



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

Texas Department of State  
Health Services



**TEXANS CARE**  
*for* **CHILDREN**

# A parent's guide to raising healthy, happy children



## Phone Numbers at a Glance:

My child's Doctor/Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Urgent Care Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Emergency Room: \_\_\_\_\_

My Pharmacy: \_\_\_\_\_

Poison Control Center: 1-800-222-1222

## Texas 2-1-1:

Dial 2-1-1 to connect with health and human services (HHS) in Texas. It's a free, 24-hour service that can connect you to services like rent and utility bill help, food, emergency shelters, employment help, medical and mental health services, transportation help, and trained suicide intervention counseling.

## Tools and resources for your child's healthy development:

You can track your child's milestones. You can encourage healthy development through play and positive daily interactions. For a full list of milestones and tips for parent-child play, download CDC's Milestone Tracker App on your phone or visit [cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly](https://cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly).

Share information about your child's developmental progress with your child's doctor. Your child's doctor's office should provide developmental screenings at 9 months, 18 months, 24 months, 3 years, and 4 years. Be sure to discuss your child's development during all visits. You can access screening tools yourself at Act Early Texas! [actearlytexas.org](https://actearlytexas.org) and [m-chat.org](https://m-chat.org).

## Getting help with developmental concerns:

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) helps Texas babies and toddlers, birth to 36 months. ECI services address developmental delays, disabilities or certain qualifying medical diagnoses. ECI provides services in the home and in other places where the child lives, learns and plays. It is best to identify developmental delays in children as early as possible.

For more information about ECI, 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](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services).

# Resources

For children over 3 years, call your local school district's Special Education office. You can also call the Special Education Information Center toll-free at 1-855-SPEDTEX (1-855-773-3839).

You can find resources and services to support children with disabilities, developmental delays or health care needs at [navigatelifetexas.org/en](http://navigatelifetexas.org/en).

The Partners Resource Network (PRN) has training and information for parents of children with disabilities. PRN offers resources and referrals for your child. You also have access to other parents who have children with similar special needs. Call 1-800-866-4726 or visit [prntexas.org](http://prntexas.org).

## Parenting tips:

For information on how to safely put your baby to sleep visit: [dfps.state.tx.us/Room\\_to\\_Breathe](http://dfps.state.tx.us/Room_to_Breathe)

To learn about the Period of PURPLE Crying, a time in a baby's life when they cry more than any other time, go to [purplecrying.info](http://purplecrying.info).

The Help and Hope website gives tips and tools to lower parenting stress and help kids. It has parenting tips, fun videos and an on-line search to find resources in your county. For more information, visit [helpandhope.org](http://helpandhope.org).

## Fatherhood tips:

Fathers are important and valuable to a child's development. Children are more likely to do well in school and be better able to control of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors if dad is involved. When possible, fathers should play an active role in the young child's life. For fatherhood resources, such as tips for playing with your child or being a good role model, visit [fatherhood.gov](http://fatherhood.gov) or [dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Family\\_Support/fathering\\_resources.asp](http://dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Family_Support/fathering_resources.asp).

## Help finding licensed child care and education:

Texas Child Care Licensing licenses and inspects Texas child care facilities. For a list of licensed child care centers and homes in your area or for information on choosing good child care, visit [txchildcaresearch.org](http://txchildcaresearch.org) or [dontbeinthedark.org](http://dontbeinthedark.org) or call 1-800-862-5252.

Early Head Start preschools serve low-income pregnant women and families with children ages 0 to 3 years. Head Start serves children ages 3 to 5 years. Call 1-866-763-6481 to find the Head Start program closest to you.

*Please see other side for more Helpful Resources.*

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) child care services program helps low-income, working families who need help paying for child care. It helps parents who work, attend job training, or go to school. Visit [texaschildcaresolutions.org](https://texaschildcaresolutions.org) for more information. The TWC also manages the Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification program. It identifies high quality child care programs which benefits children and families. Visit [TexasRisingStar.org](https://TexasRisingStar.org) for more information.

For more information about job search and child care help, contact your Workforce Solutions office at [twc.state.tx.us/directory-workforce-solutions-offices-services](https://twc.state.tx.us/directory-workforce-solutions-offices-services).

Pre-Kindergarten is a great way to help your 3-4 year old child prepare for school. It can improve their reading, writing and social skills. Contact your neighborhood school for more information.

