



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

A Parent's Guide to Raising Healthy, Happy Children



Dear Parent

The early years are the most important in your child's life. Your baby's brain is rapidly developing. It's creating the foundations for future health and emotional well-being. That's why it's important that you talk to your child, hug your child, and read to your child even when your child is still a baby. These things will help form the person your child will become.

Every child is unique. Every parent is unique — whether a mother, father, partner, grandparent, adoptive or foster parent, or other caregiver. It only makes sense that every parenting style is also unique. There are a few things every parent can do to have a healthier, happier child. To start, find a doctor or nurse for your child as soon as possible. Your child will visit this doctor or nurse often for checkups and other health care. This is the first step to having a “medical home” for your child (See **Medical Home on pages 2-3**).

This guide gives tips and tools for each stage of your child's development. Keep this guide handy in your purse or diaper bag. Bring it to your child's doctor visits and read it often as your child grows.

Parenting isn't an easy job, but it's one of the most rewarding things you'll ever do. Enjoy it!

A Medical Home is a partnership between a child, the family, and the child's regular doctor or nurse.

Medical home benefits:

- Your family will see the same medical staff each time your child has a well child check or sick visit.
- You have a trusted place to go for answers about your child's health and development as they grow.
- You have a professional team to guide you through any challenges your child might face.

Choosing a Medical Home:

It's important to choose a primary care doctor or nurse who you and your child feel comfortable around. They need to meet the needs of your family. When selecting your child's doctor or nurse:

- Ask friends and family for names of trusted doctors, nurses, and clinics in your area.
- Determine whether the clinic accepts your insurance and is "in-network." This will significantly reduce your out-of-pocket medical costs.
- Consider the practical needs of your family: How far is the clinic from your home? What hours is it open? Do they offer after-hours options? Does the provider speak your language and respect your culture? Can the provider accommodate your child's needs?
- Schedule a tour of the clinic and meet the doctor or nurse to make sure the team is a good fit for your family. Many clinics are happy to meet you before you have your baby so that you can get to know them better.

What to Expect at your Medical Home

You should:

- Bring this guide and a list of questions you may want to ask.
- Talk about how your child is growing, developing, and any concerns you may have.
- Let them know if you need help meeting your family's needs (food, clothing, a place to sleep) or if there are any changes in your home.
- Tell them if your child is seeing any other doctors or specialists.

The doctor should:

- Ask you questions about your child's development, behaviors, nutrition, and daily activities.
- Discuss options with you before making joint decisions about your child's health.
- Respect your family's culture and religious beliefs.
- Get an interpreter, if needed.

When you need more support, the doctor and staff should:

- Connect you with resources, family support organizations, and other community groups for parents.
- Refer you to health services if you feel overwhelmed, sad, tired, or have other health and nutrition concerns and needs.

When the child needs extra care and support, the doctor and staff should:

- Explain your child's medical records and test results with you. If you don't understand something, ask questions.
- Share research and other helpful materials about your child's health.
- Connect you with other health professionals, as needed.
- Work with the medical team and your family to determine how to treat your child's health challenges.
- Locate or give a referral for transportation, medical equipment, and home care, as well as ways to pay for them.
- Confirm your child's school or day care understands your child's medical condition.

Vaccine Schedule

Your child gets vaccines throughout their life to prevent disease and illness. Some vaccines are required at a certain age and some are recommended to prevent seasonal illnesses (like the flu shot). Use this chart to keep track of your child's vaccines by writing down the date they received them. You can also track your child's vaccines on your phone by downloading the free "**CDC Vaccine Schedules**" app.

Hepatitis B (Hep B)		
Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	At birth	
2nd	Between ages 1 and 2 months	
3rd	Between ages 6 and 18 months	

Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTaP)		
Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Age 2 months	
2nd	Age 4 months	
3rd	Age 6 months	
4th	Ages between 15 and 18 months	
5th	Ages between 4 and 6 years	

H. influenza Type B (Hib)		
Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Age 2 months	
2nd	Age 4 months	
3rd*	Age 6 months	
4th	Ages between 12 and 15 months	

Inactivated Polio (IPV)		
Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Age 2 months	
2nd	Age 4 months	
3rd	Ages between 6 and 18 months	
4th	Ages between 4 and 6 years	

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Ages between 12 and 15 months	
2nd	Ages between 4 and 6 years	

Rotavirus (RV)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Age 2 months	
2nd	Age 4 months	
3rd*	Age 6 months	

Varicella (chickenpox)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Ages between 12 and 15 months	
2nd	Ages between 4 and 6 years	

Pneumonia (PCV)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Age 2 months	
2nd	Age 4 months	
3rd	Age 6 months	
4th	Ages between 12 and 15 months	

Hepatitis A (Hep A)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Ages between 12 and 23 months	
2nd	Ages 6-18 months after first dose	

Other Shots

Type	Age Given	Date
Influenza	Annually	

* Third dose only used with certain vaccine brands. Check with your doctor.

Talk with your doctor to determine if your child needs additional shots.

Developmental/Behavioral Health Screening Schedule

During visits with your child's doctor, the doctor will monitor how your child is developing. Your child's doctor will ask you questions or talk and play with your child to see how your child responds. You will also answer questions about your child's development and behavior from a developmental screening tool. Developmental and behavioral screening tools are formal, research-based questionnaires or checklists that ask questions about your child's development including language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions. Share any concerns that you have with the doctor about how your child behaves, plays, moves, and interacts.

A positive screening does not mean that your child has a diagnosis or significant delay. It can be a sign that your child might need extra support. It can be easier to address delays with extra support if they are identified earlier. (For more information see **Developmental Concerns on pages 80-81.**)

Your child should get a developmental and/or autism screening at ages 9 months, 18 months, and 24 months. You should discuss your child's development during all visits. If your doctor does not screen at these visits, you can ask them to do a screening. Your child care provider also knows about child development and they may be trained to do a screening.

To learn more about screening your child, visit actearlytexas.org and mchatscreen.com. Download CDC's Milestone Tracker app on your smart phone at cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly to monitor your child's development between medical appointments. Use this chart to keep track of your child's screenings by writing down the date they received them.

Developmental/Behavioral Health Screenings

Type of Screening	Age Given	Date
Developmental Screening	Age 9 months	
Developmental Screening and Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening	Age 18 months	
Developmental Screening and Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening	Age 24 months	
Developmental Screening *if not completed at 24 month check-up	Age 30 months	

Keep me healthy

Before you and your baby go home from the hospital:

Your baby will receive:

- Eye ointment to prevent eye infection.
- Blood tests. Blood will be drawn with a heel prick. Your baby will need another within two weeks, usually at the first check-up. If the tests show a possible problem, you and your doctor will talk about it together.
- Hepatitis B and Vitamin K shots.
- A hearing test. If your baby needs another hearing test, your doctor will help you schedule one.
- Some babies may also have a test known as the “car seat challenge” to make sure they can safely travel home without any medical issues.

As a parent, you will receive guidance on and will learn to:

- Develop a feeding plan for your baby which may include breastfeeding support resources.
- Create a safe sleep environment and safely position your baby for sleep.
- Recognize normal feeding and sleep patterns and cues.
- Bathe your baby, including caring for your baby’s umbilical cord and genitals.
- Schedule your baby’s first doctor appointment. If you have not yet selected a doctor or nurse for your child, ask for help and see **Choosing a Medical Home on pages 2-3**.
- Secure your baby in a car seat to go home.

Your baby should see a doctor or nurse at 3 to 5 days old. During your baby’s first doctor’s office visit, your doctor will:

- Talk with you about your infant feeding goals and plan.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Examine your baby from head to toe by:
 - Checking your baby’s eyes, ears, and nose;
 - Listening to your baby’s heart and lungs; and
 - Looking at your baby’s hips, abdomen, skin, genitals, and umbilical cord.

Your doctor may also talk to you about:

- Your mental health and family support.
- Tips and strategies for what to do when your baby is crying and bonding with your baby.
- Normal infant sleep patterns.
- Keeping your baby safe inside and outside of the house.

Ask your doctor questions about your baby's health. Some questions might include how to know if your baby's eating, sleeping, and daily patterns are normal; how to soothe your baby when your baby cries; or what to do if you think your baby is not feeling well.

Feed Me

Breast milk is the best food for your baby. It meets your baby's specific needs for growth, health, and development. If possible, directly breastfeed or provide pumped breast milk to your baby for the first six months with no other solids or liquids. Check with your child's doctor about Vitamin D and iron supplements during the first year. Continue to breastfeed through the first two years of life and for as long as you and your baby want. For breastfeeding questions and help, call the toll-free **Texas Lactation Support Hotline at 1-855-550-6667** or visit breastmilkcounts.com.

Babies who are not breastfed or not exclusively breastfed should be given iron-fortified infant formula. Infant formula can be expensive. Many organizations provide formula at low costs. Call 2-1-1 to find your local food pantry. Call your WIC clinic or visit TexasWIC.org to learn about WIC-approved formulas. To learn more about formula safety recommendations, visit <https://texaswic.org/about-wic/special-wic-food-updates>.

If you are feeding your baby formula, carefully follow the directions on the infant formula container or given by your baby's doctor. These steps will help you know how to prepare and store your infant's formula correctly. Preparing your baby's formula according to the instructions is important. If your baby is younger than 2 months of age, was born prematurely, or has a weakened immune system, you may want to take extra precautions when preparing infant formula to prevent bacterial infection. To learn more, visit cdc.gov/cronobacter/infection-and-infants.html.

Tips for preparing, using, and storing your baby's formula:

Preparation

- Make sure the formula is not expired and the container is in good condition (no dents, puffy ends, or rust spots).
- Clean the countertops and wash your hands with soap and warm water before preparing bottles. Hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent you and your family from getting sick. For more information about when and how to wash your hands, visit cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html.
- Use a clean bottle and nipple. For more information about how to safely clean, sanitize, and store infant feeding items, visit cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/healthychildcare/infantfeeding/cleansanitize.html.

- Powdered formula is not sterile so you need very hot water to kill any bacteria that may be present. Use water from a safe source to mix with formula. Tap water is usually safe but contact your local health department if you are not sure. Find your local health department at dshs.texas.gov/regions/lhds.shtm.
- Use the exact amount of water and formula listed on the instructions of the infant formula container or the instructions given to you by your health care provider. Always measure the water first and then add the infant formula powder. **NEVER dilute formula by adding extra water.** This can make your baby sick.
- Shake infant formula in the bottle to mix. Do not stir.
- You do not need to warm infant formula before feeding. If you decide to warm the formula, place the bottle under running warm water or into a bowl of warm water for a few minutes. Avoid getting water into the bottle or nipple. This could contaminate the prepared formula. Test the temperature of the formula before feeding it to your baby by putting a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel warm, not hot. Never warm infant formula in a microwave. Microwaving creates hot spots which can burn your baby's mouth.
- After feeding, be sure to thoroughly clean the bottle and nipple before the next use.

