



Nine & Ten-Year Visits

Middle childhood is a time of great change in terms of the way your child thinks, socializes and develops new skills. Your child's body may be starting to change. Your support and guidance at this time are very important.

General Advice

- Good communication is key. Take time to talk and listen to your child so they feel comfortable coming to you to discuss worries and problems.
- Children do best when they know what to expect. Try to stick to daily routines for before and after school and bedtime. Set limits and "house rules" that are clear and discuss what will happen if these are broken. Be consistent.
- Praise your child when they are kind to others and behaving well. Always model the behavior that you expect. Say you are sorry when you make a mistake. Do not hit or allow others to hit. If your child misbehaves, focus on why the behavior was wrong rather than being critical of them.
- Assign your child chores around the home. This helps your child learn about responsibilities and builds self-esteem.

School

- Make an effort to attend back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences. Show an interest in school activities.
- Agree on a regular schedule for when homework will be done. (Ideally after your child has a chance to unwind from school, is well-rested and is not hungry.) Provide a quiet place to work free of distractions with no screens. Try to be available for homework questions.
- If your child is struggling in school, discuss it right away with your child's teacher. They may need extra help or an evaluation for other services.
- Talk with your child about bullying at school and how it is never okay to bully someone else and what to do if they are being bullied.



Screen Time and Online Safety

- Limit screen time (TV, computer, tablet, video games, phone) to less than 1-2 hours a day. Be specific as to when these activities are allowed to avoid arguments. Consider making a family media plan. (www.healthychildren.org/mediauseplan)
- The Internet is a great way to connect your family to helpful resources and learning tools. However, not all information available to your child is safe and reliable. Don't allow your child to have a TV, tablet, phone or computer in their bedroom. This lets you check in on what they are viewing and for how long. It also gives you the chance to have a conversation about what they are doing. Consider tracking software or services that can filter or block certain websites.
- At this age, many children are starting to use the Internet, email, online gaming instant messaging, texting and some social media sites. Be clear that you will be checking emails from time to time. Be aware of who your child is playing games with or chatting with online.
- Teach your child to NEVER: give out personal information, share passwords, send mean messages, use the internet to make someone look bad, or meet up with someone they only know online.



Talk to Your Child About...

- **PUBERTY:** Remind your child that body changes are a natural part of becoming an adult. There is a wide range of "normal" for these changes to occur. Check out "You-ology," the puberty book from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Assigned female at birth: Breast buds are the first sign and start, on average, at age 10, but can be from 8-13 years. Menses usually occurs about 2 years later.

Assigned male at birth: Testes growth and thinning/reddening of the scrotum are the first sign and start, on average, at age 11, but can be 9-14 years.

- **SAFETY WITH ADULTS:** Teach your child that no one should ever ask for a secret to be kept from parents. No one should ever ask for help with their body parts or to see your child's body parts.
- **SEXUAL BEHAVIOR:** Teach your child the importance of delaying sexual behavior. Encourage your child to ask questions and answer with clear, short and straightforward explanations.
- **SUBSTANCE USE:** Be sure to start talking to your child about not smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs at an early age.

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Eating Healthy and Being Active!

- Talk with your child about healthy eating and try to include them in food shopping and cooking. Encourage fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans.
- **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 off. Limit fatty and fried foods and don't keep junk food and sugary drinks in the house. 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, beans, lentils, tofu) and $\frac{1}{4}$ grains (whole grains like brown rice and 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. This should include continuous exercise for at least 20-30 minutes that makes them sweat (ex: playing tag, dancing, walking fast, biking, swimming). Turn off the electronics and go play outside with your child!



Oral Health

Your child should brush at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and floss once a day. If your child plays sports, have them wear a mouth guard to protect their teeth. Your child should see the dentist every six months for a cleaning.

Safety Tips

- Teach your child how and when to dial 911 and what to do in case of an emergency.
- Your child should ride in the **back seat** of the car with a lap and shoulder belt until they are 13 years old. Use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle belt fits properly. (Typically when your child is **over 4'9"** and 8-12 years old.)
- Make sure your child always wears a helmet when biking, skating, scooting and skiing. Your child should wear all the protective equipment made for the sport they play. (Ex: mouth guards, shin pads, eye protection or helmets.) Teach your child the "rules of the road" for biking and watch to be sure they follow them.
- Even if your child knows how to swim, never let them swim alone. Don't let your child play around any water unless an adult is watching.
- Your child should use UVA/UVB sunscreen SPF 30 or higher when outside. Reapply every 2-3 hours.
- 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.

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 or your child has overweight, your doctor may want to do blood tests.
- The human papilloma virus (HPV) series can be started at age 9 and older. At 11-12 years old, the tetanus/pertussis booster and meningitis vaccines are given.



Important Numbers

- Poison Control: 800-222-1222
- MA Behavioral Health Help Line: 833-773-2445 (call or text)
- 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)
- Chop Chop Family | www.chopchopfamily.org/recipes
(Fun, easy, healthy recipes to make together with your child)
- MGH Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds | www.mghclaycenter.org
(Free online resource for supporting the mental health of young children)

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