

In this letter you'll find helpful resources and learn about:

- Keeping your child's vaccines up to date.
- Comforting your child.
- Calcium and vitamin D.
- Growth spurts.
- Your child's development.
- Pretend play.
- How talking to your child is important.
- Staying involved in your child's preschool or child care.
- Creating a fire escape plan.
- Water safety.
- Safety at home.

Happy reading!

Vaccines

Make sure your child's vaccines are up to date.

In addition to a flu shot each year, your child will be due for booster doses of other vaccines between 4 and 6 years of age. Talk to your child's doctor or nurse if you have questions about vaccines or the recommended schedule.

Ask your child's doctor or nurse for a copy of your child's vaccine records during your well-child visit. Also check to make sure your child's current vaccines are in the WAIS. Be sure your child's vaccines are up to date and correct. You have the right to review your child's records, ask questions, and make corrections. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions.

To see and download your family's vaccine records online, visit myirmobile.com.



If I am upset, try reading my favorite book with me.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Help your child eat well.

Offer your child a variety of foods. Your child will choose how much of those foods to eat. Here are some helpful tips:

- Set regular meal and snack times. Offer snacks in the morning and afternoon. Fruits and vegetables are good choices. Include protein and grains in snacks, too. (Be careful of small, hard foods that can cause choking.)
- Offer at least 1 cup of vegetables and fruit a day.
- Offer your child water when they are thirsty between meals and snacks. Fluoridated tap water is best. Limit fruit juice. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 4 ounces (½ cup) of 100 percent juice a day.
- Limit sodas and sugary drinks. They may affect your child's appetite at mealtime and can cause cavities.

Calcium and vitamin D are important!

Calcium and vitamin D help build strong bones and teeth. 4 servings of milk, cheese, or yogurt a day give your child enough calcium. A serving is 1 slice of cheese or ½ cup of low-fat milk or yogurt. Other good sources are tofu made with calcium sulfate and calcium-fortified soy milk or orange juice.

Vitamin D helps your child's body use calcium. The recommended serving is 600 IU of vitamin D a day. Your child may not get enough vitamin D each day from food as few foods contain vitamin D naturally. Look for dairy products with added vitamin D. Talk to your doctor or nurse about whether your child needs a vitamin D supplement.

For more information about vitamin D, visit bit.ly/CDC-vitamin-D.

There are different ways to comfort your child.

There are many reasons why your child may get unhappy or upset other than being hungry. If you offer food or drink to comfort your child when they are upset, it may lead to an unhealthy habit of overeating. If your child recently ate a meal or snack, think about other things that may be bothering them besides hunger. Your child may be bored, tired, sick, or want your attention. Try these ideas instead of offering food:

- Snuggle up with each other and talk or read a book.
- Go for a walk together.
- Turn on some music and dance. Be silly together!

Growth and Development

Growth spurts!

It's typical for children to grow faster some months than others. During growth spurts, your child may eat more than usual. Most children get taller and thinner, and gain weight more slowly at this age. If you wonder whether your child is at a healthy weight or see changes that worry you, talk to your child's doctor, nurse, or a dietitian.



Measure my height to show me how much I am growing!

Children learn and develop at their own rate.

Most children this age can:

- Hold a crayon between the thumb and fingers.
- Kick and throw a ball.
- Understand simple directions.
- Take turns in games.
- Dress and undress themselves.

If you have questions about your child's development or speech, talk with your doctor or nurse.

You can also call your local school district or the Help Me Grow Washington Hotline at **1-800-322-2588** to ask about a free developmental screening.

Pretend play is part of learning!

Playing make-believe helps your child to learn many things, such as how to care about other people. When your child uses their imagination and makes up stories, they learn how to be creative. Your child even learns how to handle feelings and solve problems.

Talk with your child.

