

Dear Parent:

The early years are the most important years in your child's life. That's why it's so 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. It only makes sense that every parenting style is unique as well. But, there are a few things every parent can do to have a happier, healthier child. To start, find a doctor or nurse for your child as soon as possible. This might be a pediatrician, family physician, or nurse practitioner. Your child will visit this doctor or nurse regularly for check-ups and other health care. This is the first step to having a “Medical Home” for your child.

This guide gives suggestions to help you at different stages of your child's development and provides tips and tools for visiting the doctor. **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 respectful partnership between a child, the child's family, and the child's regular doctor or nurse.

When you visit your child's primary care doctor or nurse:

- Bring this guide and a list of questions or concerns to discuss.
- Talk about how your child is growing or changes you are noticing.
- Ask about resources that may help your child and family.
- Ask about how to get health care after hours.
- Ask to meet the office staff working with you and your child (nurses, referral coordinator, billing person, and others).
- Talk about if your child will get health care from other doctors or places around town.

The benefits of a Medical Home are:

- You see the same medical staff regularly. They will:
 - Partner with you in getting care for your child; and
 - Ask for and give you information to help your child.
- Your family has support in finding ways to help your child grow at every age.
- You have a place to go for answers about your child's health.
- You are connected to family support organizations.
- Your Medical Home keeps your children healthy as they grow.

Your child's doctor should:

- Ask you to talk about your child.
- Ask what you think before making decisions about your child's health.
- Respect your family's culture and religious beliefs.
- Get an interpreter if you need one.

Your child's doctor and office staff support you as a caregiver.

They can:

- Connect you with family support organizations and other parents in your community.
- Provide information about community resources.
- Pass along research and other helpful materials about your child's health.
- Provide support if your child needs to see another doctor.

Your child's doctor and office staff can help you plan your child's care by:

- Helping you set short-term (3-6 months) and long-term goals for your child.
- Giving you advice and new treatments in writing.
- Helping you write a plan for your child's medical and non-medical needs.
- Going over your child's medical records with you.
- Helping you decide about new treatments for your child.

Your child's doctor and office staff should help you get the care your child needs by:

- Locating transportation, durable medical equipment, and home care, as well as ways to pay for them.
- Explaining your child's needs to other health professionals.
- Ensuring your child's school or day care understands your child's medical condition.
- Meeting with you and others as a team about your child's health care plan.

Shot Schedule

Shots are given to your child throughout their life to prevent disease and illness. Some 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 shots by writing down the date they received them.

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

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

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

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

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1 st	Between 12 and 15 months old	
2 nd	Between 4 and 6 years old	

Rotavirus (RV)

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

Varicella (chickenpox)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1 st	Between 12 and 15 months old	
2 nd	Between 4 and 6 years old	

Pneumonia (PCV)

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

Other Shots Your Child May Get/Need*

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

Type	Date
Influenza (Annual Flu Shot)	
Hepatitis A (Hep A)	
1 st dose – Between 12 and 23 months old	
2 nd dose – 6-18 months later	
Other shots:	
Meningococcal Vaccine (required by TX state law) 11-12 years of age with a booster at 16	

Keep me healthy

Before you and your baby go home from the hospital, your baby will get:

- Blood tests.
 - Blood will be drawn with a tiny heel prick. Your baby will need another around two weeks old. The doctor will tell you where to go for the second test. If the tests show a possible problem, you and the doctor will talk about it together.
- A hepatitis B shot.
- A test to make sure your baby's heart and lungs are working well.
- A hearing test.
 - If your baby needs another hearing test, the doctor will send you to a doctor who studies hearing, called an audiologist, or back to the hospital for a follow-up hearing test.

Your baby should see a doctor or nurse at 3 to 5 days old.

During your baby's first doctor's office visit, the doctor will:

- Weigh and measure your baby.
- Check 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, and umbilical cord.

Your doctor may also talk to you about:

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

Ask the 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 is made by your body to meet baby's specific needs for growth, health, and development. Your baby will be healthiest if your baby receives only breast milk, with no other solids or liquids through the first six months and continues to breastfeed through at least the first year of life and for as long after as you and your

baby want. For breastfeeding questions and help, call the Texas Lactation Resource hotline at 1-855-550-6667.

