



## CHILD CARE FROM 3 TO 4 YEARS

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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:** 2 to 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 or 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, legumes, 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 of 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**

- 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. If a battle over snack foods arises, the best approach is to avoid buying non-nutritious snacks.
- 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. 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), fresh fruit 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 brushing your child's teeth daily using a small, soft toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride. Fluoride is important for fighting cavities, but if children younger than 6 swallow too much fluoride, their permanent teeth may be discolored, so encourage your child to rinse and spit when done brushing. You may allow your child to brush on their own, then assist them. If you haven't scheduled a visit with the dentist, now is the time.

### **SLEEPING**

Unless your preschooler is very tired, they may resist going to sleep, especially if they have an older sibling whom 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. An afternoon nap is still ideal. If not possible, a quiet time should be utilized.

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. A ritual is essential.

Most preschoolers sleep through the night, but there may be nights when their active dreams awaken them. These vivid dreams often represent the way they viewed some of the events of the day. They may reflect some impulse, aggressive feeling, or inner fear that only comes to the surface by way of these dreams. If your preschooler 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**

By about age three, most children are toilet trained during the day. If your preschooler seems capable but not interested in using the potty, try a reward chart using stars or stickers and earning a reward. If you have been battling your preschooler over potty training, taking a month break can often lead to success. It is not uncommon to take months or years to achieve nighttime dryness. Your child will probably now make the transition from using a potty seat to the big toilet. Little boys generally sit down to urinate during early toilet training, but as preschoolers they'll begin to copy their fathers or older brothers and stand up while urinating. Most three-year-olds still need assistance with wiping and good hand washing after using the toilet.

### **DEVELOPMENT/PLAY**

Since your child is in a very social stage, you may want to consider enrolling them in a preschool or participating in a playgroup. Look for a preschool program that will meet your child's needs and your expectations. Some children at this age have an imaginary friend. This is a normal part of a blossoming imagination. Your preschooler's skills continue to grow. They may be able to dress themselves completely, but need a little help with shoes and buttons. They may be pedaling a tricycle or some sort of vehicle with pedals. They can jump with both feet, stand on one foot for a few seconds, or may even try to dance. They usually enjoy artwork and may copy a circle. Provide opportunities for your preschooler to climb, run, and jump, using all of their large muscle groups. Play is their work so provide them with dress up clothes, dolls, play kitchen equipment, action figures, etc. to encourage their creativity.

Your preschooler remains curious about everything and constantly asks questions. Art is enjoyed by this age group and provides an excellent outlet for expression of feelings. Finger paints, scissors, paste and crayons are articles that can be available at home and are inexpensive. Musical toys can provide an excellent channel for releasing energy and promoting creativity. Continue to read with your child. Make a point of visiting your local library together. Acknowledge their recognition of letters, sounds, and words.

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

### **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is one of the greatest challenges facing you as a parent during the next few years. At three, your preschooler is still very physical, using temper tantrums, pushing, shoving, and quarreling to get their own way. Most of these reactions are very impulsive. Although they do not plan to behave this way, they cannot yet control themselves. The whole point of this behavior is to find not only their limits but yours as well! It is important to establish and enforce these limits consistently. Here are a few guidelines to help you in disciplining your preschooler in an effective manner:

- Always encourage and notice good behavior, as well as punishing the bad. When you notice that your child has chosen to do something acceptable instead of misbehaving, praise them. You will make them feel good about themselves, and encourage them to behave the same way in the future.
- Establish rules that help your child learn to control their impulsiveness and behave well socially without impairing their drive for independence.
- Always keep your preschooler's developmental level in mind when you set limits, and don't expect more than they are capable of achieving. For example, a three-year-old cannot control the impulse to touch things that attract them, so it is unrealistic to expect them not to touch displays in the toy store.
- Set the punishment to your child's developmental level. Use few words and keep explanations simple. "Time out" is an effective method of discipline for this age group and should last about three minutes.
- Don't change the rules or the punishment at random, and make sure all adults in the house and other caregivers consistently enforce the same limits.
- Remember that you are a key role model for your child. The more controlled your behavior, the more likely children will be to pattern themselves after you. On the other hand, if you spank them every time they break a rule, you may be teaching them that it is okay to solve problems through violence.

### **SAFETY**

Your preschooler is now able to run, jump and ride a tricycle. Their natural curiosity will drive them to explore many new things, including some dangerous places. Their self-control and ability to rescue themselves are not yet 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, near the street, or near water.
- 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. Use approved and properly installed car seats for every ride. Although the new law in Georgia requires car seats up until age 4, and then 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))

### **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 at 4 years of age.**

### **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.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

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

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