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## **Your Six to Eight Year Old**

School aged children are launching into the world outside their home. The learning experience of elementary school and relationships with friends their own age and with adults such as teachers, scout leaders, coaches, etc. are very important at this age. The challenges of school, interactions mentally and physically with their friends, and of being part of the group are going on constantly. School aged children are physically active with sports and games becoming almost an obsession.

From the successes in school and with friends and adults, children achieve feelings of industry and competence so important for their well-being. Although school aged children are more and more on their own they still need continuing parental guidance in determining their values and in helping to interpret their new life experiences.

As parents learn the strengths and particular interests of their child they can support and provide for successful experiences in those areas. Listening to your child's feelings, joys and sorrows, and making yourself available for activities you enjoy together will give your child a firm support for these important years and the future. Don't forget these are the years your child will remember – MAKE THEM COUNT!

## **Nutrition**

Children have slow but steady growth at this age. Protein foods (meats, meat substitutes, and dairy products), fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products are very important in your child's diet. Avoid the habit of using high sugar and high fat foods. The best beverages are water and milk.

Nutrition is vital for successful school performance. Breakfast should be planned and as relaxed as possible. Foods for breakfast could include: hot or cold unsweetened cereal with milk, one egg or protein food, bread or toast, 2% milk.

If your child eats at school, he/she will be presented with a nutritious lunch. If your child takes their lunch try to avoid chips, sodas, or high sugar desserts. In addition to a sandwich use a fruit or vegetable, cheese strips, and a nutritious beverage.



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## **Dental**

Children are losing their baby teeth and getting their permanent teeth. Regular and thorough brushing, the use of dental floss, and regular dental checkups are necessary. A diet that avoids sugary snacks or sticky candy and that includes raw fruits and vegetables will help prevent cavities.

## **Sexual Education**

Sexual curiosity is normal. Children will gain their information from friends if not informed about reproduction and sexual issues at home. Peer information will often be incorrect. In order to convey the facts and values you wish your child to have parents are the best educators. Children need to be able to discuss sexual information they read, see and hear on TV, or learn about from their friends – so being an “askable” parent is essential.

Certain issues are bound to come up. Genital touching of the preschool age (3-6 years) should be decreasing. Preparation for menstruation should occur by 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Also, preparing boys and girls for the bodily changes of themselves and the opposite sex is a good idea. Being alert to body hygiene and prevention of body odor is important with increased perspiration of the pre-adolescent.

## **Safety**

School aged children need and want to know the “whys” of safety. The consequences of not following rules can be understood at this age, too.

In the car, appropriate car seats for your child’s height and weight should be worn at all times. Your child should NEVER ride in the front seat.

In the neighborhood, survey play areas, observe equipment, and have children avoid bodies of water, construction sites, ditches, etc.

Bicycles should be of proper size and in good repair. Road rules should be taught. Helmets should always be worn.



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Swimming should always be supervised. Use floatation equipment properly. Do not use swim floats as life vests.

Supervise your child's sports activities – equipment should be proper, leaders should be trustworthy, etc.

At home, observe and practice rules of fire safety and firearm safety. Always have well maintained smoke detectors in your home. Lock up all firearms and store ammunition separately.

Teach your child to look out for him/herself. (See Body Safety Handout)

Know where your child is at ALL times!!!

### **A Few Words on Being a Parent**

These and other topics will your child's development. We are eager to discuss any concerns you may have about your child. Please see our suggested reading section for a list of helpful books.

### **Suggested Reading**

**NEXT CHECKUP: 9-10 YEARS OF AGE**