Use Quickly or Store Safely

- Use prepared infant formula within one hour from start of feeding and within two hours of preparation.
- If you are not going to use the prepared infant formula within two hours, immediately store the bottle in the refrigerator and use it within 24 hours.
- Throw out any infant formula that's left in the bottle after feeding your baby. **Do not refrigerate it to save for later.** The combination of infant formula and your baby's saliva can cause bacteria to grow.

To learn more about infant formula feeding, visit cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/formula-feeding/index.html.

Tips for Bottle Feeding

- Position the bottle at an angle rather than straight up and down so the infant formula only comes out when your baby sucks.
- Let your baby take breaks from drinking when he or she seems to want them.
- Watch your baby for signs or cues (see next section) that he or she is full, and then stop feeding, even if the bottle is not empty.
- Consider inviting your partner or other caregivers to feed the baby to encourage bonding.

Remember:

- **Do not** use a bottle to feed your baby anything besides breastmilk or infant formula.
- **Never put cereal or any other solid food in the bottle**, unless advised by your doctor. Putting infant cereal or other solid foods in your baby's bottle will not make him or her sleep longer and could increase your baby's risk of choking or overfeeding.
- **Hold your baby close and watch** while you feed him or her a bottle.
- **Always hold the bottle for your baby while feeding.** Propping the bottle in your baby's mouth can increase your baby's risk of choking, tooth decay, and ear infections, due to fluid buildup in the internal ear.
- **Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle.** Infant formula can pool around the baby's teeth and this can cause tooth decay.
- **Do not force your baby to finish the bottle** if your baby is showing signs or cues of fullness.

Your baby uses special cues to let you know when they are hungry. "I want to eat" cues can look like:

- Making sucking noises.
- Making hands into fists.
- Keeping hands near lips or sucking on hands.
- Puckering lips.
- Sticking their tongue out.
- Tightening arms and legs.
- Turning their head to look for a breast or bottle (this is called rooting).
- Being irritable or crying. Crying is a late sign of hunger. If your baby is crying, you may have to calm them down before trying to feed them.

For more information about how to tell when your baby is hungry, visit the Texas WIC video blog at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57LsG4bML-0>.

Your baby also uses cues to tell you they are full. "I want to stop eating" cues can look like:

- Turning their head away from the nipple or bottle.
- Sucking slower or stop sucking.
- Relaxing arms and hands.
- Pushing away or letting go of the breast or bottle.
- Falling asleep.
- Being irritable or crying.

For more information about how to tell if your baby is getting enough milk, visit the Texas WIC video blog at youtu.be/_nLk8Rtb3So.

Do not feed your newborn cereal or other solid foods unless advised by your doctor.

Your baby's digestive system is not yet ready to process solid foods until about age 6 months. Exclusive breastfeeding for up to 6 months helps protect infants against eczema, wheezing, and reduces risk of asthma and obesity. To help decrease the risk of choking, solids should be given when your baby can sit up by themselves, control their head and neck, and shows interest when you are eating near them.

Your baby is getting enough to eat if they:

- Are gaining weight.
- Have at least four wet diapers a day by the time your baby is four days old and at least five wet diapers a day by the time your baby is one week old.
- Have at least three poopy diapers a day by the time your baby is one week old. This number may decrease after 4-6 weeks.

Take care of my teeth:

Care for your baby's gums. Wipe your baby's gums with a soft, moist washcloth at least once a day. Don't put your baby's pacifier, bottle nipples, teethingers, or other items in your mouth. You can transfer bacteria from your mouth to the baby's mouth.

Keep me safe

- Handle your baby gently. Support your baby's head and neck when holding your baby.
- Don't leave your baby alone on a changing table, bed, or other high place. Your baby could fall.
- Avoid others who are sick.
- Avoid the sun. Use infant sunscreen on small areas of the body if protective clothing and shade are not available.
- Keep your baby away from hot objects and liquids. Test water temperature with the inside of your wrist before putting your baby in the bath. Home water should be less than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Wash your hands with soap and water before touching or holding your baby. Ask family and guests to do the same. This is one of the most important steps in keeping your baby safe from germs.
- Make sure family members have a recent Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) vaccine. It will keep the baby safe from pertussis (whooping cough). Tdap vaccination during pregnancy provides the best protection for mothers and babies.

- Make sure family members have a recent flu vaccine.
- **Never shake a baby!** Shaking a baby can cause brain damage, blindness, hearing loss or even death. Remember, your baby isn't trying to make you angry or upset. Take a deep breath, step away, and calm yourself.
- Never let anyone smoke around your baby. This helps to reduce their risk of asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Always supervise your baby with siblings younger than age 12. (See **Safe Sibling Play on page 72.**)

Tear out the Helpful Resources section at the front of this guide. Fill out the emergency numbers and place on the refrigerator, or add contacts to your phone for quick reference.

Car Safety

A child safety seat is the only safe way for your baby to ride in any vehicle. Texas law says that your baby must ride in an appropriate child safety seat for their height and weight until they are at least age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

Riding safely in the vehicle:

- **Selection:** Select a safety seat that is appropriate for your child's age, height, and weight, and one that fits correctly in your vehicle.
- **Location and direction:** Place the safety seat in the back seat rear-facing (facing the back window).
- **Harnessing:** Always buckle the harness! Use the harness slot that is at or BELOW the baby's shoulders. Tighten the harness until it is snug against their body and the chest clip is placed at armpit level.
- **Installation:** Once installed, the safety seat should not move more than 1 inch from side-to-side and front-to-back.

Additional tips:

- Your baby should always be rear-facing in their safety seat. Once they are toddlers, they should remain rear-facing until they outgrow the height and weight limits of their rear-facing seat.
- Avoid using pre-owned safety seats that may be expired, recalled, or involved in a vehicle crash.
- Use the safety seat even if your baby fusses. Stay calm to help your baby calm down.
- Your baby will adjust to the safety seat.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute.
- Children younger than age 13 should always ride in the back seat.
- Drive safely. **NEVER text or talk on the phone while driving.**

If you have safety seat questions or want to be sure your safety seat is installed in your car correctly, call **Safe Riders** toll-free at **1-800-252-8255** or visit **Safe Kids Worldwide** at cert.safekids.org to find a technician near you.

To learn more about keeping your child safe in and around cars, visit dshs.texas.gov/the-office-injury-prevention/safe-riders or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.

Infant Sleep Safety

There are actions you can take to keep your baby and their environment safe during sleep and reduce their risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related deaths. This information should be shared with every person caring for your baby. This includes grandparents, other family, and child care providers.

The exact cause of SIDS is unknown, but these tips have been found to reduce the risk of SIDS:

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep every time, including for naps and at night.
 - If your baby rolls over on his or her own, from back to stomach or stomach to back, there is no need to reposition the baby. Starting sleep on the back is more important for reducing SIDS risk.
- Use a firm and flat, non-inclined sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved** crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard**. The surface should be covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding or soft items in the sleep area.
 - If you bring your baby into your bed for feeding or comforting, remove all soft items and bedding from the area and put your baby back on a safety-approved** sleep surface when finished. This sleep area should be close to your bed. If you fall asleep while feeding or comforting your baby in your bed, place your baby back in their separate sleep surface as soon as you wake up. Do not bring your baby to a couch or chair for feeding or comforting your baby if you think you might fall asleep.
 - Beds, couches, sofas, chairs, car seats, strollers, swings, carriers, slings, infant chairs, bouncy seat, sitting boosters or pillows, or other devices or surfaces that are not safety-approved** for infant sleep should not be used to place your baby to sleep for naps or at night.

**For more information about crib safety and safety-approved infant sleep surfaces, visit cpsc.gov/SafeSleep.

- Breastfeed your baby to reduce the risk of SIDS.
 - Studies show that breastfed infants are more easily awakened than babies fed formula. Breastmilk protects baby against illness such as diarrhea and respiratory infections which can make your baby more vulnerable to SIDS. Breastfeeding exclusively through the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding through the first two years of life and beyond leads to the lowest risk.
- Share your room with your baby, ideally through the first year of your baby's life, but at least for the first six months, as this age is when rates of infant death are highest. Room-sharing allows for more opportunities to watch over your baby and to respond to their feeding and comfort needs.
- Keep your baby in your room close to you, but on a separate, safety approved** sleep surface. Do not put soft objects, toys, crib bumpers, or loose bedding under baby, over baby, or anywhere in baby's sleep area.
- Do not smoke or vape during pregnancy and do not smoke or vape or allow others to smoke or vape around your baby. Do not allow smoking or vaping in your home or your vehicle. For help quitting tobacco, call **Texas Quitline** toll-free at **1-877-YES QUIT (1-877-937-7848)** or visit YesQuit.org.
- Think about giving your baby a pacifier at the time you lay your baby down for sleep for naps and at night. If you are breastfeeding, do not introduce a pacifier until breastfeeding is well established.
- Do not let your baby get too hot during sleep.
 - Dress your baby in single layer of sleep clothing appropriate for the environment, such as a wearable blanket. This keeps your baby warm without the need for loose blankets in the crib.
 - Do not over bundle your baby.
 - Monitor for signs of overheating such as sweating or feeling hot to the touch.
 - Keep your baby's face and head uncovered during sleep.
- Follow your pediatrician's guidance on your baby's vaccines and regular health checkups.
- Avoid using products that go against safe sleep recommendations, especially those that claim to prevent or reduce the risk for SIDS.
- Do not use heart or breathing monitors in the home to reduce the risk of SIDS.
 - If you are interested in learning about these monitors for other health conditions, talk with your baby's doctor and always follow safe sleep recommendations.
- Give your baby 30 minutes of tummy time each day while baby is awake and someone is watching.

**For more information about crib safety and safety-approved infant sleep surfaces, visit cpsc.gov/SafeSleep.

Learn more about Infant Sleep Safety

To learn more about infant sleep safety, visit dshs.texas.gov/safeinfantsleep/, safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov/safesleepbasics/faq or getparentingtips.com/babies/safety/ABCs-of-safe-sleep-for-babies/default.asp.

For more information about crib safety and safety-approved infant sleep surfaces, visit cpsc.gov/SafeSleep.

Play with me

Your baby needs attention and contact to help them feel safe, secure, and loved. By playing and talking with your baby, you encourage your baby's brain development.

- Hold your baby to your chest so there is skin-to-skin contact.
- Hold, cuddle, rock, and hug your baby. Let your baby look at your face.
- Change your baby's position occasionally.
- Talk, sing, and read to your baby.
- Listen to gentle music.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate. Some babies take a little longer to do some things. You can track your baby's development by downloading the **CDC's Milestone Tracker app** at cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html on your smart phone.