### **More state services:**

The Women, Infant, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) offers:

- Nutrition education,
- Food supplements,
- Health care referrals, and
- Social service referrals.

The program is for pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women who have a low-income. It is also for infants and children under the age of five who are at nutritional risk. Call 1-800-942-3678 to find the WIC office closest to you.

For information about breastfeeding, call 1-800-514-6667 or 855-550-MOMS (6667) or visit [breastmilkcounts.com](https://breastmilkcounts.com).

### **Texas Home Visiting Program:**

Texas Home Visiting is free parenting support offered at home or convenient locations. Home visitors can provide you with tools and resources for parenting. You can get:

- Tips on how to build your child's early learning,
- Pregnancy support,
- Breastfeeding information,
- Tips on how to soothe your crying child,
- Information about taking care of more than one child, and more.

The program is available in approximately 40 counties in Texas. It helps good people be great parents. For more information visit [dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/Texas\\_Home\\_Visiting](https://dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Texas_Home_Visiting) or email [HomeVisiting@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:HomeVisiting@dfps.state.tx.us)

### **Women's health and family planning:**

The Texas women's health programs provide eligible women with family planning exams, some health screenings and birth control. To apply or learn more, call 1-866-993-9972 or visit [HealthyTexaswomen.org](https://HealthyTexaswomen.org). If you have Medicaid during your

pregnancy you will be auto-enrolled into Healthy Texas Women about 60 days after the birth of your child. Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas provides resources for birth control, STD testing, and other healthcare services. Call 1-800-230-PLAN (7526) or visit [Plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-greater-texas](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-greater-texas).

### **Saving for college:**

Texas offers many college savings plan options. To enroll or learn more, call 1-800-445-GRAD (4723) or visit [Texastomorrowfunds.org](https://www.texastomorrowfunds.org).

### **Car seat and bike safety information:**

Call Safe Riders at 1-800-252-8255 for advice on bike helmets and buying and installing car seats. Or visit the Safe Kids Worldwide website at [Cert.safekids.org](https://www.cert.safekids.org) to find a child passenger safety technician near you.

### **Educational television and online resources:**

Watching television or digital media is not recommended until 24 months. Children age 2 to 5 years should only watch high-quality, educational programming. PBS KIDS offers non-commercial, fun, educational videos, games and hands-on resources. Go to [Pbskids.org](https://www.pbskids.org) or search for “pbs kids” in app stores for phones, tablets, and TV devices. You can also go to [Pbsparents.org](https://www.pbsparents.org) for more ideas and advice.

### **To find your local library:**

Call 2-1-1 or go to the Texas Public Libraries webpage at [Publiclibraries.com/texas.htm](https://www.publiclibraries.com/texas.htm)

### **Health insurance:**

Texas Health Steps is health care for children birth through age 20 who have Medicaid. If your child has Medicaid and you need help finding a doctor or dentist, call Texas Health Steps at 1-877-847-8377 (1-877-THSTEPS) or go to [bit.ly/my-childrens-medicaid](https://www.bit.ly/my-childrens-medicaid).

Call 2-1-1 to ask about local health insurance programs for families with low-income.

Visit [Texashealthoptions.com](https://www.texashealthoptions.com) or call 1-800-252-3439 to speak to an insurance specialist with the Texas Department of Insurance.

Children with Special Health Care Needs Services Program helps children with special medical needs, disabilities, and chronic health conditions. Through this program your family can get help paying for medical care, insurance premiums, family support services, and other services not covered by Medicaid, CHIP, or private insurance. Visit [hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/children-special-health-care-needs-program](https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/children-special-health-care-needs-program) or call 1-877-888-2350.

### **Child Support Services:**

The Office of the Attorney General helps families establish a child’s legal father, set child support, collect child support payments, find absent parents and more. They work together with you to meet your child’s physical and emotional needs. For more information, call 1-800-252-8014 or visit [texasattorneygeneral.gov/child-support](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/child-support).

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## Dear Parent

The early years are the most important years in your child's life. Your baby's brain is rapidly developing. It's creating the foundations for future health and emotional wellbeing. 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 — whether a mother, father, partner, grandparent, adoptive or foster parent, or other caregiver. It only makes sense that every parenting style is unique as well. However, 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 (See **Medical Home on pages 2-3**). Your child will visit this doctor or nurse often for check-ups and other health care. This is the first step to having a “Medical Home” for your child.

