



Important Points for the School-age Child: 6-10 Years

Physical Development:

The school-age child will gain an average of 5-7 lbs. and grow 2.5 inches per year. The Food Guide Pyramid shows a range of servings for each food group. How much you actually eat depends on your age and activity level. School-age boys and girls require about 1600 to 2400 calories each day, depending on their age and activity level. Once they hit their growth spurt, girls require an additional 200 calories and boys 500 calories. School age children will therefore require between the low and middle range of servings. Children who are overweight and dieting should at least eat the lowest range of servings. No more than 30% of your diet should come from fats. For a 1600 calorie diet, that would equal 53g of fat each day and for a 2200 calorie diet, 73g of fat each day. School age children require about 800 mg of calcium each day. Once they begin puberty, their calcium requirements will increase to about 1200 mg each day. Please encourage your child to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day. Limit screen time to 1 hour a day; this means TV, computer games, smartphones, and Internet time too!

Development:

School age children are highly active, like to paint and draw, jumps rope, skips, may lose first tooth, vision is 20/20, understands concept of numbers, knows right and left, can tell time, can repeat numbers backwards, can read age-appropriate books, understands concept of space, writes stories, cooperates and shares, may try cheating or lying, likes to copy adults, attention span is 15 minutes at 6 and 1 hour at 9 years, may be modest about body, enjoys clubs or group sports, friends and peer acceptance become increasingly important.

Touchpoints:

Your child's developmental task during her school-age years is to identify with her peers. This increased emotional involvement with relationships outside the home channels energy away from parents to socially acceptable norms within his peer group. This independence (in the form of "don't kiss me in front of my friends, Mom") helps them achieve self-efficacy and resilience. The new independence may come as a surprise to parents and some may experience a sense of loss. Remember that your job as parents continues to be providing roots *and* wings. Another touchpoint will be the beginning of open discussions with your child regarding violence, sexuality and substance abuse. Please discuss these issues openly with your child to share concerns or correct misconceptions. Setting limits may be necessary to allow children to be exposed to such issues when they are developmentally ready to do so.

Safety:

- Use a booster seat, in the back seat, until the vehicle seat belt fits properly. The lap belt should lay across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt should fit across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall).
- If he cannot yet do so, begin to teach your child his or her full name, address and phone number.
- Kids need to understand that guns are not toys and learn how to behave around them. Lock the guns and ammunition separately, and hide the keys where your child cannot reach them.
- Enroll in swim lessons and remember that knowing how to "swim" does not make your child water-safe at this age. All pools must be gated. Always use sunscreen when your child is outside playing or swimming.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and check that they work properly every month. Keep your child's environment free of smoke: no smoking in the home or car. Conduct fire drills.
- Teach your child rules for interacting with strangers, either on the phone or at the door. Develop a secret codeword that only the parents and child know can be used with another adult in case of extreme emergency.
- Children should be taught to play group sports in appropriate, safe and supervised areas with proper equipment and rules. Helmets and safety equipment should be worn when riding bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and skates. Your child should drink 1 cup of water every 30 minutes while playing sports in our Texas heat.

What to expect during this visit:

Between 11 and 12 years, we will administer the tetanus and pertussis booster; the first meningococcal vaccine; and begin the 2-shot HPV series. Please refer to the "After the Shots" handout for further instructions. Other screening includes vision, hearing, and blood pressure. Please let us know if your family has a history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol or triglycerides.