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★ 5-8 YEAR

Welcome to the primary school years. Your child will now be in school and having growing independence and skills. They are developing ability to reason. They will be developing more friendships and learning more outside the home now. You as parents are still their emotional center and most important teachers.

#### DIET

Your job as a parent is to offer healthy foods and allow your child a chance to choose them. Offer three healthy meals and 1-2 snacks day. Set a good example for your child. Eat together as a family if possible. Limit fast foods, junk foods, and sweets. Let your child help you shop and do simple meal preparation.

Limit milk to 16-24 ounces per day of lower fat milk (skim or 1% unless they are underweight). If your child is dairy intolerant or refuses to drink milk, offer other calcium rich substitutes (yogurt, cheese, calcium supplemented juices, soy milk, rice milk, etc.). Encourage plenty of water and limit juice to less than 4 ounces per day.

Don't get into power struggles with picky eaters. It is better to calmly keep offering a variety of healthy foods. A multivitamin may be given to especially picky eaters.

#### SLEEP

It is important for children this age to have a regular bedtime routine. The average 5-8 year old sleeps 10-11 hours per day. Nighttime fears and awakening can still be common problems. Consult with your provider or read Dr. Ferber's book "Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems" for advice.

#### ELIMINATION

At 5 years, it is normal for 30% of children to wet the bed. Most of the time they are just deep sleepers with small bladders. Between 6-8 years we do not worry much about bed wetting. Consult with your provider if your child is still bed wetting after age 8.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Most 5 year olds can hop, skip, and balance on one foot, draw a person with at least six body parts, print some letters and numbers, speak in full sentences, use appropriate verb tenses, follow directions, and listen well.

From 6 to 8 years, motor skills and coordination steadily improve. We encourage sports participation and regular exercise. Reading usually develops between 5 and 6 years. Peer relationships and acceptance become more important. There is growing interest in friendships. It is normal to have curiosity about their bodies and how everything works. The sexes often play separately at this age.

#### SAFETY

Children under the age of eight needs to be secured in a booster seat (it's the law!). Read the manufacturer's instructions for your seat and make sure your child's height and weight are appropriate for the seat. Be a good role model and buckle up too. In the summer months remember sun and mosquito protection! Teach your child now to wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet whenever they are on a bike.

Teach your child about stranger danger, privacy, and to know their full name, address, and phone number. Teach your child how to call 911 in an emergency.

If you have a gun, make sure guns and ammunition are kept locked in separate places. The Illinois Poison Control number is (800) 222-1222 – call them if your child has an accidental ingestion.

Develop a fire escape plan for your home and practice it with your child.

## A FEW OTHER THINGS...

Brush teeth twice a day using a soft toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste. See a dentist every six months. Flossing should now be done every day.  
We recommend limiting TV and computer usage to less than 2 hours a day. Monitor what types of shows and games your child is watching and playing.  
Encourage daily reading – both reading to your child and letting them read on their own once they develop reading skills.  
Having your child do simple household chores is a great way to encourage independence and responsibility.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

DTap, MMR, Varicella, and Polio vaccine boosters are generally given at age 5 for kindergarten. We recommend an influenza vaccine, generally given as a nasal spray at this age, in the winter months.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

*“How to Get Your Child to Eat: But Not Too Much”* by Ellyn Satter  
*“Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense”* by Ellyn Satter  
*“Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles: Winning for a Lifetime”* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka  
*“1-2-3 Magic – Effective Discipline for Children 2-12”* by Thomas Phelan  
*“How to Get Your Child to Love Reading: For Ravenous and Reluctant Readers Alike”* by Esme Raji Codell

*If you have any questions about this handout please contact our office at 847-676-5394*