If you are worried about your baby's growth or development, talk to your doctor or nurse.

Watch for your baby to:

- Respond to your voice and touch.
- Move their eyes to follow an object in front of their face.
- Sleep a lot. Your baby can't tell night from day just yet.
- Be startled by loud noises.

Learn my signs:

Your baby will show you signs or cues that they may be uncomfortable and need something to change. Try to learn your baby's likes and dislikes and respond to these cues.

Baby's Signs	Try these Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look away• Stiffen arms or legs• Frown• Yawn• Fall asleep• Cry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold baby close and rock baby while repeating the same sound like "sh-sh-sh-sh"• Move away from a noise or other stimulant• Burp baby• Change diaper• Remove or add clothing• Play with something different• Feed baby

Your baby's crying can be stressful, but it is a normal and important way that your baby tells you that they need something to change.

Try to remain calm and curious about the reason for their crying.

See **Soothing a Crying Baby on pages 74-75** and **Parent Self-Care on Page 73** for more information.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

Your baby may have a visit with their doctor at age 2-4 weeks. The 2-4 week check-up will be similar to the first checkup and will also include the final newborn blood test.

At the 2 month check-up, your doctor will:

- Talk about your feeding plan and goals.
- Weigh and measure your baby including head circumference.
- Look at your baby's eyes and skin.
- Listen to your baby's heart and lungs.
- Give your baby a few shots to help your baby's body fight disease. You can use the **Vaccine Schedule on pages 4-5** to help you keep track of your baby's vaccines.
- Encourage mom to attend the postpartum checkup and continue taking prenatal vitamins.

If you don't have health insurance for your baby, call 2-1-1 or visit yourtexasbenefits.com to find out about children's health insurance.

Feed me

Exclusive breastfeeding (only breast milk with no other foods or liquids) is recommended for about the first six months of life. Babies who are not able to exclusively breastfeed should be given iron fortified infant formula. Look for hunger signs and try to feed your baby before they get fussy.

Use the following tips to feed your child:

- Hold and look at your baby while they eat. This makes your baby feel safe and loved.
- If your baby bottle-feeds, consider allowing other family members or caregivers to feed the baby. Feeding is a key time for getting close to your baby called bonding.
- Your baby may have a growth spurt and want to eat more. This is normal. If you are breastfeeding, feed your baby as often as they want and your body will make more milk to keep up with your baby's feeding patterns.
- Do not use a bottle to feed your baby anything besides breast milk or infant formula.
- Never put cereal or other solid food in the bottle unless advised by your baby's doctor. Putting infant cereal or other solid foods in your baby's bottle will not make him or her sleep longer and could increase your baby's risk of choking.

- Your baby's digestive system is not yet ready to process solid foods until about age 6 months. Exclusive breastfeeding for up to 6 months helps protect infants against eczema, wheezing and reduces risk of asthma and obesity. To help decrease the risk of choking, solids should be given when your baby can sit up by themselves, control their head and neck and shows interest when you are eating near them.
- If you are returning to work or school after your baby is born, continue to breastfeed your baby if possible. Visit breastmilkcounts.com for tips on how to continue to breastfeed once you go back to work or school and for information on pumping and storing breastmilk. Talk with your employer before returning to work or school about your breastfeeding goals and develop a plan for expressing breast milk. Visit TexasMotherFriendly.org for more information. Talk to your insurance company or WIC to see if you qualify for a free breast pump.

Take care of my teeth

Care for your baby's gums. Wipe your baby's gums with a soft, moist washcloth at least once a day.

Keep me safe

- Check the batteries in your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors every year.
- Practice a fire escape with the whole family. **How would you get your baby out if there were a fire?**
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke, e-cigarette aerosols, and other tobacco products. It makes it harder for your baby to breathe and can contribute to sleep related death, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Cigarette filters and e-cigarette liquids are poisonous if consumed by your baby. If you think your child has been exposed to liquid nicotine, act fast and immediately call the **Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222**.
- Put your baby on their back to sleep and create a safe sleep environment every time, including naptime. Share SIDS information with all your baby's caregivers. (See **Safe Infant Sleep Safety** on dshs.texas.gov/SafeInfantSleep)
- Keep small objects and toys away from your baby. Your baby is learning to put things in their mouth and could choke on small objects.
- If your doctor prescribes medicine for your baby, read the label and instructions every time. Call your doctor if you have questions.
- If carrying your baby in a car seat, always buckle the safety straps to secure your baby.

- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/
- Babies age 6 months and younger should not be in direct sunlight. If outside, stay in the shade and dress baby in clothing that covers arms, legs, and head.
- Always supervise your baby with siblings younger than age 12. (See **Safe Sibling Play on Page 72**)
- You may need to find reliable child care. Use the **Choosing Child Care section on pages 78-79** for tips on how to select the best child care for you and your baby.

Play with me

- Let your baby feel different objects by rubbing them against their hands.
- Let your baby spend time playing on their tummy each day. Tummy time helps head, neck, and stomach muscles. Stay with your baby during tummy time.
- Smile and talk to your baby a lot. Read books and be expressive as you read.
- Carry and hold your baby while you move around the house. Talk about what you are doing.
- Encourage other family members to talk with, play with, and help care for your baby. This fosters family bonding.
- Avoid TV and other digital media for your baby.

Watch me grow

Every baby develops new skills at their own pace. If you're worried about your baby's development, talk to your doctor. Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs can help.

To find your nearest ECI program, visit citysearch.hhsc.state.tx.us or call the HHS Office of the Ombudsman toll-free at **1-877-787-8999**, select a language, and select option 3 for ECI information.

Watch for your baby to:

- Turn and smile at you when your baby sees or hears you.
- Make sounds (e.g., coo) and smile.
- Move arms and legs on both sides of your baby's body.
- Calm or comfort themselves. Some babies do this by bringing their hands to their mouth.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 4 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Talk about your feeding plan and goals.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Check your baby from head to toe to see how your baby moves, hears, and sees.
- Give your baby a few shots. If your baby had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.

Find out about children's health insurance. If you don't have health insurance for your child, call 2-1-1 or visit yourtexasbenefits.com.

Feed me

Exclusive breastfeeding (only breast milk with no other foods or liquids) is recommended for about the first six months of life. Babies who are not able to exclusively breastfeed should be given iron fortified infant formula. Look for hunger signs and try to feed your baby before they get fussy.

Use the following tips to feed your child:

- Hold your baby and look at them while they eat. This makes your baby feel safe and loved.
- Feeding is a key time for getting close to your baby, called bonding. If your baby bottle-feeds, consider allowing other family members or caregivers to feed the baby to encourage bonding.
- Your baby may have a growth spurt and will want to eat more. This is normal. If you are breastfeeding, feed your baby as often as they want, and your body will make more milk to keep up with your baby's feeding patterns. If you think you are not making enough milk, talk with your doctor or make an appointment with a lactation support provider.
- Do not use a bottle to feed your baby anything besides breast milk or infant formula.
- Never put cereal or other solid food in the bottle unless advised by your baby's doctor. Putting infant cereal or other solid foods in your baby's bottle will not make him or her sleep longer and could increase your baby's risk of choking.
- Your baby's digestive system is not yet ready to process solid foods until about age 6 months. Exclusive breastfeeding for up to 6 months helps protect infants against eczema, wheezing, and reduces risk of asthma and obesity. To help decrease the risk of choking, solids should be given when your baby can sit up by themselves, control their head and neck, and shows interest when you are eating near them. If breastfeeding, continue your baby's Vitamin D drops as prescribed by the doctor.

- If you are returning to work or school after your baby is born, continuing to breastfeed your baby is possible. Visit [breastmilkcounts.com](https://www.breastmilkcounts.com) for tips on how to continue to breastfeed once you go back to work or school and for information on pumping and storing breast milk.

Take care of my teeth

- Keep wiping your baby's gums each day with a soft, damp cloth. Or you can use a very soft, infant-sized toothbrush to brush your baby's teeth.
- Once teeth break through, use a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste on a toothbrush.
- The smear should be about the size of one grain of rice. Find an example of a smear and learn more about dental care at dshs.texas.gov/dental-health/parents.
- Once your baby starts teething, your baby may drool, become fussy, or put things in their mouth. Try a cold teething ring.
- Don't put your baby to bed at night with a bottle. Your baby could choke or get cavities.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, be sure to clean it often with warm, soapy water. Do not put the pacifier in your mouth to clean it.

Keep me safe

- Begin child-proofing your home. See the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke, e-cigarette aerosols, and other tobacco products. It can aggravate health problems like asthma and allergies, and increase their risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Cigarette filters and e-cigarette liquids are poisonous if consumed by your baby. If you think your child has been exposed to liquid nicotine, act fast and immediately call the **Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-222-1222**.
- Put your baby on their back to sleep and create a safe sleep environment every time your baby goes to sleep, including naptime. Share SIDS information with all of your baby's caregivers.
- **Never** leave your baby alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- If carrying your baby in a car seat, always buckle the safety straps.
- At this age, your baby is moving more. **Never** leave your baby alone on a bed, sofa or changing table, or in a walker or tub.
- Keep hot liquids away from your baby. They could spill and burn your baby.
- Keep balloons away from your baby. If a balloon covers their mouth, or if your baby inhales a piece of a popped balloon, your baby won't be able to breathe.

- Watch siblings or other young children with your baby. (See **Safe Sibling Play on Page 72.**)

Play with me

- Read your baby picture books with colorful photos or images.
- Play peek-a-boo with your hands or a blanket.
- Hold a rattle or toy in front of your baby. Let your baby follow it with their eyes.
- Give your baby time to play on their tummy. Always stay with your baby during tummy time.
- Encourage two-way communication. When baby coos or babbles, be sure to respond and have a pretend “conversation.”
- Take your baby for walks in a stroller or carrier. Talk to your child about what you see.
- Get more play ideas by downloading CDC’s Milestone Tracker app, Vroom app, or by signing up for Bright by Text at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate. Watch for your baby to:

- Smile at you.
- Have good head control.
- Begin to roll over and reach for objects.
- Push up on their elbows to raise their chest off the floor.
- Try to get your attention by moving around or making noises.

When something new or unexpected happens, your baby might cry. Try to:

- Be patient and calm. Your baby can pick up on your feelings. If you’re calm, your baby will feel safe.
- Show your baby new things, new people, and new situations very slowly and for short amounts of time.
- Comfort your baby. You can rock your baby, sing to your baby, or offer a pacifier.
- Babies do not cry to make you sad, mad, or upset. For more tips on how to calm a crying baby, check out the **Soothing a Crying Baby section on pages 74-75.**

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 6 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Talk with you about your feeding plan and goals.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Give your baby the next set of shots. If your baby had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- Check your baby's mouth and any teeth.

