

## Six-Nine Year Visit

Visits to the pediatrician should stimulate home discussion about a variety of health matters. Here are some topics for you and your children to talk about after today's check-up. Wherever possible let your child have the opportunity to think through the details of how to apply these general guidelines. Try to explain reasons for rules instead of just "laying down the law".

1. Eat a well balanced diet. Try to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Avoid excessive junk foods which are high in fat and calories. Have breakfast before going to school. Foods with calcium should be eaten at least 3 times a day. Children his age should be drinking skim or 1% milk. Eat meals as much as possible.
2. Get some exercise regularly. This means doing something that involves good physical activity almost every day. For some, organized sports may be the way to get this exercise, but for others it may mean individual activities of walking, running, biking, swimming or just playing outside. Don't forget safety when participating in physical activity-use appropriate mouth guards, eye protection and helmets.
3. Brush teeth at least twice each day. Avoid snacking on sugary foods. Make regular visits to the dentist.
4. Get enough sleep. Establish a regular schedule of sleep that is not too different on the weekdays and weekends.
5. Don't watch too much television or spend too much time with the computer or video games. Limit this "screen time" to two hours maximum per day. Parents should monitor activity on the computer and internet. Read for pleasure.
6. Learn to swim.
7. Make sure all car rides are safe rides:
  - a) Children this age should be riding in the back seat only.
  - b) Always wear a seat belt.
  - c) Children under 65 pounds must be in a booster seat unless over age 8 or 4ft 9in. Even children under 80 pounds are probably safer in a booster.
8. Observe bicycle safety precautions, especially wearing a helmet for every bicycle ride. Children must be trained in bicycle operation. Until a child has been observed riding confidently and following basic rules of the road, riding must be restricted to sidewalks, paths, and driveways.
9. Rollerblades, scooters and skateboards can be great exercise, but can result in injuries. Helmets and wrist guards should be worn to prevent, serious injury. These activities should not occur where there is traffic.
10. Firearms are very dangerous for children of all ages and should not be kept at home. If they must be kept at home, they must be stored unloaded and locked up. Children should be taught never to handle a firearm they might encounter elsewhere, such as at a friend's home. Parents should make it a point of inquiring about the presence of firearms before allowing child to visit a friend's home.

## **ADVICE TO PARENTS**

1. Establish fair rules to be followed at home with respect to such activities as bedtime, TV watching and helping with chores (setting the table, keeping one's room neat).
2. Spend active time with your child. Show interest in his daily school activities.
3. An adult should be present at home to supervise your child's activities and avoid "latch-key kid" syndrome. Know where your child is at all times.
4. Provide an allowance and guidance on how to manage it.
5. Praise and encourage your child's activities. Contribute to your child's self-esteem. Show affection. If there are siblings promote the individual strengths of each child.
6. Promote activities outside the home, such as sports, Cub Scouts, Brownies, church or synagogue groups, summer camps, etc. In planning these activities, discuss them with your child, listening to their interests. Don't forget to allow for unplanned "free play" time.
7. Don't underestimate your importance as a role model.
8. Encourage reading or hobbies. Obtain a library card for your child.
9. Ensure a level of sex education appropriate to your child's age and interest. Answer questions factually. It is very appropriate for parents to initiate discussion. We have some favorite read-together books that can help.

## **SCHOOL**

1. To a certain extent, downplay the importance of school performance. Teach your child the joy of learning. Dwell on, "WHAT did you do in school today?" instead of, "HOW did you do in school today?" Kids generally feel enough pressure from peers and teachers. It is the parents' role to be supportive of the school's efforts, not to be school police. If there are problems with school performance, talk to the teachers and call on us to help.
2. Every child has strengths and weaknesses. In a sense, it is very unfair that elementary schools generally expect kids to perform well in all areas. After all, adults are allowed, even encouraged to specialize in and do what they are good at. Adults are not forced to hit their heads against the wall in areas where they are less talented. It is crucial to the child's self-esteem that we understand their own best way to learn and individualize their education accordingly. We should praise them for their work in areas where they do well and allow them to do less well in other areas. If there are significant weaknesses which are apparent to teachers or parents, we should teach your child to recognize this, work around it, and not become too frustrated. Please discuss with us any school problems. Many children go for years with subtle undiagnosed learning disabilities. It is a real shame when a child is blamed for poor school performance when it's really not their fault. These children should be evaluated and given special help, not criticized and blamed.

# R<sub>x</sub> for Healthy Active Living

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Ideas for Living a Healthy Active Life

- 5** Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables every day.
- 2** Limit screen time (for example, TV, video games, computer) to 2 hours or less per day.
- 1** Get 1 hour or more of physical activity every day.
- 0** Drink fewer sugar-sweetened drinks. Try water and low-fat milk instead.

## My Goals (choose one you would like to work on first)

- Eat \_\_\_\_\_ fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get \_\_\_\_\_ minutes of physical activity each day.
- Reduce screen time to \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per day.
- Reduce number of sugared drinks to \_\_\_\_\_ per day.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient or Parent/Guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doctor signature

### From Your Doctor

Pediatric & Adolescent Care of Silver Spring, P.A.  
12501 Prosperity Drive, Suite 100  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
(301) 681-6730

**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



**Healthy Active Living**  
An Initiative of the American Academy of Pediatrics