**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.

## The Benefits of a Medical Home:

- 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 at every age.
- You have a team of professionals 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 with. 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."
- 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? Can the provider accommodate your child's special needs? Or your family's lifestyle choices?
- Schedule a tour of the clinic and meet the doctor or nurse to make sure the team is a good fit for your family.



## 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 or any changes you see.
- 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, 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 parents in your community.
- Refer you to health services if you feel overwhelmed, sad, tired, or have other health needs.

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

- Go over your child's medical records and test results with you.
- Pass along 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 transportation, medical equipment, and home care, as well as ways to pay for them.
- Ensure your child's school or day care understands your child's medical condition.

## Shot Schedule

Your child gets shots 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. You can also track your child's shots on your phone by downloading the free "CDC Vaccine Schedules" app.

### Hepatitis B (Hep B)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	At birth	
2nd	Between 1 and 2 months old	
3rd	Between 6 and 18 months old	

### Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTaP)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	2 months old	
2nd	4 months old	
3rd	6 months old	
4th	Between 15 and 18 months old	
5th	Between 4 and 6 years old	

### H. influenza Type B (Hib)

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

### Inactivated Polio (IPV)

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	2 months old	
2nd	4 months old	
3rd	Between 6 and 18 months old	
4th	Between 4 and 6 years old	

**Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)**

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

**Rotavirus (RV)**

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

**Varicella (chickenpox)**

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

**Pneumonia (PCV)**

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

**Hepatitis A (Hep A)**

Dose	Age Given	Date
1st	Between 12 and 23 months old	
2nd	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 look at 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. Share any concerns that you have 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 66-67.](#))

Your child should get a developmental and/or autism screening at 9 months, 18 months, and 24 or 30 months. But you should discuss your child's development during all visits. If your doctor does not do the screening at these visits, you can ask that it be done. Your child care provider knows about child's development. They may be trained to do a screening.

To learn how you can do a screening for your child and for more information visit Act Early Texas! at [actearlytexas.org](http://actearlytexas.org) and [m-chat.org](http://m-chat.org). Download CDC's Milestone Tracker app on your smart phone.

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	9 months old	
Developmental Screening and Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening	18 months old	
Developmental Screening and Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening	24 months old	
Developmental Screening *if not completed at 24 month check-up	30 months old	

## Keep me healthy

### Before you and your baby go home from the hospital:

Your baby will receive:

- 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.
- 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, your doctor will help you schedule one.

The parent will receive guidance. You will learn to:

- Feed, diaper, and safely position your baby for sleep.
- Track your baby's feeding, urination, and bowel movements by writing them down. Some parents use apps, like Baby Tracker, for this task.
- Care for and clean your baby's umbilical cord and genitals/circumcised penis.
- 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:

- Do a blood test screening.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- 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 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, feed your baby only breast milk, with no other solids or liquids, through the first six months. Continue to breastfeed through the first year of life and for as long after as you and your baby want. For breastfeeding questions and help, call the toll-free Breastfeeding Hotline at 1-855-550-MOMS (6667) or visit [breastmilkcounts.com](http://breastmilkcounts.com).

Breastfeeding is not an option for all parents. In such cases, feed your baby iron-fortified formula until their first birthday. Make sure to follow the directions on the formula container. Adding too much water or formula can harm your baby.

Tips for bottle feeding:

- Do not use a microwave to warm a bottle of formula or pumped breastmilk. It creates hot spots that can burn your baby's mouth. Rather, submerge the bottle in warm water or run under warm water. Test temperature on the inside of your wrist.
- Hold your baby in your arms or sitting up on your lap to feed, and angle the bottle so your baby doesn't suck air.
- Do not prop the bottle. Propping a baby's bottle can cause choking, ear infections, and cavities.
- Invite your partner or other caregivers to feed the baby to encourage bonding.
- Sterilize bottles and nipples between feedings with hot water and mild soap.

### **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).
- Is crying or irritable.

## **Feed your baby until they seem full. Pause to burp your baby during breaks. When the feeding is over burp your baby. Your baby may be full when your baby:**

- Turns head away from the nipple or bottle.
- 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. Don't put your baby's pacifier 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.
- 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.
- 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 vaccine. It will keep the baby safe from pertussis (whooping cough).
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute.
- Never shake a baby! No matter how upset you are. Shaking a baby can cause brain damage, blindness, hearing loss or even death.