Protect your baby from the flu by getting a flu shot. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your baby's first flu shot.

Feed me

Your baby still gets most of their nutrition from breast milk. Babies who are not breastfed or are not exclusively breastfed should be given iron fortified formula. If you are breastfeeding your baby, try to continue doing so until your baby turns age 2 or longer. That will provide the most health benefits, including:

- Balanced nutrition.
- Continued protection from eczema, asthma, and illness.
- Improved lifelong health for both mother and baby.

Your baby may be ready to try to eat solid foods at about age 6 months. If your baby is sitting up without support, can hold their head steady, and watches when others eat food, it might be a sign they are ready to try solid foods. Talk to your baby's doctor for guidance.

Add new foods to your baby's diet gradually. Babies have small stomachs and only need a little bit of food at first. Start with a small amount, about 1 to 2 teaspoons, and let your baby guide you on how much food to feed. Give your baby one new food at a time and watch for any allergic reactions. You can help your baby practice using a cup by giving them small amounts of breast milk, formula, or water at meal and snack times. Juice is not recommended until your baby is at least age 1. The high amounts of sugar and lack of protein or fiber in juice can contribute to cavities and obesity.

Some starter foods to try:

- Pureed meats, vegetables, fruits.
- Iron fortified whole-grain infant cereal.
- Ask your baby's doctor about options if your family doesn't eat meat.

Avoid foods that are choking hazards:

- Hard pieces of fruits or vegetables like raw apples or carrots. Cook hard foods until they are soft.
- Popcorn or pretzel pieces.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, or other round and slippery foods. These should be cut into quarters for children younger than age 4.
- Tough or large chunks of meat.
- Hot dogs or sausages. Cut into short lengthwise strips rather than round coin-shaped pieces.
- Sticky foods, hard candies, or dried fruits like raisins.

Take care of my teeth

- When your baby is age 6 months you should plan for regular dental checkups.
- Your doctor can refer your baby to a dentist if you do not have one. You can also call 2-1-1 to find a provider and resource near you.
- Gently brush any teeth with a soft toothbrush or a soft cloth and tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste. The smear should be about the size of one grain of rice. Find an example of a smear and learn more about dental care at dshs.texas.gov/dental-health/parents.
- Don't share a spoon or eat from your baby's spoon. Sharing utensils can give your baby germs that cause cavities or make your baby sick.

Keep me safe

- Your baby is quickly becoming more mobile. Be sure to child-proof your home. See the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Keep your baby's car seat facing the back of the car. Call **Safe Riders** toll-free at **1-800-252-8255** if you have questions about how to install or secure your car seat.
- **Never** leave your baby alone in the bathtub or sink, even if you use a bath ring or seat.
- Test bath water with the inside of your wrist to make sure it is not too hot.
- **Never** leave your baby alone on high places like changing tables, beds, or chairs.
- At this age, your baby will put things in their mouth. Make sure to lock away any cleaners, bug spray, and medicines. Keep small objects out of reach.
- Always use high chairs safely. Use the high chair safety belt and don't leave your baby alone in the chair.

- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/
- Keep plastic bags away from your baby. They can cause suffocation.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke, e-cigarette aerosols, and other tobacco products. It can aggravate health problems like asthma and allergies, and increase their risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Cigarette filters and e-cigarette liquids are poisonous if consumed by your baby. If you think your child has been exposed to liquid nicotine, act fast and immediately call the **Poison Control Hotline** at **1-800-222-1222**.
- Supervise your baby with other children. See **Safe Sibling Play** on Page 72.

Play with me

- Put a favorite toy just out of your baby's reach. Help your baby move to get to it.
- Give your baby blocks or other objects your baby can grasp with their hands.
- Read, sing, and talk to your baby to help them develop language.
- Get down on the floor with your baby and play.
- Take your baby outside for walks in a stroller or carrier.
- Get more play ideas by downloading CDC's **Milestone Tracker** app, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for Bright by Text at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate. Watch for your baby to:

- Make sounds like "ah," "eh," and "oh."
- Roll over and try to push up when on their stomach.
- Stand up if you hold your baby under the arms.
- Begin to recognize their name and familiar faces.
- Express emotions by smiling, squealing, or laughing when happy, or frowning, crying, or grunting when sad or angry.
- Move their head and eyes to track objects and people.

For ideas on how to get your child interested in reading, use the **Read to Your Child Every Day** section on pages 82-83.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 9 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Talk with you about your baby's nutrition and feeding plan.
- Weigh and measure your baby including head circumference.
- Complete a developmental screening to check how your baby is developing compared to other babies the same age.
- Check your baby's heart, lungs, and other body parts.
- Give your baby any shots and blood tests they may need. If your baby had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.

Feed me

Your baby still gets most nutrition from breast milk. Babies who are not breastfed should be given iron fortified infant formula. If you are breastfeeding your baby, try to continue doing so until your baby turns age 2 or longer. This will provide the most health benefits, including:

- Balanced nutrition.
- Continued protection from eczema, asthma, and illness.
- Improved lifelong health for both mother and baby.

Your baby may be eating more at meal times now and becoming more comfortable with eating solid foods. They may be interested in touching their food or holding cups and bottles. Encourage your baby to explore new food varieties and textures by slowly adding in mashed and lumpier foods.

Babies are usually ready for soft, chopped foods around age 8 or 9 months and may want to hold their own spoon or use their hands to eat. It can be messy, but it gets better with time. Encourage use of a cup and talk with your baby's doctor about plans for transitioning from a bottle to a cup around age 9 months.

Some foods to try:

- Mashed, soft vegetables or fruits.
- Mashed, soft-cooked beans.
- Cottage cheese or yogurt.
- Chopped, soft-peeled, or cooked vegetables and fruits.
- Soft tofu, ground beef, chicken, or turkey.
- Iron-fortified, whole-grain infant cereal.

Avoid foods that are choking hazards:

- Hard pieces of fruits or vegetables like raw apples or carrots. Cook hard foods until they are soft.
- Popcorn or pretzel pieces.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, or other round and slippery foods. These should be cut into quarters for children younger than age 4.
- Tough or large chunks of meat.
- Hot dogs or sausages. Cut into short lengthwise strips rather than round coin-shaped pieces.
- Sticky foods, hard candies, or dried fruits like raisins.

Take care of my teeth

- Have your baby seen by a dentist every six months. Your doctor can refer your baby to a dentist if you do not have one.
- Gently brush the teeth and gums with a soft toothbrush or a soft cloth and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.

Keep me safe

- Safety-proof your home. See the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Keep heavy objects, small choking hazards, and hot liquids out of reach.
- If you think your baby has swallowed something poisonous, call the **Poison Center Hotline** toll-free at **1-800-222-1222**.
- **Never** leave your baby alone around bathtubs, play pools, toilets, and buckets. Your baby can drown in just a few inches of water.
- Help your baby learn why some things are not safe. If your baby goes to the stove, say, "Hot" and move your baby away.
- **Never** leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- Be careful in the sun. Keep sunscreen on your child when outside (at least SPF 15) and use a hat to cover their face and head.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons away from your baby. They can cause suffocation.

Play with me

- Point to and name body parts.
- Read to your baby. Look at magazines and picture books. Talk about what you see.
- Build towers with blocks or toys.
- Show your baby how to drop objects into bowls or small containers.
- Take your baby for a walk in a stroller, jogger, carrier, or baby backpack and talk to your child about what you see.
- Avoid TV, videos, and computers. Consider developing a family media use plan. For more information, visit [healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx).
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker** app, Vroom app, or by signing up for Bright by Text at [brightbytext.org](https://www.brightbytext.org) or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your baby to:

- Point to objects.
- Say “ma,” “ga,” “da,” “di,” “ba,” and other consonant-vowel combination sounds.
- Crawl using arms and legs alternately.
- Pull themselves up to stand.

You may also notice that your baby:

- Gets upset if you leave even for a short time.
- Knows which toys are theirs and gets upset when they are taken away. This is normal.
- Might be fearful or shy of strangers.

For more tips on how to calm a crying baby, check out the **Soothing a Crying Baby** section on pages 74-75.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 12 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Screen your baby for tuberculosis and anemia.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Give your baby some shots. If your baby had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- Screen your baby to see if they have been exposed to lead. Your baby can get lead in their body by breathing or eating lead dust, chips, or flakes. Lead can affect the way your baby learns, grows, and hears. If your baby is at risk, they may need a blood test for lead.
- If your child did not receive a developmental screening at their age 9-month checkup, ask your doctor's office to provide a screening at this visit.

Feed me

Continue to give your baby breastmilk through your baby's second birthday and beyond. Breastfeeding and breastmilk provides benefits to you and your baby for as long as you choose to breastfeed. If your baby is formula-fed, wean your baby from infant formula at age 12 months. Use the following tips to feed your child:

- Between ages 10 and 12 months, most babies are ready to eat pieces of table foods that your family is already eating. Your baby should use their thumb and forefinger to bring foods to their mouth and can chew very well.
- Try soft cut fruits and vegetables, chopped chicken or turkey, finger foods like dry cereal, small pieces of cooked pasta, and mixed foods like toast with avocado or tortillas with beans. Keep letting your child practice using a cup.
- At age 12 months, you can start giving your child unsweetened, unflavored whole-fat cow's milk unless there is a family history or risk of obesity or heart disease. Talk with your baby's doctor about this and non-dairy milk alternatives.
- Always try to provide healthy snacks and meals, like fruits, vegetables, meats, and whole grains.
- Limit foods that are high in salt (sodium), like canned foods, fast foods, and processed meats.
- Children younger than age 2 should not eat foods or drinks with added sugars. This includes cookies, cakes, candies, juice, or soda. The high amounts of sugar and lack of protein or fiber can contribute to cavities and obesity.

- Let your toddler decide how much to eat. If they decide they are full, don't ask them to continue eating.
- Avoid distractions such as watching TV or other electronics during mealtimes.
- Make mealtime family time by engaging with your child and talking about their food.

Avoid foods that are choking hazards:

- Hard pieces of fruits or vegetables like raw apples or carrots. Cook hard foods until they are soft.
- Popcorn or pretzel pieces.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, or other round and slippery foods. These should be cut into quarters for children younger than age 4.
- Tough or large chunks of meat.
- Hot dogs or sausages. Cut into short lengthwise strips rather than round coin-shaped pieces.
- Sticky foods, hard candies, or dried fruits like raisins.

Take care of my teeth

- By the time your baby is age 12 months, your baby should be seeing a dentist every six months and more often if needed.
- Make brushing your baby's teeth a part of the daily routine. Brush your baby's teeth in the morning and at night.

