

## 3 YEAR OLD WELL CHILD VISIT

**What do 3 year olds do?** 3 year olds start to show their personalities and independence; they have likes and dislikes, make simple decisions and learn from their mistakes. Here are some more things you can expect from your child:

- Her speech and verbal skills grow stronger every day. Most people will understand what she says 75% of the time; her ability to put 2-3 sentences together will make her conversations with you and other children exciting. She may even bargain with you when you tell her to do something (“lunch first, then nap”). Encourage her to finish familiar phrases in a book or tell the end of the story herself. Ask her to name pictures and body parts. Count common objects (like stairs) and mention colors when you see them (“red stop sign”). Look for ways to practice reading (signs or words on boxes at the grocery store).
- She will play imaginative games with other children and together, they will create elaborate stories. Encourage her to tell you about her friends and her experiences with them.
- Her personality starts to shine; she has opinions and likes to make decisions. Including her in family discussions and letting her make choices helps build her self-esteem. Letting her assert control by giving her choices will help minimize conflict.
- She is starting to understand gender differences and can say “I am a girl.”
- Her physical skills get stronger and she can control her movements better. She can walk up stairs alternating feet, stack 6-8 cubes, throw a ball overhand, balance on 1 foot for 1 second. She may also learn to ride a tricycle, copy a circle and draw a person with 2 body parts.
- She is more independent now and can dress and undress herself, brush her teeth, and feed herself. Most children this age are toilet trained during the daytime.

## Things to Know about Caring for 3 Year Olds

### Feeding:

- She should drink 15-20 ounces of whole milk and less than 6 oz. of juice per day.
- Try not to give him sweet and salty foods, fast foods, and sugary drinks/soda. These foods can make behavior hard to control, can increase his risk for diseases later in life, and can damage his teeth.
- He needs to eat 3 meals and 2 snacks a day with food from all 4 food groups – vegetable, fruit, meat and bread/pasta/cereal.

**Teeth:** Clean his teeth twice a day with a soft brush and water. He can start using a tiny bit of toothpaste. Make sure he sees his dentist every year.

### Sleeping:

- Have a nightly bedtime routine, such as reading a book, singing a song, taking a bath before putting her to bed.
- She should be sleeping through the night now. If she wakes up at night, don't offer her anything to eat or drink. If she has nightmares she may need you to comfort her; a favorite animal or blanket can also help.
- You can move her out of her crib to a bed when you are ready. Make sure the bed has a bedrail and that you have taken all of the dangerous items out of her room.

**Toilet training:** If you are still having a hard time with this, talk to your pediatrician. Here are some tips:

- It helps to dress her in easy-to-remove pants. Put her on the potty every 1-2 hours and while she is there, read to her or sing songs with her. This will keep it fun and will relax her.
- When she is done, help her wash her hands and remember to clean the potty chair after each use. Reward her if she uses the potty.

**TV:** What children see on TV and how long they watch TV can cause sleep problems, behavior problems, weight problems and violence. Think of other things he can do instead of watching TV, like going for walks, reading, going to a park, going to the zoo or going to story time at the library. Have fun as a family; both children and adults need active playtime! If you do let your child watch TV, pick educational programs and only let him watch for 1-2 hours a day. Talk about what you see together and remember that the commercials may be bad for him. Try not to watch TV during dinner and don't let him have a TV in his room.

**Discipline:** At this age, she is learning simple rules about safety and behavior but she still needs lots of supervision!

- Be calm when he does something wrong; screaming at him, shaking him or spanking him won't work. The best way to discipline him is to put him in "time-out" for up to 2 minutes for bad behavior and praise him for good behavior. Be calm and consistent, over and over and over again.
- Temper tantrums at this age are common and can be very frustrating. Again, stay calm because losing your temper might encourage her more. Try distracting her to a new activity; if this does not work you may need to walk away. Don't let her hit, bite or use other violent behaviors. If she does, stop her immediately and tell her how these behaviors make the other person feel. Show her how to apologize and handle anger constructively with discussion, exercise, or time alone to cool off.