
YOUR CHILD AT 3 YEARS

I. DIET/SLEEP

- A. The 3-year-old is often a picky eater, but you should encourage variety. Do not become a short order cook. Eat meals as a family. Rituals are common at this age. This can not only include repetition of food preferences (food jags), but also of dishes and the arrangement of dishes. Be tolerant of this need.
- B. Your child is now able to feed himself with little spillage, and also is more coordinated with using utensils.
- C. Your child still needs 800mg. of calcium per day. That equals about (3) 8oz glasses of milk or the equivalent.
- D. **SLEEP:** If not already done, this is a good time to make the change from the crib to the "big bed". Sleep time is usually 10-12 hours/night. Nighttime waking periods may develop when the child wants to play, roam around the house, or crawl into parents' bed. Be sure the house is safe. Put a bell on your child's bedroom door so you will know if your child is leaving their room. Allowing them to enter your room/bed will be a tough habit to break, it is much easier if you don't allow it in the beginning. Also, at this age children begin to have real dreams. Keep bedtimes consistent. It is common to have an unbending bedtime routine at this age, for example, the same book every night.

II. DEVELOPMENT

- A. A child at this age often uses plurals, can give first and last name, dresses with supervision, alternates feet going upstairs, knows a few rhymes and can put on their own shoes.
- B. They like to pretend. They will investigate and manipulate everything that can be reached. They are beginning to have shared interactional play with others.
- C. Because of limited experiences, they begin to develop "magical thinking" (if he thinks or wishes it, it will happen). This is his attempt to explain events.
- D. Be consistent with your discipline. Praise your child for good behavior. The need for time outs for behaviors you want to change should be lessening. Spanking is never effective in the long run.
- E. Do not negotiate with your 3 year old. You can offer choices such as "Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue shirt?" but not "Do you want to get dressed?" A "yes or no" question may often be met with a "no" answer.
- F. Do not try to reason with a 3 year old in an attempt to change their behavior. Use short sentences to state expected behavior: "You have to wear a coat. It's cold outside".
- G. A 3 year old may be able to copy a circle and a cross, and kick a ball.

III. SAFETY

- A. Continue to make sure her teeth are brushed twice daily. A pea sized amount of toothpaste is sufficient to get the job done. It is now time to make the first dental appointment and every 6 months thereafter.
- B. Ensure playground safety and teach stranger safety.
- C. Remember to keep a smoke free and childproof environment. Weapons should be always unloaded in a locked cabinet. Keep all poisons and medications out of reach of children. **The Poison Control number is 1-800-222-1222.**
- D. Limit television, videos, and computers to one hour per day.
- E. Your child can move to a booster seat at the weight of 40 pounds.
- F. Teach your child how to identify himself by name. When separated from your child, teach them to stay put rather than move a distance away. Always teach your child to ask for help.
- G. A 3 year old should still hold hands when crossing streets.
- H. Remember to use bike helmets whenever your child is on anything with wheels.

IV. OTHER

- A. Your child's next visit is at age 4 years.
- B. Annual flu shots are the only recommended vaccines at this age.