

A PARENT'S A, B, C of RAISING CHILDREN

A

Alcohol-Free Pregnancy

Alcohol consumed during pregnancy can lead to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). There is no safe amount of alcohol a woman can drink while pregnant. Therefore, it is recommended that women abstain from drinking alcohol at any time during pregnancy.

- [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome](#)

B

Back to Sleep

Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, even for naps. This is the safest sleep position for a healthy baby to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies placed on their stomachs to sleep are much more likely to die of SIDS than babies placed on their backs to sleep.

- [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome](#)
- [SIDS: "Safe to Sleep" Campaign](#) (NIH)

Bicycle Helmets

Unfortunately, only about one-quarter of children ages 5 to 14 wear helmets when riding bicycles. The percentage of teen cyclists who wear helmets is close to zero. If every bicycle rider wore a helmet, that action alone would prevent an estimated 150 deaths and another 100,000 nonfatal head injuries each year. Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of serious head injury by as much as 85% and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88%. Helmets have also been shown to reduce the risk of injury to the upper and mid-face by 65%.

- [Bicycle-Related Injuries](#)

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the ideal method of feeding and nurturing infants. Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for infants. Breastfeeding protects an infant from a wide array of infectious and noninfectious diseases. Breastfeeding improves maternal health by reducing postpartum bleeding and may lower the risk of premenopausal breast cancer and ovarian cancer.

- [Breastfeeding](#)

C

Compliment Your Kids

Compliment your kids when they do something good. This may encourage good behavior and keep the communication lines open. Involved parents appear to be a protective factor against the lure of tobacco.

- [Got a Minute? Give It to Your Kid](#)

Concussion in Youth Sports

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a “ding” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

- [Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports](#)

Cover Up

Covering up to protect the skin from the sun can lower the risk for sunburn and skin cancer. To protect your kids from too much sun exposure, be sure they wear a hat, shades, and sunscreen; seek shade; and cover up. A few serious sunburns can increase your child’s risk of skin cancer later in life. Covering up can also help prevent mosquito bites and West Nile Virus, which is usually spread from the bite of an infected mosquito.

- [Fight the Bite](#)
- [Play it Safe in the Sun: A Guide for Parents](#)

Cover up unused electrical outlets to prevent kids from getting a shock (or worse) if they stick their finger or object in the outlet. Safety plugs should be inserted in unused outlets when toddlers are in the home. Make sure all outlets in the home have face plates.

- [Electrical Safety in the Home](#)²

D

Dental Health

Dental decay is one of the most common chronic infectious diseases among U.S. children. This preventable health problem begins early: 17% of children aged 2-4 years have already had decay. By the age of 8, approximately 52% of children have experienced decay, and by the age of 17, dental decay affects 78% of children. Children and adults who are at low risk of dental decay can stay cavity-free through frequent exposure to small amounts of fluoride. This is best gained by drinking fluoridated water and using fluoride toothpaste twice daily. Children and adults at high risk of dental decay may benefit from using additional fluoride products, including dietary supplements (for children who do not have adequate levels of fluoride in their drinking water), mouth rinses, and professionally applied gels and varnishes.

- [Children’s Oral Health](#)

E

Exercise

Exercise (physical activity) helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints; control weight; build lean muscle; lower fat; prevent or delay the development of high blood pressure; and lower blood pressure in some adolescents with hypertension.

It is recommended that children and adolescents participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week.

- [Bone Health](#)
- [How Much Physical Activity do Children Need?](#)

F

Folic Acid

Insufficient folic acid (a B vitamin) in pregnant women can lead to spina bifida (spine defects) and anencephaly (brain defects) in infants. All women who could possibly become pregnant should take a vitamin with folic acid every day. Take 400 micrograms of folic acid daily both before pregnancy and during the first few months of pregnancy to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain and spine.

- [Folic Acid](#)

G

Growth and Development

Do you know all the ways you should measure your child's growth? We naturally think of height and weight, but from birth to 5 years, your child should reach milestones in how he plays, learns, speaks and acts.

