

4 Year Check Up

Well Child Appointments can be made online at AustinRegionalClinic.com.



NUTRITION

This year your 4 year old will gain an average of 4-6 pounds and grow 2-3 inches in height. To promote healthy growth, offer your child meals and snacks at approximately the same times every day. Predictable eating times help control appetite. We recommend 3 meals and 2-3 snacks a day.

There are many triggers for hunger, such as boredom, visual cues, situational cues, and advertising. Distraction tactics, like talking, playing, or enjoyable activities like finger painting are options to try if your child requests food and it is not time for a meal or snack.

What Should I Serve My Child for Meals and Snacks?

Utilize the MyPlate visual guide to create well-balanced meals and snacks for your family. This illustrates the 5 food groups that are important to include in your child's diet and how much of each. Goal: Make ½ the plate at meals fruits and vegetables. Your 4 year old may still be reluctant to try new foods. If parents model a healthy and varied diet, and offer foods even if refused, then the reluctance may be overcome. Never force a child to eat a certain food, and do not reward eating a food with dessert.

Your child's appetite will vary at times. Parents provide and the child decides. You, as the parent, are responsible for what foods are offered, what time meals and snacks are served, and where meals and snacks are eaten. Your child decides whether they eat what is offered or whether they will wait for the next meal or snack. Do not cater to your child's likes and dislikes; offer a



variety of foods. Join your child at mealtime and show how you enjoy eating healthy food. Set a good example.

Healthy Habits Tips

Remember the message "7-5-1-1-0" for what healthy habits are important for your child.

7: Eat breakfast 7 days a week. Eating breakfast prevents children from getting too hungry and overeating later in the day--habits that lead to weight gain. If serving cereal, provide a breakfast cereal with at least 2 grams of fiber and less than 9 grams of sugar per serving.

5: Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. By making ½ your child's plate fruits and vegetables at meals and including fruits and vegetables for snack, your child will get the needed amount of fruits and vegetables.

1: Do not let your child spend more than 1 hour on total screen time (TV, video games, computer time, tablets and phones). Sit next to your child and discuss what they are seeing and doing when they are using screens. While there are many educational games and entertaining kid apps available, spending too much time watching screens can cause health problems for your toddler. Just like with many things, parents need to set limits for their toddler around screen-time to keep them safe. Choose media (apps, games, videos) that are interactive, non-violent, and educational. Preschoolers copy what they see, so make sure that your media choices show people being treated just as you'd like your child to treat others.

To keep your child healthy, turn off all electronics during meals and keep the tablets and TVs out of your child's bedroom. If there already is a "screen" in their bedroom, remove it. These steps will not only decrease screen-time, but also help increase parent-child communication, and decrease sleep problems.

1: Have your child participate in at least 1 hour of physical activity per day. Outdoor play in this age group naturally yields more physical activity. Plan for



unstructured, outdoor play time every day.

0: Encourage your child to drink almost no sugar sweetened beverages. Soda, sports drinks, lemonade, fruit drinks, and even 100% fruit juice all contain a large amount of sugar. This makes children who drink them gain weight. Try not to buy or bring these beverages into your home. Water and low-fat (1%) or nonfat (skim) milk are the best drinks for your family.

Many parents assume that child care, preschool, and other caregivers, including family members are providing good nutrition and activity options for their child. It is important for families to ask about these options and provide healthy alternatives if needed.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY SNACKS

- Fruit
- Low-fat/frozen yogurt
- Celery stalks, cucumber slices
- Frozen banana slices
- Bran muffins
- Sugar-free cereals
- Low-fat cheeses
- Crackers or unsalted pretzels

Is My Child Overweight/Obese?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is widely used to help define overweight and obese children. BMI compares height and weight and varies by age and sex. A BMI between the 85th and 95th percentile is defined as overweight, and a BMI above the 95% is defined as obese. BMI and BMI % will be shared at your child's visit. Do not hesitate to ask your child's doctor about any concerns you have about your child's weight or eating habits.