- Always supervise your baby with siblings under age 12. (See **Safe Sibling Play on page 58.**)
- Tear out the **Helpful Resources section at the front of this guide.** Fill out the emergency numbers, and place on the refrigerator or by the phone for quick reference.

## 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:

- Place the car seat in the back seat so the baby faces the back window.
- Buckle your baby in a rear-facing car seat that is not expired (check manufacturer label on seat).
- Use the car seat even if your baby fusses. Stay calm to help your baby calm down and adjust to the car seat.
- Drive safely. NEVER text or talk on the phone while driving.

If you have car seat questions or want to be sure your car seat is installed in your car correctly, call Safe Riders toll-free at 1-800-252-8255 or visit the Safe Kids Worldwide website [cert.safekids.org](http://cert.safekids.org) to find a technician near you.

## Sleep Safety

Follow the ABC'S of sleep:

### A - Sleep *alone*

Put your baby to sleep alone with no other adult or child sharing the sleep surface.

### B - On their *backs* with no blankets or bedding

Put your baby on their back to sleep for every sleep. Put your baby in a crib or bassinet with a firm sleep surface in the same room as you. The crib should be clear of all objects except for a mattress, tight-fitting bottom sheet, and your baby. If your baby leaves an impression on the mattress, the surface is too soft.

### C - In a *crib* and cool (70 degrees is ideal)

Dress your baby lightly and avoid overdressing. Keep the room where your baby is sleeping cool. Always put the baby in the crib to sleep. If you are unable to purchase a crib for your baby, contact Cribs for Kids toll-free at 1-888-721-CRIB (2742) or [cribsforkids.org](http://cribsforkids.org).



### S - In a *smoke* free environment

Keep your baby away from second hand smoke. If you smoke, try to quit. If someone else who smokes is caring for your baby, ask that they don't smoke while caring for your baby. Never smoke indoors where your baby is being cared for or sleeping. For help quitting tobacco, call Texas Quitline toll-free at 1-877-YES QUIT (1-877-937-7848), visit [quitnow.net/texas](http://quitnow.net/texas), or text QUIT to 47848.

- You may bring your baby into bed with you for feeding or comforting and then return the baby to their 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.
- Breastfeed your baby, if possible. It reduces the risk of sleep related death, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- 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.
- Talk to all caregivers about how to safely put your baby to sleep.

For more information on safe sleep visit: [dfps.state.tx.us/Room\\_to\\_Breathe](http://dfps.state.tx.us/Room_to_Breathe)

## 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 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. You can track your baby's development by downloading the CDC's Milestone Tracker app 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 that they need to change activities or feel uncomfortable. Try to learn your baby's likes and dislikes and respond to them.

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

Your baby's crying can be stressful. But it is a normal and important way that your baby tells you that they need something. Try to remain calm and curious about their discomfort. See [Soothing a Crying Baby on pages 60-61](#) and [Parent Self-Care on page 59](#) for more information.

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

Your baby may have a visit at 2-4 weeks. The 2-4 week 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, including head circumference.
- 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 on pages 4-5** 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 2-1-1 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 6 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.
- Feeding is a key time for getting close to your baby called bonding. Allow 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 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 [breastmilkcounts.com](http://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, and e-cigarette vapors. It makes it harder for your baby to breathe and can contribute to sleep related death, including 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.
- Babies under 6 months old 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 under age 12. (See **Safe Sibling Play on page 58**)

## 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.

## 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](http://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 (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? You will need to find reliable child care. Use the [Choosing Child Care section on pages 64-65](#) for tips on how to select the best child care for you and your baby.

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- 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.

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 2-1-1.

## Feed me

Exclusive breastfeeding (only breast milk with no other foods or liquids) is recommended for about the first 6 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.
- Feeding is a key time for getting close to your baby called bonding. Allow 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 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 [breastmilkcounts.com](http://breastmilkcounts.com) for tips on how to continue to breastfeed once you go back to work.



## 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 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.
- 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.

## Keep me safe

- Begin safety-proofing your home. See **Childproofing Checklist on page 57**.
- Keep your baby away from cigarette and cigar smoke, and e-cigarette vapors. It can lead to health problems like asthma and allergies.
- If carrying your baby in a car seat, always buckle the safety straps to secure your baby.
- Never leave your baby alone in a car, not even for a minute.
- 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, 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 58**.

## 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 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](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### Watch for your baby to:

- Smile at you.
- Have good head control.
- Begin to roll over 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 calm a crying baby, check out the [Soothing a Crying Baby section on pages 60-61](#).

