

## **Child Care from 5 to 6 Years**

After a year full of cognitive, physical and emotional growth, your little one has changed into such a grown-up five-year-old. In fact, she is getting ready to begin a new adventure in “real” school. Your child’s temperament may seem less rebellious and more responsible in some areas. You may notice that your child wants to please and is aware of following the rules. Your child may be questioning what you think is a parent and comparing it to her friend’s opinion. Children this age respect differences but do not understand them yet. They share more easily and can show tremendous concern for others.

### **Eating**

Continue to offer your child selections from the basic food groups at all meals and snacks. Teach her about foods. Of the major food groups, a kindergartner needs; around 24 ounces of milk and milk products; 2-3 servings of the meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts group; 2-4 fruit servings; 3-5 vegetable servings; and 6-9 bread, cereal, rice, pasta group servings per day. At least one serving of fruit per day should be a citrus fruit or juice. A yellow or dark green vegetable should be served at least 3 to 4 times a week. A bread serving is one slice or a cup of cereal. Remember the simple rule of thumb: to offer a tablespoon of each food group per year of life at a meal is adequate at this age.

Avoid “empty” calorie snacks such as soft drinks, chips, candy, and cookies. If given, these should be in limited amounts. Encourage healthy snacks of fruit, popcorn, peanut butter, stuffed celery, raisins, cheese strips, etc. Some of the books below are excellent resources for snacks and kids’ meals ideas throughout the preschool and school age years. You may notice that your child develops strong food preferences and refuses certain foods during the early childhood years. This will change somewhat as she is exposed to different foods outside your home. Try not to use food as a reward for good behavior, praise is preferable.

### **Sleeping**

Your child may not be experiencing sleep problems during this age. However, some children may have occasional nightmares. If you are concerned about these, please discuss it with the doctor.

### **Elimination**

It is not unusual to have occasional accidents at night and even at play. Wet pants appear to be more common than stool incontinence, but both can occur. If this is a problem for you or your child, ask for information to help you. It can be extremely frustrating for parents to deal with this and it’s a good idea to talk this over with your doctor.

### **Development/Play**

Children this age enjoy being outside and having space to run, jump, ride, and use their imaginations. They still enjoy imitating role models in their play and like using “real” props instead of toy ones. They also enjoy craft and artistic materials and may be beginning to enjoy simple board games. They request friends to come and play and do not require as much supervision for arguments.

Your child’s vocabulary has expanded She is able to use 6 to 8 word sentences, name several colors, and ask the meaning of words. She is also able to follow 2 to 3 commands when given in succession. Encourage your child to read for pleasure. At this age this is still done by reading to her. Read together.

She can look through her book while you read yours. If she does not have a library card, get one and use it. Ask the librarian to help you select age appropriate books. Toward the end of this year, your child will begin to recognize letters, maybe words, and some even do simple reading. Acknowledge her progress and let her enjoy her level of “reading”.

Your child’s motor skills are improving as well. You may notice that your child can throw and catch a ball fairly well, jump rope, skate with good balance, and ride a tricycle or even a two-wheeler with training wheels. Artistic skills include drawing a human figure with four or more parts, dexterity with scissors, and copying a triangle or diamond. As you can see, your child is getting herself ready for a full day of school! “School readiness” should be discussed with your child’s teacher or health care provider if you have any concerns.

### **Safety**

This is an important age to stress safety and prevention of injury in all activities. If swimming lessons have not begun, now is the time. Call your local parks and recreation department or YMCA if you are unaware of programs in your area. Teaching bicycle safety must be ongoing. Your child should be wearing an approved helmet, have an appropriate size bike, and know traffic rules.

Experimentation with matches and other potential burn sources such as firecrackers and lighters is not unusual at this age. Thus, rules prohibiting these dangerous items should not be established. Instructions for use or behavior regarding the use of the stove or fireplace as well as emergency burn information should begin now.

If you haven’t done so already, teach your child her name, address and phone number. Teach her who the appropriate people are to ask for help if she is injured, lost or afraid, as well as stranger safety instructions. You must balance opportunity for health interaction with the need for protection. In over 85% of child sexual abuse cases the victim knows the offender, who is most often male. Now is the time to teach your child about “safe touch” and resisting uncomfortable touch (read Its MY body\*3 or Touch Talk\*2 with her). Teach the names of all body parts including genitals (“penis” and “vagina”) and bottom. Children need a vocabulary to say “no” to an unwanted touch. This is difficult to teach so become involved in a school education program.

Never allow your child to handle firearms. **STORE ALL WEAPONS UNLOADED, IN LOCKED CABINETS. AMMUNITION SHOULD BE SIMILARLY LOCKED BUT IN A DIFFERENT LOCATION. THE KEYS SHOULD BE HIDDEN, OUT OF REACH, OR BETTER YET, LOCKED UP!** Most firearm injuries occur in and about the home. Consider asking questions about the presence of firearms at friends’ homes. Teach your child or children the **NEW** rules of gun safety: **Never touch a gun; Every gun is loaded; When in doubt, get out.**

### **Communication and Discipline**

Your child’s behavior will in part be guided by which feelings he wants you to express toward him. Similarly, your child learns that having and expressing emotions is important for effective communication.

Often the natural or logical outcome of an act provides enough reward for your child. When reality's pressure is not sufficient, then your positive reinforcement is the desirable behavioral guidance your child needs. Do not restrict praise just to completion of a task but give it during the performance. This encouragement shows your child that he is worthwhile. Don't reward misbehavior by increased attention or by giving in. Similarly, don't physically punish more than is necessary or threaten inappropriate punishment. Threats and physical abuse only promote fear, guilt, and shame and teach your child that violence is an acceptable method of problem solving.

### **Suggested Handouts, readings Videos**

Safety for Your Child 5<sup>4</sup>, *Bicycle Safety Camp* videotape<sup>4</sup>, any Bicycle TIPP Safety Sheet<sup>4</sup>, What's to Eat<sup>4</sup>, Feeding Kids Right Isn't Always Healthy<sup>4</sup>.

### **Additional Resources for Parents**

#### **General Child Care**

Taking Care of Your Child by R. Pantell, J. Fries, and D. Vickery; Caring for Your School-Age Child by the American Academy of Pediatrics (After 9/94)

#### **Growth and Development**

Your Five-Year-Old by L. Ames and F. Ilg.

#### **Communication and Discipline**

Your Child's Self Esteem by D. Briggs; What Do You Really Want for Your Children? By W. Dyer; Parent Effectiveness Training or P.E.T. in Action by T. Gordon; How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by A. Faber and E. Mazlish; Positive Discipline by J. Nelsen.

#### **Other**

Child of Mine. Feeding with Love and Good Sense by E. Satter; Feed me! I'm Yours by V. Lansky; Pick Up Your Socks by E. Crary; Confessions of a Happily Organized Family by D. Schofield; Raising a Son; Parents and the Making of a Healthy Man by D. & J. Elium; Raising a Daughter: Parents and the Awakening of a Healthy Woman by J. & D. Elium.

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