively participate in the story.
- Give the child time to process the story and to respond to questions asked.
- Relate the story back to experiences in the child's life or ask the child to recall similar experiences.
- Point out letters, colors, and shapes to the child while reading.

Preschoolers (3 and 4 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Find ways to help your child learn sounds and letters, and match correct letters to sounds.

Kindergarteners (5 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Help your child to begin recognizing printed words.
- Ask your child to retell stories they enjoy.

First Graders (6 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Give your child an opportunity to read by using words, picture clues and memory. Help the child to use any method that will make reading fun and enjoyable.