



# What to Expect as Your Child Grows: Well Child Care at 10 Years

## Nutrition

- Many children and adults eat too many calories from high-fat foods, sweets, and large portion sizes. Set a good example.
- Eat meals as a family when possible. Encourage everyone to eat slowly and enjoy the conversation as well as the food.
- Involve your children with meal planning and writing grocery lists. This helps them learn, and they can make their own decisions about new foods to try.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand.

## Development

- Many girls and 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 ten-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 or extracurricular activities. Sports should be fun and focus on sportsmanship, rather than winning and losing. Make sure your child gets plenty of physical activity everyday.
- Ten-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 if your child doesn't believe he can do chores or other tasks. This may be an appropriate age to introduce allowance.
- Projecting a positive self-esteem is very important at this age. Children should not always be putting themselves 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 children and, within reason, you should respect your children's choices. Similarly, your children 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 and Discipline

- Ten-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 understand the need for rules. Discuss with your children how they can begin to be responsible for their behaviors.
- Parents play an important role in the life of a ten-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.

- Ten-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 parents' opinions. Discuss with your child how to make good choices in the company of friends.
- Parents and kids should discuss issues of sexuality. When kids realize that parents feel comfortable with discussing sex, they ask for information more often. Their issues and questions start to come up naturally. Take advantage of these times to discuss values and answer any question honestly.

## Media

- Reading is very important for ten-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." 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.
- Your child should not be exposed to shows or games with violent or sexual themes. The ratings systems for movies, games, and television are good guides for what is appropriate for your child.

## 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, ten-year-olds still need supervision. Parents should model safe choices.
- **Car Safety**
  - Everyone in a car should always wear seat belts..
- **Pedestrian 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 not present.
  - Don't buy a bicycle that is too big for your child.
- **Strangers**
  - Discuss safety outside the home with your child.
  - Make sure your child knows his address, phone number, and his parents' places 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. Their symptoms are also 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. Set a good example for your child. If you cannot quit, do NOT smoke in the house or near children.
- Teach your children that even though smoking is unhealthy, they should be civil and polite when they are around people who smoke.

## Immunizations

- Your child should already be current on all routinely recommended vaccinations. Additional vaccines are sometimes given when children travel outside the country. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about immunizations.
- Annual flu vaccines are recommended.

## Next Visit

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child have a routine check-up every year.