



This newsletter provides important information about your baby through infancy and early childhood. You will receive 10 issues of this newsletter before your child reaches age 5. Other publications for parents include *Path to Parenthood* and *Growing Up Healthy*. If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter or are interested in a home visit or other assistance, please call one of the Vermont Department Health district offices listed below:

Barre	802-479-4200	Newport	802-334-6707
	888-253-8786		800-952-2945
Bennington	802-447-3531	Rutland	802-786-5811
	800-637-7347		888-253-8802
Brattleboro	802-257-2880	St. Albans	802-524-7970
	888-253-8805		888-253-8801
Burlington	802-863-7323	St. Johnsbury	802-748-5151
	888-253-8803		800-952-2936
Middlebury	802-388-4644	Springfield	802-885-5778
	888-253-8804		888-296-8151
Morrisville	802-888-7447	White River Junction	802-295-8820
	888-253-8798		888-253-8799

Your health insurance benefits include many preventive services at no charge to you: regular health check-ups and dental visits; immunizations (shots); vision and hearing checks; and child safety and developmental guidance.

Information in these newsletters was adapted from the following sources: *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton, MD; *Babytalk*; *Link Letters*, Healthy Steps; *Baby Your Baby*, Utah Department of Health; *Cradle Crier*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics; and *Path To Parenthood*, Vermont Department for Children and Families.

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
Child Development Division
103 South Main Street
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growing up healthy

A newsletter from Healthy Babies, Kids & Families

5 YEARS



Your child is now 5. She's entering middle childhood and starting school.

Even if she attended preschool, entering kindergarten will be a major milestone for her, and you. Many school-related issues

will emerge, such as her readiness for kindergarten and her ability to separate from you. Also, as she becomes more independent and begins to explore your neighborhood, it will be important to teach and frequently review safety rules about crossing the street, playing on playgrounds, riding her bike, and interacting with strangers.

This is the last Healthy Babies, Kids and Families newsletter you will receive. As your child grows and develops, enjoy your time with her, and continue to work closely with your health care provider—your family doctor, nurse practitioner or clinic.

General Development

Your child's growth will slow, while her strength and motor coordination will increase. These changes will contribute to her growing confidence—and competence—and enable her to participate in sports, dance, gymnastics, and other physical activities.

She will be able to dress herself without help. She will count on her fingers and can remember her address and telephone number. She will recognize many letters of the alphabet, and can print some of them. She will be able to draw a person with a head, body, arms and legs.

Her favorite activities will continue to be make-believe and dress-up. She'll play interactive games with her friends.

And she will love listening to stories—and may even begin to read soon.

Oral Health

Your child should brush her teeth twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste and floss once a day. Let your child floss and brush her teeth, then you take a turn to make sure her teeth are properly cleaned. If you get your water from a well, continue to use fluoride supplements, as recommended by your dentist.

If your child is still regularly sucking her fingers or thumb, talk to your health care provider. Serve foods containing sugar only at meal times and in limited amounts to limit risk of tooth decay. Schedule a dental appointment for your child every six months.

Healthy Eating

Offer your child regular healthy meals and snacks; include a variety of healthy foods. Share family meals together.

Don't worry if your child's food intake is inconsistent. One day she may eat everything in sight, and the next, she'll barely eat anything at all. Keep in mind that too much milk or juice can fill her up so she isn't hungry for meals. Encourage her to drink water between meals. Let her make some choices about what she will eat and respect her need to refuse foods at times. Continue to introduce her to new foods. Let her help prepare meals and she may be more likely to eat foods she has helped make.

If your child has started school, make sure that you give her a balanced breakfast or that the schools provides one. If she is in school at lunchtime, pack a nutritious lunch or have her participate in the school lunch program.

Safety

Because your child is so independent, it's very important to teach her to be safe at home and school, on the playground and in the neighborhood. Below are some things to keep in mind:

- ◆ Never allow your child to sit in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag. The safest place for her is in the back seat.
- ◆ Continue to use a car booster seat with a seatbelt.
- ◆ Teach her how to swim and reinforce water safety rules; make sure she's supervised every time she is near water.
- ◆ Continue to put sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) on your child before she goes out to play or swim.
- ◆ Keep your child's environment free of tobacco smoke.
- ◆ Test smoke alarms to be sure they work properly.
- ◆ Teach your child about your family emergency plan, including knowing phone numbers and safety rules at home, in your neighborhood and getting to and from school (look both ways before you cross the street, obey street signs).
- ◆ Lock up poisons, matches, and electrical tools.
- ◆ If you must keep guns in your home, make sure that they are kept unloaded and locked up and that ammunition is stored separately; make sure your guns have trigger locks.
- ◆ Emphasize playground safety.
- ◆ Teach your child rules about strangers (Never open the door to strangers; never get into a stranger's car).
- ◆ Make sure she wears a bicycle helmet, and is aware of general bike safety, like using hand signals and obeying street signs.

