Can you believe that four years ago your child was born? Boy, “does time fly when you are having fun.” Now you know why your parents used to say that you were growing up too fast. Ties to your “apron strings” will begin to loosen as the 4-year-old develops more independence. Before you know it, it will be time to start kindergarten. In previous generations, moms and dads learned what to expect of their child from their mother, grandmother or another family member. Today, most families are so scattered that parents do not have this help available. Therefore, do not hesitate to ask any questions you might have about your child’s growth and development during the four-year checkup. This is the reason for regular well-child exams.

PARENTING AND BEHAVIORAL

- Provide some type of structured learning environment in preparation for kindergarten next year. Examples include preschool, Head Start or Sunday School. Show an interest in your child’s preschool activities.
- Allow your child to participate in setting and cleaning up the table. Always praise him or her for a job well done.
- Supervise brushing twice a day with a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste.
- Provide your 4-year-old with clearly stated limits along with an explanation of the consequences if rules are broken.
- Continue to allow your 4-year-old to make choices whenever possible but the choices should be limited to those you can live with (“red shirt or green shirt”). Never ask a 4-year-old an open question (“Do you want to take a bath?”) unless you are willing to accept their answer.
- Always remember the positive effects of praise.
- The 4-year-old may arise if parents make their child eat more than he or she needs to, or show too much concern in what their child eats.
- Provide some type of structured learning environment in preparation for kindergarten next year. Examples include preschool, Head Start or Sunday School. Show an interest in your child’s preschool activities.
- Schedule re-checks as recommended by the dentist.
- Continue reading books to your child and spending quality time one-on-one.
- The 4-year-old will still ask many questions, most of which start with “Why?” Nothing is sacred and some questions will throw you for a loop! Watch what you say around your child ... he or she will repeat everything.
- CLEANING

- The 4-year-old continues in a period of relatively slow growth. Average weight gain per year is only three to four pounds.
- The 4-year-old really enjoys playmates. At this stage the toddler will begin to play cooperatively with others.
- Do not worry if your child becomes curious about body parts.
- Continue giving a fluoride supplement if your drinking water is not fluoridated. Some dentists recommend fluorde be continued through age 8; others recommend continuing through age 12 or 16. Check with your pediatrican and dentist. Learn how to prevent dental injuries and what to do in case of a dental emergency, especially the loss or fracture of a tooth.
- EATING

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- Continue reading books to your child and spending quality time one-on-one.
- Arrange times for safe running and exploring outdoors.
- The 4-year-old really enjoys playmates. At this stage the toddler will begin to play cooperatively with others.
- It is normal for children this age to have imaginary friends. Parents can sometimes use the youngster’s imaginary “playmate” to their advantage (like getting your 4-year-old to do something you want him or her to do.)
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- Limit high-fat, low nutrient foods.
- The 4-year-old can and usually insists on feeding himself or herself.
- Mealtimes should be pleasant and food should never be forced. Provide nutritious foods and let your child decide what and how much to eat. Offer small portions with the availability of a second helping.
- The 4-year-old will often imitate peers in food likes and dislikes.
- Avoid nuts, hard candy, uncut grapes, hot dogs or raw vegetables. Control sweets and avoid junk food.
- Eat dinner together as a family whenever possible.
- Insist on good table manners and encourage pleasant conversation during meals.
- Turn off the TV off during meals.

**IMMUNIZATIONS**

- If it is the flu season, we do recommend a flu vaccine.
- Vision and hearing will also be checked. Since immunization schedules vary from doctor to doctor, and new vaccines may have been introduced, it is always best to seek the advice of your child's health care provider concerning your child's vaccine schedule.

**TOILET TRAINING**

- By age 4, 95 percent of children are bowel trained.
- By age 4, 90 percent of children are dry in the daytime and 75 percent at night.

**SAFETY**

- Your child continues to require close supervision. Accidents continue to be the principal cause of death in children in this age group.
- Know where your child is at all times. A 4-year-old is too young to be roaming the neighborhood alone.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.

**ILLNESSES**

- The 4-year-old experiences less respiratory infections, such as colds, ear infections and sinus infections than the previous year. Begin to teach good habits: washing his or her hands after using the toilet, putting his or her hands in front of his or her mouth before coughing or sneezing, and washing his or her hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Remember, most illnesses at this age are viral, which means antibiotics will not shorten the course of the illness.
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**SLEEP**

- An afternoon nap may still be necessary.
- Fears of the dark, thunder, lightning, etc. are quite common at this age.
- Maintain a consistent bedtime and bedtime routine, using a night light, securely blanket or toy are all ways to help lessen nighttime fears.
- Nightmares can wake a child up from sleep. They can be triggered by changes or stress. Reassure your child and put him or her back to bed.

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