



Developmental Notes - Eight / Nine Years

Milestones:

This period is marked by considerable development in academic skills, physical abilities, social interactions and emotional regulation. By this age, children are articulate in their first language and have mature sentence structures. They should be able to recount stories as well as more effectively express their emotions and feelings. By around eight years, a child may start to become more influenced by peer groups, is able to focus on multiple aspects of a problem, starts to use logic, and has the ability to see the viewpoints of others.

Nutrition:

Refer to www.mypyramid.gov for suggestions on healthy eating and proper food portions.

Encourage your child to eat a well-balanced diet and avoid excessive amounts of “junk food”. Also, discourage eating while watching television as this can lead to frequent unhealthy snacking and obesity. Television advertising, incidentally, can also be a serious obstacle to your child’s good nutrition as children at this age are extremely receptive to ads for sugary snacks. To combat this outside influence, keep your kitchen stocked with low sodium, low sugar and low fat foods and reserve sweets for special occasions. Some examples of healthy snacks include fruit, carrot or celery sticks, yogurt, crackers, oatmeal cookies, bran muffins and cheese.

Vitamins:

If your child is an extremely finicky eater or drinks less than six ounces of fluoridated water each day, please ask our physicians regarding supplementary vitamins. Continue fluoride supplementation when indicated, and make sure your child brushes his teeth at least twice a day and sees a dentist once to twice a year.

Elimination:

A few children at this age may continue to wet their beds at night. It affects one out of ten children greater than five years old, is more common in boys, and there is often a family history of bedwetting. It is usually due to a lack of control over a child’s “full bladder alarm system” so that a child sleeps right through the sensation of a full bladder. A much smaller number of children at this age have daytime wetting problems and an even smaller group is unable to hold urine both day and night. If your child has any problems with excessive bedwetting that causes significant family disruption or distress to the child, or if there are other indications that wetting is due to more than just slow development of the full bladder response, consult with our physicians to see if any testing and/or treatment is recommended.

Sleep:

Children at this age typically sleep between nine to twelve hours per night. Always reinforce a regular bedtime and create a calm and relaxing bedtime atmosphere to help your child settle down.

Developmental Activities:

Make time for regular family interactions such as during shared mealtimes. Keep in mind that you as parents serve as role models in terms of behaviors and attitudes. At the same time, encourage your child to engage in peer play and activities outside of the home such as sports, camps and clubs. If your child is involved in an organized sport, make sure that the coach emphasizes teamwork and fun play rather than competition and winning. If your child is not interested nor does well in sports, emphasize other activities such as playing an instrument, singing, model building, or card collecting. Also, reinforce responsibility by assigning household chores.