Encourage healthy and safe habits in general. Be

sure that your child gets enough sleep—at least 10 hours a night. Have your family take part in regular physical activity, like riding bikes or playing ball. Limit television viewing to one to two hours per day at the most, and watch the programs with her. Remind your child to wash her hands after using the toilet and before meals.

Starting Kindergarten

Even if your child has attended child care or preschool, kindergarten still is a major turning point for her—and you.

Your child's elementary school will be full of new people for you both to get to know. She'll need to obey both her school and classroom rules, get along with others, and learn not to disrupt her classmates. Some children manage these new challenges well, while others struggle with them.

Promote successful school entry by visiting the school with her and meeting her teacher, before she starts kindergarten. Talk to her about all the new opportunities, friends and activities at school. Let her help pick out back-to-school clothes. When school does start, meet with your child's teachers and continue regular communication. If you can, get involved with your child's school, perhaps as a volunteer. Talk with her about what she did at school everyday when she gets home. Let her know often that she is doing a good job.

When your child enters kindergarten, your schedule will probably change—especially if, up until now, you've had her in a full-day, full-year child care, or if she's only been at home.

Night Toilet Training and Bed Wetting

Young children occasionally wet their beds. If this happens, don't make a big deal out of it. She's not wetting the bed on purpose. Let her know it's not her fault and that it will probably stop as she gets older—don't punish or ridicule her.

Many children aren't ready for nighttime toilet training until long after they've been daytime trained. In most cases, nighttime wetting will gradually disappear with age. Limit fluid intake in the evening and have her use the toilet right before bedtime every night.

If your child starts regularly wetting her bed—or still can't make it through the night in underwear—have her wear a nighttime diaper, and talk to your health care provider.

Discipline

At this age it's important to encourage your child to control herself when she's mad or acting out. Continue to model behavior and help her learn control and ways to deal with feelings of conflict and aggression.

Using physical punishment is not recommended. If you lose control and act physically aggressive, it may teach your child to use power and physical aggression. A firm and loving approach can be the best way. Praise her when she is not acting out to reinforce her good behavior. For example, tell her, "You really are trying to control yourself, aren't you? I'm so proud of you."

(Brazelton LB. (1992) *Touchpoints: the essential reference*. Reading MA: Perseus Books)

Sexuality Education

Your child may begin asking about the physical differences between male and female bodies. This is normal. Use correct terms for all body parts, including genitals. Picture books suitable for family reading can be helpful—check with your local library to see what they have. Explain to your child that certain body parts—those usually covered by a swimsuit—are private and should not be touched without her permission.

Environmental Spotlight: The Play Area

Art supplies may contain solvents, asbestos, lead and cadmium. If chemicals from these products are inhaled, absorbed through the skin, or eaten by children, the results can range from headaches or nausea to more serious illnesses. Fortunately, there are alternatives to harmful art supplies. Below are some ways to keep your child safe.

- Check the label of art products you buy; make sure there aren't any DANGER, WARNING, or CAUTION statements, and follow all instructions for use.
- Make sure there is adequate air flow, so possible vapors do not build up. You can increase air flow by opening a window, and using a fan.
- Use water-based rather than solvent-based products. Avoid products that smell like food—children may try to eat them.
- Avoid artists' pastels. Many contain asbestos, contaminated talc, lead and cadmium pigments.
- Avoid permanent felt tip pens. Use washable markers, crayons, pencils and poster paints.
- Use vegetable and plant dyes instead of cold water, fiber reactive or commercial dyes.
- Use white glue or school paste in place of airplane, epoxy and instant bonding glues.
- Don't allow your child to eat around art materials.
- Be sure she washes her hands after using art materials, especially before eating.
- Vacuum or wet mop dust from her art work area; sweeping could stir up harmful dust.
- If you are not sure what something is made of, call the manufacturer and ask for a material safety data sheet (MSDS).
- Keep dangerous materials out of reach of children and make sure everything is clearly labeled.

Also, if you have outside playground equipment made of pressure treated wood, make sure it's properly maintained to avoid exposure to arsenic—treat it every two years with an oil-based stain sealant. In addition, use wood chips under the structure to prevent contact with contaminated soil. For more information, call the Vermont Office of Environmental Health at 1-800-439-8550.