Babies who are not breastfed should be given iron-fortified formula until their first birthday. Make sure to follow the directions on the formula container. Adding too much water can harm your baby. If you are bottle-feeding, hold your baby in your arms or sitting up on your lap to feed and do not prop the bottle. Propping a baby's bottle can cause choking, ear infections, and cavities.

Your baby will wake frequently to eat. Your baby's stomach is small and your baby will need to eat often. It may take some time to get used to your baby's feeding schedule. This is normal. Breastfed babies will need to eat at least 8-12 times in a 24-hour period and babies who eat formula will need to eat 6-8 times a day.

Your baby may be hungry if your baby:

- Makes sucking noises.
- Keeps hands near lips.
- Puckers lips.
- Bends arms and legs.
- Searches for the nipple (roots).

Feed your baby until they seem full. Learn your baby's signs for fullness and let your baby stop feeding when your baby has had enough. Your baby may be full when your baby:

- Turns head away from the nipple.
- Sucks slower or stops sucking.
- Relaxes arms and hands. Pushes away. Falls asleep.

Your baby is getting enough to eat if your baby:

- Is gaining weight.
- Has at least 4-6 wet diapers a day by the time your baby is one week old.
- Has at least 3 bowel movements a day by the time your baby is one week old. This number may decrease after 4-6 weeks. Formula is harder for babies to digest than breast milk, so they may have fewer bowel movements.

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

- 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.
- Keep your baby away from hot objects and liquids. Test water temperature with the inside of your wrist before putting baby in the bath.
- You, family members and guests should wash your hands with soap and water before touching or holding your baby. This is one of the most important steps in keeping your baby safe from germs.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

CAR SAFETY

The car seat is the only safe place for your baby in the car. Texas law says that your baby has to ride in a car seat.

In the car:

- Buckle your baby in a rear-facing car seat.
- Place the car seat in the back seat so the baby faces the back window.
- Use the car seat even if your baby fusses. Stay calm to help your baby calm down and adjust to the car seat.

If you have car seat questions or want to be sure your car seat is in the car right, call Safe Riders toll-free at 1-800-252-8255.

SLEEP SAFETY

- Put your baby on their back to sleep for every sleep.
- Put your baby to sleep alone on a firm sleep surface. A firm crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet is recommended.
- Room sharing without bed sharing is recommended. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a crib or bassinet in the same room as the parents.
- You may bring your baby into bed with you for feeding or comforting and then return the baby to his own crib or bassinet when you are ready to go back to sleep. Do not feed or hold your baby on a chair, couch, or recliner if you feel like you might fall asleep.
- Keep stuffed toys, soft things like bumper pads and pillows, and loose bedding like sheet or blankets out of your baby's crib and away from the sleep area.
- Keep a smoke-free home and do not allow anyone to smoke around your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby. It reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- Consider offering your baby a pacifier at nap and bedtime. For breastfed babies, pacifier use should be delayed until breastfeeding is

well established, usually around 3-4 weeks.

- Keep the room where the baby sleeps at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Talk to all caregivers about how to safely put your baby to sleep.

Play with me

Your baby needs attention and contact to help him feel safe, secure, and loved.

- Hold, cuddle, rock, and hug your baby. Let your baby look at your face.
- Change your baby's position every once in a while.
- 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. If you are worried, 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 that they need to stop playing. Your baby might look away, stiffen arms or legs, frown, yawn, fall asleep, or cry. These are all signs that your baby is ready for something different. Your baby may need to be held close, move away from a noise, be burped, get a clean diaper, look at something different, be warmer or cooler, be comforted, be fed, or lay down for a nap.

While crying can be stressful, it is a normal and important way that your baby tells you that they need something. Babies cry for many reasons – not just because they are hungry.



Keep me healthy

Your baby may also have a visit at 2-4 weeks. This check-up will be similar to the 2 month check-up and will also include the last newborn blood test.

