



In this letter you'll find helpful resources and learn about:

- Community immunity.
- Healthy food choices.
- Oral health.
- Talking to your child about differences.
- Listening to your child.
- Helping your child with stress.
- Questions about sex.
- Gun safety.
- Teaching your child about 911.

Happy reading!

Vaccines

What is community immunity?

Community immunity, or herd immunity, helps slow down or stop the spread of disease among people in a community. It only works when most of the population get vaccinated from vaccine preventable diseases. For some diseases, such as measles, at least 9 out of 10 of us must have immunity to keep the virus from spreading. When you and your family get vaccinated, you protect others at risk, such as those who:

- Have weak immune systems, like people with cancer.
- Can not get vaccinated because they're too young or too old.
- Have certain medical conditions preventing them from getting vaccinated.

Even though your child has started school, make sure they have a well-child visit every year. If your child is not fully vaccinated, or if you have questions about vaccines, talk to your doctor, or nurse. For more information, visit doh.wa.gov/immunization.

You can also sign up to see and download your family's vaccine records online at myirmobile.com.



When I get vaccinated, I protect myself and my friends.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Help your child learn healthy food choices.

Children are healthier and learn better when they eat well. Offer children a variety of healthy foods. Sitting and eating together as a family can teach your child eating habits, but don't ask them to clean their plates. At this age, children are very good at knowing when they are full. Here are some tips:

- Include at least 1 serving of a fruit or vegetable at every meal or snack. 1 serving for a child this age is about a ½ cup, the same as ½ a medium-sized apple or 6 baby carrots.
- Make a list with your child of their favorite foods from each food group. Give your child lots of chances to try new foods, but don't force them to eat. Remember, your child may need to try a new food many times before they like it.
- Have meals and snacks at regular times. Wait until meal and snack times to offer food. Keep screens off during meal and snack times to enjoy eating together.
- Water and milk are the best drinks for children. If you give your child juice, choose 100 percent juice and offer just 4 to 6 ounces each day. Limit giving your child other drinks with added sugar, like soda and sports drinks.

Remember, your child learns by watching you. Healthy eating habits are important for the whole family. For more information on how to help you child eat well, visit myplate.gov/life-stages/preschoolers.

Oral Health

Care for your growing child's teeth!

Help your child brush their teeth well at least twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Floss between teeth. Watch for the permanent 6-year molars which may come in now.

When your child eats a sugary snack, have them rinse their mouth with tap water when done. To prevent cavities, talk with a dentist about getting dental sealants.

For children participating in sports, ask the dentist about using a mouth guard to prevent teeth from being damaged or knocked out during play. This is important as all teeth, including baby teeth and permanent teeth, are needed for speech and to keep other teeth in place. Protect your child's teeth, jaw, and head from injury by using:

- A car seat or booster seat on every car ride.
- A helmet for active sports, such as bicycling, skateboarding, skating, skiing, and riding a scooter.

If a permanent tooth is knocked out, take your child to a dentist within 2 hours. The tooth can often be reattached. Hold the tooth by the crown (biting side). Rinse it gently in cold water. Do not scrub. Place the tooth in a secure container of cold milk or a wet cloth. Save your dentist's phone number in your phone or somewhere easy to access in case of emergency.

Growth and Development

Help your child learn about others.

As your child gets older and is around more people, they will meet children who are not like them. They may look or sound different, have different abilities, or be part of other kinds of families or cultures. Help your child understand that every person is unique and special. If you notice your child staring at someone, remember they are just being curious. Talk to your child about what they see and answer any questions about the differences they may notice in others. Encourage your child to make friends with all kinds of people. You're a role model for your child. Children learn how to treat others by watching you.

Help your child learn to handle strong feelings.

You set a good example when you show your child respect as you talk about strong feelings and solving problems. It may be hard to listen to your child when they are very angry or upset. When your child is mad at you it's even more difficult. Listen to your child to help them calm down and talk. If you need to calm down, take a deep breath and count to 10. Try to listen without interrupting. Kneel or bend down to your child's level. Tell your child you want to hear and understand their feelings. Then you can find ways to solve the problem together.

How to help your child deal with stress.