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Give your baby 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.

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 nutrition from breast milk or infant formula. If you are breastfeeding your baby, try to continue doing so until your baby turns one-year-old. That will provide the most health benefits, including:

- Balanced nutrition.
- Boosted immunity.
- Improved health.

Your baby may be ready to start trying solid foods at about 6 months of age. If your baby is sitting up without support and watching 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. 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. Juice is not recommended until your baby is at least one year old.

### Some starter foods to try:

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

## Avoid foods that are choking hazards:

- Hard pieces of fruits or vegetables.
- Whole corn kernels.
- Dry fruits, like raisins.
- Uncut grapes or cherry tomatoes.
- Tough or large chunks of meat.
- Hot dogs or sausages.
- Large pieces of cheese, including string cheese.
- Marshmallows, hard candy or gummy candy.

## Take care of my teeth

- When your baby is 6 months old you should plan for regular dental checkups. Your doctor can refer your baby to a dentist if you do not have one.
- Gently brush any teeth with a soft toothbrush or a soft cloth and tiny smear of fluoride 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 make your baby sick.

## Keep me safe

- Your baby is quickly becoming more mobile. Be sure to safety-proof your home. See the **Childproofing Checklist on page 57**.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- Keep plastic bags away from your baby. They can cause suffocation.
- Supervise your baby with other children. See **Safe Sibling Play on page 58**.

## 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.
- 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](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT 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.

For ideas on how to get your child interested in reading, use the **Read to Your Child Every Day section on pages 68-69.**

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- 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 that you may have missed in other appointments.

## Feed me

Your baby still gets most nutrition from breast milk or infant formula. If you are breastfeeding your baby, try to continue doing so until your baby turns one-year-old. That will provide the most health benefits, including:

- Balanced nutrition.
- Boosted immunity.
- Improved health.

Your baby may be ready to start trying solid foods at about 6 months of age. If your baby is sitting up without support and watching 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. 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. Juice is not recommended until your baby is at least one year old.

### Some starter foods to try:

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



## Avoid foods that are choking hazards:

- Hard pieces of fruits or vegetables.
- Whole corn kernels.
- Dry fruits, like raisins.
- Uncut grapes or cherry tomatoes.
- Tough or large chunks of meat.
- Hot dogs or sausages.
- Large pieces of cheese, including string cheese.
- Marshmallows, hard candy or gummy candy.

## Take care of my teeth

- Have your baby seen by a dentist every 6 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 57**.
- 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 Network. It's a toll-free call 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.
- 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.
- 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://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## 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.
- Pull themselves up to stand.
- Move their head and eyes to track objects and people.

### 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 60-61](#).

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- Check the iron level in your baby's blood.
- Screen your baby for tuberculosis.
- Weigh and measure your baby, including head circumference.
- Give your baby some shots.
- 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 child did not receive a developmental screening at their 9-month check-up, ask your doctor's office to provide a screening at this visit.

## 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.
- Always 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 under age 2 years should not eat foods or drinks with added sugars. This includes cookies, cakes, candies, juice, or soda.
- 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. Talk to your child.

## Take care of my teeth

- By the time your baby is 12 months old, your baby should be seeing a dentist every 6 months and more often if needed.
- Make brushing your baby's teeth a part of the daily routine.

## 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 57**.

- 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 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.
- 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 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.
- Encourage your child to explore safe spaces (see **Childproofing Checklist on page 57.**)
- 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 under 2 should not watch TV, movies, or use other electronics.
- Get more play ideas by downloading CDC's Milestone Tracker app, Vroom app, or by signing up for Bright by Text at [brightbytext.org](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### Watch for your baby to:

- Point at things.
- Use both hands equally.
- 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 on **pages 68-69.**

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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 the Children's Health Insurance Program at 2-1-1 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 spoon with your child or put their pacifier in your mouth. You can pass bacteria to your child's mouth that can cause cavities.

## 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 57**.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least two years old. The longer they stay rear-facing, the safer your child will be. Always keep car seats in the back seat of the car. For car seat guidelines in Texas, visit [dps.texas.gov/director\\_staff/public\\_information/carseat.htm](https://dps.texas.gov/director_staff/public_information/carseat.htm).
- Keep cigarettes, e-cigarette and supplies, matches, and lighters out of your child's reach.
- 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 child. They can cause suffocation.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute.