Keep me safe

As your child becomes more mobile, it's important to make your home a safe environment to explore. Use the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**. Use the following tips to keep your child safe:

- Keep the crib mattress at its lowest level with the sides up so your child cannot climb out.
- Don't give your child hard-to-chew or round foods such as popcorn, nuts, raisins, tortilla chips, and grapes.
- Common accidents for toddlers include falls, burns, choking, poisoning, and drowning. Make sure you or another responsible adult is always watching.
- Starting at age 12 months, consider teaching your child how to swim or sign your child up for lessons. Learning water skills can help reduce drowning risk for young children.
- If your child seems ready, it's a good idea to start lessons now. Don't let your child play around water unless an adult is watching.

- Keep your child in a rear-facing car safety seat in the back seat of your car. This position keeps your toddler the safest and helps prevent head and neck injuries in a crash.
- Keep your child out of rooms where there are hot objects, like an oven or space heater.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke, and e-cigarette vapors. It can lead to health problems like asthma and allergies. Cigarette filters and e-cigarette liquids are poisonous if consumed by your baby. If you think your child has been exposed to liquid nicotine, act fast and immediately call the **Poison Control Hotline** at **1-800-222-1222**.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons away from your child. They can cause suffocation.

Make sure I get lots of sleep

Your toddler should be sleeping 12-16 hours a day including naps. Keep bedtime and naptime routines the same every day.

Try reading, singing, or rocking to relax your child. Put your toddler in the crib sleepy, but not asleep, so your toddler can learn to fall asleep on their own.

Play with me

- Hide an object in one of your hands. Let your toddler try to find the object.
- Let your toddler put blocks into a box and dump them out.
- Encourage your child to explore safe spaces (see **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.)
- Blow bubbles and help your child pop them.
- Try non-toxic finger paints or crayons with your child.
- Dance or sing with your toddler.
- Remember, children younger than age 2 should not watch TV, movies, or use other screens, such as a smart phone or laptop. Too much screen time can lead to delays in attention, thinking, language and social skills and blue lighting on digital screens can impact sleep needed to grow and can overstimulate baby.

- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker** app, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your baby to:

- Point at things.
- Use both hands equally.
- Try to copy what you are doing.
- Hand you a book when they want to hear a story.
- Stand alone.
- Pick up a cube or small toy in each hand and bang them together.
- Wave "bye-bye."
- Speak one or two words.

For more tips about reading, use the **Read to Your Child Every Day** section on **pages 82-83**.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Notes

[illegible]

Keep me healthy

At the 15 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Weigh and measure your child, including head circumference.
- Look in your child's eyes and mouth.
- Watch how your child interacts with the doctor/other strangers.
- Ask about your child's diet and sleep habits.
- Give your child some shots. If your child had any shot reactions before, remind the doctor or nurse what happened.

If you don't have health insurance, call 2-1-1 or visit yourtexasbenefits.com to find out about children's health insurance.

Take care of my teeth

- Take your toddler for a dental visit. The dentist will count your toddler's teeth, look for cavities, and talk to you about how to take care of their teeth.
- Brush your child's teeth after breakfast and before bed. Use a soft toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.
- Don't share a fork or spoon with your child or put their pacifier in your mouth. Sharing utensils can pass bacteria to your child's mouth that can cause cavities.
- Don't give your toddler a bottle in bed.

Keep me safe

- Safety items like baby gates and cabinet locks are very important to keep your toddler safe. See the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least age 2. The longer they stay rear-facing, the safer your child will be. Always keep car seats in the back seat of the car. For child passenger safety information Texas, visit dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or dps.texas.gov/section/media-and-communications-office/child-passenger-safety-information.
- Keep cigarettes, e-cigarette and supplies, matches, and lighters out of your child's reach. Do not allow smoking around your baby.
- Be careful in the sun. Keep sunscreen on your child when outside (at least SPF 15) and use a hat to cover their face and head.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons away from your child. They can cause suffocation.

- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/

Play with me

- Look at books with your child. You can share “reading” time by talking about the pictures.
- Hide favorite toys behind furniture or under a blanket for your child to find.
- Pretend with your child. Make believe you are cooking a meal or putting a baby doll or stuffed toy to bed.
- Explore nature together in a yard or at a park.
- Experiment with crayons, chalk, and other non-toxic art supplies.
- Build a tower with blocks.
- Continue to avoid television, tablets, and other digital media. It is not recommended until age 24 months.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC’s Milestone Tracker app**, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for Bright by Text at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate. By age 15 months, watch for your toddler to:

- Point to body parts.
- Understand simple commands (like “no” or “please give to me”).
- Scribble.
- Say 2 to 3 words besides “mama” or “dada.”
- Know the meaning of some words like “cup,” “on,” and “out.”
- Tell you what they want by pointing or making noise.
- Walk well, bend down, and get back up.

You might notice that your toddler also:

- Has a change in appetite. Your child may eat less because they’re not growing as fast.
- Puts all their energy into learning to walk and might be slow to learn some other things.

For tips on how to help your toddler through a tantrum, check out the **Managing Tantrums section on pages 76-77**.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 18 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Weigh and measure your toddler, including head circumference.
- Check your child from head to toe, including teeth, eyes, and ears.
- Watch how your child walks and uses their hands and arms.
- Complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Screen your child for autism.
- Give your child any shots they need. If your child had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.

Take care of my teeth

Teach your child to take care of their teeth. Help your toddler brush their teeth with a child-sized, soft toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.

Keep me safe

- Make your home a safe environment. Use the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least age 2. The longer they stay rear-facing, the safer your child will be. When you install a forward-facing seat, use one with a five-point harness. Always keep car seats in the back seat of the car. For child passenger safety information in Texas, visit dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or dps.texas.gov/section/media-and-communications-office/child-passenger-safety-information.
- Drive safely: make sure everyone is buckled in the vehicle before you drive. **Never text or talk on the phone.** Model safe behaviors for your child.
- It's still easy for your child to choke on food. Don't feed your child small, round foods.
- This could include nuts, popcorn, marshmallows, raw carrots, grapes, candy, or hot dogs. **Always watch your child while they are eating.**
- Hold your child at a safe distance from lawn mowers, overhead garage doors, driveways, and streets.
- Keep small appliances and electrical cords out of reach.
- Make sure all medicine has safety caps and hide them out of reach. Don't take medicine in front of your child; your child may try to copy you.
- Repeat to your child what they can and cannot touch. Your child is starting to learn how things work and can't always remember what not to touch.

- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons away from your toddler. They can cause suffocation.

Play with me

- Support your child's language development by reading, singing, and talking about what you are doing.
- Identify things when your child points.
- Let your toddler help with small chores like taking a spoon to the table or putting dirty clothes in the laundry basket.
- Let your child play in the bath. Your child may like to use plastic bowls and containers in the tub. Never leave your child alone in the tub.
- Throw or kick a ball together. Be active outside.
- Avoid television and digital media for as long as possible. It is not recommended until age 24 months. If you do sometimes have TV or screen time, make it educational and watch and talk about it together.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker** app, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate. Watch for your toddler to:

- Walk up steps.
- Use a spoon or cup without spilling most of the time.
- Speak about six words and communicate to you with gestures.
- Roll a ball back and forth with you.
- Pretend to feed a doll or stuffed animal.
- Explore alone but with a parent close by.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 2 year check-up, the doctor will:

- Complete an autism screening to check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Screen your child for tuberculosis and anemia (low iron).
- Weigh and measure your child including head circumference.
- Give your child shots, if needed. If your child had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- Check your child's eyes, ears, and mouth.
- Watch how your child walks, talks, and listens.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index) to see if your child is at a healthy weight. Make sure your child is eating nutritious foods, low in sugar and salt.
- Screen your child to see if they have been exposed to lead.

Handwashing

Germs are everywhere. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Give your child frequent reminders of how and when to wash hands. To learn about the five easy steps for handwashing, visit go.usa.gov/xV9Td.

Take care of my teeth

Continue to take your toddler for dental checkups. Be sure to check your child's teeth when you brush them. If you see any white or brown spots, take your child to the dentist as soon as possible.

Toilet training

Start introducing your child to the bathroom. Read books about using the potty. Let your child follow a bathroom routine with a parent or sibling. Make a trip to pick out underwear. Purchase a toilet ring or training toilet.

Be patient about potty training. Look for signs that your child is ready to start using the toilet. Your child may be ready if they can:

- Stay dry for a few hours after emptying their bladder.
- Tell you if they are wet or need to use the restroom.
- Pull pants down and up.
- Understand when you say, "go into the bathroom," "wipe," or "pull up your pants."

Keep me safe

- Make sure your home is a safe environment. Use the **Childproofing Checklist on Page 69**.
- Be sure that you and your toddler wear a **CPSC-approved** helmet when riding a tricycle or bicycle.
- Keep your toddler away from lawn mowers, overhead garage doors, driveways, and streets.
- Put bags and purses out of reach. There could be medicine and other items in them your child should not touch.
- Teach your child to wipe their nose with a tissue and wash hands often.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least age 2. The longer they stay rear-facing, the safer your child will be. When you install a forward-facing seat, use one with a five-point harness. Always keep car seats in the back seat of the car. For child passenger safety information in Texas, visit dps.texas.gov/section/media-and-communications-office/child-passenger-safety-information.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Keep plastic bags and balloons away from your toddler. They can cause suffocation.

Play with me

- Play “dress up,” “telephone,” and other pretend games with your child.
- Help your child put puzzles together, paint, build with blocks, and let your child explore their interests. Be sure to use toys with large pieces that can't be swallowed.
- Take your toddler on walks and let them look, listen, and touch.
- To help with decision-making skills, allow your child to make choices. Limit the choices to two or three options (e.g., offer a banana or apple for snack).
- Let your toddler play with plastic cups and a pan of water or sand so they can pour, scoop, and dig.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker app**, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Healthy Screen Time

- Children ages 2 to 5 should only watch educational, non-commercial programs. Find programs at pbskids.org.
- Limit TV/screen time (including smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.). No more than one hour per day, and for no more than 30 minutes at a time. Too much screen time can lead to delays in attention, thinking, language and social skills and blue lighting on digital screens can impact sleep needed to grow and can overstimulate your child.
- Watch with your child and help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- Set up media-free times together and media-free locations at home, such as bedrooms.
- Have a screen-free time of 90 minutes before bedtime so that your child's eyes can adjust to natural light.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your child to:

- Use two-word phrases like “want food” or “go home.”
- Throw a ball overhand.
- Make a tower of 5-6 blocks.
- Point to the picture in a book when you say “Show me the _____.”
- Use at least 50 different words.
- Kick a ball forward.
- Play alongside other children.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 2 ½ year check-up, the doctor will:

- Weigh and measure your child.
- Complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age if a screening was not done at the 2-year checkup.
- Listen to your child's speech.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index). Make sure your child is eating a healthy diet that is low in sugar and salt.
- Look in your child's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.
- Give your child any shots they need. If your child had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.

