



## CHILDREN'S MEDICAL OFFICE

of North Andover, P.C.

477 Andover Street  
North Andover, Massachusetts 01845

www.chmed.com  
978.975.3355

# YOUR PRESCHOOLER – AGE 2 TO 5 YEARS

## HEALTH

Preschoolers spend more time around other children and many attend school. The average preschooler normally catches 8-10 colds or viruses during the year, occurring most during the winter months. Most will pass and are not dangerous. Here are some tips for keeping your child healthy

- **Prevention is best!** Preschoolers see the pediatrician every 6 months until age 3 and then yearly. These visits are not just for shots but are an important time to screen for subtle developmental problems and a great opportunity for you to learn more about your preschooler.
- **Wash your child's hands often**, especially before mealtimes and after he/she uses the bathroom. This is a great way to help prevent the spread of colds and viruses. Also keep the toys clean.
- **Remember that fever is the body's normal response to illness and actually HELPS your child get better.** It is not dangerous. We treat fever because it can make the child feel uncomfortable. Use Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) according to the instructions in our Acute Illness Guide. Never use aspirin in children.
- **Brush your child's teeth twice a day.** Use a small smear of fluoridated toothpaste and provide assistance to ensure all teeth are brushed. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a first dental screening at age 3 years but many pediatric dentists will see your child as early as age 1.

## SAFETY

Preschoolers are developing many new skills and are eager to explore the world around them. This curiosity can expose them to potential dangers. So what can you do to help keep your child safe?

- **Take safety measures to keep your home "childproof."** Keep outlets covered, install safety gates on stairs and store all medications, alcohol, cleaning products and other poisons up high or locked.
  - **Remember that preschoolers still have the tendency to put things in their mouths** and are still at risk for choking. Beware of small toys, coins and remember to cut foods up small and avoid serving foods like whole hotdogs, whole grapes or hard candy.
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- **Set up and enforce rules and limitations** to help teach your child about dangerous situations. For example, insist on 100% car seat use and make sure your child sees you wearing your seatbelt. Start helmet use as soon as your toddler starts to sit on a tricycle or any moving toy.
- **Provide supervision** especially around the water, the stove, the stairs and in the yard.

## FEEDING

The preschool years are an important time to instill healthy eating habits and attitudes about nutrition that will last a lifetime. Please refer to our handout Nutrition in the Toddler/Preschool Child for more detailed information.

## SLEEP

Preschoolers sleep around 10-12 hours per day. Proper rest is vitally important to help kids stay healthy, have better behavior during the day and perform well at school. Establishing bedtime routines is a great way to ensure your preschooler has enough rest. Here are some tips:

- **Set fixed times** for going to bed, waking up and taking naps
- **Stick to routines** by alerting your child 30 minutes and then 10 minutes before bedtimes
- **Provide a winding down period** 30 minutes before that does not involve the television but a quiet activity such as reading or snuggling in a rocking chair
- **Make the bedroom a quiet, cozy place** that is conducive to sleeping, not playing or watching TV.
- **Limit food or drink** before bed and avoid caffeinated beverages.
- Although some preschoolers no longer nap during the day, **it is still important to have a “quiet time”** usually in the afternoon so they can relax and slow down for a while. If your child does nap, make sure the nap is not too long as to effect your child’s bedtime (usually a 1 hour nap is sufficient)

## BATHING and SKIN CARE

- Bathing or showering every other day is sufficient. Use mild soaps and avoid bubble baths that can irritate skin.
  - Use sunscreen and insect repellent during warmer months.
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## **DEVELOPMENT & STIMULATION**

Your child is becoming a “big kid!” Preschoolers are eager to explore the world and connect with peers.

- Provide opportunities for your child to learn about their community. This can be as simple as taking your child along on errands to the post office or grocery store.
- Create opportunities for your child to interact with his peers. Sometimes play dates at this age can be tough as children are learning to negotiate with peers and share their world. With parent’s support and guidance, your child’s social skills should improve over time with practice (and patience!).
- If your child is struggling with tantrums or you need more specific help with behavior modification, please refer to our website (Child Development-Discipline) for more detailed information,

## **YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY**

A preschooler needs happy, satisfied parents. Set aside time to be alone with your partner regularly. Make sure you maintain your hobbies, interest, career, etc. It is normal and common for parents to feel depressed, anxious and overwhelmed. It may seem hard to cope with a demanding preschooler and you may even feel as if you’re about to lose control. Help is available. Call us or call Parental Stress Line at #1-800-632-8188.

**Other important telephone #'s to keep by your phone:**

**Pediatrician: 978-975-3355**

**National Poison Control Hotline: 1-800-222-1222**

**Police/Fire/Ambulance: 911**

**Parental Stress Line: 1-800-632-8188**

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