

# Wellness Guide at 4 Years Old

Helpful tips to support your child's development at this stage of life.



## Development

- **Choices:** Your clever 4-year-old is getting good at negotiating. Find ways to let them choose within the scope of what you find acceptable.
- **Problem Solving:** Help them problem solve by providing just enough guidance so that your child may be able to make a choice and learn to problem solve on their own. Be ready to observe, describe the situation ("the milk has spilled"), or provide simple information ("the wipe-up sponge is near the sink") before reacting or taking charge.
- **Creativity:** You may also be noticing more creative play and imagination. This can even reveal itself in the expression of fears, as your child may not be able to tell the difference between what is real and what is make-believe. Avoid triggers such as scary books, videos, or games and provide reassurance by acting calm, loving, and accepting of these fears.
- **Curiosity:** Have fun being curious with them. When they ask one of their many questions, take time to wonder about it with them or ask what they think the answer might be.
- **Skills:** Some of your child's other skills include running, jumping, climbing, balancing on one foot, learning how to get dressed, naming colors, learning to count, remembering parts of stories/songs/rhymes, and knowing their first and last name.
- **Emotions:** As friendships develop, your child may start to solve more conflicts on their own. Continue to help describe feelings.
- **Academics:** Look for ways to learn letters together. Using scissors, drawing, and writing help to develop your child's fine motor skills.
- **Predictions:** Modifying games so that they do not have a "loser" may be easier for them to handle and enjoy. When reading together, ask what has happened or what might happen next.
- **Categories:** Your child understands the ideas of "same" and "different" and can categorize not only objects, but people. Think about the gender or ethnic labels they might be exposed to and consider discussing the value of being "different".
- **Private Parts:** Be ready to discuss "private parts," in an age appropriate way, as your child is very likely to be looking, touching, and asking about theirs. Let your child know that no one should ask to see/touch their private parts, and no adult should ask for help with their private parts. Teach them to tell a trusted adult if someone asks them to disobey their parents, do something without permission, keep a secret, or makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.
- **Toilet Training:** It is normal for night wetting to still occur even if your child is dry during the day.
- **Interactions:** Face-to-face interaction with caregivers will enhance your child's social and verbal development.

## Safety

- **Drowning** is a leading cause of accidental death in this age group. Continue constant supervision around water.
- Introduce helmets for bikes/tricycles/scooters.
- Discuss street safety, animal safety, and strangers.
- Secure heavy furniture to the wall.
- Preschoolers are safest in their car seat, in the back seat of the car.
- Be cautious about open windows and furniture near windows that can lead to falls.
- Keep household cleaners, vitamins, and medicines out of reach or locked away.
- Never leave your child alone in the car or at home.
- Keep sharp objects, small objects/magnets/batteries, balloons, and plastic bags out of reach.
- Verify that smoke alarms are working properly and avoid smoke exposure.
- Remove/lock up guns. Lock away cigarettes, lighters, alcohol, marijuana, and vaping devices.

### IMPORTANT RESOURCES

**POISON CONTROL:**  
(800) 222-1222

**SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE: 988**

## Health

- Try to eat family meals together at home, and offer a variety of healthy foods the family eats, including one your child likes.
- Give Vitamin D (400 to 600 IU/day).
- They have a better chance to eat in a healthy way if you eat healthy foods too. Include fresh vegetables and fruits, lean meats/proteins, and whole grains.
- Offer milk with meals. Limit juice. Limit foods/beverages with added sugars. Limit processed foods. Avoid sugar sweetened beverages and snacks.
- Brush teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on a soft toothbrush 2 times a day. Floss. Make a dentist appointment.
- Encourage daily physical activity for the whole family. We recommend 60 minutes of exercise every day.

### HEALTH RESOURCES

CHILDREN & NUTRITION

CONSTIPATION

## Digital Media Plan & Safety

- Limit screen time to 1 hour a day of high-quality programs. Bedtime and mealtime should be electronic-free zones.
- Do not allow screens in children's bedrooms.
- Visit the AAP website to create a [Family Media Plan](#).
- Review with your child that it is never OK to give personal information online unless they have parental approval.
- Consider a break from screen time if your child struggles to transition off of screens.

### THE 5 Cs OF MEDIA USE

## Overseas Travel

If your family will be traveling internationally, schedule a virtual eTravel consultation at least 4–6 weeks before departure to review travel health recommendations, vaccines, and medications.

### TRAVEL CONSULTATION

## Family Well-being

There is a direct connection between how kids feel and how they behave. If you and your child have been busy or apart (such as with work or preschool), it can help to spend time together reconnecting by reading, resting, cuddling, or even sharing a favorite activity together.

If you want to talk about your child's day, they may be more relaxed if you do not overwhelm them with questions and you patiently/attentively listen. ("Tell me more about that.") When you show you enjoy listening, your child feels loved and appreciated.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DOSING TABLES [↗](#)

COMMON ILLNESS SUPPORT [↗](#)

PATIENT EDUCATION [↗](#)