

Child Care from 6 to 9 Years

Welcome to the age of the “loose tooth”! Around age 6 your child will begin to lose primary teeth (if he hasn't already) and continues until about age 12. During this time, it is important to continue with appropriate dental habits and checkups. You may notice that your child may be more resistant and stubborn at times and may display temper tantrums. Be patient and consistent in your discipline! Your child is coping with quite a lot in terms of his cognitive and socialization development.

Around age 8, you may notice that your child becomes less resistant and enjoys helping with household chores. Having some simple jobs for your child to do is important. It helps him organize his time, lets him feel a part of the family, and can give him a sense of importance and accomplishment. Just remember to fit the job to the child's age. Some examples for this age might be: empty the dishwasher, set the table and clean up after dinner, fold clothes and put them away, vacuum the car, and dust furniture.

Eating

Continue to offer your child selections from the basic food groups at all meals and snacks. Teach him about foods. Of the major food groups, your child needs: around 24 ounces of milk and milk products; 2-4 ounces of the meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and nuts group; 2-4 fruit servings; 3-5 vegetable servings; and 6-11 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. Avoid “empty” calorie snacks such as soft drinks, chips, candy, and cookies. If given, these should be in limited amounts. Encourage snacks of fruit, popcorn, peanut butter, stuffed celery, raisins, cheese strips, etc. You may notice that your child develops strong food preferences while refusing others. This will gradually change as he is exposed to different foods outside your home. Try not to use food as a reward for good behavior; praise is preferable.

Sleeping

A regular bedtime and bedtime routine is important for the school-aged child. Your child may not be experiencing sleep problems; however, some children may still have nightmares. Others may still have problems with bed-wetting. If this is a problem for you, ask your doctor for information.

Elimination

It is not unusual for children 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 it over with your doctor.

Development/Play

Children this age enjoy playing with peers of the same sex. They enjoy being outside and having space to run, jump, ride, and use their imaginations. Because of their interests in these and other sports activities, it is extremely important to teach your child about sports and bicycle safety.

Your child's attendance at school and participation in outside and group activities increases interaction with peers. You must realize that your child will begin to value his peers' opinions as well as yours. However, at this age parent opinion and values are still the strongest. It is extremely important that you

encourage your child to participate in some form of exercise on a regular basis. Physical education in the schools is usually not enough unless your child plays actively every day. Exercise could be in the form of outside group activities such as city sponsored sports or privately organized and adult supervised activities. The benefits are tremendous. One word of caution, however. These are for children and even though they are voluntarily coached by parents, they should remain child oriented! The object of these organizations at this age is not to make professional athletes out of 6 to 8 year olds! It is to have FUN, and kids will do that IF they are permitted.

The TV can become the major pastime for children. Don't let it! Television can be a positive resource if used in small and controlled doses. Watch TV with your child explaining the difference between reality and fantasy. You can discuss the commercials and advertising as a concept, etc. Control what and how much time your children spend watching TV. You'll be amazed at the difference in your quality family time after 2-3 weeks of reduced or no TV. It's the first few days of withdrawal that are the hardest.

Encourage your child to read. Read to him. Let him read to you. Read together: you read your book while he reads his. Your example will help reinforce that this is for personal pleasure. Now is the time to get a library card and use it. Ask the librarian for book suggestions. During this sixth year most (but not all) children are doing simple reading. Reinforce positive reading and writing behaviors. Don't over correct and your child will progress. By seven or eight most are reading well enough for this to be an activity they can sustain on their own. Ask the school teacher for suggestions. Now is the time to become involved in your child's school's parent organizations.

Children this age can have an allowance. There are different options about why you give an allowance. Some believe an allowance depends on the number of chores the child does around the house. Others feel that household chores are part of being a family and should not necessarily be rewarded. The allowance is given to encourage the child to learn about managing money and is used as needed or saved.

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. Again, 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 objects such as firecrackers, or lighters is not unusual at this age. Instructions 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 his name, address and phone number. Teach him who the appropriate people are to ask for help. Provide safety instructions for encounters with strangers. Now is the time to teach your child about "safe touch" and resisting uncomfortable touch (read It's MY Body*3 or Touch Talk*2 with him). Ask for additional references about the dangers of strangers and preparing your child. Introduce the concept of saying no to alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

Continue to teach your child that all firearms are unsafe and should be presumed loaded. 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

At this age, it is not unusual for children to steal money or enticing items. This phase usually passes, but if you are concerned, seek advice from your health care provider or a teacher. Punishment to fit the crime and parental examples are two of the best ways to handle this.

Your child has been learning a great deal in school in the short time he has been there. This includes not only academic subjects but ethics, values, and social skills as well. He may be reading well now and should also be able to tell time. (Buy a watch with regular hands, not digital.) Be aware of what's going on in school and discuss it at dinner, if possible. If your time permits, you might try volunteering at school to increase your awareness

Suggested Handouts, Readings & Videos

Safety for Your Child 6 Years⁴ (or for 8), *Bicycle Safety Camp* videotape⁴, and Bicycle TIPP Safety Sheet⁴, "Touch and Sexual Abuse"^{*3}, for 8 and over *What Kids Want to Know About Sex and Growing Up*, *Playground Safety*⁴, *Sports and Your Child*⁴

Additional Resources for Parents

General Child Care

Caring for Your School-Age Child by the American Academy of Pediatrics (After 9/94)

Taking Care of Your Child by R. Pantell, J. Fries, and D. Vickery

Growth and Development

Your Six-Year-Old or Your Seven-Year-Old or Your Eight-Year-Old by L. Ames and F. Ilg; Arnold's Fitness for kids, Ages 6-10 by A. Schwarzenegger; Kid Fitness by K. Cooper

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 & E. Mazlish; The Strong Willed Child by J. Dobson; When Your Child Drives You Crazy by E. LeShan

Other

Siblings without Rivalry by A. Faber and E. Mazlish; Parents Guide to Raising Kids in a Changing World by D. Smith

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