SLEEP

Your preschooler still needs quite a bit of night sleep. Children this age are typically sleeping 10-13 hours out of their 24 hour day, including naps. When your child doesn't get enough sleep, they will be more grumpy and less likely to follow instructions.

Preschoolers thrive when there is a routine, meaning the same pattern of things happen every night before sleep. A great routine is Brush, Book, and Bed. When you brush teeth, read a book, and then tuck into bed every night, your child will become calm as they recognize the pattern. This is especially true if you tuck them into bed at the same time every night, weekends included.

You may notice that your child has more trouble falling asleep when they get a full 2 hour nap. If this is the case, then it's OK to limit napping to 30-60 minutes in the daytime.

DEVELOPMENT

Ready for Reading

You can launch your child on the right course for school success. Keep reading with your child every day, for at least 20

minutes. When sharing a book together, model finger-point reading. Touch the words as you read left-to-right. Children should be learning that the letters on the page tell the story. Talk about the story you read together, too. You might discuss your child's favorite parts in the story and ask questions about what happened.

By four years, many children can recognize some letters. Build your child's awareness of letters. When you have moments at a stop light or moments of waiting at a store, point out letters around you or play rhyming games. Talk about the sounds the letters make. Start with the easy ones to pick up such as "mmm" and "sss."

Ready for Writing

Your four year old might be just starting to form letters. But the more they practice the skills of drawing, scribbling, and painting, the more they'll be ready for the coming years of writing. Make sure to have crayons and washable markers around your place. Involve them in writing that you do too, such as making a grocery list. Point out the first letters of the things you put down on your list.

Growing Independence

At four years old, children are more interested in doing things for themselves. They love to express their thoughts! Make sure to have a bit of time every day where you are playing what *they* command. When you do this for even 5-10 minutes, they are more likely to follow your directions about your family rules. Because of their growing independence, it's important to set and keep family rules to keep your preschooler safe and help them tame their strong emotional responses. When your child breaks a family rule, say in simple words the rule that they broke. Then tell them the consequence of their actions. Keep the consequence tied to the action and make



Online Access: Day or Night

- View your child's medical records
- Print your child's shot records any time
- Book your child's next appointment
- Review your child's After Visit Summary

— Enroll Today —
Visit MyChartARC.com

sure it's a consequence you can live with and remember to enforce. For example, you set a family rule that all the family only rides a tricycle or bike with a helmet. Remind them as they get out their trike or bike about your family rule. If they get on without their helmet, then give them the consequence of no riding for a day.

Be realistic in your expectations. A four year old will constantly involve their body as well as their mind. If you want your four year old to be quiet and still for more than a minute or two, provide a quiet activity such as a coloring book or a favorite book to "read."

If your child challenges your authority, express disapproval, but try not to be emotional.

If calm disapproval doesn't work, a time-out is the most effective form of discipline. Time-out means having your child separate from you and others for just a few minutes. Afterwards, make sure that they understand that you disapprove of a particular thing done, but avoid saying your child is "mean" or "bad." Describe what they did wrong. Clearly separate the behavior from the person. Try not to get upset yourself.

Slapping or spanking your child for bad behaviors does not work to change their behavior. Read more about other things you can do to avoid spanking at www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials.

Encourage independence with the daily morning and evening routines. Children at four do much better getting ready when there is a routine. For example, when you do the same things every morning: go to the bathroom, eat breakfast, get dressed, brush teeth, then they will learn this pattern over time (some months). At this age, sometimes picture charts of the routine help kids independently remember the pattern.

Begin to create a sense of family responsibilities. Each family needs every person to help out around the house. Your preschooler can begin to learn to do jobs



around the house, such as putting dirty clothes in a basket or putting away their toys. Encourage and praise them when they are good helpers.

Help Your Child Become a Good Friend

Four to six year olds are learning what it means to be a friend. They will have fun times as well as arguments and hurt feelings. It can be tempting for parents to try to solve these problems themselves or by talking with the other child's parent. Instead, guide your child to solve problems. With your help, your child can learn how to solve social problems.

