



Three Year Preventive Exam

Development

At 3 years, speech and motor activity are focused on investigating or modifying the environment. Your child should speak in clear sentences that are understandable to you and mostly (~75%) to those outside the immediate family. There is often some minor stuttering at this age. Being with other kids in a preschool setting often helps. If stuttering becomes excessive, please give us a call. Teach your child the ABC song, colors, and work on counting. Reading to your child is one of the best things you can do for her. Use books as a way to talk together. You do not always have to read the text to your child, you can look at pictures and talk about a story. Let your child try to “tell” part of the story. Look for ways to practice reading like reading STOP signs and identifying fruits and vegetables by name, color, and shape while in the grocery store. By three years of age, many kids can pedal a tricycle, balance briefly on one foot, alternate feet ascending stairs, build a tower of 9 cubes, copy a circle, do simple puzzles, dress themselves, and recognize colors.

Any media exposure should be limited to 60 minutes per day (maximum), be of good-quality, and ideally watched while sitting in a parent’s lap. Watch and discuss programs with your child when possible. Check out www.common sense media.org for recommendations. Do not use TV, phone or an iPad as a substitute for interaction with your child. Turn off devices during meals. Encourage your child to play with favorite toys creatively and allow her to safely explore the world around her. Engage in guided, interactive play with your child several times a day, but also encourage free time play.

Behavior

Three is the age of imagination. You may notice creative play, abstract thinking, and make-believe playmates. He may also have nightmares or be afraid of monsters in his room. Comfort and reassurance usually help. Be careful not to let his concerns become a bad habit. You may have to insist he stay in his room at night in spite of fears. Most three-year-olds enjoy interactive play with peers. You may notice distinctive personality characteristics. Some kids are shy and need to be introduced to others gradually in safe surroundings. Others are overly aggressive and need to be separated from others until they can play nicely.

At 3 years old, children become self-determined individualists whose successes or failures at controlling the world around them influence their behaviors. When given choices, your child is able to learn consequences and is starting to develop the sense of right from wrong. He will likely try to negotiate with you. It is very common for children this age to engage in “benign” lying. While your child will want to show his independence by performing activities of everyday living such as feeding, bathing, dressing, and toileting, these activities still require supervision. Include your child in family interactions by asking for his opinion and allowing him to contribute to the conversation. These interactions encourage your child’s self-esteem and reinforces his special place in the family.

Healthy family interactions are the foundation of a positive family environment & healthy child development. Set realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations. Enlist all caregivers to be consistent in expectations and discipline. Keep instructions and tasks simple and easy to follow. Reward good behavior with praise, hugs, and small treats like stickers. In the long run, positive reinforcement for desired behaviors is more effective in teaching children than negative consequences for undesired behavior. Give your child opportunities to make choices to minimize conflict. Use “time-out” as a consequence for inappropriate actions. Time-out is a quiet spot such as the corner of a room, or a boring room such as a den, in which your child can cool down. Use one minute for each year of age. Then briefly talk to him about what he did to warrant a stay in time-out. Research shows physical punishment, such as spanking, has adverse outcomes and shows no long term benefit. It increases the risk for injury and can lead to increased aggression in your child now and in the future.

Diet

Water should be available at all times and should be regularly offered to children. She should drink <24 oz of low-fat or fat-free milk each day to meet her calcium and Vitamin D needs. Juice is not a necessary drink. If you choose to give juice, limit it to 4 oz daily and serve it with a meal. Offer a variety of healthy foods to your child, including fruits and vegetables and protein sources. Protein sources such as meat and bone free fish should be offered at least 2 times per week. Remember that children this age rarely eat 3 meals a day. Rather they will eat 1 larger meal with multiple smaller meals and snacks. Trust your child to determine when she is hungry or full and never encourage her to eat calories not asked for. Do not fall into the trap of making a separate meal if your child refuses what you have prepared. This only encourages picky eating. Instead, have healthy snacks on hand when your child determines she is hungry.

Oral health

Use a soft toothbrush with a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day. Allow your child to try brushing on occasion to avoid conflict, but children at this age do not have the dexterity to brush effectively. This is the time to schedule a dental appointment if you haven't already. Many kids do better with a pediatric dentist. We can recommend a good one in your area.

Toilet Training

Most children are toilet trained, at least during the daytime by this age. If your child is not, use an approach that encourages him to make the decision to use the potty. You know your child is ready to be toilet training when he is dry for periods of ~2 hours, knows the difference between wet and dry, and can pull his bottoms up and down, wants to learn, and can indicate when a bowel movement is coming. You can bring books to the potty, elevate his feet, and always praise attempts whether or not they were successful. Choose pants that are easy to remove. When your child indicates he is ready, place him on the potty every 1–2 hours in a relaxing environment. Many children enjoy a special trip to buy “big kid” underwear when they feel ready to stop using diapers during the day. This is a common age for kids to explore their genitals. It is completely normal, but you may want to teach your child when and where it is appropriate.

Safety

Keep household cleaners, tide pods, and E-Cigarettes out of reach as accidental ingestions and aspirations may occur. Nicotine cartridges from e-cigarettes are especially dangerous. Keep firearms stored unloaded and locked in a safe, with ammunition stored

separately. It's important to keep your car, home, and other places where your child spends time free of tobacco smoke and E-cigarette vapor. Move dangerous chemicals such as those found in drain cleaners and dish-washing detergents out of your child's reach. Some house plants are poisonous, so move them up high, too. If your child ingests anything potentially poisonous, **call Poison Control at 800-222-1222**. Keep this phone number by your phone. Kitchen safety includes turning pot handles towards the back of the stove, making sure your child cannot reach the microwave so she cannot remove hot liquid or food, and not leaving hot liquids or heavy objects on a table with a tablecloth that she may pull down. Keep her away from moving machinery, lawn mowers, driveways, alleys, and streets.

If your child has outgrown the rear-facing height or weight limits for your convertible or 3-in-1 car seat then you may face your child forward. However, if she has not outgrown these limits continue to keep her rear-facing as it provides the best protection for your child's neck, spine, and head in the case of a crash. It is safe for your child's feet to touch the vehicle seat in front of her and for her legs to bend or hang over the sides as this position does not put your child at risk for foot or leg injuries. The new car seat recommendations say to keep your child forward facing in a car seat with a 5 point harness until your child has outgrown the manufacturer height or weight limits. The longer they remain in a 5-point harness the safer they will be. Your own safe driving behaviors are important as well. Use a seat belt, do not put the car in drive until everyone is buckled in, do not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and do not text or use mobile devices while driving. Never leave your child in the car unattended.

It is extremely important to supervise your child around water. If you have a pool, it should be fully enclosed and equipped with self-closing gates. Buckets of water and kiddie pools should be emptied when not in use. A supervising adult should be within an arm's length, providing "touch supervision" whenever children are in or around water. **REMEMBER, IT ONLY TAKES SECONDS TO DROWN.** When outside, protective clothing should be worn and sunscreen should be applied. See the [sunscreen](#) page in the parent information section of our website.

What to expect at this visit

A developmental screen should be completed before this visit. We will check your child's hearing and vision today. Please let us know if your child has any exposure to lead or you are worried about the iron in his diet. We will apply fluoride varnish at this visit unless you have established with a dentist. Flu vaccine may be given at this visit, if in season. See our [Medication Dosing Guide](#) for recommended dosing of acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

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