

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

- How to prepare for your child's next well-child visit.
- Protecting your child from serious diseases.
- Introducing new foods to your child.
- How to help your child solve problems.
- Hand washing.
- Choosing a preschool.
- Complementary medicines.
- Leading by example.
- Safe gun storage.
- Fire safety and preventing burns.
- Helmet and water safety.

Happy reading!

Well-Child Visits

Your child may need a checkup.

Most doctors recommend a checkup at 2.5 years. Ask your doctor or clinic if you should make an appointment. This is a good time to ask questions about your child's development. Make sure your child also sees a dentist once a year. Check with your insurance company to find out how many dental visits are covered each calendar year.

Vaccines

Protect your child.

Vaccines are the most important way to protect your child against serious diseases. Be sure your child meets the requirements for child care and preschool by getting all the recommended vaccines. If your child hasn't received all the recommended vaccines, now is a great time to catch up. Children may be required to stay home from child care or preschool during a disease outbreak if they're not up to date.

It's also important for you, other people living in your home, and people who care for your child to be up to date with vaccines. Ask your doctor or nurse about vaccines recommended for adults. Consider these questions:

- Do you get a flu shot every year?
- Have you had the whooping cough (Tdap) shot?
- Do you have your own vaccine record?
- Are your child care providers vaccinated?

For vaccine information, including vaccine safety, effectiveness, and FAQs, visit the DOH website doh.wa.gov/immunization.

Sign up to get access to your and/or your family's official immunization records online at myirmobile.com.



If you have questions about vaccines, ask my doctor.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Help your child learn to eat new foods.

Be patient while your child finds out what foods they like. Offer a variety of healthy foods and let your child choose from them. They may like a food this week and refuse it next week. Your child may like foods prepared a certain way, such as applesauce instead of apple slices.

At mealtimes, include at least one healthy food you know your child likes. For healthy tips for picky eaters, visit bit.ly/MyPlate-Toddlers.

Don't force your child to eat, and don't reward them or punish them for not eating. Making your child eat a food they don't want will not teach them to like it. If your child says they have finished a meal, let them stop eating. Children usually know when they have had enough. Wait until snack time to offer more food. Offer snacks with balanced nutrition, such as fruits, vegetables, protein, and grains.

Try to make meals family time. Plan to eat together at least once a day. Talk with your child about what they did during the day. Ask about their favorite part of the day.



Ask me about my day during dinner!

Growth and Development

Help your child solve problems.

Show your child how you expect them to behave. This will help your child learn to control their own behavior. It will also help teach how actions affect others. For example, if your child throws a toy:

1. Show how they can play with the toy. Say, "This is one way to play with the toy and be safe. Can you play with the toy like this?"
2. Give your child a chance to play with the toy safely. If they keep throwing it, suggest another toy. Say, "I can see that you want to throw. Let's put away these toys and get a ball we can throw."

Hand washing: do it right and do it often!

Germs that cause illnesses can pass from your child's hands to their mouth. Teach your child to cough or sneeze into the bend of their elbow, instead of into their hands. It's important to always wash your child's hands at these times:

- Before eating
- After they cough or sneeze
- After using the toilet
- After playing outside or with pets
- After coming home from child care or preschool

Wash your hands with your child to show them that it's important. Watch to be sure your child does a good job. Here are some hand washing tips:

- Use regular soap and warm water. Antibacterial soap is not recommended. Only use hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
- Wash for about 20 seconds. Sing "Happy Birthday" all the way through to make sure you've washed long enough.
- Rinse hands well and dry.

Child Care and School Readiness

It's time to find a preschool!

If your child will be going to preschool, it's important to start looking now for one both of you will like. There are many kinds of programs to choose from. Here are a few things to do to help you decide:

- Make a list of the most important things to both you and your child and take it with you.
- Visit more than one preschool, talk to staff, and watch a class. Talk with other parents at the schools.
- Take your child to visit your final choices. Let them help make the decision, if possible.

For more information on choosing the right preschool for your family, visit childcareawarewa.org/families.

Family Support and Routines

What to know about complementary medicine.

Tell all your child's health care providers about any complementary health approaches your child uses (like natural products, home remedies or chiropractic). Each provider should know of everything you do for your child's health. This will help you get the best and safest care for your child.

Be careful when choosing vitamins and herbal supplements. They don't go through the same testing as medicines do before going to market and are not tested for safety or effectiveness in children. Your child may react differently than an adult would to these products.

For information on talking to your health care provider about using complementary health products and practices, visit bit.ly/NIH-CH.

Your child learns from watching you!

What you do is just as important as what you say. As a parent, you teach your child many things by talking to them. However, your child also learns from watching and copying you and other family members.

Practice healthy habits, such as getting regular exercise and limiting screen time. Make sure your child sees you brush your teeth daily. Encourage nutritious eating by eating nutritious foods yourself. If you smoke, now is a great time to stop. For information about quitting, call 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669) or visit bit.ly/DOH-help2quit.

Safety

Lock up guns!

All children are in danger if they play with guns. If you have guns at home, always store them unloaded. Store them in a gun safe, lock box, or use a cable or trigger lock. Lock up bullets separately. Keep lock box keys where children cannot get them.

Find out if your child's other caregivers own guns. Make sure they are stored safely. For safe gun storage information visit lokitup.org.

Keep matches and lighters out of reach.

Young children are curious about fire. Children as young as 2 can start fires and hurt themselves if they play with matches and lighters. If you have lighters and matches at home, keep them out of your child's reach and out of sight. Watch your child to make sure they are safe when stoves, fireplaces, and barbecue grills are in use.

Start the helmet habit early.

Help your child get in the habit of wearing a helmet whenever they ride a toy with wheels or on the back of your bike. When you ride a bike, wear a helmet. It is the law! Your child learns from watching you.

Closely watch your child in and around water!

Children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water. They can slip away and go underwater quickly and quietly. An adult must always be within an arm's reach whenever a toddler is in or around water. Talk with your doctor or nurse about swimming lessons for your child. But remember, even if your child has been in a water skills class, they can still drown.

Always stay with your child whenever they are in the bathroom or taking a bath. Empty wading or kiddie pools when you're not using them. Keep garbage cans covered and put fences around pools, hot tubs, as well as ponds. If a gate is needed, it should close and latch by itself.

Learn child CPR. Call your local fire station for classes.

Make sure your child wears a life jacket when playing in or near water; on a dock; or in a boat, raft, or inner tube. Set a good example and wear a life jacket yourself. Swim where there is a lifeguard on duty whenever you can.

For more information on water safety and drowning prevention for all ages visit seattlechildrens.org/dp.



Make sure I wear a life jacket when I am in or near water.

Resources

- **Vaccine schedules:** cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules
- **Vaccine questions:** doh.wa.gov/immunization
- **Online vaccine records:** myirmobile.com
- **Tips for picky eaters:** bit.ly/MyPlate-Toddlers
- **Find a preschool:** childcareawarewa.org/families
- **Complementary health:** bit.ly/NIH-CH
- **Tobacco Quitline:** 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669) and bit.ly/DOH-help2quit
- **Firearm safety:** lokitup.org
- **Water safety:** seattlechildrens.org/dp

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your child is 3 years old with information on:

- Creating a screen time plan.
- CPR.
- Your child's emotions.

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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