

Eating

- I am growing more slowly and don't need to eat as much food as I ate when I was younger.
- I need to eat a variety of foods from the four main food groups: vegetables and fruits, milk products, grain products (including breads), and meat and meat alternates.
- I can use a fork and spoon and might be able to use a knife to feed myself.
- I will probably ask you for more snacks between meals. Some good snacks to give me are small servings of raw vegetables, fruit, cheese, whole grain muffins, plain crackers and yogurt.
- Solid foods that are hard, small and round, smooth or sticky should not be given to me if I am under 4 years. They may block my airway and I could choke.
- If you have any questions about how much food or the type of food I should eat, talk to our community health nurse.

Keeping Me Safe

I am getting more independent every day. You may not always be near by when I am playing. I can think about what might happen if I do something that isn't safe, like crossing the street, but not always. I still need you to teach me what is safe and what isn't safe. I also need you to help make sure the world around me is safe.

Most childhood injuries can be predicted and prevented. Here are some simple guidelines to help keep me safe between 3 and 5 years old...and beyond.

Falls are the leading cause of hospital visits for childhood injuries

- I am safest on tricycles where I sit low to the ground.
- Always put a helmet on me when I ride a tricycle or bicycle.
- Don't put bunk beds in my room until I am at least 6 years old.
- If we have a balcony, don't leave furniture on it that I can use to climb over the railing.
- Make sure all of our windows have screens I cannot push out.
- If I have a swing set or other climbing toys in my yard, make sure they are on a soft surface like grass, sand or wood chips.

Car Safety

- One of the most important things you can do to keep me safe is to put me in an approved child safety seat or booster seat **every time** we travel by car and to use my seat correctly every time you put me in it.
- When installing my child safety seat, always read your instruction manual for the seat and owners manual for your vehicle.
- Don't forget to use the tether on the back of my seat.
- I need to travel in a child safety seat until I weigh 18 kilograms (40 pounds), which will be when I am about 5 years old.
- When I weigh 18 kilograms (40 pounds), put me in a booster seat. I should use a booster seat until I weigh 36 kilograms (80 pounds) or reach the age of 8.
- I am safest when you put me in the back seat. **Never** put me in the front seat if our car has a passenger-side air bag.
- Talk to our community health nurse if you have any questions about installing and using my child safety seat.

House and Neighborhood

- Always turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- If you haven't already, set our hot water heater to below 50°C.
- Keep cords from venetian blinds well out of reach. I can strangle myself with a blind cord.
- Unplug electrical appliances that aren't being used. Put away electrical appliances in the bathroom.
- Lock up or put out of reach all poisons, medicines, household cleaners and alcoholic beverages.
- Know the first aid for poisoning and keep the phone number for the Poison Control Centre close to the phone. The phone number in Alberta is **1-800-332-1414**.
- Supervise me whenever I am playing. Don't let me play around the driveway, garage or street.
- Walk around our vehicle before you back out of the driveway to make sure there are no children or toys behind it.
- If we have an automatic garage door, always make sure I am with you and well away from the door before closing it.
- Hold onto me whenever we are near traffic.

- Don't cut the lawn with a power mower when I am around and never let me ride on a riding mower.
- Always stay with me when I am riding my tricycle or driving motorized toys, like cars and trucks. Don't let me ride in the street or near traffic.
- I need to wear several layers of clothing when I play outside in the winter, instead of one heavy layer.
- A helmet can help protect my head when I go tobogganing or skating.

Water Safety

- Never leave me alone near a wading or swimming pool, lake or ocean, even if I know how to swim.

Fire Safety

- Teach me how to "stop, drop and roll" if my clothes catch fire.
- Make sure our house has smoke detectors that work.
- Plan and practice how our family will get out of the house if there is a fire.
- Keep lighters and matches far out of my reach.

Sun Safety

- Keep me out of the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Put sunscreen on me when I am in the sun. I should also wear light clothing, hats and sunglasses for protection from the sun.



Questions?

If you have any questions concerning your child's healthy growth and development, please contact your community health nurse at your local health region office.

3 to 5 years

Growth and Development Series

All About Me



Hi. I am your 3- to 5-year-old child.

I am quickly becoming my own person. I know what I like and what I don't like. I have my own friends and my own way of doing things. I might do some things before other children and I may do some things after them. Be patient. I will get there in my own time.

The most important thing you can do is to be warm, loving and responsive to me. This will help my brain develop and shape the way I learn, think and behave for the rest of my life. I also need you to take care of yourself. If you feel unhappy or have negative feelings, please talk to family, friends or your doctor.

To help you know what to expect, here are some common milestones most children reach between 3 and 5 years old.

Growth

Body

- I will gain about 2 to 7 kilograms (5 to 16 pounds) and grow from 2.5 to 12.5 centimetres (1 to 5 inches) in height between 3 and 5 years of age.
- I will grow more slowly as I get older. That means I won't grow as much when I am 4 years old as I will grow when I am 3 years old.
- My arms and legs are growing quickly. My head and body (trunk) are growing more slowly.
- I will grow at my own rate, faster than some children and slower than others. If I don't gain 1 to 2 kilograms (3 to 4 pounds) or grow 2.5 to 5 centimetres (1 to 2 inches) between birthdays, talk to our doctor or community health nurse.

