

General Health Care Tips

Well-child Visits: Make appointments to review each child's general health & well-being. Talk to your child about what to expect; make a list of questions to ask; write down observations about your child's development; note any concerns. If your child participates in school or community sports, ask the doctor to fill out sports physical forms. Be sure your child is up to date with immunizations as well as other health screenings for vision, dental & hearing.

Immunizations: These are the most important form of preventive medicine. They not only protect your child from getting certain diseases, they also protect your child's friends and classmates. Check the schedule of recommended childhood & adolescent immunizations by calling the Centers for Disease Control Immunization Hotline at 1-800-232-4636 or 1-888-232-6348 (TTY) or by visiting their website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm>.

Dental Visits: Cavities are the most common childhood disease. If left untreated, they can become a major health problem. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that children see a dentist twice a year, more often if they have certain health conditions or are at risk for tooth decay. Visit <http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/teeth/healthy.html> for information about children's oral health.

Sleep: Each child has different sleep needs, but one thing is the same; lack of sleep is unhealthy. If your child has special health needs, sleep deprivation can make them worse. Children who do not sleep enough have trouble paying attention in school. In general, school-aged children need 9 -10 hours a night. Learn more about sleep habits at <http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sleep/sleep.html>.

Nutrition: Good nutrition helps ensure a child's health, growth & development. Serve your children three meals a day that include a variety of foods. Children are more apt to eat foods they help choose and/or prepare. Eat family meals together as often as possible. For healthy meal ideas visit www.mealsmatter.org/CookingForFamily/Planning/index.aspx .

Physical Activity: School budget cutbacks & pressure to prepare children for state standardized tests means physical education & recess are no longer part of many children's school day. Another thing that takes away from physical activity time is the time your child spends watching TV, using the computer & playing video games. Establish family rules for screen time, make informed choices about shows to watch, and turn off the TV during mealtimes. Have a family meeting to brainstorm ways to include walks, bicycle rides or other activities in your family's daily routine. Visit http://www.ehow.com/how_1926_child-start-exercising.html to learn more.