Handwashing

Germes are everywhere. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Give your child frequent reminders of how and when to wash hands. To learn about the five easy steps for handwashing, visit go.usa.gov/xV9Td.

Take care of my teeth

Brush your child's teeth twice a day and take your child to the dentist every six months for a cleaning. Limit sweet drinks and snacks. Healthy snacks include things like cheese, yogurt, unsweetened cereal, fruits, and vegetables.

Toilet Training

Help encourage your child's decision to use the potty. Praise your child for any effort or interest and never shame your child for accidents.

You can help your toddler be successful by:

- Dressing your child in clothes that are easy to remove.
- Making a routine — place your child on the potty every hour or so.
- Making it fun — read, sing a song, and help your child relax.
- Responding to accidents with love and understanding.

Keep me safe

- Watch your toddler around water. Always stay within arm's reach. Empty buckets, tubs, and other items immediately after use and remove toys from pools when you are done playing.
- Your child may be big enough to be in a forward-facing car seat. When you install a forward-facing seat, use one with a five-point harness. Keep your child's car seat in the back seat of your car. Check the buckles every time you put your child in the seat to make sure they are secure.
- Teach your toddler to ask an adult before petting a dog or other pet. Keep your child away from animals who are eating and don't allow your child to take a toy or bone out of a dog's mouth.
- When you cook on the stove, turn the pot handles to the center of the stove. Remove stove knobs, if you can.
- Be careful in the sun. Keep sunscreen on your child when outside (minimum of SPF 15) and use a hat to cover their face and head.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Keep plastic bags away from your child. They can cause suffocation.

Play with me

- Look at a book with your child each day. Let your child pick out their favorites.
- Sing songs like "London Bridge" and "Ring Around the Rosie."
- Let your toddler help pick up toys and put laundry in the hamper.
- Play chase.
- Help your child learn the names of colors, feelings, animals, and plants.
- Listen and respond to what your child says, even if it doesn't make sense to you.
- Continue to limit TV and screen time. This includes smartphones, tablets, and computers. Limit high-quality, educational programs, or video games to no more than one hour per day. Find educational shows designed for kids at pbskids.org.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker app**, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your child to:

- Point to 5-6 body parts.
- Use 3-4 word phrases.
- Know sounds animals make.
- Put on clothes and brush teeth with help.
- Jump up and down and throw a ball.
- Point to a picture and name something in the picture.
- Play with other children (e.g., tag).

Sign me up for Head Start or Preschool

If your child is not yet enrolled in child care, now is the time to start looking for a preschool or **Head Start program**. **Head Start** and many other preschools allow enrollment any time of year.

To find out more about **Head Start**, visit eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc or call 1-866-763-6481.

To find a local preschool, visit txchildcaresearch.org, dontbeinthedark.org, or call 1-800-862-5252 or 2-1-1. Use the **Choosing Child Care** section on pages 52-53 to help you pick a preschool program.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 3 year check-up, the doctor will:

- Screen your child for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Take your child's blood pressure.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Check your child's vision.
- Observe your child's speech.
- Ask what new things your child can do, what their sleeping habits are, and what your child eats.
- Give any shots your child may need. If your child had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- May complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing.

Handwashing

Germs are everywhere. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Give your child frequent reminders of how and when to wash hands. To learn about the five easy steps for handwashing, visit go.usa.gov/xV9Td.

Take care of my teeth

- Help your child brush their teeth twice a day and check your child's teeth regularly for white or brown spots. If you notice any spots, visit the dentist as soon as possible.
- Limit sugary foods and drinks — they can cause cavities.

Keep me safe

- Continue to use a size-appropriate forward-facing car seat and make sure your child is buckled up every time. When you install a forward-facing seat, use one with a five-point harness.
- Keep all medicines and cleaning supplies out of reach. Keep the **Poison Control Center** phone number close by and call **1-800-222-1222** if your child swallows something.
- Do not leave your child alone in the house, car, or backyard.
- Watch your child when they play near streets and driveways. Don't let your child cross the street alone.
- Children are excellent climbers. Make sure play equipment is secured to the ground and furniture is moved away from windows.

- Keep the trash inside a latched cabinet or in a place where your child can't get into it.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Teach your child not to play with plastic bags. They can cause suffocation.

Safety in the vehicle

A car seat is the only safe way for your child to ride in any vehicle. Texas law requires that your child must ride in an appropriate car seat for their height and weight until they are at least age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

Riding safely in the vehicle:

- **Selection:** Select a safety seat that is appropriate for your child's age, height, and weight, and one that fits correctly in your vehicle.
- **Location:** Place the car seat in the back seat of the vehicle.
- **Direction:** Once your child has outgrown the height and weight limits of a rear-facing seat, your child can transition into a forward-facing seat that is appropriate for their height and weight.
- **Installation:** Once installed, the car seat should not move more than 1 inch from side-to-side and front-to-back.
- **Harnessing:** Always buckle the harness! Be sure the harness is snug against your child's body and the chest clip is placed at armpit level.
 - **For a rear-facing seat,** use the harness slot that is AT or BELOW the child's shoulders.
 - **For a forward-facing seat,** use the harness slot that is AT or ABOVE the child's shoulders.

Additional Tips:

- Avoid using pre-owned car seats that may be expired, recalled, or have been involved in a crash.
- Use the car seat even if your child fusses. Stay calm to help your child stay calm. Stop your car in a safe area if you need to attend to your child.
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled up correctly.
- Children younger than age 13 should always ride in the back seat.
- Drive safely. **NEVER** text or talk on the phone while driving.

Safe Riders is a program that can offer free child safety seats to qualifying families throughout Texas.

To find out if you are eligible, or if you have car seat questions and want to be sure your car seat is installed correctly, call **Safe Riders** toll-free at 1-800-252-8255. To find a child passenger safety technician near you, visit Safe Kids Worldwide at cert.safekids.org.

Play with me

- Let your child pick a few books at the library. See if there are any programs for your child.
- Play outside. Practice throwing and catching a ball.
- Ask your child to tell you how an object feels (e.g., soft, sticky, hard, rough, or furry).
- Play games and teach your child the importance of taking turns.
- Start a play group or have a play date so your child can interact with other children their age.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker app**, Vroom app, or by signing up for Bright by Text at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your child to:

- Enjoy pretend play and play with friends.
- Carry on short, but understandable, conversations.
- Draw a person with body parts.
- Use a toothbrush and get dressed with your help.
- Walk up stairs alternating feet.

Your child will continue to assert their independence. For tips on how to help your toddler through a tantrum, check out the **Managing Tantrums** section on **pages 76-77**.

Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) if they are at **least age 4 by Sept. 1 of that year.**

Eligibility requirements are listed at tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-education-faqs#pkprogram. Check with the school near you because some schools offer free Pre-K for children age 3.

Pre-K is a great way to help your child be kindergarten ready. It improves their reading, writing, math, and social skills. Contact your neighborhood school for more information.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At the 4 year check-up, the doctor will:

- Screen your child for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Check your child's blood pressure.
- Test your child's vision and hearing.
- Give your child a few shots. If your child had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- Observe your child's speech and motor skills.
- Ask questions about your child's learning and behavior.
- Complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing.

Handwashing

Germ s are everywhere. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Give your child frequent reminders of how and when to wash hands. To learn about the five easy steps for handwashing, visit go.usa.gov/xV9Td.

Take care of my teeth

- Help your child brush their teeth twice per day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Your child should still see the dentist every six months or more often if needed.

Keep me safe

- Your child might be ready to move to a booster seat in the car. Check to see if your child has reached the weight or height limit of their car seat before switching to a booster. Children can ride in a booster seat with the adult lap and shoulder belt until the adult safety belt will fit them properly. Kids must have a lap/shoulder belt to use a booster seat.
- Keep bug spray, paints, equipment, and other items stored out of reach. Explain to your child these items are dangerous.
- Hold on to your child's hand when crossing the street or walking through parking lots.
- Practice bicycle safety. Always have your child use a helmet.

- By age 4, most children are ready for swim lessons. Consider teaching your child how to swim or sign your child up for lessons. Don't let your child play around water unless an adult is watching.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Teach your child their body parts using correct terms and explain that certain parts of the body are private.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- Teach your child not to play with plastic bags. They can cause suffocation.

Play with me

- Explore your child's creative side. Let them cut paper, glue, mold play dough, paint, etc.
- Read to your child daily and ask them questions about the story. Let your child tell you a story.
- Run, jump, or skip together. Create a mini-obstacle course.
- Let your child help make and serve meals and help with chores. Be sure to keep your child away from hot appliances and sharp objects.
- Take your child to the zoo, library, and other places that have special events just for kids their age.
- Continue to limit TV and screen time. Limit high-quality, educational programs and video games to no more than one hour per day. Find educational shows designed for kids at pbskids.org.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker app**, **Vroom app**, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your child to:

- Hop on one foot.
- Know their name, age, and can sing a song from memory.
- Express more feelings, like excitement, fear, and sadness.
- Explain how everyday items are used. For example, “What do you do with a fork?”
- Trace shapes on paper.

For more tips about reading, use the **Read to Your Child Every Day** section on pages 82-83.

Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) if they are at least age 4 by Sept. 1 of that year. There are certain eligibility requirements listed at tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-education-faqs#pkprogram. Check with the school near you because some schools offer free Pre-K for children age 3.

Pre-K is a great way to help your child be kindergarten ready. It improves their reading, writing, math, and social skills. Contact your neighborhood school for more information.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Notes

[illegible]

Keep me healthy

At the age 5-checkup, the doctor will:

- Screen your child for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Check your child's vision and hearing.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Give your child any shots they missed. If your baby had a reaction to a shot before, tell the doctor.
- Ask about your child's behavior and social interactions.
- Check your child's blood pressure.

Handwashing

- Germs are everywhere. Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start
- teaching it at an early age. Give your child frequent reminders of how and when to
- wash hands. To learn about the five easy steps for handwashing, visit go.usa.gov/xV9Td.

Take care of my teeth

- Make sure to schedule your child's six-month dental checkup.
- Help your child brush twice a day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste and help them floss once a day.

Keep me safe

- Teach your child safe street habits. Teach them to look both ways before crossing the street and always cross with a grown-up.
- Always apply sunscreen on your child (SPF 15 or higher) before they go outside to swim or play.
- Test your smoke detectors every month. Make a fire escape plan and teach your child what to do. Hold a fire drill for the whole family.
- Teach your child to never play with matches or lighters. Always keep them out of reach in your home.
- Help your child learn the difference between dangerous strangers and helpful strangers. Talk about different situations. Role-play so your child can practice being assertive.

