

3 Years

Glacier Medical Associates

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DEVELOPMENT AND NORMAL ACTIVITY

While certain behaviors and physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal.

Your 3 year old will become better at jumping, galloping, walking on tiptoes, running more smoothly, and walking backwards for longer distances. However your toddler will continue to stumble and fall frequently. She will learn to ride a tricycle. Three year olds also know how to undress themselves, but still need help with dressing. He will be able to button and unbutton large buttons.

Three year olds become more relaxed and flexible, but will still cry and hit at times. Your child may quickly alternate between shyness and joy and may show fear of unfamiliar objects or activities. Three year olds may begin to talk about dreams.

Socially, toddlers are keenly interested in family activities, idolize parents and seek approval from adults. Three year olds will test limits constantly. They often prefer to play alone and may have an imaginary playmate. They continue to quarrel with other children, but may share and take turns occasionally.

Three year olds will speak about 1,000 words and begin to use pronouns in speech as well as grasp some grammatical principles. They delight in hearing stories over and over again and love learning short rhymes and songs. At this age, they may match or identify primary colors and enjoy imaginative and imitative play. Three year olds can assume some very simple responsibilities like putting toys away with adult help. They have an attention span of no more than a few minutes. Three year olds are getting better at choosing between alternatives.

Children at this age often want to do things by themselves; this is normal. Patience and encouragement will help 3 year olds develop new skills and build self-confidence. You can also do activities with your child to develop their ability to stay on task. Activities such as reading

books, doing puzzles and playing simple board games help with this. Continue to limit the amount and content of TV your child watches to no more than 1 hour per day.

FEEDING AND NUTRITION

Mealtime should be a pleasant time for the family. Your child should be feeding himself completely on his own now. Avoid giving him junk foods. You are the parent so you make the rules about good, healthy foods. If you are having problems at mealtime, ask your doctor for advice. Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Think up a game that makes brushing fun. Make an appointment for your child to see the dentist.

TOILET TRAINING

Some children still require diapers during the day and night. Avoid putting too many demands on the child or shaming him about wearing diapers. Let your child know how proud and happy you are as toilet training progresses.

CONSTIPATION

A child may have constipation if his stools (poops) are too hard, too infrequent, too painful, too large, or if he cannot push it out. Constipation in children can cause concern for parents. Sometimes children have poor bowel habits because they are not encouraged to be on a regular schedule. Sometimes they are just “too busy” to spend enough time on the toilet to empty their bowels. Signs of constipation include painful bowel movements, abdominal pain and soiling (the child has an “accident” in his pants).

Here are some tips for constipation:

- Have your child sit on the toilet for 10 minutes after breakfast or until he empties the lower bowel completely. Place a footstool under his feet. Do not make this a punishment or negative experience.
- Make sure your child eats fruits, vegetables and whole grain cereals every day.
- Adding a daily serving of bran cereal to your child’s diet may be helpful (kids like raisin bran).
- Limit milk to 3 servings per day.
- Encourage your child to drink lots of water. Fruit juice in moderation (1 or 2 servings a day) may help.
- Encourage your child to come in from play every time he has the urge to have a bowel movement.

Do not give your child enemas, suppositories or laxatives unless you are told to do so by your child's doctor.

DISCIPLINE

For behaviors that you would like to encourage in your child, try to catch your child being good. That is, tell your child how proud you are when he does what you want him to do.

In general, "time-outs" for misbehavior should equal in minutes the age of your child in years (3 minutes for a 3 year old). Use "time-outs" only for specific behaviors previously agreed upon by you and your child. A time out loses its effectiveness and becomes confusing to your child if used too often. Remember to set rules and be consistent.

SAFETY

- Teach your child the first and last names of family members.
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.
- Practice a fire escape plan.
- Check smoke detectors. Replace the batteries if necessary.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Make sure your child can't get at electrical wires, outlets, or appliances.
- Quit smoking. Do not expose your child to smoke.
- Turn your water heater down to 120° F (50° C).
- Never leave your child alone in a car.
- The back seat is the safest place for a child to ride. Young children should never sit in the front seat of a car with airbags.
- Everyone in a car must always wear seat belts.
- Hold onto your child's hand when you are near streets and parking lots.
- Do not allow riding of a tricycle or other riding toys on driveways or near traffic.
- Have your child wear a bicycle helmet.
- Supervise all street crossing.
- Continuously watch your child around any water.
- Limit the time your child spends in the sun. Use sunscreen on your child's skin when outdoors.
- Keep medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc. locked up.
- Put the poison center number on all phones. The poison control number is 1-800-860-0620.
- Ask your doctor about syrup of Ipecac. Use it only if you are told to do so.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.

- Do not put toxic substances into drink bottles, glasses, or jars.
- Keep your child away from lawn mowers, overhead garage doors, and electric tools.
- Do not allow your child to climb on ladders, chairs, or cabinets.
- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.
- Keep firearms unloaded and locked up with ammunition locked up separately from the gun.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Keeping active isn't a problem for most young children. There are lots of ways to channel this energy in positive ways:

- Try to find physical activities that are fun for the whole family.
- Let your child play as long as he has energy and interest. High energy may come in spurts.
- Limit the amount of time your child watches TV and plays video or computer games to no more than 1 hour a day.
- Be a role model by being physically active yourself.
- Look for community programs that encourage physical activity.

IMMUNIZATIONS AND NEXT DOCTOR'S VISIT

At today's visit your child may receive the second of two Hepatitis A shots, if it has not been given already. Two doses of the vaccine, given at least 6 months apart, are needed for lasting protection.

Vision, hearing, and blood pressure screening should take place.

Your child's next routine visit should be at the age of 4 years. Please bring your shot record to each visit.

CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN IF:

- Your child has a bad reaction to the immunization.
- You have any other concerns about your child.

You can reach a doctor 24 hours a day by calling: **862-2515**

WHAT TO EXPECT

Discipline will continue to be an important issue. Breaking and testing rules will come occasionally in the months ahead. Your child will become more cooperative in her play with

other children, and continue to be very curious and imaginative but will be able to distinguish fantasy from reality. Your child should learn her first and last name. He will learn to sing songs and draw a person with three parts. Your child may become more private when changing clothes or using the bathroom.

SUGGESTED READING

Guide to Your Child's Nutrition By: W. Dietz

Guide to Your Child's Symptoms By: D Schiff

Caring for Your Baby and Young Child By: S Shevlov

Web Sites

www.kidshealth.org

www.brightfutures.com

www.aap.org