## Play with me

- Look at books with your child. You can share “reading” time by talking about the pictures.
- Play hide-and-seek games.
- Pretend with your child. Make believe you are cooking a meal or taking a trip to the beach.
- Explore nature together in a yard or at a park.
- Experiment with crayons, chalk, and other art supplies.
- Build a tower with blocks.
- Continue to avoid television, tablets, and other digital media. It is not recommended until 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](https://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### By 15 months, watch for your toddler to:

- Point to body parts.
- Understand simple commands (“no”, “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 62-63](#).

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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 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 toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.

## Keep me safe

- Make your home a safe environment. Use the **Childproofing Checklist on page 57**.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least two years old. 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 car seat guidelines in Texas, visit [dps.texas.gov/director\\_staff/public\\_information/carseat.htm](https://dps.texas.gov/director_staff/public_information/carseat.htm).
- 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 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 remember what not to touch.
- 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.

## 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.
- Throw or kick a ball together. Be active outside.
- Avoid television and digital media as long as possible. It is not recommended until 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](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## 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 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- Complete a developmental 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.
- 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) 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.

### 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.

### 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 57**.
- 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.
- Use a rear-facing car seat until your child is at least two years old. 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 car seat guidelines in Texas, visit [dps.texas.gov/director\\_staff/public\\_information/carseat.htm](https://dps.texas.gov/director_staff/public_information/carseat.htm).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Healthy Screen Time

- Children ages 2 to 5 years should only watch educational, non-commercial programs. Find some on [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org).
- Limit TV/screen time (including smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.). No more than 1 hour a day, and for no more than 30 minutes at a time.
- 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

### 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.
- Play alongside other children.



## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

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

- Weigh and measure your child.
- May complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing compared to other children the same age.
- Listen to your child's speech.
- Check your child's BMI (Body Mass Index). Make sure your child is eating a healthy diet, low in sugar and salt.
- Look in your child's eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.
- Give your child any shots they have missed before.

### 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.

## 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 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 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 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. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- 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 to no more than 1 hour a day.
- 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 BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### Watch for your child to:

- Point to 5 to 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.
- Plays 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](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc) or call 1-866-763-6481.

To find a local preschool, visit [txchildcaresearch.org](http://txchildcaresearch.org), [dontbeinthedark.org](http://dontbeinthedark.org), or call 1-800-862-5252 or 2-1-1. Use the **Choosing Child Care section on pages 64-65** to help you pick a preschool program.

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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.
- May complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing.

### 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. 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.

## 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 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](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### Watch for your child to:

- Enjoy pretend play and play with friends.
- Carry on short, but understandable, conversations.
- Draw a person with two 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 62-63](#).

## Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten if they are at least 4 years old by September 1st. There are certain eligibility requirements listed at [tea.texas.gov/ece/eligibility.aspx](http://tea.texas.gov/ece/eligibility.aspx). Check with the school near you because some schools enroll at 3 years old.

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

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 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.
- Observe your child's speech and motor skills.
- Ask questions about your child's learning and behavior.
- May complete a developmental screening to check how your child is developing.

### 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 every 6 months or more often if needed.

## 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. Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- 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.
- 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 to no more than 1 hour a day.
- Get more play ideas by downloading CDC's Milestone Tracker app, Vroom app, or by signing up for Bright by Text at [brightbytext.org](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### Watch for your child to:

- Hop on one foot.
- Knows 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 68-69](#).

## Sign me up for Pre-K

Your child may be eligible for free Pre-Kindergarten if they are at least 4 years old by September 1st . There are certain eligibility requirements listed at [tea.texas.gov/ece/eligibility.aspx](http://tea.texas.gov/ece/eligibility.aspx). Check with the school near you because some schools enroll at 3 years old.

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

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Keep me healthy

### At the 5 year check-up, 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.
- Ask about your child's behavior and social interactions.
- Check your child's blood pressure.

### Take care of my teeth

- Make sure and schedule your child's 6 month dental check-up.
- 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.
- 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.
- Test your smoke detectors 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 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.
- Teach your child not to play with plastic bags. They can cause suffocation.

## 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.
- 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](http://brightbytext.org) or by texting BRIGHT to 274448.

