4 years

Caregiver Tips

- Mealtime is a perfect place to learn. Offer a variety of healthy, colorful foods. Talk about how the food tastes, smells, feels and looks.

- **Trust your preschooler’s appetite.** All children know how much they need to eat. Ask your preschooler, “Is your tummy full?” Don’t make them eat more.

- **Avoid bribing, comforting, or rewarding with food.**

- Continue to have family meals. If they don’t eat at one meal, they will at the next.

- Focus on meals. Turn off the TV and other screens. Slow down and enjoy family time.

- Sweets and sweetened drinks (soda, fruit punch or sports drinks, etc.) should not be a part of daily routine.

- Avoid computers or TVs in your preschooler’s bedroom.

Feeding Advice

- Start meals with a vegetable. Include an item from each food group (fruit, vegetables, dairy, whole grains, and protein) with every meal.

- Serve your preschooler the same food as the rest of the family. Avoid making separate food.

- Serve small portions and let your preschooler ask for more. Continue to use small plates, spoons and forks.

- Keep up good habits when eating away from home. Bring fruits or vegetables.

- If your child is in child care or with relatives, make sure you know what they are eating and drinking. Maintain healthy eating plans.

- At restaurants, split meals between kids or share your meal. Order milk with the meal. Avoid filling up on pre-meal foods, such as bread, chips or crackers.

- Offer healthy snacks, like vegetables, cut-up fruit, cubed cheese or yogurt.

What should my preschooler be drinking?

- Serve milk at meals.

- Serve water first for thirst between meals.

Be Active

- Encourage daily play of one hour or more. Make it a part of the family routine. Try riding a bike, skipping, dancing, jumping or running.

- Enjoy throwing and catching balls with your preschooler. Try playing hopscotch or hide-n-seek.

- Limit screen time (TV, computers, tablets, video games, cell phones) to 30 minutes at a time and no more than 1 to 2 hours a day. Help your preschooler choose what to watch.

Sleep Advice

- Enjoy a calming sleep routine with low lights, a warm bath, and **reading** together, or have your preschooler **read** to you.

- Avoid food or screens before bed.

- It is normal and best for preschoolers at this age to sleep 11 to 13 hours each night.

http://ohioaap.org/projects/PMP
With lots of words, strong muscles and play skills, the 4 year old keeps finding new things to explore. Give them lots of variety for play, like hoops, different types of balls, bats, bean bags, and scarves to throw and catch. Your preschooler may have less body fat, so they may look taller or thinner. This is healthy growth and normal at this age.

Activities with Your Child

- Your preschooler will be curious about everything. It’s a great time to show them how simple, everyday things work. Avoid multiple hours of screen time by getting them to help out with simple tasks.
- Walking outside with your child is a chance to talk about what they see. Have them find different animals or objects in nature.
- Your preschooler enjoys new things that use the five senses (sight, smell, taste, feel and sound).

Fun at Mealtime

- Meals are the best time to talk. Ask them about their day and what activities they did.
- Portions need to match your preschooler’s size and activity level. Check out myplate.gov for more details.
- Ask your preschooler to help you mix and match food groups at every meal and snack.
- Choose vegetables, fruits, grains, milk/dairy, and proteins, like peanut butter, beans, fish, lean meat, nuts/ seeds. But your child still needs to be the one to say when their tummy is full.

Try This!

- Try short “move it and groove it” breaks together where you dance and sing.
- When your child shops with you, show them which foods are good for you and which foods to eat only sometimes.

Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App

Search Parenting at Meal and Playtime on Apple Store or Google Play

App Highlights...

- Physician-endorsed materials for parents to access on-demand
- Resources for parents organized by age
- Text reminders sent monthly and/or for age milestones
- Easy sign-up
- Videos on feeding, play, nutrition and more

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