- [Child Development](#)
- [Child Development: Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#)

Pediatric growth charts have been used by pediatricians, nurses, and parents to track the growth of infants, children, and adolescents in the United States since 1977. The 1977 growth charts were developed as a tool for health professionals to determine if the growth of a child is adequate. Measurements include height, weight, and head size (2 years of age and younger). Growth charts are tools that contribute to forming an overall clinical impression for the child being measured.

- [Individual Growth Charts](#)

H

Handwashing/Hygiene

The most important thing that you and your kids can do to help keep from getting sick is to wash hands, especially after coughing and sneezing, before preparing foods or eating, and after using the restroom. By washing your hands often, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste. Everyone should wash their hands for 20 seconds (about the length of a little tune) to remove germs. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs. Rinse well and dry your hands. It is estimated that one out of three people do not wash their hands after using the restroom.

- [Clean Hands Save Lives](#)

I

Install and Maintain Smoke Alarms

Install smoke alarms on every floor of your home, including the basement. Be sure to place smoke alarms near rooms where people sleep. Test all of your smoke alarms every month to ensure they work properly.

- [Fire Deaths and Injuries](#)

J

Job Safety

Make sure young workers are trained properly to perform tasks, and supervise them appropriately. Injuries, sometimes fatal, can result at home, on the job, and elsewhere.

- [Young Worker Safety and Health](#)

K

Know Your Child's Risks and Family History

Know if you or your child is at risk for certain conditions or diseases because of family history, medical history, environmental concerns, or other issues. Collect and record your family history and talk to your health care provider if there are conditions or diseases that may place you or your child at risk. Take steps to lower risk where appropriate.

- [Family History is Important for Your Health](#)

Remove triggers that may cause asthma or other health problems. Triggers include smoke, dust mites, cockroaches, pets, and mold.

- [You Can Control Your Asthma](#)

L

Learn More About Your Child's Life

Get to know your children's friends, interests, and hobbies. Learn if any of them are placing your children at higher risk for injuries or bad habits. Get involved in your children's lives and talk to them about making positive, healthy choices. Spend time together having fun and doing healthy things.

- [Quick Stats: Underage Drinking](#)
- [Stop Underage Drinking](#)  (federal resources)

M

Motor Vehicle Safety

Nearly half of children under age 5 who were killed in motor vehicle crashes were riding unrestrained. Child safety seats lower the risk of death by about 70% for infants and by about 55% for toddlers ages one to four. If restraint use among motor vehicle occupants ages five years and older increased to 100%, an additional 9,000 lives would be saved and 160,000 nonfatal injuries would be prevented each year.

- [U.S. Motor Vehicle Injury Facts](#) 

N

Nutritious Food

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may lower the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health. Most fruits and vegetables are filling and naturally low in fat and calories. Leave the high-fat, high-sugar snack foods at the store. Serve child-sized portions.

- [Nutrition for Everyone](#)

O

Other Caregivers

Ensure that others caring for your child (including family, friends, neighbors, day care, and schools) have your contact information, know what to do in case of an emergency, and have appropriate policies in place to handle problems. Determine if caregivers are screened and provided training.

- [Healthy Schools, Healthy Youth](#)

P

Passenger Safety

Motor vehicle injuries are the greatest public health problem facing children today. In fact, they are the leading cause of death among them.

- [Child Passenger Safety](#)

Pets

Pets provide many benefits to humans. They comfort us and give us companionship. However, some animals can also pass diseases to people. Infants and children less than five years old are more likely than most people to get diseases from animals. This is because young children often touch surfaces that may be contaminated with animal feces (stool), and young children like to put their hands in their mouths. Young children are less likely than others to wash their hands well. Children should wash their hands thoroughly with running water and soap after contact with animals. Adults should supervise children while they are washing their hands.

- [Animal Safety Tips](#)

Plan Ahead for Emergencies

Post the poison control number 1-800-222-1222 on or near every home telephone. Keep poisons and other hazardous substances away from children and pets.

- [Poisoning Prevention: Safety Tips for You and Your Family](#)

Have a plan, and practice what to do before weather emergencies strike. Knowing what to do can help protect you and your family.

- [Natural Disasters and Severe Weather](#)

Prenatal Care

Through prenatal care, health problems can be prevented, identified and treated early, or closely monitored. Persons with certain conditions or diseases can receive specialized care, which may lower the risk in the fetus or newborn of developing similar or other problems.