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

- Weigh and measure your baby.
- Look at your baby's eyes and skin.
- Listen to your baby's heart.
- Give your baby a few shots to help your baby's body fight disease. You can use the **“Shot Schedule” in the front of this guide** to help you keep track of your baby's shots.

If you don't have health insurance for your baby, call the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) toll-free at 1-877-543-7669 (1-877-KIDS_NOW) 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 breastfed or not exclusively breastfed should be given iron fortified formula. Look for hunger signs and feed your baby before they get fussy.

- Hold your baby while they eat. This makes your baby feel safe and loved.
- Your baby may have a growth spurt and will want to eat more. This is normal. If you are breastfeeding, feed your baby often and your body will make more milk to keep up with your baby's growth.
- Don't put cereal or other solid food in the bottle. Babies aren't ready for solid foods until they are about 6 months old.
- If your baby is breastfeeding or was born early, the doctor might recommend vitamin drops. Talk to the doctor about this.
- Visit www.breastmilkcounts.com for tips on how to continue to breastfeed once you go back to work.

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.
- Practice a fire escape. How would you get your baby out if there were a fire?
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke. It makes it harder for your baby to breathe and can contribute to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- 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.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.



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.

Watch me grow

Some babies take a little longer to do some things. Talk to your doctor if you're worried. Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs can help. Call the DARS Help Line toll-free at 1-800-628-5115 for more ECI information.

Watch for your baby to:

- Turn and smile at you when your baby sees or hears you.
- Make sounds (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.

Will you be going back to work or school? Now is the time to start looking for child care. **Use the “Tips for Picking Child Care” section in the back of this guide** for tips on how to select the best child care for you and your baby.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your baby.
- Check your baby from head to toe to see how your baby moves, hears, and sees.
- Give your baby a few shots.

Find out about children's health insurance. If you don't have health insurance for your child, call the Children's Health Insurance Program toll-free at 1-877-543-7669 (1-877-KIDS-NOW).

Take care of my teeth

Your baby might be getting their first tooth. Keep wiping your baby's gums each day with a soft, damp cloth or use a very soft, infant-sized toothbrush to brush your baby's teeth.

- Once your baby starts teething, your baby may drool, become fussy, or put things in your baby's mouth. Try a cold teething ring.
- Don't put your baby to bed at night with a bottle. Your baby could choke and get cavities.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, be sure to clean it often with warm, soapy water.

Keep me safe

- Begin safety-proofing your home. Cover outlets. Remove small, sharp or poisonous objects. Move cords out of reach.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke. It can lead to health problems like asthma and allergies.
- If carrying your baby in a car seat, always use the safety strap.
- 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 badly.

- Keep balloons away from your baby. If a balloon covers their mouth, your baby won't be able to breathe.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

Play with me

- Read your baby short stories with rhyming words or other books.
- 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 his tummy. Always stay with your baby during tummy time.



Watch me grow

Watch for your baby to:

- Smile at you.
- Have good head control.
- Begin to roll and reach for objects.
- Push their chest up off the floor to their elbows.
- Try to get your attention.

When something new 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, wrap your baby loosely in a blanket, or offer a pacifier.

For more tips on how to soothe a crying baby, **check out the “Crying Babies and Toddler Tantrums” section in the back of this guide.**

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your baby.
- Give the next set of shots. If your baby had a reaction to the shot before, tell the doctor.
- Check your baby's mouth and any teeth.

Your baby can get a flu shot once your baby is six months old. Ask your doctor or nurse.

Feed me

Your baby still gets most nutrition from breast milk or from infant formula. The best nutrition, growth and development comes from breastfeeding for at least one year and for as long after that as you and your baby want. Gradually begin to add other foods to your baby's diet beginning at about 6 months of age. Talk to your baby's doctor to see if your baby is about ready to start adding solid foods.

Some starter foods to try:

- Pureed or mushy meats, vegetables, fruits.
- Iron fortified infant cereal.

Give your baby one new food a week and watch for any allergic reactions. If your baby doesn't react to the food, you can add a new food the next week.