- **Never** leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own. Learn more about keeping kids safe in and around cars at dshs.texas.gov/saferiders/parents/ or getparentingtips.com/kids/safety/keeping-kids-safe-in-and-around-cars/.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun. Teach your child that a gun is not a toy.
- Teach your child not to play with plastic bags. They can cause suffocation.

Vehicle safety

A car seat is the only safe way for your child to ride in any vehicle. Texas law requires that your child must ride in an appropriate car seat for their height and weight until they are at least age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

Riding safely in the vehicle:

- **Selection:** Select a car seat or booster seat that is appropriate for your child's age, height, and weight, and one that fits correctly in your vehicle. Once your child has outgrown the height and weight limits of a forward-facing harness seat, they may need to transition into a booster seat without a harness.
- **Backless booster:** Use **ONLY** in a seating position with a headrest. The child's ears should be in line with the vehicle's seat or headrest to provide head support.
- **High-back booster:** Use in a seating position with or without a headrest. If the seating position in a car does not have a headrest, a high-back booster seat is needed.
- **Location:** Place the car seat or booster seat in the back seat of the vehicle.
- **Use:** Always buckle up using a lap and shoulder belt in the car.
- The shoulder belt should fit flat across the chest and over the child's shoulder. The shoulder belt should not sit on the child's neck.
- The lap belt should fit snugly across the hips. The lap belt should not sit over the soft area of the stomach.

Additional Tips:

- Your child should stay in a harnessed seat until they outgrow the height and weight limits of the seat.
- Avoid using pre-owned car seats and booster seats that may be expired, recalled, or have been involved in a crash.
- Use the car seat or booster seat even if your child fusses. Stay calm to help your child stay calm. Stop your car in a safe area if you need to attend to your child.
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled up correctly.
- Children younger than age 13 should always ride in the back seat.
- Drive safely. **NEVER** text or talk on the phone while driving.

If you have car seat or booster seat questions or want to be sure your car seat or booster seat is installed correctly, call **Safe Riders** toll-free at **1-800-252-8255**. To find a child passenger safety technician near you, visit Safe Kids Worldwide at cert.safekids.org.

Play with me

- Read with your child. Help them learn to read their name and words on labels and signs.
- Play guessing games. Pretend to do something and let your child guess what you are doing.
- Help your child learn numbers. Stack items and count while you stack.
- Let your child pick and lead a game. Play with them and follow their rules.
- Play outside. Find creative ways to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Let your child help make healthy snacks. Use this as an opportunity to teach them about good nutrition. Be sure your child can't reach hot appliances or sharp objects. Eat together as a family when possible.
- Help your child to learn rhyming words and play simple word/picture games.
- Get more play ideas by downloading **CDC's Milestone Tracker** app, **Vroom** app, or by signing up for **Bright by Text** at brightbytext.org or by texting **TEXASKIDS** to **274448**.

Watch me grow

Each child grows and changes at a different rate.

Watch for your child to:

- Draw some letters and numbers and copy squares and triangles.
- Count to 10 and tell a simple story using complete sentences.
- Play board games and card games with others.
- Name at least four colors.
- Be able to follow simple directions.
- Draw a person with at least six body parts.

Notes

Length: _____ inches Date of appointment: _____

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Childproofing Checklist

Childproofing is a big job, but if you take it room by room, you'll be done in no time.

Download a full checklist at getparentingtips.com/babies/safety/babyproofing-your-home/babyproofing-checklist.pdf or use the one below!

Throughout the House

- ☐ Put gates at the top and bottom of stairs
- ☐ Put window guards or stops on windows
- ☐ Tie up window shade cords
- ☐ Put outlet covers on electrical outlets
- ☐ Look for electrical cords that could be hazards
- ☐ Use door or pinch guards to protect fingers
- ☐ Add doorknob covers, especially on external doors
- ☐ Use furniture straps to secure furniture and televisions to walls
- ☐ Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors once a month
- ☐ Pick up anything small that children could swallow like batteries, small toys, coins, etc.
- ☐ Buy a fire extinguisher
- ☐ Remove bug and mouse traps
- ☐ Keep bags and purses out of reach
- ☐ If you have a gun, make sure it's unloaded and locked up separately from the bullets.
- ☐ Remove decor that may be at baby level

Kitchen

- ☐ Get a stove guard or knob covers
- ☐ Secure drawers and doors with latches or locks
- ☐ Move appliances and cords away from counter edges and low shelves.
Store knives and cutlery out of reach
- ☐ Move cleaning products out of reach
- ☐ Store dishwasher and laundry pods out of reach
- ☐ Use a trash can with a childproof lid
- ☐ Use placemats instead of tablecloths
- ☐ Use plastic dishes for baby food
- ☐ Keep pet food and water bowls out of reach

Living Room

- ☐ Make sure house plants are out of reach
- ☐ Install a safety screen around the fireplace
- ☐ Put away breakable decorations
- ☐ Put corner protectors over sharp edges and corners
- ☐ Use furniture security straps on bookshelves and televisions

Bathroom

- ☐ Put a mat on the floor so no one slips
- ☐ Put locks on toilet lids and cabinets
- ☐ Store pills and medicine out of reach
- ☐ Place soap, shampoo, toothpaste, makeup, and razors out of reach

Bedroom

- ☐ Make sure your crib meets safety standards
- ☐ Keep a safe zone around the crib away from windows, blinds, art, mirrors, cords, etc.
- ☐ Make sure the crib is free of blankets, bumpers, pillows, toys, and overhanging mobiles, etc.
- ☐ Make sure furniture is secured with straps

Garage and Outside

- ☐ Install a lock on the garage door
- ☐ Have a spot for your keys that is out of children's reach
- ☐ If you have a pool, install a 4-foot locking fence around all sides; consider an alarm on the gate door
- ☐ Keep fertilizers, chemicals, cleaners, antifreeze, bug spray, etc. out of reach

Notes

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Safe Sibling Play

A new baby in the house can be a source of joy and confusion for other children in the home. They may be excited, but may also feel confused, frustrated, or upset. Check in with the other children about their feelings and emotions about the baby. Teach them how to safely interact with a younger sibling.

Always supervise children younger than age 12 with your baby.

Help older children adjust to baby's arrival:

- Read stories together about new babies and older siblings.
- Give your child a doll so they can practice gentle touch and caregiver activities.
- Talk about the advantages of being an older sibling and award new “big-kid” privileges.
- Involve your child in caring for the baby by becoming a special helper or protector.
- Praise older children for good behavior and achievements after the new baby's arrival.
- Ask your child about their feelings, listen, and provide loving reassurance.

Talk with older children about safety:

- Explain that babies can choke easily. Tell your child to always ask permission before giving a toy or food to the baby.
- Show how to touch and kiss the baby gently, focusing on touching feet instead of face.
- Teach children to put away their “big kid” toys — small items like Legos and marbles — where the baby cannot reach them.
- Tell them to always ask an adult for help if they want to see or hold the baby. Teach them to never climb on chairs, tables, or cribs to see the baby.

Parent Self-Care

Parenting is hard work.. It can be very stressful at times – even overwhelming. If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of your family.

Self-care doesn't have to be time-consuming or expensive. It can be a simple activity that brings you happiness and lowers stress. It can help you avoid emotional burnout. Plan to do something for yourself at least once every day.

Self-Care Ideas

- Schedule time to talk with another adult. Talk about how you are doing.
- Make a nutritious snack or smoothie for yourself.
- Go for a walk alone or with a friend or partner.
- Take a long bath or shower.
- Enjoy a television show, movie, podcast, or music.
- Make yourself a coffee or tea and enjoy it slowly.
- Go to a religious service, meditate, or do some deep breathing.
- Read a book or magazine.
- Get plenty of rest and know that you don't have to do it all.

Don't be afraid to:

- Ask for and accept help from friends, family, or your partner. They can help watch your child while you take a break.
- Delay household or work duties until you get the rest or food you need.
- Pay attention to your feelings. If you feel like you can't cope or manage day-to-day activities or care for your child, then it's time to call your doctor.

Soothing a Crying Baby

Babies cry to let you know that something needs to change. Sometimes they cry every day — this is normal. It can be hard to tell what your baby might need when they're crying. It can be frustrating when your baby cries, but stay calm and be patient while you figure out your baby's needs. Soon enough you will be able to tell what your baby needs by their cry.

Some reasons babies cry:	What you can do:
They are uncomfortable from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gas pains • a dirty diaper • clothing (hot/cold, tight, itchy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pat or rub your baby's back. • Change your baby's diaper every three hours when they're awake. • Remove or add clothes until your baby is comfortable.
They are sick or hurt.	Call the doctor if you think your baby is sick. If you think your baby is hurt, try to figure out where they are hurt and call the doctor if necessary.
They are bored.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your baby a new toy • Take your child for a walk, • Pick them up or change their position • Go outside.
They are sleepy.	Bring your baby into a quiet, dark room. Try holding your baby skin- to-skin, swaying or rocking your baby, gently massaging them, and repeating "shushing" sounds or singing to them. Some babies also like to be breastfed or given a pacifier or finger to suck on.
They are over stimulated (too noisy, too bright or too many adults holding the baby).	Babies will fuss and/or turn their head away when they've had enough. Dim the lights, move your child to a quieter room or ask visitors to leave.
They are teething.	Offer your baby a teething ring that's been cooled in the fridge, a pacifier, or other safe toy to chew on. Rub your baby's gums with a clean washcloth.
They are hungry.	Feed the baby.

If nothing works and you feel you need a break:

Never shake a baby!

No matter how upset you are. Shaking a baby can cause brain damage, blindness, hearing loss, or even death. Don't try to cover their mouth or face to stop the crying – this can cause suffocation.

Remember, a child does not cry to make you mad, sad, or upset.

If everything feels like it's too much, you can:

- Put your baby in a safe place and leave the room for five minutes. Sometimes babies just need a chance to settle down.
- Take those five minutes to calm yourself. Stand outside, take slow, deep breaths, or call a friend or your partner for support.
- If your baby is still crying and/or you can't calm yourself down, check on your baby and then call a friend or family member. Ask them to come over and care for your baby while you take the time you need to calm down.
- Have a plan in place. Write down a person you can call for help. Write down some ideas to calm you and your baby. Stick these on your fridge or somewhere you can see it.

Tantrums

Around age 1, your toddler will begin to express negative feelings like anger and frustration by throwing tantrums. Tantrums happen when a child is emotionally overloaded and unable to express their emotions any other way. Tantrums are a normal part of development. Even though they can be as frustrating as a crying baby, there are ways to decrease and even prevent them.

Before a tantrum:

Plan ahead. If you are going to be away from home, bring along a few snacks and a toy or book to keep your toddler busy.

