

Well Child Care at 10 Years

Nutrition

It is important for children to eat appropriate numbers of calories. High fat foods, sweets, and large portion sizes should be consumed in moderation. Parents set a good example by choosing healthy foods and appropriate portion sizes. Eat meals as a family when possible. Encourage everyone to eat slowly and enjoy the conversation as well as the food. Try salads with low-fat dressing and homemade vegetable soups as appetizers. Involve your children with meal planning and writing grocery lists. Keep healthy snacks on hand.

Development

Many girls and a few boys have a growth spurt at this age. The start of sexual development is normally soon followed by this growth spurt. Girls usually start their sexual development one or two years earlier than boys.

School achievement is very important for 10-year-olds. Reading, writing, and arithmetic should be the focus of learning. Make sure your child takes responsibility for bringing home schoolwork and has a good place to study at home.

Help your child get involved in school and extracurricular activities. Sports should be fun and focus on sportsmanship, rather than winning and losing. Make sure your child gets plenty of physical activity each day.

10-year-olds particularly like doing chores. They enjoy hearing from parents that they have done a chore well. It is important for children to begin to think of themselves as capable of accomplishing things. Ask your healthcare provider for help if your child doesn't believe he can do chores or other tasks.

Projecting a positive self-esteem is very important at this age. Your child should not always be putting himself down. Ask your healthcare provider for advice if your child consistently has a poor self-esteem. Kids want to dress the way their friends dress. This is important for your child and, within reason, you should respect your child's choices. Similarly, your child will want to speak with words that may be unique to their peers, age group, or pop culture. Again, within reason, this choice is to be respected.

Behavior Control

10-year-olds have an increasing ability to function without adult supervision at school, on the playground, at home, and in safe community locations. They have learned most social rules and the need for rules. Discuss with your child how he can begin to be responsible for his behavior.

Parents play an important role in the life of a 10-year-old. The parent of the same gender as the child plays a particularly important role at this time. Despite the attention given to popular culture heroes, role-modeling by parents is very important.

10-year-olds should be responsible for their actions and expect responsible behavior from their friends and peers. The opinions of friends are very important, perhaps more important than their parent's opinions. Discuss with your child how to make good choices in the company of friends.

Parents and kids should discuss issues of sexuality. You should occasionally ask your child if he has any other questions about sex. When kids realize that parents feel comfortable with discussing sex, they ask for information more often. Discuss sexual values with your child.

Reading and Electronic Media

Reading is very important for 10-year-olds. Be sure to read at every opportunity with your child and discuss the book. Let your child read and tell you stories from books.

Encourage your child to participate in family games and other activities. Limit "screen time" (TV, electronic games,

computers) to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day. Carefully select the programs you allow your child to view. Be sure to watch and discuss some of the programs with your child. Do not put a television in your child's bedroom. Schools, libraries, and most homes now have Internet access. This can be a useful tool in helping children with homework and helping them learn. Spending a lot of time on the computer may isolate kids from their peers. It also takes away from other activities such as homework, sleep, exercise, or spending time with others. Set up rules with your kids and monitor your child's use of the Internet. Make sure that home computers have some kind of filter or parental control.

Children often want a cell phone at this age. Parents need to consider how mature their child is, and how their child will use the phone. Is it to call in case of emergency? Or to text friends and check social media? Cell phones can be distracting and keep children from face-to-face communication. They can also expose children to cyber-bullying. If you decide to give your child a cell phone, set careful guidelines, and monitor your child's use of the phone.

Your child should not be exposed to shows or games with violent or sexual themes.

Dental Care

Brushing teeth regularly after meals is important. Brushing before bedtime is the most important time of all. Make regular appointments for your child to see the dentist.

Safety Tips

Accidents are the number one cause of death in children. Kids like to take risks at this age but are not well prepared to judge the degree of those risks. Therefore, 10-year-olds still need supervision. Parents should model safe choices.

Car Safety

- Everyone in a car should wear a seat belt or be in an appropriate car seat.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

- Children at this age will generally cross streets safely. However, be sure that you practice this skill when your child has a new street to cross.
- Make sure your child always uses a bicycle helmet. You can set a good example by always wearing a helmet.
- Your child is not ready for riding on busy streets. Begin to teach your child about riding a bicycle where cars are present.
- Purchase a bicycle that fits your child well. Don't buy a bicycle that is too big for your child. Bikes that are too big are associated with a great risk of accidents.

Strangers

- Discuss safety outside the home with your child.
- Make sure your child knows her address and phone number and her parents' place(s) of work.
- Remind your child never to go anywhere with a stranger.

Smoking

- Children who live in a house where someone smokes have more respiratory infections. When they develop respiratory infections, their symptoms are more severe and last longer than those of children who live in a smoke-free home.
- If you smoke, set a quit date and stop. Ask your healthcare provider for help in quitting. If you cannot quit, do

NOT smoke in the house or near children.

- Teach your child that even though smoking is unhealthy, he should be civil and polite when he is around people who smoke.

Immunizations

Your child should be current on routinely recommended vaccinations. An annual influenza shot is recommended for children up until 18 years of age. Additional vaccines are also sometimes given when children travel outside the country. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about immunizations.

Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child have a routine checkup every year. Be sure to bring your child's shot records to every annual visit.

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