Take care of my teeth

- When your baby's first tooth comes in, you should plan for regular dental check-ups. Your doctor should refer you to a dentist.
- Gently brush any teeth with a little, soft-bristled toothbrush or a soft cloth and some water – no toothpaste.

- Don't share a spoon or eat off of your baby's spoon. Sharing utensils can give your baby germs that cause tooth decay or that can make your baby sick.

Keep me safe

- 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.
- 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.
- Put baby gates at the stairs and keep doors closed.
- Be sure to block off your baby's access to space heaters, wood stoves, and kerosene heaters.
- Never leave your baby alone on high places like changing tables, beds, or chairs.
- At this age, your baby will put things in his mouth. Make sure any cleaners, bug spray, and medicines are locked away and small objects are out of reach.
- Always use the high chair 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. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

Play with me

- Show your baby toys. Your baby will want to hold, smell, chew, squeeze and pat them.
- 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.

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 her name and familiar faces.

For ideas on how to get your child interested in reading, use the **“Read to Your Child Every Day”** section in the back of this guide.



Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your baby.
- 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 that you may have missed in other appointments.

Take care of my teeth

- When your baby's first tooth comes in, you should plan for regular dental check-ups.
- Gently brush the teeth and gums with a little, soft-bristled toothbrush or a soft cloth and some water.



Keep me safe

- Keep heavy objects and hot liquids out of reach. Remove tablecloths from tables.
- If you think your baby has swallowed something poisonous, call the Poison Center Network toll-free at 1-800-222-1222.
- Use corner protectors on sharp edges of furniture.
- Never leave your baby alone around bathtubs, play pools, toilets, and buckets. Your baby can drown in just a few inches of water.
- Keep your baby's crib away from curtains and blind cords.
- Help your baby learn why some things are not safe. If your baby goes to the stove, say, "hot," and move your baby away.
- Keep guns and weapons far away from your child. The best way to keep your child safe is to never have a gun in the home. If you have a gun or if people you visit have guns, they should be stored unloaded and locked, with bullets locked separately from the gun.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

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.

Watch me grow

Watch for your baby to:

- Start to point to objects.
- Say “ma,” “ga,” “da,” “di,” “ba,” and other sounds.
- Crawl using arms and legs alternately (not bunny hopping),
- 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 his and gets upset when they are taken away. This is normal.
- Might be fearful or shy of strangers.

For more tips on how to soothe a crying baby, **check out the “Crying Babies and Toddler Tantrums” section in the back of this guide.**

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At your child's 12 month check-up, the doctor will:

- Check the iron level in your baby's blood with a small finger prick.
- Screen your baby for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your baby.
- Give your baby some shots.
- Screen your baby to see if they have been exposed to lead. Your baby can get lead in her body by breathing or eating lead dust, chips, or flakes. Lead can affect the way your baby learns, grows, and hears.

Feed Me

Continue to give your baby breast milk or infant formula through your baby's first birthday. Breast milk provides benefits to your baby for as long as you choose to breastfeed. If your baby is formula fed, wean your baby from infant formula at 12 months.

- At 12 months old, you can start giving your child whole cow's milk.
- Let your toddler decide how much to eat and always provide healthy snacks. If your baby decides they are full, don't ask them to continue eating.
- Avoid distractions, such as watching TV, during mealtimes.
- Make meal time family time. Talk to your child.

Take care of my teeth

- By the time your baby is 12 months old, your baby should have a first dental visit.
- Make brushing your baby's teeth a part of the daily routine.

Keep me safe

- Secure televisions, furniture, and other heavy items so your child can't pull them over.
- Keep the crib mattress is at its lowest level with the sides up so your child cannot climb out.
- Move sharp objects (like scissors and knives) and phone, electrical, and blind cords out of reach.

- Don't give your baby hard-to-chew foods such as popcorn, nuts, raisins, tortilla chips, and grapes. Don't give hotdogs, even if they're cut into pieces.
- Continue to watch your child carefully. Common accidents for toddlers are: falls, burns, choking, poisoning, and drowning.
- 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. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- Keep balloons away from your baby. If a balloon covers your child's mouth, your child won't be able to breathe.
- Install safety gates on stairs and guards on windows to prevent falls.



