

# Preschool

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The preschool period generally refers to ages 3 to 6 years

The rate of growth during the preschool period is slow and steady

Children by this stage have mastered some autonomy and are moving toward a creative exploration of their potential

# Height and Weight

School children gain 5 to 7 lb  
and most children grow 2 ½ to 3in  
per year

# Body Proportions

The rate of growth for the extremities is faster than for the trunk and the head and neck decrease in size in proportion

# Muscle and Bone Development

- Rapid growth in the muscles accounts for 75% of the weight gain
- More erect posture and steady gait make the child appear less awkward and clumsy

# Teeth

- Children develop dental decay and plaque buildup
- Daily brushing, flossing, and visits to the dentist at least every 6 months
- Eat snacks that are low in carbohydrates such as apples, celery, carrots, and cheese

# Sensory Development

- Visual acuity improves to 20/20 at about 3 years old
- Lack of depth perception
- Able to listen and interpret and distinguish different sounds

# Vital Signs

- Average pulse range from 90-100 beats per minute
- BP average 100/60 mm Hg
- Respiratory rate is 22-25 breaths per minute at rest



# Fine Motor Skills

- 4 yr old children manage many of their self-care activities (bathing, dressing, feeding and toileting)
- May require some assistance and supervision with bathing
- Can manipulate clothing, but may need help with tying shoelaces

# Fine Motor Skills

- Can handle spoon, fork and knife
- Able to sit at table for longer periods of time
- At 4 yrs of age, recognize their need to use the toilet
- Able to draw a simple face and use scissors to cut along a line
- They can copy letters and print their names

# Sexual Development

- Aware of their genital organs and their sexual identity
- May become strongly attached to the parent of the opposite sex

# Sexual Development

- Children at this stage are also curious about the differences between the male and female bodies
- Masturbation is a common activity
- Using the correct terms and encouraging questions about sex helps keep the lines of communication open between parents and children

# Psychosocial Development

- Preschoolers pretend, explore and try out new roles
- Erickson's task of initiative
- Good role models needed

# Discipline

- Parents need to set limits
- Preschoolers strive to follow rules and please parents
- Discipline teaches children impulse control and the parents need to help the child learn to channel emotions into words
- Parents may use positive reinforcement to limit undesirable behaviors
- Discipline should be of short duration
- Time out can be useful

# Jealousy

- Better able to share and understand that he or she is not the only person in need of the caregiver's attention
- Parents should set aside special time for them
- There should be a special space for toys and other meaningful items
- Child may be given little jobs to assist the parent with the care of other siblings

# Responses to Divorce

- May have strong wish to reunite their parents
- Make the child feel loved and protected by both parties
- Children should feel that they have their own space in both parents' homes
- See box 8-1 for divorce hints for parents



# Preschool Education

- The first day should be brief and the parent should stay with the child until acclimated
- Signs of preschool readiness include mastery of toilet training, ability to tolerate brief periods of separation from parents, and increased communication skills

# Cognitive Development

- Preschooler unable to focus on several aspects of a stimulus
- Preschoolers lacks reversibility
- Able to share, take turns and follow rules
- May use overactive imaginations to enhance parts of a story
- Many preschoolers believe that if they become ill or injured they are being punished for their wrongdoings
- Preschoolers have longer attention spans and listen attentively

# Moral Development

- Parents need to set good examples and have consistent patterns of interaction
- Children at this stage begin to develop a superego or conscience
- Caregivers must help children understand the cause and effect that certain behaviors may have on others
- Preschoolers are just beginning to recognize that deliberate lying is a bad thing to do

# Communication

- 4 yrs of age – three to four word sentences and understand who, what, and where questions
- 5 yr olds vocabulary contains between 2000 and 2400 words
- Children 3, 4 and 5 like to monopolize conversations
- Preschoolers can understand basic time concepts and delay their gratification

# Nutrition

- Daily caloric needs – 1800 calories divided over the course of the day
- Preschool children do best when they have three meals and three snacks daily
- Some preschoolers develop strong food preferences

# Nutrition

- By 5 many children begin to develop food habits similar to those of their peers
- The best diet for young children includes foods containing proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, and limited fats
- Good food choices for snacks may be fresh or dried fruits, vegetables in bite size pieces, cheese or yogurt
- See table 8-2 for a typical preschool diet

# Sleep and Rest

- Preschool child requires about 10 to 12 hours of sleep each night
- Following a consistent bedtime routine helps minimize the conflict or debate
- Preschool children often wake up during the night with frightening nightmares –or night terrors
- May be inconsolable for a period of time, the child is unable to recall the event in the morning and will disappear without intervention

# Play

- Preschool children engage in cooperative or associative play
- The preschool child uses toys such as jungle gyms, tricycles, and Big Wheels to help further develop gross motor skills such as jumping, running, and climbing
- The preschool years are a time of building confidence (Look at, Listen to me, Watch me)
- Time spent at play is in activities that use their imagination



# Safety

- Less likely to fall than the toddler
- Most can recite a list of "Nos"
- Clothing must not be restrictive
- Nightclothes flame resistant

# Safety

- Motor Vehicle accidents are the major cause of accidental death in preschool children
- As children become more active and involved in various games and activities, the number of injuries they sustain often increases

# Safety

- Preschool children should be given swimming lessons and instructions about water safety regulations
- Parents must begin to educate their children about the dangers of talking to strangers or accepting candy

# Health Promotion

- Preschool children need to receive booster shots for diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT) and the trivalent oral polio vaccine (TOPV) to ensure immunity and protection against these diseases

# Thumb Sucking

- Fulfill the child's sucking and comfort needs
- Other comfort objects such as a teddy bear, soft doll, or blanket can replace the thumb and still provide the child with a sense of security
- Usually lessens and disappears

# Bed-wetting

- Enuresis
- Not a problem until after toilet-training is well established
- Stress and illness in the child appear to make it worse
- Medical exam needed to rule out underlying pathology
- Parents can sometimes prevent accidents by taking the child to the toilet in the evening hours and limiting fluids after 5 PM

# Fears

- Caregivers must acknowledge the child's fears
- Reassurance and reality reinforcement are essential in helping children cope with their fears
- Fear of abandonment frequently occurs at this age
- Parents may help diminish the fears of abandonment by being honest with their child

# Gross Motor Skills

- 4 yr old can walk and run on their tiptoes, hop and balance on one foot for 3 to 5 seconds and use alternating feet while descending stairs
- 4 yr old likes to climb and jump from heights without fear
- By 5 yrs of age muscle coordination and strength increase
- At 5 children can jump rope, skip on alternating feet, walk on a balance beam, and catch a ball with both hands