



Development

4-year-olds are talkative and animated. They will speak in 4+ word sentences, be understandable to everyone outside of the family, and ask lots of questions (why, what, when, how), often interrupting conversations. Provide time for your child to tell stories or answer questions. Kids this age identify emotions and are sensitive to the feelings of others. Your child should now be developing the coordination to alternate feet while descending stairs, hop, jump, stand on one foot, climb a ladder, ride a tricycle, walk on tiptoes, hold a pencil well, build a tower of 10 blocks, and cut/paste. They should wash and dry their hands and brush their teeth with help. Your 4-year-old should be able to dress themselves, including using zippers and buttons and copy figures such as a circle and cross. Kids this age typically enjoy the companionship of other children and play cooperatively. Preschool can help your child develop friendships, making the transition to kindergarten easier.

Inappropriate or excessive media use has been associated with attention problems, impaired sleep, school difficulties, vision changes, and obesity. Any media exposure should be limited to 60 minutes per day, be of good quality, and is ideally watched with a parent. Watch and discuss programs with your child when possible. Check out www.common sense media.org for recommendations. Do not use TV, phone or iPad as a substitute for interaction with your child. Turn off devices during meals. Read to your child every day and ask them about the stories. Take them to parks, libraries, and other places of interest. Encourage your child to play with favorite toys creatively, to play group games, and to release energy by running, climbing, swinging, sliding, and jumping. Engage in guided, interactive play with your child several times a day, but also encourage free time play.

Behavior

Four is an age of independence. Kids want to do things on their own, without help from Mom or Dad. Try to make your child's surroundings as safe as possible. Let them explore as much as possible but set limits. **Keep your child away from moving machinery, lawnmowers, driveways, alleys, and streets.** Teach your child to avoid strangers and especially not to accept food from them. Advise them to be careful around dogs, especially when the dog is eating. Teach your child what to do in case of a fire.

This is a normal age for your child to be interested in their own as well as a playmate's body. They may be curious about where babies come from and about the differences between boys and girls. Use correct terms for genitals and realize that your child's sexual curiosity and explorations are normal. Try to answer questions honestly, in as natural a way as possible, and at your child's level of understanding. Stay within the boundaries of each question. Usually, children are not ready to hear information beyond a simple answer to what they are asking. Some children who are gender non-conforming, gender variant, or transgender may manifest by this age by showing distress when faced with conflicting expectations on how to dress and act.

Healthy family interactions are the foundation of a positive family environment and healthy child development. Set realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations. Enlist all caregivers to be consistent in expectations and discipline. Keep instructions and tasks simple and easy to follow. Reward good behavior with praise, hugs, and small treats like stickers. In the long run, positive reinforcement of desired behaviors is more effective in teaching children than negative consequences for undesired behavior. Give them opportunities to make choices to minimize conflict. Use "time-out" as a consequence for inappropriate actions. Time-out is a quiet spot such as the corner of a room, or a boring room such as a den,

in which your child can cool down. Use one minute for each year of age. Then briefly talk to her about what they did to warrant a stay in time-out. Research shows that physical punishment, such as spanking, has adverse outcomes and shows no long-term benefit. It increases the risk of injury and can lead to increased aggression in your child now and in the future.

Toilet Training

Most 4-year-olds are toilet-trained, at least during the daytime, but about 25% are not dry at night yet. With time and positive support, your child should accomplish this skill.

Oral health

Use a soft toothbrush with a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day. Allow your child to try brushing on occasion to avoid conflict, but children at this age do not have the dexterity to brush effectively. Your child should be seeing a dentist regularly and should have fluoride applied every 6 months. Kids do better with a pediatric dentist and we can recommend a good one.

Safety

Keep firearms stored unloaded and locked in a safe with ammunition stored separately. It's important to keep your car, home, and other places where your child spends time free of tobacco smoke and E-cigarette vapor. Move dangerous chemicals such as drain cleaners and dish-washing detergents out of your child's reach. If your child ingests anything potentially poisonous, call **Poison Control at 800-222-1222**. Kitchen safety includes turning pot handles towards the back of the stove, making sure your child cannot reach the microwave so they cannot remove hot liquid or food, and not leaving hot liquids or heavy objects on a table that they may pull down.

The new car seat recommendations keep your child in a forward-facing car seat until your child has exceeded the seat's height or weight limits. The longer they remain in a 5-point harness the safer they will be. Once they have outgrown those limits you can use a high back or belt-positioning booster-seat. Children should not ride in the front seat until 13 years old. Your own safe driving behaviors are important as well. Use a seat belt, do not put the car in drive until everyone is buckled in, do not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and do not text or use mobile devices while driving. Never leave your child in the car unattended.

It is extremely important to supervise your child around water. If you have a pool, it should be fully enclosed and equipped with self-closing gates. A supervising adult should be within an arm's length, providing "touch supervision" whenever children are in or around water. Even for better swimmers, one parent should be assigned as "water watcher," whose eyes and attention do not leave the swimmer. Never leave a child in charge of other children and have clear handoffs between "water watchers." **REMEMBER, IT ONLY TAKES SECONDS TO DROWN.** Parents and children should learn to swim, and parents should know CPR. When outside, protective clothing should be worn, and sunscreen should be applied. See the sunscreen page in the parent information section of our website.

What to expect at this visit

A developmental screen should be completed before this visit. We ask parents to complete a screening for social determinants of health form to provide the best care for your child. Please let us know if your child has any exposure to lead or you're worried about the iron in their diet. Immunizations include: DTaP–Polio & MMR–V (Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella). Fever and a rash that can look like measles, mumps, rubella, or varicella can occur 5 days – 3 weeks after vaccination. Flu and COVID vaccines may be given at this visit, if in season. See our Medication Dosing Guide for dosing of acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Dtap



Polio



MMR–Varicella



Influenza injection



Nasal Influenza



COVID