Make sure I get lots of sleep

Your toddler should be sleeping 12-14 hours a day. 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 her own.

Play with me

- Make a book using cardboard and magazine pictures. Let your child turn the pages.
- Hide a small 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.
- Turn off the TV and dance or sing with your toddler. Children under 2 should not watch TV, movies, or DVDs.

Watch me grow

Watch for your baby to:

- Try to copy what you are doing.
- Hand you a book when your toddler wants to hear a story.
- Stand alone.
- Pick up a cube or small toy in each hand and bang them together.
- Wave “bye-bye.”
- Speak 1 or 2 words.

For more tips about reading, use the **“Read to Your Child Every Day”** section in the back of this guide.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your child.
- 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 baby 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 the Children's Health Insurance Program at 1-877-543-7669 (1-877-KIDS_NOW) 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 plain water, no toothpaste yet.
- Don't share a spoon with your child or put her pacifier in your mouth. You can pass germs from your mouth to your child's mouth.

Keep me safe

- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child reaches the weight and height limit. Then you can install a forward facing seat. Always keep rear and forward-facing seats in the back seat of the car.
- Keep poisons and dangerous items high and out of reach in locked cabinets. Keep the number of the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) near the phone.
- Use gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Move furniture your child can climb on away from upstairs windows. Consider using window guards.
- Keep cigarettes, matches, and lighters out of your child's reach.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.



Play with me

- Look at books with your child. You can share “reading” time by just talking about the pictures.
- Play hide-and-seek games.
- Pretend with your child. Make believe you are cooking a meal taking a trip to the beach.
- Build a tower with blocks.

Watch me grow

By 15 months, watch for your child to:

- 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 child also:

- Has a change in appetite. your child may eat less because they’re not growing as fast.
- Puts all his 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 “Crying Babies and Toddler Tantrums” section in the back of this guide.**

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Check the iron level in your baby's blood with a small finger prick.
- Weigh and measure your toddler.
- Check your child from head to toe, including teeth, eyes, and ears.
- Watch how your child walks and uses their hands and arms.
- Check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Screen your child for autism.
- Give your child any shots they missed before.

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-bristled toothbrush and water. At this age, your toddler is still too young to use toothpaste.



Keep me safe

- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is buckled before you drive. Model safe behaviors for your child.
- It's still easy for your child to choke on food. Avoid small foods like 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 garages or driveways, when a car is backing out.
- 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.
- Use baby gates and keep things your child can climb on away from windows and doors. Secure any furniture to the wall that your child might climb on or pull over.
- Repeat to your child they can and cannot touch. Your child is just learning how things work and can't remember what not to touch.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

Play with me.

- Support your child's language development by reading, singing, and talking about what you are doing.
- Identify things your child points at.
- 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.

Watch me grow.

Watch for your toddler to:

- Walk up steps and run.
- 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 feed a doll or stuffed animal.
- Explore alone but with a parent close by.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

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

- Check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Screen your baby for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Check your child's eyes, ears and mouth.
- Watch how your child walks, talks and listens.
- Screen your child for autism.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index). BMI helps you know if your child is at a healthy weight.
- Screen your child to see if they have been exposed to lead.

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 your child is wet or needs to use the restroom.
- Pull pants down and up.
- Understand when you say “Go into the bathroom,” “Wipe,” or “Pull up your pants.”

Take care of my teeth

Take your toddler for another dental check-up. 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 soon.

