

Health and Wellness: 6 Years

Development

- Your child has more coordination and should be able to tie shoelaces.
- All aspects of your child's development (physical, social and mental skills) will grow. Your child should have normal communication skills.
- Your child may want to participate in new activities at school or join community education activities (such as soccer) or organized groups (such as Girl Scouts).
- Set up a routine for talking about school and doing homework.
- Limit your child to 1 to 2 hours of quality screen time each day, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Screen time includes television, video game and computer use. Watch TV with your child and supervise Internet use.
- Spend at least 15 minutes a day reading to or reading with your child.
- Your child's world is expanding to include school and new friends. He or she will start to exert independence.

Diet

- Encourage good eating habits. Do not make separate meals for him or her.
- Help your child choose fiber-rich fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little added sugars or sweeteners.
- Offer your child healthful snacks such as fruits, vegetables, healthful cereals, yogurt, pudding, turkey, peanut butter sandwich, fruit smoothie, or cheese. Avoid foods high in sugar or fat. Cut up any food that could cause choking.
- Your child needs 800 milligrams (mg) of calcium each day. (One cup of 2 percent milk has 300 mg calcium.) In addition to milk, cheese and yogurt, dark, leafy green vegetables are good sources of calcium.
- Your child needs 10 mg of iron each day. Lean beef, iron-fortified cereal, oatmeal, soybeans, spinach and tofu are good sources of iron.

Your child's growth:

Weight: ____ lbs. ____ oz. (____ percent)

Height: ____ in. (____ percent)

Blood pressure: ____ mm Hg

BMI: ____ percent

- Let your child help make good choices at the grocery store, help plan and prepare meals, and help clean up. Always supervise any kitchen activity.
- Limit soft drinks and sweetened beverages (including juice) to no more than one small beverage a day. Limit sweets, treats and snack foods (such as chips), fast foods and fried foods.

Exercise

- The American Heart Association recommends children get 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. This time can be divided into chunks: 30 minutes physical education in school, 10 minutes playing catch, and a 20-minute family walk.
- In addition to helping build strong bones and muscles, regular exercise can reduce risks of certain diseases, reduce stress levels, increase self-esteem, help maintain a healthy weight, improve concentration, and help maintain good cholesterol levels.
- Be sure your child wears the right safety gear for his or her activities, such as a helmet, mouth guard, knee pads, eye protection or life vest.
- Check bicycles and other sports equipment regularly for needed repairs.

Sleep

- Help your child get into a sleep routine: washing his or her face, brushing teeth, etc.
- Set a regular time to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Teach your child to get up when called or when the alarm goes off.

- Avoid heavy meals, spicy food and caffeine before bedtime.
- Avoid noise and bright rooms.

Safety

- Your child needs to be in a car seat or booster seat. Be sure all other adults and children are buckled as well.
- Do not let anyone smoke in your home or around your child.
- Practice home fire drills and fire safety.
- Supervise your child when he or she plays outside. Teach your child what to do if a stranger comes up to him or her. Warn your child never to go with a stranger or accept anything from a stranger. Teach your child to say “NO” and tell an adult he or she trusts.
- Enroll your child in swimming lessons, if appropriate. Teach your child water safety. Make sure your child is always supervised and wears a life jacket whenever around a lake or river.
- Teach your child animal safety.
- Teach your child how to dial and use 911.
- Keep all guns out of your child’s reach. Keep guns and ammunition locked up in different parts of the house.

Self-esteem

- Provide support, attention and enthusiasm for your child’s abilities, achievements and friends.
- Create a schedule of simple chores.
- Have a reward system with consistent expectations. Do not use food as a reward.

Discipline

- Time outs are still effective. A time out is usually 1 minute for each year of age. If your child needs a time out, set a kitchen timer for 6 minutes. Place your child in a dull place (such as a hallway or corner of a room). Make sure the room is free of any potential dangers. Be sure to look for and praise good behavior shortly after the time out is done.
- Always address the behavior. Do not praise or reprimand with general statements like “You are a good girl” or “You are a naughty boy.” Be specific in your description of the behavior.

- Use discipline to teach, not punish. Be fair and consistent with discipline.

Dental Care

- Around age 6, the first of your child’s baby teeth will start to fall out and the adult (permanent) teeth will start to come in.
- The first set of molars comes in between ages 5 and 7. Ask the dentist about sealants, plastic coatings applied on the chewing surfaces of the back molars.
- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups. (Your child may need fluoride tablets if you have well water.)

Eye Care

- Your child’s vision is still developing. Make eye checkups at least every 2 years.

Immunizations (Shots) Today

Your child may receive these shots at this time:

- DTaP, IPV (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis + inactivated poliovirus)
- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- VAR (varicella)
- influenza.

Talk with your health care provider for information on giving acetaminophen (Tylenol®) after your child’s immunizations.

Your Child’s Next Well Checkup

The Minnesota Department of Health recommends yearly well child checkups through age 18.

Your child may need a shot for:

- influenza.