



Five & Six-Year Visits



MassGeneral Hospital
for Children™

Starting school is a significant milestone. Experiences this year may have a lasting influence on your child's health. Help them get off to a great start!

General Advice

- Before starting kindergarten (or first grade), plan a special trip to visit your child's new school and meet the teachers.
- Discuss with your child how to be safe on the school bus, crossing streets, on the playground and near strangers. Teach your child phone numbers in case of an emergency.
- Children do best when they know what to expect. Stick to daily routines for before and after school and bedtime. Consider making a family media plan (see website section). Schedule specific time for TV, video games and computer, and limit it to less than 1-2 hours a day. Try to have your child go to bed at the same time on the weekends.
- Take time to talk and listen. This makes your child feel important and gain self-esteem. Ask your child to tell you the best and worst parts of their day. Teach them that everyone has ups and downs, and that it is okay to have sad or negative feelings.
- Assign your child chores around the home. Have them help set the table, clean up their toys, feed pets, etc. This helps your child learn to help out and also builds self-esteem.

Reading Tips

- Take your child to the library on a regular basis and let them choose the books they want to read and take home. Leave books in your child's room for them to enjoy on their own.
- Read together every day and ask your child questions about what is happening in the story. Use funny voices and animal noises.
- Run your finger under the words as you read to teach your child that the print tells the story. When you find that your child has learned the words to their favorite books, let them complete the sentences or take turns saying the words.
- Don't test your child on words, numbers, letters, etc. Instead, make it a fun game and find ways to bring out your child's love of learning.



Discipline and Teaching Social Skills

- Praise your child when they are kind to others and behaving well. Always model the behavior that you expect.
- Set limits. When a rule is broken, a logical consequence needs to follow. Spanking or hitting is never advised and won't help. Be consistent. When your child does something wrong, explain that what they did was wrong and what will happen if it continues. Five-minute time-outs are appropriate at this age.
- Teach your child skills for solving social problems with friends:
 - When upset, teach your child to stay calm and not to hit, grab or push.
 - Help them understand the other child's point of view. (For example, "Tony is upset. He must want a turn too.")
 - Teach them to use their words. (For example, "I'm mad that you took the crayon from me.") Teach them to say "I'm sorry" after hurting someone's feelings.

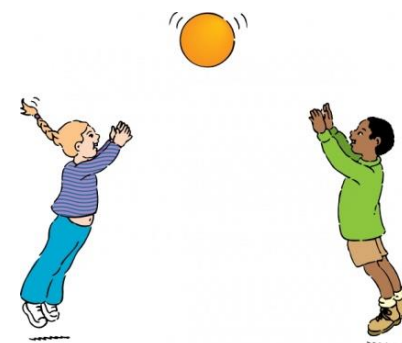
Oral Health Tips

Your child should brush their teeth twice a day with a soft, child-sized brush and a small, pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. After they are done, teach them to spit out the toothpaste. Don't have them rinse their mouth with water because it washes off the fluoride. Your child should see the dentist every 6 months.

Safety with Adults

It is important to teach your child to respect and trust others, but also how to be careful. Teach your child these simple rules:

- "Secrets are not okay. No one should ever tell you to keep a secret from me or any other adult."
- "Certain body parts are private. No adults, except parents and doctors, should ever touch you where you wear a bathing suit."
- "If you are not sure if something is OK, ask me. I will never get mad at you for asking."
- When you bring your child to a crowded place, look around and point out where to go for help if you get separated.



Five-Year Visit continued...

Eating Healthy and Being Active!

- School-aged children can be very opinionated about what they eat. Most would be happy with a bland, white, starchy diet (pasta, rice, chicken nuggets and fries, etc.). Continue to talk more with your child about healthy eating and include them in food shopping and cooking. Encourage fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. These high-fiber foods also help with digestion and prevent constipation.
- **Mealtime Habits:** Healthy eating should be something the whole family works on together. Your child is more likely to eat healthy foods if they watch you eating them. Whenever possible, eat meals as a family with all screens (TVs, tablets and phones) off! Limit fatty and fried foods, and don't keep junk food and sugary drinks in the home. Instead, save them for special events only.
- **Plate Planner:** Your child's lunch and dinner plate should be $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ protein (meat, fish or tofu) and $\frac{1}{4}$ grains (whole grains like brown rice or pasta are best). Offer at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day.
- **Drinks:** Offer your child 2-3 cups a day of unsweetened milk. Juice (even 100%) has a lot of sugar and isn't recommended. Give your child fruit to eat instead. Don't offer sweetened drinks (Capri Sun, Gatorade, Hawaiian Punch, Sunny D, soda, iced-tea, lemonade). These are full of sugar and may contribute to unhealthy weight gain. Instead, offer water between meals. If there is a special occasion and you decide to give a sweet drink, limit it to 4 ounces or less.
- Make sure your child is active for 1 hour or more every day. Turn off the electronics and go play outside with your child! Help them ride a bike, take them to the park or give them swimming lessons.



Vaccines (*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)



Today:

- The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.
- If you have a strong family history of high cholesterol, your doctor may want to do a blood test to check your child's cholesterol.

Important Numbers

- Poison Control 800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line 800-632-8188
- HAVEN Domestic Violence Help Line 617-724-0054
- Smoking Quit Line (free) 800-TRY-TO-STOP
- Your doctor's office: _____

Websites

- AAP Healthy Children | www.healthychildren.org
(Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Kids Eat Right | www.eatright.org/kids
(American Dietetic Association tips on smart shopping and healthy cooking)
- Family Media Use Plan | www.healthychildren.org/mediauseplan
(Info from the AAP on how to create a family media plan custom for your family's needs)
- Boston Navigator | www.bostonnavigator.org
(Search for youth programs in the Boston area by age and location)

Your child's next routine visit will be in one year.

Safety Tips

CAR SAFETY

- Your child should always ride in the back seat of the car. Continue to use a belt-positioning booster seat. Keep your child in a booster until they reach 4'9" and is 8-12 years old.

HEAD SAFETY

- Protect your child from head injuries or even death. Teach your child to use a helmet and safety gear when biking, skating, scooting and skiing.

STREET SAFETY

- Don't let your child play in or near the street. They may go into traffic without thinking. Don't allow your child to cross the street without an adult. Begin to teach them to stop at the curb and look both ways before crossing.

FIRE SAFETY

- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Test them monthly and change batteries yearly. Make an escape plan in case of fire in your home and teach your child what to do if the smoke alarm sounds.

WATER SAFETY

- Now is a good time to teach your child to swim. Even if they know how to swim, teach them to never swim unsupervised.

GUN SAFETY

- It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you must have a gun, store it unloaded and locked with ammunition locked separately. Make sure this is the case wherever your child plays.