Keep me safe

- Keep poisons and dangerous items high and out of reach in locked cabinets.
- Cover outlets.
- Secure televisions, furniture and other heavy items so your child can't pull them over.
- Be sure that you and your toddler wear a CPSC-approved helmet when riding a tricycle or on a bicycle.
- Keep your toddler away from moving machinery, 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.
- If there is a gun in your home, it should be stored unloaded and locked, with the bullets locked separately from the gun.
- Be sure to childproof doors, especially ones that could lock.
- Teach your child to wipe their nose with a tissue and wash hands regularly.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

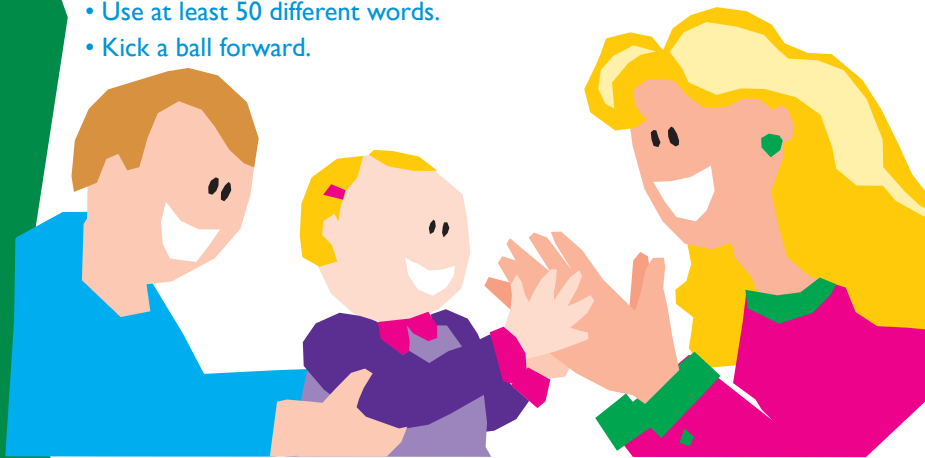
Play with me

- 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.
- 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 2 or 3 options (For example, offer a banana or apple for snack).
- Let your toddler play with a pan of water or sand so they can pour, scoop, and dig.

Watch me grow

Watch for your child to:

- Use 2-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.



Notes

Height: _____ inches

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.
- Check your how child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Listen to your child's speech.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Look in your child's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

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.



Take care of my teeth

Brush your child's teeth every day and take your child to the dentist every 6 months for a cleaning.

Limit sweet drinks and snacks. Healthy snacks are things like cheese, yogurt, unsweetened cereal, and fruits and vegetables.

Keep me safe

- Watch your toddler when your toddler's 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 should now be in a forward-facing car seat. 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 the 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. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

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.
- Limit TV/screen time (including smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.) to educational shows for no more than 1-2 hours a day.

Watch me grow

Watch for your child to:

- Point to 5-6 body parts.
- Use 3 to 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.

Sign me up for Head Start or Preschool

Now is the time to start looking for a preschool or Head Start programs. You can find preschools in the phone book, by searching online or by calling 2-1-1. **Use the “Tips for Picking Child Care” in the back of this guide** to help you pick a preschool program. You can sign your child up any time of year for Head Start. To find out more visit: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc> or call the Head Start Knowledge and Information Management Services at 1-866-763-6481.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At this check-up, the doctor will:

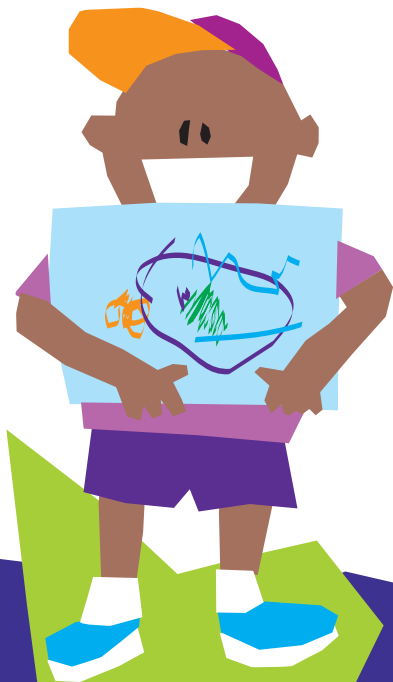
- Screen your baby for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Take your child's blood pressure.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Check your child's vision and teeth.
- Observe your child's speech.
- Ask what new things your child can do, what their sleeping habits are, and what your child eats.
- Give any vaccines your child may need.