Talking together is one of the best activities for you and your child. "Why?" is probably one of your child's favorite words. They think you know everything! You may get tired of answering the same questions over and over but taking time to talk with your child is very important. Listen to your child's ideas and stories to find out what they are thinking and understanding. Knowing that you listen when they talk to you now may make it easier for your child to come to you with problems as they get older.

Child Care and School Readiness

Stay involved in preschool and child care.

If your child is going to preschool, stay involved to help make sure they have a good experience. Here are some tips:

- Meet regularly with your child's teachers and ask questions about how they are doing.
- Offer to volunteer.
- Join in on special events, such as field trips and holidays.

Ask your child's teacher or child care provider about songs or rhymes they use for daily activities, such as tooth brushing, clean-up, or naptime. Try singing the song or saying the rhyme for the same activities at home. Making connections between school and home routines builds a strong foundation for learning.



Come see me at school and ask my teacher how I am doing.

Safety

Fire safety and making a plan.

Create an escape plan so everyone knows how to get out of the house in case of a fire. There should be two ways out of every room. Make sure your child knows what your smoke alarm sounds like. For more information visit bit.ly/AAP-firesafety.

Protect your child in or near water!

A child can drown quickly and silently in a tub, pool, river, lake, canal, or the ocean.

Swimming and water safety are important skills for your child and family to learn. Even if your child knows how to swim or has had lessons, they are not old enough to be around water unless an adult is within arm's length every minute. If you do not know how to swim, take the time to learn. Learning to swim is fun and great exercise for the whole family.

Put a life jacket on your child whenever they are near or on the water. Use a Coast Guard-approved life jacket made for your child's weight. Adjust the straps to fit snugly. Washington State law requires all children under 13 to wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket on boats less than 19 feet.

Protect your child at home.

Your child may seem very grown up now, but does not understand danger or how they may hurt themselves or others. Keep your home safe and watch your child carefully. Here are some tips to protect your child at home:

- Keep purses, backpacks, and briefcases out of reach as they often have pills, cough drops, nail files, makeup, pocket knives, or lighters in them.
- Put screens in front of the fireplace and space heaters.
- Don't allow your child to help cook at the stove. When you cook outside, keep your child away from the grill or fire.
- Never use a fuel-burning heater, stove, or grill in your home or in a tent for heat or to cook with.
- Put a non-skid mat in the tub or shower to help prevent falls as most bathtub injuries are due to slips.
- Supervise your child at bath time to prevent drowning and burns from hot water.

Lock up poisons!

Poisons may look like food or drinks. Teach your child to ask an adult before eating or drinking anything you haven't given them. Here are some tips to keep your child safe:

- Keep medicines, vitamins, and mouthwash in child resistant containers. Store these items and all other cosmetic/personal care products (toothpaste, lotions, nail polish, hand sanitizers, etc.) where your child cannot see or reach.
- Keep e-cigarette/vaping products, marijuana products, tobacco, and alcohol locked up and out of sight. If you have marijuana edibles in your home, teach your kids that the "Not for Kids" logo means the edibles are only for adults. Always store cleaning products, paint, or gas in their original containers, never used soda, juice, or milk containers.



If you think your child has been poisoned, stay calm and call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Call 911 if your child has collapsed, has stopped breathing, has trouble breathing, or will not wake up. Don't hang on to medicines. Get rid of any leftover, expired, or unwanted medicines at free medication return locations, find one near you at takebackyourmeds.org.

Resources

- **Online vaccine records:** myirmobile.com
- **Nutrition resources:** myplate.gov/life-stages/preschoolers
- **Child development resources:** 1-800-322-2588 (711 TTY relay)
- **Fire safety resources:** bit.ly/AAP-firesafety
- **Washington Poison Center:** 1-800-222-1222 (TTY 711) and wapc.org
- **Medicine take back locations:** takebackyourmeds.org

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your child is 4 years old with information on:

- Vaccines for parents and caregivers.
- Helmet safety.
- Getting ready for kindergarten.

For the Health of All Our Children

Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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