



## CHILD CARE FROM 4 TO 5 YEARS

[www.northfultonpediatrics.com](http://www.northfultonpediatrics.com)

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**SUGGESTED DIET:** The following is an ideal diet selected from the four food groups, but recognize that your child will not always eat a balanced diet every day. All children over the age of two should follow the same recommended low-fat, low-cholesterol diet that you do. It is not necessary to totally eliminate higher fat foods from your child's diet, rather serve them in moderation and balance them with more frequent servings of lower fat choices.

1. **Milk & Dairy Products:** 3 servings (6-8 oz. per serving) per day. Your child may drink whatever milk the rest of the family does (1% or less). Other milk products include yogurt and cheese. 1 ounce of cheese is equivalent to about 6 oz. milk.
2. **Meat/Protein:** 3 servings per day. A serving size is 2 ounces (4 tablespoons). Lean meat, poultry, fish, tofu, beans, peas, eggs, or peanut butter are all good choices. You get the same amount of protein from 1 oz. meat as from 2 T. peanut butter, 1 oz. cheese, 1 egg, or ½ cup cooked beans or peas.
3. **Fruits & Vegetables:** Fill ½ of your child's plate with fruits and vegetables. Try for 1 serving of a fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin A, such as peaches, broccoli, carrots, squash, or sweet potatoes. Serve at least 1 fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C, such as broccoli or spinach. Do not use juice or limit juice to no more than 6 ounces per day of 100% fruit juice.
4. **Breads & Cereals:** 4 servings per day, with a serving size being ½ slice bread, ½ cup cereal, or 1/3 cup pasta. Try to use products with a high fiber content (whole wheat bread, cereals with higher fiber, oatmeal, and brown rice).
5. **Vitamins:** 600 IU of vitamin D is recommended daily.

### **FEEDING TIPS**

- Your child should be good company at meals, and be ready to learn basic table manners. Explain the rules and then model them. They will behave as they see the rest of the family behaving at the table.
- Try not to use food as a reward for good behavior; praise is preferable.
- Don't worry if your child's food intake is inconsistent. Do not force them to eat. A decreased appetite or "picky eater" at this age is normal. If you offer the appropriate foods at each meal, and avoid multiple non-nutritious snacks, then your child will receive an adequate diet by eating when they are hungry.
- Try to avoid making mealtime a battleground. Respect their food preferences. Some may resist eating certain foods or insist on eating only one or two favorite foods for a period of time. This does not mean that you make them special meals, only that you provide at each meal one or two things they will eat, (example: fruit) Continue to offer a variety as their likes and dislikes will vary. Many preschoolers are "grazers" and do better eating 3 smaller meals along with 2 - 3 healthy snacks a day.
- Some healthy snack suggestions include: Fresh fruit, yogurt, string cheese (part skim milk), dry cereal (whole grain, low in sugar), crackers (whole grain, low-fat), raisins, graham crackers or fresh fruits and vegetables. Whole peanuts, hard candy, grapes and hot dogs remain a choking hazard until your child is 5 or 6, particularly if they are moving around while eating.
- Encourage family mealtime.
- Avoid having the television on during mealtime.

### **DENTAL HEALTH**

Continue good dental care. Brush your child's teeth daily using a small, soft toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste. Dentists do not recommend fluoride in your child's toothpaste until you are sure your child will spit out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it. It is important that regular brushing becomes part of your preschooler's routine now in order to instill lifetime habits. You may allow your child to brush on their own, then assist them. Your child should continue to visit the dentist every 6 months for cleaning and routine checkups.

### **SLEEP**

Unless your preschooler is very tired, they may resist going to sleep, especially if they have an older sibling who stays up later. They are afraid of "missing something" if the rest of the family is up after they go to sleep. Your child needs about ten to twelve hours of sleep each night. The afternoon nap may be disappearing due to preschool and other activities. If possible, try to give your child a "quiet time" to allow you both a break.

Fears of the dark, the unknown, storms, and "monsters" are all quite common at this age. Maintaining a consistent bedtime and bedtime routine, using a night light, security blanket, or toys are all ways that may help to lessen the fear. Another good way to prepare your preschoolers for sleep is by reading them a story. Once the story is over and you've said your good-nights, don't let them stall further, nor talk you into staying with them until they fall asleep. They need to learn how to do this on their own.

Most preschoolers sleep through the night, but there may be nights when their active dreams awaken them. Four-year-olds are magical thinkers, and they use their imaginations in all phases of their world. As a result, you may see an increase in nightmares for a short while as this age has difficulty separating fantasy from reality. If your child does wake up in the middle of the night afraid and crying, try holding them, talking about the dream, and staying with them until they are calm enough to fall back asleep. Rest assured these are a normal developmental stage and will disappear naturally as your child grows older.