Take care of my teeth

- Help your child brush their teeth every 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.
- 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. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.



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 (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 his age.

Watch me grow

Watch for your child to:

- Enjoy pretend play and play with friends.
- Build a tower with at least six blocks.
- Carry on short, but understandable, conversations.
- Draw a person with two body parts.
- Use a toothbrush and get dressed with your help.
- Ride a tricycle.

Your child will continue to assert their independence. For tips on how to help your toddler through a tantrum, **check out the “Crying Babies and Toddler Tantrums” section in the back of this guide.**

Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten if they are at least 4 years old (some schools enroll at 3 yrs old) and meet certain eligibility requirements. Pre-K is a great way to help your child prepare for school by improving their reading, writing and social skills. Find out more by visiting www.prekindergartenprepares.com or contact your neighborhood school for more information.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At this check-up, the doctor will:

- Screen your baby 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.
- Observe your child's speech and motor skills.
- Ask questions about your child's learning and behavior.

Take care of my teeth

- Help your child brush their teeth twice a day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- Your child should still see the dentist for a regular cleaning every 6 months.

Keep me safe

- Your child might be ready to transition 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.
- 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.
- If you own a gun, it should be stored unloaded, in a locked container, with the bullets separate from the gun.
- 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. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.



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.
- Take your child to the zoo, library, and other places that have special events just for kids his age.
- Limit TV/screentime (including smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.) watching to 1-2 hours a day and do not keep a TV in your child's room. TV shows and videos should be educational.

Watch me grow

Watch for your child to:

- Hop on one foot.
- 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 in the back of this guide.

Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten if they are at least 4 years old (some schools enroll at 3 yrs old) and meet certain eligibility requirements. Pre-K is a great way to help your child prepare for school by improving their reading, writing and social skills. Find out more by visiting www.prekindergartenprepares.com or contact your neighborhood school for more information.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Keep me healthy

At this check-up, the doctor will:

- Screen your baby for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your child.
- Check your child's vision, hearing, and teeth.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index).
- Give your child any missed shots.
- Ask about your child's behavior.

Take care of my teeth

- Make sure you schedule your child's 6-month cleaning.
- Help your child brush twice a day with a pea-sized amount of toothpaste and help her floss once a day.

Keep me safe

- Teach your child safe street habits like looking both ways before crossing the street and always crossing with a grown-up.
- 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.
- Always apply sunscreen on your child (SPF 15 or higher) before they go outside to swim or play.
- Install smoke detectors and test them every month. Make a fire escape plan and teach your child what to do.
- 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 friends, helpful people, and strangers. Point out the helpful people in crowded places, like police, store clerks, and lifeguards.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.

Play with me

- Read with your child. Help him learn to read his 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.

Watch me grow

Watch for your child to:

- Print 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 6 body parts.

Notes

Height: _____ inches

Weight: _____ pounds _____ ounces

Questions for the doctor: _____

Tips from the doctor: _____

Babies cry to communicate. 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 try to 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 her cry.

Some reasons babies cry:	What you can do:
They are hungry.	Feed the baby.
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 the baby's back.• Change the baby's diaper every 3 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.	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 her, and "shushing" or singing to her. 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 your clean finger.

Tantrums:

Around the age of one, your toddler will begin to express negative feelings (like anger and frustration) by throwing tantrums. Tantrums can occur until your child is around 4 years old. Tantrums are a normal part of development and 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 her words. If you notice your toddler is getting mad, ask your child how they feel (“Are you mad?”) and identify what’s making them mad when you can. Say it out loud to your toddler. (“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.

During a tantrum:

Stay calm. It’s okay for your toddler to cry and scream when angry. This is how your toddler expresses themselves.

Offer a distraction. Try to get your toddler to focus on something else like a favorite toy or book. Sign, 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 you 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. Or, if you are in a place where your child can be left alone safely, walk to another room.

Don’t give in to demands. Giving your toddler what they want will only stop the crying temporarily. It will not stop the tantrums; in fact, it will probably make them worse. Your toddler will learn that they only need to scream to get what they want and may try it more often.