Teeth

- I should have all 20 of my baby teeth by the time I am 3 years old. I will probably not get any new teeth until after I am 5 years old.
- To prevent cavities, I need to brush my teeth with a child's soft toothbrush and a pea-size amount of flouride toothpaste. Teach me to spit out the toothpaste and not to swallow it.
- I should visit my dentist regularly.

- I can practice brushing my own teeth but I need your help to brush and floss my teeth at least once a day (bedtime is the best time).

Development

Language

By the time I am 3 years old:

- I can understand 900 to 1,000 words.
- A person who does not know me should understand about 75% of what I say.
- I can make the p, m, h, n and w sounds.
- I know the primary colors of red, blue and yellow.
- I might talk more often and for a longer time.
- I have fun saying nonsense words and I love singing nursery rhymes or songs with actions.
- I might get ear infections. If I seem to be having trouble hearing, take me to our doctor as soon as possible.

By the time I am 4 years old:

- I can talk in complete sentences of 5 to 6 words.
- I can make the b, k, g and d sounds.
- I can tell stories. Ask me to tell you about my day.
- I can listen and follow 3-step directions, such as, "Get your shoes and your coat and wait by the door."
- I will probably ask a lot of questions. I learn from your answers.
- I can probably count to 10.
- I can tell you how old I am.
- I might say my full name and home address.
- I might use slang words, such as, "cool" or "gross."
- I understand opposites, like same and different, hot and cold, in and out. I also understand concepts like under, beside, in front, behind or in back of.

By the time I am 5 years old:

- I can understand and use about 2,000 words.
- A person who does not know me should understand about 90% of what I say.

- I can make the f and y sounds.
- I might talk more about other people and less about myself.
- I can define simple words.
- I might ask you the meaning of abstract words, like "science."
- I like talking fast and talking in a very quiet or very loud voice.
- I can understand stories, songs and shows on television. I like to talk about them with you.
- I like using new words. I learn new words from people and events around me.
- If I am hard to understand, I do not speak in complete sentences or I cannot follow directions, I should see a speech-pathologist.

Movement

- When I am about 4 years old, I will walk heel to toe.
- I can walk down stairs, one foot at a time, without help.
- I can hop and stand on one foot.
- I can easily move forward and backward.
- I can copy shapes and draw circles, squares and other geometric shapes.
- I can draw a person with three body parts (head, torso and legs).
- I can print some letters of the alphabet.
- I can use scissors.
- I can swing, climb, skip and jump.
- I can catch a ball that is bounced to me.
- I can feed myself without making a big mess.
- I can dress myself but I still need help with shoelaces and buttons.

Sexual Health

Children learn about sexuality daily and continue learning throughout their lives. Sexuality is an awareness of our entire self as a male or female. This is basic to healthy sexual development.

- I am fascinated with body parts and the differences between boys and girls. You might find me "playing house" or "playing doctor".

- I might ask you questions like, "Can I marry you mommy/daddy?" or "Why don't I have a penis?" I need simple, honest answers so it will be easier to have open communication when I am older.
- I might touch my own genitals for lots of different reasons. This is a normal part of my sexual development.

Behavior and Emotions

Thinking, Feeling and Doing

- I can learn, think, reason and solve simple problems.
- I can be very social with other people.
- I probably love to talk.
- I know how to play with other children and can share, take turns and do group activities.
- I like going on trips.
- I will probably change the way I act if I get a new brother or sister.
- I can be aggressive and might fight to get my own way sometimes.
- I can make jokes and laugh at funny things other people say.
- I want to help with household chores.
- I don't like going to bed.
- I can focus on a task and finish it.
- I like more complex stories.

Toilet Habits and Grooming

- I am probably toilet trained but I might pee my bed at night.
- I can use the toilet without help, if my clothes are simple to undo.
- I can wash my hands and face, brush my teeth, comb my hair and wash my body in the bathtub.

Sleeping

- I need to sleep about 9 to 12 hours each night.
- I might not need to nap anymore.

Playing

- I like to play with other children and to make new friends.
- I like to go to the park, playground, play school and other places where I can meet other children.
- I like to play make-believe games.
- I like to sing, dance and act out short plays.
- I can do crafts with scissors, crayons, glue, clay, finger paints and other materials.
- I can pedal a tricycle.
- There are many toys made for children my age. I will probably tell you what type of toys I like.

Discipline

- I need routines and rituals for meals, bedtime and other regular activities.
- I need limits and loving adult supervision.

Child Care

- If I need child care, talk to a community health nurse who can tell you what to look for in a child care setting.

Immunization

- Protect me from disease. Make sure I get my last childhood immunizations after I am 4 years old and before I start school.