### **ELIMINATION**

Your child is probably fairly independent in their toileting routine by now, although they may still require help in getting clean after a bowel movement. Continue to reinforce good hand washing techniques. Incorporating fruits (fresh or dried), vegetables, peanut butter, and grains into their diet will help minimize any constipation problems. It is common for children to have accidents at this age and wet their clothes. Some 4 year-olds are able to stay dry all night while others still consistently wet every night. The process required for successful night time bladder control takes longer to develop in some children. They should not be punished, as they are not wetting the bed on purpose. Limiting their fluid intake and waking them to use the bathroom probably won't help the situation but reassuring them that these mishaps are "no big deal" will help them feel better about it.

### **DEVELOPMENT/PLAY**

Your child is adding new vocabulary words every day, some of which you may not be happy about. It is not uncommon for this age child to "pick up" mild profanity from other children or older siblings. Four-year-olds are using pronouns (I, you, and me), are able to understand some prepositions, count several objects, and identify a few colors. Your child continues to ask questions constantly as well as tell "exaggerated" stories.

Your child is probably never still. He is able to run, skip, and hop on one foot. He may also throw a ball overhand as well as catch it. Fine motor skills are improving as well. Your child may use scissors to cut out a picture and may be able to copy a square and a circle.

Your child is in a stage of a "magical thinking," and toys or props that encourage the imagination are very appropriate. These include play clothes for dress-up, paper products or articles from an office, or cans and things from the grocery store. Art supplies, musical instruments, and child tool kits also enhance their creativity. Help your child to learn the value of reading. Read to them. Make books available to them. Acknowledge their recognition of letters, sounds, or words. However, this is not an age that you have to push them to read. Let them just enjoy their level of "reading."

Sexual curiosity is common at this age and you may notice this being demonstrated through doctor and nurse play. Try not to let this upset you. It is normal and will not become a problem unless you make it into an issue.

Your child is in a phase of associative play. That is, they enjoy playing with other children and being dramatic and imitative. They can resolve minor conflicts but still need parental supervision. It is not uncommon for your child to have imaginary playmates or for you to find them talking to them! This usually disappears as your child approaches school age.

Limit media use (TV, computer, video, tablets) to no more than 1 hour a day. A TV in your child's bedroom is not recommended. Pay attention to TV ratings guides and online content.

#### **DISCIPLINE**

Four-year-olds are emotional and can be temperamental. Your child may have mood swings and be physically and verbally loving and affectionate and may also be similarly aggressive. This is where preschool or a period of time in an organized child care setting may help. Appropriate behavior and play interaction can be reinforced at school and at home as well. You must teach them what is acceptable behavior and what isn't. The only way they will learn to set their own limits later is by having you set reasonable limits for them now. Remember to reward good behavior more often than punishing bad, and to avoid physical punishment. It is essential to deal with misbehavior promptly and fairly, not waiting so long that your child forgets why they are being disciplined. Encourage your child to express their emotions through words instead of aggressive actions. Time out is still an effective method of discipline for this age group and should last about 4 - 5 minutes. Emphasize it as a time to calm down rather than punishment.

#### **SAFETY**

Your preschooler's natural curiosity will drive them to explore many new things, including some dangerous places. Their self-control and ability to rescue themselves are not fully developed, so they still need careful supervision.

- Lock doors to any dangerous areas.
- Keep plug covers on all outlets.
- Keep all medicines in child resistant containers and out of reach.
- Post the **Poison Control Number (404) 616-9000** by your phone.
- Supervise your child closely whenever they are playing in the driveway or near the street.
- Begin educating your preschooler about preventing accidents. Teach water safety. If bicycling, teach safety rules and insist on helmet use.
- Motor vehicle safety remains critical and is still the greatest risk to your child's health. . Although the new law in Georgia requires booster seats up until age 6, the AAP recommends booster seats until your child is 4 feet 9 inches tall. ([www.nhtsa.gov/safety/cps](http://www.nhtsa.gov/safety/cps))
- The back seat is the safest spot for them to sit.
- Teach your child their full name, address and phone number. Teach them the appropriate people to ask for help if injured or lost.
- Check your smoke detectors twice a year when daylight savings time changes are made. You should have yearly family fire drills.
- Teach them about gun safety and stranger safety.

#### **FEVER MANAGEMENT**

You may treat your child's fever with either of the following:

**Tylenol** (Active ingredient is acetaminophen)

**Advil, Motrin** (Active ingredient is ibuprofen)

**Your child's next well childcare visit should be in one year.**

#### **Additional Resource for Parents**

**Visit our web site at [www.northfultonpediatrics.com](http://www.northfultonpediatrics.com)**

[www.aap.org/bookstore](http://www.aap.org/bookstore)

[Positive Discipline for preschoolers. Jane Nelson](#)

[Caring For Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5](#), by AAP

[www.chop.edu/service/vaccine](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine)

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