1. Help your child understand the other child's point of view. "I guess Suzie wants a turn too."
2. Teach your child the following:
 - Use words rather than their body to solve problems.
 - Do not hit, grab, or shove.
3. Suggest words they might use to talk about their feelings:
 - "I get upset when you talk to me like that."
 - "I'm sad you don't want to play with me."
 - "I'm angry you took the ball from me."
4. Stand close by and watch as the children solve their problem. Being close by puts the children on their best behavior. This is how they begin to develop the confidence and skills to communicate honestly, calmly, and politely with others.



Language

At about age four, language skills blossom. Pronunciation improves, although f, v, s, z, sh, l, th, and r may remain difficult for another year or so. Sentences are relatively complex and may contain eight or more words. Preschoolers love questioning and learning through language.

Tips

- Teach your child to show respect through language, like saying "please" and "thank

you." Set a good example. Encourage respectful communication between family members.

- Teach your child songs, rhymes, and simple poems. You can share these together when you have times that you have to wait (such as in traffic).

Body Talk

As your child has grown to understand more about their world, they will likely begin to ask harder questions. Some of those questions might be about where babies come from and about their private parts. Some issues your child may ask about include:

"How did I get in your tummy?"

"Where was I before I got in your tummy?"

"How come girls don't have a penis?"

Typically in the preschool years, your child may begin to show an interest in how things work. These are not adult sexual thoughts, but signs of normal curiosity. Know that these discussions will likely be ongoing over the course of their lives, rather than one time conversations. You will share more and more factual information as they get older. However, your child needs to learn what is all right to do and what is not. Setting limits to exploration is really a family matter. You may decide to teach your child the following:

- Interest in genital organs is healthy and natural.
- Nudity and sexual play in public are not alright.
- No other person, including even close friends and relatives, may touch "private parts." The exceptions are doctors and nurses during physical exams and your own parents when they are trying to find the cause of any pain in the genital area. Stress to your child that doctors and nurses should always have 2 adults in the room (for example doctor plus parent or doctor plus nurse) to keep them safe.

When your child begins to ask questions, the following might make it easier for both of you:

- **Don't laugh or giggle, even if the question is cute.** Your child shouldn't be made to feel ashamed for their curiosity.
- **Be brief.** Don't go into a long explanation. Answer in simple terms. Your 4 year old doesn't need to know the details of intercourse.
- **Be honest.** Use proper names for all body parts. For example, you can respond, "Well, you weren't in my tummy, but you were in a special place in my body called the uterus."

- **See if your child wants or needs to know more.** Listen to your child's responses and reactions.

If you are uneasy talking about sex or answering certain questions, be honest about that too. Consider asking a relative, close family friend, or your pediatrician to help talk to your child.



DENTAL CARE

The following strategies can help prevent tooth problems:

- Brush your child's teeth with a soft nylon toothbrush twice a day using a small amount (pea-sized) of a fluoride-containing toothpaste. **Teach them to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.**
- **Make sure to brush right after eating sticky-sugary foods. These include raisins, sticky candies or gums, dried fruit, gummi "fruit snacks" or gummi vitamins.**
- Drink fluoride-supplemented water.
- For patients insured by Medicaid, you can find a dental provider for your child www.tmhp.com, or calling the THSteps Hotline at **877-847-8377**.

SAFETY

Most of these injuries can be prevented. Your child is at special risk for injuries from drownings, poisons, burns, falls, and car accidents.

Car Safety

Car accidents are the greatest danger to your child's life and health. To prevent these injuries, correctly USE a car safety seat EVERY TIME your child is in the car. They should stay in a 5-point-harness car seat until they outgrow it (usually well past 4 years old). They will then move into a booster seat until they are 4'9" tall, for most children this is well past 8 years of age. The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat.

Do not allow your child to play in the street or driveways. Walk behind your car before you backup your car to be sure no one is

behind you. You cannot always see your child through the rear view mirror. We do recommend cars with backup cameras for families with children.