- [Pregnancy Information](#)
- [Smoking among Adults: Reproductive Health Consequences](#)

Protective Eyewear


Although eye protectors cannot eliminate the risk of injury, appropriate eye protectors have been found to lower the risk of significant eye injury by at least 90% when fitted properly.

- [Eye Protection for Infection Control](#)

Q

Quit Smoking

Half of all adult smokers have quit, and you can too. There are millions of people alive today who have learned to face life without a cigarette. Quitting smoking is the best step you can take for a healthier life.

- [Quit Tips](#)
- [Youth Tobacco Prevention](#)
- [You Can Quit Smoking Now!](#)  (smokefree.gov)

R

Recreation and Sports Safety

Swimming can be fun. But certain precautions should be taken to protect your children and other swimmers from getting sick. Don't let your children swim if they have diarrhea. Don't swallow the pool water. Wash hands.

- [Healthy Swimming](#)

Supervise your children on playgrounds. Check the safety of playground equipment before you children play on them.

- [Playground Injuries](#)

Girls who play sports have higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, more positive body image, and higher states of psychological wellbeing than girls and women who do not play sports.

- [Tobacco-Free Sports Initiatives](#)

S

Safety Checks

Store all medicines, household products, personal care products, and other dangerous substances in locked cabinets that are out of reach of small children.

- [Tips to Prevent Poisonings](#)

Perform a home safety check, and remove things that pose a tripping hazard. Secure banisters and handrails at all stairwells. Use safety gates at the bottom and top of stairs when young children are around.

- [Childhood Injuries](#)

T

Take a Break

Take a break from a situation if you feel yourself losing control. Ask a friend or relative to watch your children for a little while. Offer to help other parents so they can take a break.

- [Child Maltreatment Prevention](#)

Travel

When traveling with kids outside the United States, know vaccination recommendations, breastfeeding recommendations, and food and water precautions.

- [Traveling with Children](#)

U

Use Antibiotics Wisely

Use antibiotics only when your health care provider has determined that they are likely to be effective. Children are of particular concern because they have the highest rates of antibiotic use. They also have the highest rate of infections caused by antibiotic-resistant pathogens.

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in a way that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of antibiotics. These resistant bacteria survive and multiply - causing more harm, such as a longer illness, more doctor visits, and a need for more expensive antibiotics. Resistant bacteria may even cause death.

Parent pressure makes a difference. For pediatric care, a recent study showed that doctors prescribe antibiotics 65% of the time if they perceive parents expect them; and 12% of the time if they feel parents do not expect them. Parents should not demand antibiotics when a health care provider has determined they are not needed. Parents should talk with their health care provider about antibiotic resistance.

- [Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work](#)

V

Vaccinations

In the U.S., vaccines have reduced or eliminated many infectious diseases that once routinely killed or harmed infants, children, and adults. However, the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable disease and death still exist and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines. Vaccine-preventable diseases have many social and economic costs: sick children miss school and can cause parents to lose time from work. These diseases also result in doctor's visits, hospitalizations, and even premature deaths. It's important to keep vaccinations up-to-date.

- [Immunization Schedules](#)
- [What Parents Need to Know about Vaccines](#)

W

Watch Your Kids

It only takes a second for small children to get into something they shouldn't get into. To prevent injury, be aware of common causes of injury in the home, at school, and on the move.

- [Injuries among Children and Adolescents](#)

X

Explain the Facts of Life

Talking about the birds and bees is important. Also, talk to your kids about some of the issues we don't often want to talk about, such as violence, abuse, what's inappropriate, and what to do if something happens.

- [Child Maltreatment Prevention](#)
- [Dating Matters](#)

Y

Yearly Exams and Screenings

When they are less than a year old, babies should usually be seen by a health care professional every few months for routine exams, vaccinations, and screenings. Around one year of age, children may be seen every six months to yearly. Some children may need to be seen more often and others less often. Ask your health care provider how often your child should be seen.

- [Immunization Schedules](#)

Z

ZZZZs

Make sure you and your family gets plenty of sleep (ZZZZs). If you are rested, then you are in better shape to deal with the joys and challenges of raising safe and healthy kids and teens!

- [Sleep Hygiene Tips](#)