Many things may cause stress, including both happy and sad things. Starting school, family changes (such as a new sibling, a move, or a divorce), or broader world events may all be stressful. Learn when your child is feeling stress by noticing changes in how they behave. Your child may:

- Feel sick or cry and whine more often than usual.
- Have temper tantrums or trouble getting along with others.
- Not want to do things they usually enjoy.

There are things you can do to help your child cope in any stressful situation. Here are some tips:

- Keep your daily routine the same as much as possible. This helps your child feel safe.
- Talk with your child to find out what they are thinking. Help your child understand their feelings. This will help them learn how to deal with emotions.
- Give your child simple, honest answers. Be sure to answer all questions, but remember, too much information may be scary or confusing.
- Help your child express and release their feelings by doing things, such as drawing, playing with dolls or puppets, and being physically active.

Family Support and Routines

Questions about sex are normal

You may be uncomfortable or worried about how to answer your child's questions about sex. When your child asks you a question about sex or private body parts, keep your answer short and simple. Use the correct words for body parts and try not to seem embarrassed. Find out why your child is asking the question. This may make it easier to answer.

If you need help, ask your doctor, nurse, or a trusted friend for help and ideas. You can also find tips at bit.ly/AAP-talking-about-sex.

Safety

Practice gun safety at home.

It's very hard to keep things hidden from curious children, which is why it's important to lock up all guns. If you have guns in your home, your child may find them and want to play with them.

Storing guns safely is very important. Here are some tips:

- Always remove bullets from guns.
- Lock up guns and bullets separately.
- Use a locking device, such as a gun safe or lock box.

If your child asks about guns, tell them guns are very dangerous and if they see a gun, follow these rules:

1. Stop what they are doing.
2. Do not touch the gun.
3. Leave the area where the gun is.
4. Tell an adult right away.

For more information on gun safety and storage, visit bit.ly/KH-gunsafety.

To know more about safe gun storage, go to kingcounty.gov/lockitup and bit.ly/seattlechildrens-firearms-in-the-home.



Lock up guns and bullets separately. Store your firearms in a gun safe with a locking device.

Understand gun safety away from home.

Each year in Washington State, about 70 deaths of children and teens involve a firearm. Most of these shootings occur in or around the home.

Before your child goes to other children's homes, ask the parents about firearms and how they are stored. Ask about guns just as you would ask about other safety issues, such as booster seats or swimming pools.

Then decide whether to let your child play there. For more information, visit Asking Saves Kids at bit.ly/Asking-Saves-Kids.

Know about medicine safety at home.

Teach your child that medicines should only be given to them by an adult. They should not take medicine by themselves and should not share medicines with other children. Keep medicine out of reach and out of sight of your child.

Know more about how to store medicine safely, visit bit.ly/AAP-med-safety-tips.

Prepare for an emergency.

Begin to teach your child how and when to call 911 in case of an emergency. Here are some tips:

- Use a toy phone and pretend your child is making a call. Help your child practice giving their phone number, address, and parents' full names.
- Make sure your child knows where cell phones are kept, how to unlock them and how to make a call, especially if there isn't a landline.
- Make sure your child knows they should stay calm and answer all the operator's questions. Tell your child that help will be on the way even though the operator may continue to ask questions.
- Teach your child not to hang up until the operator says it's OK.

Teach your child that 911 is for people emergencies only. Your child should not call 911 for hurt animals. Make sure your child knows never to call 911 as a joke or just to see what happens. To learn more about teaching children to use 911, call your local fire department or visit bit.ly/KH-how-to-use-911.

An infographic titled "Tips for calling 911" with five numbered tips. 1. Stay Calm: Speak clearly and don't talk too fast. 2. Be Clear: Give your name, location, and type of emergency. 3. Listen Carefully: Listen to the emergency operator. 4. Follow Instructions: Do exactly what the operator tells you to do. 5. Don't Hang Up: Don't hang up until the operator tells you it's OK. Each tip is accompanied by a circular icon: a person speaking, a location pin, an ear, a checklist, and a telephone receiver with a red X over it.

Use these tips when you teach your child about 911.

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your child is 6 years old with information on:

- How to identify sexual abuse.
- Water safety.
- Street and bike safety.

For the Health of All Our Children

Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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