Encourage your child to use their words. If you notice your toddler is getting mad, ask your child how they feel (e.g., “Are you mad?”) and identify what’s making them mad when you can. Say it out loud to your toddler (e.g., “I know you feel angry when…”).

Give choices. Toddlers are learning to be independent. Allow simple, safe choices. Limit the choices to two or three. Give invitations, not orders; instead of saying, “Pick up your toys,” you might say, “When you finish picking up your toys, we can go see grandma.”

Pick your battles. It’s better for your child to dress in silly clothing than to fight them over wearing something you’ve picked out. Save your energy for what matters.

During a tantrum:

Stay calm. It’s okay for your toddler to cry and scream when angry. This is how your toddler expresses themselves. If you react calmly and confidently, they may calm down too. Most tantrums last about 10 minutes.

Don’t give in to demands. When you give into a toddler’s screaming and crying, the child learns that tantrums work.

Offer a distraction. Try to get your toddler to focus on something else like a favorite toy or book. Sing, dance, and make silly faces. Go outside. This works best when you first notice your child is upset (before a full-blown tantrum sets in).

Give your child some alone time. Tantrums are attention-grabbers. They are not as effective if no one is watching. Take your child to a quieter place, away from the problem and allow them to try to calm down. If you are in a place where your child can be left alone safely, walk to another room. As a bonus, removing the audience can help you tune in to your child and help them calm down more quickly.

Correct dangerous behavior. If your toddler's tantrums include hitting, kicking, or hurting others or throwing things, correct the behavior immediately. Move your child somewhere safe and quiet and tell them firmly, "no hitting," or "no kicking." If you feel your child's behaviors are out of control, call your doctor.

After a tantrum:

Don't punish your toddler for throwing a tantrum. Tantrums are normal and your toddler will grow out of them.

Once your toddler is calm, offer a hug and understanding. Say something like, "I'm sorry you didn't get that cookie you wanted." If your child is old enough, it can help to tell them why (such as, "you just had a snack and it is almost dinner time").

When you are both settled, spend a few minutes reviewing what happened. Praise your child for regaining control. Practice ways your child can use words in the future to tell you what they want. Teach your child some words to use when they feel like yelling or throwing things.

Stick with the rules you have set as a parent. Toddlers get confused and angry when rules change. Be consistent and don't be afraid to say "no." Share these rules with friends and family. It will help prevent future tantrums.

When to Get Help

The toddler years are a challenge for most parents, so don't be too hard on yourself. Do your best, and if you or your child has a bad day, know that you'll get a chance to try again tomorrow. Don't be afraid to take a break or to ask your partner, a friend, or family member for help if you feel overwhelmed.

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommends that you talk to your doctor if:

- Temper tantrums get worse after age 4.
- Your child intentionally hurts himself or someone else during a tantrum, or if your child breaks things during tantrums.
- Your child holds his breath or faints during tantrums.
- Your child has nightmares, trouble potty training, headaches, stomach aches, or other signs of worry or anxiety.

The **Texas Youth Helpline** is available to help parents with younger children as well as teens. Contact them at **1-800-989-6884** or visit dfps.state.tx.us/youth-helpline/default.asp.

Child Care

Good child care should support your child's development and make you feel comfortable. Start exploring child care a few months ahead of time. Plan a visit to each center or home you want to learn more about and talk with the director or caregiver. Take this guide with you when you go.

Child Care Regulation (CCR) is a program that monitors and provides inspection reports on all licensed and registered child care in Texas. You can find five years of compliance history online: [TxChildCareSearch.org](https://www.txchildcaredatabase.org). Although CCR monitors centers annually, you will want to do your own research too — ask questions, observe children and their teachers and request information important to your child's care.

Learn the facts before entrusting your child to someone else and always choose state-regulated day care. Unregulated care means no inspections, no training, no one enforcing basic health and safety standards, and no record for you to check.

What to Look for:

Research your options. Find a licensed or registered day care in your area and check its inspection record at [TxChildCareSearch.org](https://www.txchildcaredatabase.org).

Visit the day care while children are there and look for features that will help your child thrive. Meet and interview the caregiver or director.

Stay Involved:

Keep talking with the caregiver. Discuss your concerns and make sure you are happy with their answers. Keep talking to your children. Ask them how the day went, what they did, who they saw, or if anything special happened.

Report anything that may affect a child's health or safety, including child abuse or neglect or illegal care to the **Texas Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-252-5400**.

Important Questions for Your Child Care Center:

1. May I see your state permit and your last inspection?
2. What experience and training do you have in caring for children?
3. How many children do you care for and how do you ensure you meet all their needs?
4. May I see your operational policies so I can learn more about your services?
5. What's a typical day like for a child in your care?
6. How do you protect the health and safety of children in your care?
7. What type of safe sleep practices do you follow?
8. How do you discipline children?
9. How do you handle emergencies and under what circumstances will you contact me?
10. How will you discuss progress and concerns related to my child?
11. How are breastmilk feedings handled? Is there a space in the center where I can breastfeed my baby?

Here are some other things to look for:

Infant Care

- ☐ There is a crib for each baby.
- ☐ Teachers respond to crying babies quickly and in a caring way.
- ☐ Infants have space and freedom to play, climb, and crawl.
- ☐ Diapers are changed often and in a clean area. Teachers wash their hands and the infants' hands after each diaper is changed.
- ☐ Babies are fed on demand and are held while being fed.

Preschool Care

- ☐ Classrooms have a regular schedule providing a balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities.
- ☐ Furniture, equipment, and materials are the child's size and at the child's level.
- ☐ Classrooms are organized with clear learning areas: library, science, writing, art, blocks, dramatic play, math, etc.
- ☐ Space is available for children to store their personal items.
- ☐ Lesson plans show what the children will be learning each day and week.

Final things to think about:

- Do you feel comfortable leaving your child there?
- Would you be happy there if you were a child?

See the **Helpful Resources section at the front of this guide** for more information on quality child care and child care financial assistance.

All children need support as they grow and learn, but some children need extra help.

You may notice your child is behind in some of the activities listed in the guide. All children grow and develop at different rates. Taking longer to do new things could mean that a child has a developmental delay or a disability. Delays or disabilities can be because of illness, an accident, or other reasons.

If you are concerned about your child's development, contact the programs listed below about your concerns. Don't wait to contact someone. The sooner you identify the delay or disability, the sooner your child can receive help.

For children, newborn to age 3:

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) partners with families to help children grow, learn, and stay healthy. ECI helps Texas babies and toddlers up to 36 months old with developmental delays, disabilities, or certain qualifying medical diagnoses. ECI services are provided in the home and in other places where the child lives, learns, and plays.

Some examples of ECI services are:

- Hearing and vision services
- Nutrition services
- Physical/Occupational therapy
- Speech-language therapy
- Specialized skills training to help with learning and development
- Family education and training
- Case management
- Assistive technology such as help getting specialized equipment

If you have a concern about how your child is developing, talk with your doctor or your local ECI program. To locate an ECI program near you call the **HHS Office of the Ombudsman** toll-free at **1-877-787-8999**, select a language, and select **option 3** or visit hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services.

For children ages 3 years and older:

Beginning at age 3, your child may be eligible to receive special education services. Children who meet eligibility criteria may receive Early Childhood Special Education services in a variety of settings such as a pre-kindergarten classroom, in the home, or in community settings. If you are concerned about your child's learning or behavior, contact your local school campus, district, or charter school. To get help locating your local education agency, call your regional Education Service Center or contact the ChildFind Network at childfindtx.tea.texas.gov/contactus.html. To learn more, call the **Special Education Information Center** toll-free at **1-855-SPEDEX (1-855-773-3839)**.

Other resources:

ECI has information on resources for children and families in a Resource Guide located on their HHS website found at hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services/eci-resource-guidecentral-directory.

The Department of State Health Services Audiovisual Library has books, video tapes, audio tapes, and journals. You can learn about child development and early intervention. Anyone in Texas can borrow these materials for only the cost of return postage. To find out more, go to hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services/eci-library-collection, or call **(888) 963-7111 x7260**.

Families can find resources and services to support their children at navigatelifetexas.org/en.

Partners Resource Network (PRN) operates Parent Training and Information centers (PTIs) across Texas for parents of children with disabilities. Visit prntexas.org or call **1-800-866-4726**. PRN has materials and books about developmental delays and disabilities. They can connect you with parents of kids with similar conditions. They can provide you with information about services and resources in your area.

Parents can access free screening tools at Act Early Texas! actearlytexas.org and mchatscreen.com.

Read together every day

The most important thing you can do to help your child do well in school is read aloud to them every day.

Reading to a child from the time they are a newborn helps their speech and language develop. The more words they hear when you talk, read, and sing, the more their brain grows. Reading aloud will give your child the skills they need to learn to read, write, and understand information as they grow.

You can help your child learn to love reading.

Read to a newborn for a few minutes at a time. When they lose interest, stop reading. As they get older, read for longer. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close together. Bedtime is an especially great time for reading together.

Give everything a name. You can build comprehension skills early, even with the youngest child. Play games that involve naming or pointing to things. Say things like, “Where’s your nose?” and then, “Where’s Mommy’s nose?” Or touch your child’s nose and say, “What’s this?”

Get a library card. Borrow books for free from the library.

Be interactive. Engage your child so they will actively listen to a story. Discuss what’s happening and point out things on the page. Answer your child’s questions. Ask questions of your own and listen to your child’s responses.

Read it again and again and again. Your child will probably want to hear a favorite story over and over. Go ahead and read the same book for the 100th time! Research suggests that repeated readings help children develop language skills.

Keep books where children can reach them. Have books in the rooms where they play.

Know when to stop. If your child loses interest or has trouble paying attention, just put the book away for a while. Don’t continue reading if your child is not enjoying it.

Some literacy milestones:

Ages 6-12 months

- Looks at pictures.
- Reaches for a book.
- Puts book in mouth.
- Sits in lap, head steady.
- Pats pictures to show interest.

Ages 12-18 months

- May carry a book around.
- Turns board book pages, several at a time.
- May make same sound for a particular picture (like labels).
- Points when asked, "where's...?"
- Turns book right side up.

Ages 18-24 months

- Turns board book pages easily, one at a time.
- Names familiar pictures.
- Fills in words in familiar stories.

Ages 24-36 months

- Learns to handle paper pages.
- Goes back and forth in books to find favorite pictures.
- Starts to scribble.
- Reads familiar books to self.

Age 3 years and older

- Turns paper pages one at a time.
- Listens to longer stories.
- Can retell a familiar story.
- "Writes" name.
- Moves toward letter recognition.
- "Reads" to stuffed animals or dolls.
- Says whole phrases, sometimes whole stories

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.