## Watch me grow

### 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 6 body parts.

## Notes

Length: \_\_\_\_\_ inches                      Date of appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ pounds \_\_\_\_\_ ounces

Questions for the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tips from the doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Childproofing Checklist

- Cover outlets and move cords out of reach.
- Attach televisions, furniture, and other heavy items to the wall or floor so your child can't pull them over.
- Remove tablecloths from tables.
- Install smoke alarms throughout your home.
- Pad sharp furniture edges and table corners.
- Install baby gates at the top and bottom of all stairs.
- Keep drapery cords tied together up high out of child's reach. Make sure baby's crib is away from curtains and cords.
- Place a barrier around fireplaces, woodstoves, space heaters, or other heat sources.
- Install cabinet locks and move all small, sharp, and poisonous objects and substances to secure drawers and cabinets.
- Move furniture your child can climb on away from upstairs windows. Consider using window guards.
- Install childproof doorknob covers so that a child cannot enter a room that contains hazards.
- Place knob protectors on stove knobs.
- Set water temperatures below 120 degrees to avoid scalding.
- Keep guns and weapons far away from your child. If you have a gun or if people you visit have guns, store them unloaded and locked. Store bullets separate from the gun.
- If there is a pool or hot tub where you live, make sure to have a 4-foot fence around all sides. Secure the door with a self-closing latch out of your child's reach.

### Safe Sibling Play

Older siblings may be excited about a new baby in the house, but they may also feel confused, frustrated, or upset. Parents should provide extra support to their older children. Teach them how to safely interact with a younger sibling. Always supervise children under 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 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 baby.
- Show how to touch and kiss 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 baby cannot get them.
- Instruct children to always ask for adult help if they want to see or hold baby. Teach them to never climb on chairs, tables, or cribs to see baby.



## Parent Self-Care

Being a parent is a joy, but it is relentless hard work. It's essential that you take care of yourself. If you focus on your own physical and emotional needs, you will have more energy to care for your child.

Self-care does not 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. Make a 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.

### Don't be afraid to:

- Ask friends, family, or your partner to watch your child while you take a break.
- Delay household or work duties until you get the rest or food you need.
- Call your doctor. Depression is common among new parents. Your doctor is there to help.

## Soothing a Crying Baby

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 their 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"> <li>• gas pains</li> <li>• a dirty diaper</li> <li>• clothing (hot/cold, tight, itchy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pat or rub your baby's back.</li> <li>• Change your baby's diaper every 3 hours when they're awake.</li> <li>• Remove or add clothes until your baby is comfortable.</li> </ul>
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 them, and "shushing" 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 your clean finger.

## 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. Write down some ideas to calm you and your baby. Stick these on 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.**

## 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 their 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. 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. 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.

### 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 Licensing (CCL) is a program that monitors and provides inspection reports on all licensed and registered child care in Texas. You can find 2 years of compliance history online: [TxChildCareSearch.org](https://www.txchildcaresearch.org). Although CCL 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 [DontBeInTheDark.org](https://www.dontbelinthedark.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.

## Top 10 Questions for Your Child Care:

- May I see your state permit and your last inspection?
- What experience and training do you have in caring for children?
- How many children do you care for and how do you ensure that you meet all their needs?
- May I see your operational policies so I can learn more about your services?
- What's a typical day like for a child in your care?
- How do you protect the health and safety of children in your care?
- Do you know about and always use safe sleep practices with infants?
- How do you discipline children?
- How do you handle emergencies and under what circumstances will you contact me?
- How will you discuss progress and concerns related to my child?

## 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 while being fed.

### 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 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 3-years-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.
- 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 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](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services).



## For children ages 3 years and older:

Local school districts can screen 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 Special Education Information Center toll-free at 1-855-SPEDEX (1-855-773-3839).

### Other resources:

ECI has more 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](https://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](https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services/eci-library-collection), call (888) 963-7111 x7260, or email [avlibrary@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:avlibrary@dshs.state.tx.us).

Families can find resources and services to support their children at [navigatelifetexas.org/en](https://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](https://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](https://actearlytexas.org) and [m-chat.org](https://m-chat.org).

### 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 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.** 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:

### 6-12 months

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

### 12-18 months

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

### 18-24 months

- Turns board book pages easily, one at a time.
- May use book as transitional object (e.g. at bedtime).
- Names familiar pictures.
- Fills in words in familiar stories.

### 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.

### 3 years and up

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

Contributions to the guide have been made by the following agencies and organizations.



Information, recommendations and suggestions found in this material are to be used at the discretion of the reader. This material is not intended to be used as a replacement for your child's doctor.