

Four Years



DATE _____
Weight _____
Height _____
BP _____

THE BASICS

Two things are very important, now and in the future.

- Eat dinner together regularly, every night if possible.
- No interruptions, no TV, no phone, just family.
- Make it a time that when they get older the kids will want to come; they won't have to be made to come.
- Eating is not the focus, the family is.
- The other is that dads need to play rough with their kids, girls and boys. The contact between dads and kids is often limited, and sometimes a simple thing like wrestling or throwing kids on the bed develops a relationship that will become more important over the years. It's pretty normal for dads to continue to wrestle and roughhouse with their sons, but continued rough play with girls may be even more important. If dad never coached a little league team, that would be fine. I'm not talking about WWF, just some play that makes mom say "somebody's going to get hurt!"

SEX

- This is the "play doctor" age – be ready, but don't worry if it happens.
- They love to check out bathrooms wherever you go.
- It's OK to bathe kids together – but they're pretty curious.

SAFETY

Your kids likely know the rules better than you. They should be able to tell others about family safety rules (car seats, airbags, holding hands across streets, don't talk to strangers, etc.).

- Sun protection.
- Bug protection – don't be afraid of DEET, with careful application, even 25% DEET is safe. Avoid combo sun/bug products.
- Teach your child how to swim – not how to play, but how to swim.
- Careful around dogs, cats.

NUTRITION

Your kids will eat what you serve them. If it's not in the house, they won't ask for it, unless they see it on TV, which is a problem all its own. Set a good example. Kids don't eat as much as adults. They know how much they need and if allowed will monitor their calorie intake very well.

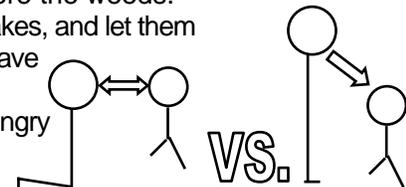
MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL

- Kids often cut their own hair at this age.
 - Lots of thinking and imagination.
 - Lots of questions – pay attention!
 - Listen and give eye contact – "get in the teepee"
- Boundaries are tested, expect it, and look carefully at the rules you've set up to make sure they are worth fighting for. Look for weaknesses in your boundaries (*your dog tries to get out of the yard where the fence is weakest*).

Sibling rivalry often escalates. Let them fight if reasonable. Kids will be more likely to be kind and share if they feel they get to choose when and how to do so. You can give your input, but try to avoid getting in the role of judge in their fights. Tell them to go outside, go to their rooms, whatever, but don't solve their problem for them.

- They talk back, they're stubborn – this is where a sense of humor really helps.
- Overlook little things – deal with trends in behavior.
- Rules – few and important (God only had ten).
- Remember – your children will grow up and be like you – not what you say, but what you do.
- It's not unusual for kids to be insecure in new settings.
- Water the flowers, ignore the weeds.

Let your children make mistakes, and let them learn from them. You don't have to point out the obvious if it's obvious ("you wouldn't be hungry if you'd eaten your dinner").



EDUCATIONAL (Suggested reading)

Parenting with Love and Logic; Cline/Faye
Siblings without Rivalry; Faber/Mazlish
Grace-Based Parenting; Kimmel
Winning at Parenting; Coloroso (DC/DVD)