Prevent Drownings

Keep your child within an arm's reach around water. Never leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, pail of water, wading or swimming pool, or any other water—even for a moment. During swimming parties with preschoolers, make sure that one adult is designated as watcher of the pool. Children fall in easily and a child can drown even though no one hears anything out of the ordinary. Use Coast-Guard approved life jackets if your child is boating or near waterways. If you have a swimming pool, fence it on all sides with a fence at least 4 feet high, and be sure the gates are self-latching. Most children drown when they wander out of the house and fall into a pool that is not fenced off from the house.



Teach Simple Rules About Safety with Adults

Keeping children safe is an important job for parents. You want your child to respect and trust others, but you also need to teach your child to be careful. These are simple rules you can start mentioning to your child and conversation starters to talk about with your child.

- “If an adult (even a grown up you know) asks you to do something that you’re not sure is OK, always ask me first. I won’t get mad at you for asking.”
- “No one should ever tell you to keep a secret from me—one that might make me mad if I found out. Adults should never expect you to do this.”
- “If we get separated, find a security guard or police officer.”
- When you are in a very busy place, as you enter point out to your child the people who could help if you and your child get separated.

Prevent Falls and Injuries

Your child will find an endless variety of

dangerous situations at home and elsewhere. Your child can fall off play equipment. Make sure the surface under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall. Use safety-tested mats or loose-fill materials, like shredded rubber, sand, wood chips, or bark, maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches and extending at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) from play equipment.

Avoid the recreational use of trampolines at home. All children, especially those 5 years or younger, are at risk of serious trampoline-related injuries.

Install window locks on all windows on the 2nd floor and higher.

Strap your preschooler in properly at all times when in a shopping cart.

Prevent Burns and Excessive Sun Exposure

All homes should have smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Change the batteries twice a year on a date you’ll remember, such as Daylight Saving Time and Standard Time change dates.

Avoid the sun during the hours of 10am to 4pm. If outside, stay in the shade, use a hat to protect your child’s face, and use a sunscreen. Sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more and broad spectrum is preferred. Sun exposure during childhood can cause skin cancer and premature aging of the skin later in life.

Prevent Poisonings and Ingestions

Keep household products and medicines safely capped and out of sight and reach. Keep all products in their original containers. Liquid laundry and dishwasher packets have proven to be dangerous to preschoolers. Keep them up high and out of reach.



Small button (circular) batteries, balloons, and small magnets become dangerous in your preschooler’s hands. Swallowing or putting them into their nose can cause significant medical problems and put your child in the hospital. Make sure to keep them out of areas where your preschooler plays.

Keep vapes and e-cigarette parts and liquid up high and out of reach as well.

If your child does put something poisonous in their mouth, call the poison help line immediately. Do not make your child vomit.

Add the Universal Poison Control Number (1-800-222-1222) to your cell phone contacts or download the app from American Association of Poison Control Centers called WebPoisonControl. This will guide you on what to do in case of a possible poisoning.

Prevent Gun Injury

If you have children, it is best to not have a gun in your home. For those who keep a gun in the home, follow these safety rules:

- Always keep the gun unloaded and locked up.
- Lock and store the bullets in a separate place.
- Hide the keys to the locked boxes.

RESOURCES

Websites

www.healthychildren.org

A parenting website developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Now available in Spanish.

www.common sense media.org

Common Sense Media helps families make smart media choices, with ratings of apps, games and movies.

www.healthychildren.org/English/media

Set a family media plan to help establish a healthy balance of family time and “screen-time” for your family.

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents

www.vaccineinformation.org

Rich websites with information on vaccines and the stories of those who lives have been touched by vaccine-preventable illness.

Make Safe Happen

An app available for iPhone and Android that gives a room-by-room checklist of how to keep your child safe.

24-Hr Appointment Scheduling
visit MyChartARC.com or
ARCappointments.com

Same-Day & After Hours Care
call your ARC clinic and press “1”

24-Hr Phone Nurse
call your ARC clinic and press “4”

A·R·C ACCESS