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 (“You just had a snack and it is almost dinner time”).

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.

Other Tips:

- Babies and toddlers thrive on routine. Try to do things the same way and at the same time each day.
- Babies and toddlers need interaction. Interact with your child – talk to, cuddle, play and sing, read and spend quiet time with your child every day.

If nothing works and you feel you need a break:

- Put your baby in a safe place and leave the room for 5 minutes. Sometimes babies just need a chance to settle down.
- Take those 5 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 a break.
- Have a plan in place. Write down a person you can call for help and some ideas to calm you and your baby – stick it to your fridge or somewhere you can see it.

Never shake a baby! No matter how upset you are. Shaking a baby can cause brain damage, blindness, hearing loss or even death.

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 to visit to each center you want to learn more about and talk with the director or teacher. Take this guide with you when you go.

Child Care Licensing (CCL) is a program that monitors and provides inspection reports on all licensed and registered child care in Texas. You can find reports online: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care. Although CCL checks centers regularly, 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.

Get Some Basic Information. *Ask about:*

- Their business hours.
- Their license or registration (Is it up to date?).
- **Their last inspection report. Ask to see it.**
 - The report will include things such as:
 - Cleanliness/Safety - Is it clean and safe, inside and out?
 - Toys/Equipment – Are they safe, age-appropriate, and are there enough?
 - Space – Is there room for all activities?
 - Nutrition – Is the food healthy? Ask to see a menu.
- Price and payment options.
- The number of children and teachers in the center.

Visit the Center. *Check to see if:*

- There is a schedule posted. It should show a regular routine.
- The children and teachers seem happy and relaxed.
- Teachers respond quickly to children's needs in a way that is warm, friendly and caring.
- Teachers interact with the children.
- Teachers use a gentle, calm voice to set limits, give instruction and redirect negative behavior.

Talk with the Teacher or Director. *Ask these questions:*

- How do you discipline children?
- How do you handle toilet training?
- Do you have CPR and first aid training?

- What training does your staff receive?
- Are children allowed to watch TV? How do they use technology to support learning?
- How do you handle emergencies?
- How many years have you worked in child care?
- Do you allow unannounced visits by parents?
- Will the teacher give daily updates?
- How are meals and snacks provided?

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 after each diaper is changed.
- Babies are fed on demand and are held.

Preschool Care

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

School-Aged Children Care

- Transportation is safely provided to and from school.
- Children have freedom and flexibility after their school day.
- Children have space and time to do homework.

Final things to think about - Do you feel comfortable leaving your child there? Would you be happy there if you were a child?

This checklist has been adapted from materials developed by The Family & Workplace Connection and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

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. While 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. Don't wait to contact someone. The sooner you identify the delay or disability, the sooner your child can be connected with services to 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, birth to 36 months, with significant developmental delays or disabilities.

Some examples of ECI services are:

- Hearing and vision services
- Nursing and nutrition services
- Physical/Occupational therapy
- Speech-language therapy
- Specialized skills training
- Family education and training
- Case management
- Assistive technology

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 DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115 or visit www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis.

For children ages 3 years and older:

Local school districts can evaluate kids ages 3 and older through the Child Find program. If your child is found to have a delay or disability, they can get needed help from the school district. To learn more, call the special education office in your school district or call the Texas Education Agency Parent Info Line at 1-800-252-9668.

Other resources:

The ECI Directory has more information on local resources for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Call the DARS Help Line at 1-800-628-5115 and ask for a copy of the directory.

The Department of State Health Services Audiovisual Library has books, video tapes, audio tapes, and journals 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 <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/resources> and click on the link to the Audiovisual Library or call (888) 963-7111 x7260.

Partners Resource Network (PRN) operates Parent Training and Information centers (PTIs) across TX for parents of children with disabilities. They can be reached at <http://www.partnerstx.org/> or 1-800-866-4726. PRN has materials and books about developmental delays and disabilities, can connect you with parents of kids with similar conditions and can provide you with information about services and resources in your area.

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 together every day.

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 littlest 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 so that you can 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.