

# HEALTH builders



# A Tasting Party

**Y**ou can help your child learn about healthy eating, and have fun at the same time. Select one food from each of the following food groups:

- Milk products (things like milk, cheese, yogurt)
- Meats and beans (things like chicken, beef, pork, pinto beans, fish)
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Grains and cereals (rice, bread, cereal, tortillas)

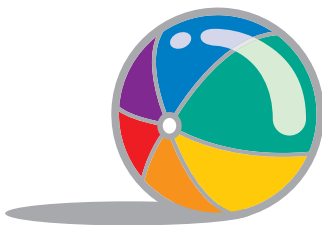
Put a sample of each food onto your child's plate and talk about each one. For example:

**Milk helps your bones grow strong.**

**Meats and beans give you energy.**

**Fruits and vegetables have lots of vitamins to keep you from getting sick, and grains can fill you up when you're really hungry.**

Talk with your child about how the foods taste. Are they salty? Sweet? Is the texture smooth or rough? What are their colors? Talk about how you need to eat from all of these groups to keep healthy.



# Keep Moving

**I**t is important for your three year old to have lots of active play each day. It doesn't have to be a hard work-out, or boring. It can be fun playtime – he just needs to get his body moving. Your child should not spend more than a half hour sitting in one place at a time, so take him to a park to play on the equipment, dance together, play follow the leader and march around the house, or play catch. Help him keep his body healthy!



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three year old

# My Teeth

**Y**our three year old needs to brush her teeth at least twice a day, morning and night. If you don't have one already, buy a child-size toothbrush. Brushing with water will do the job – she doesn't need to use toothpaste. If you do use toothpaste, make sure to buy children's toothpaste (without fluoride) and use a pea-sized amount. Turn brushing her teeth into a counting game and see if she can brush her teeth while you count to ten. Try ten seconds for the top edges of her teeth, ten seconds for the insides of her teeth, and ten seconds for the outsides of her teeth. Or, sing a song while she is brushing and see if she can brush the whole time you are singing. You will still need to brush her teeth for her, to make sure her teeth and gums are clean, but she is learning while you brush and count!



# How Does a Plant Grow?

**P**lanting seeds together and watching the plant grow can be a fun way to talk about how things grow – both plants and people! Buy a packet of seeds and let your child help you dig in some soil and loosen it up, plant the seeds, and water them. Try something that grows easily and quickly like pumpkins or sunflowers, for a quick success. When the plant sprouts and begins to grow, show him how it is growing and talk about how the plant needs sunshine, water and soil to grow. Then talk with him about how he needs things like healthy food, water, exercise and sleep to grow.



# Eat Your Colors

**E**ating many different kinds of food is important for your child to get all the nutrients she needs. One way to do this is to eat many different colors of fruits and vegetables. When you have a little extra time to work with your child, head to the fruit and vegetable aisle of your grocery store for a “color” shopping trip. Talk together about all the different colors of fruits and vegetables. Pick different colors of fruits or vegetables for your child to try, like strawberries, oranges, blueberries and grapes. At the store, and again at home, talk together about their different colors and the different smells or textures. You can also pick one color and choose several fruits or vegetables that have similar colors, such as oranges, carrots, and sweet potatoes. Talk about how they may have one color on the outside, and be a different color on the inside. At a meal or snack time, taste the fruits or vegetables together, cooked if needed.



# No More Diapers!

**Y**our child may be starting to use the toilet by herself. This is a big job for a three year old, and she will probably need some help. Don't pressure your child to learn how to use the toilet by herself, but encourage her when she seems ready, and talk with her about healthy habits. (Many children, especially boys, will not be ready to learn to use the toilet until after age three.) Help her learn how to take off the clothes she needs in order to go to the bathroom, to wipe herself clean, and to wash her hands every time after she goes to the bathroom. Help her learn to put her clothes back on too. It takes time and patience to learn these skills and accidents will happen. Your child will learn from positive words and experiences, so avoid shaming your child if an accident happens. And if you are going to be away from your home, take along extra clothes and cleaning supplies like wet wipes, paper towels and a plastic bag. Just remember your child will learn, and be proud when she can do this all by herself!





# Reading with a Purpose

**P**lan a trip to the library with a special focus in mind: finding books, books, and more books to help your child learn about things that are important for his health. The librarian can help you find books that are just right for your child's age. What is your child interested in, or what does he need help with? Is he interested in the different parts of his body? Ask for help finding a picture book about the body – all the different parts like bones, organs, and skin. You can find all kinds of books – about growing, about healthy teeth, about seeing and hearing, or about getting well after being sick. Look for books that have lots of pictures and read together at the library or take a few books home.

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three year old



# Sweet Sleep

**Y**our child needs plenty of sleep in order to stay healthy and for her mind and body to grow. If she is rested, she will have more emotional strength to be able to solve problems and get along with others. Most three year olds need between nine and 11 hours of sleep each day, either from a nap and nighttime sleep together, or all at nighttime (some three year olds may not nap during the day).

One way to make bedtime easier for both you and your child is to create a routine and do it every day. Make up your routine to fit your family and your child. It could be listening to soothing music, singing together, reading a story, taking a bath, having a snack, talking about what your child did that day, or a few of these things. Your work as a parent may not be over when your child falls asleep! Some children this age have nightmares and will need to be calmed in order to go back to sleep. As your child starts toilet training, she may also accidentally wet the bed. Make sure you are getting plenty of sleep too, so that you have the patience to help your child get the rest she needs.

# What's That I Hear?

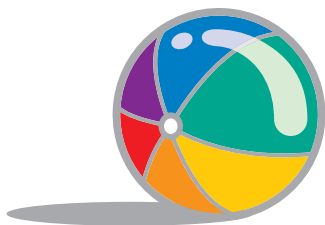
**D**uring this year, your three year old should be able to tell you if he hears sounds. Play a hearing game that will be fun for your child, and also help you know if he is hearing noises around him. Take a walk in your neighborhood or around a safe park and tell your child you are playing a hearing game. Tell him:

**I'm going to listen for a sound,  
and see if you can guess what it is!**

When you hear a sound, give him a clue and see if he guesses the noise. For example:

**I hear a sound! Do you hear it? What  
do you think it is? It comes from a car!  
That's right it's a horn. Beep-beep!**

Listen for common sounds your child will recognize, like children playing, a baby crying, an airplane flying overhead, or birds chirping. If you have any concerns that your child is not hearing well, take him to the doctor to check it out.



# Crazy Mouth

**Y**ou may not think of children flossing their teeth, but even at three years old your child can start practicing healthy habits, and that includes using dental floss between her teeth. Her little fingers will not be coordinated enough to fit in her small mouth, and slide dental floss between her teeth by herself, especially since it's hard to see inside her own mouth. One way to help her learn about the idea of flossing her teeth is to make up a crazy mouth that she can practice on. First count the number of teeth in your child's mouth – how many teeth are on top, and how many on the bottom? Then draw a big mouth on a piece of paper, with a top row of teeth and a bottom row of teeth (the same number as in her mouth). Let your child glue beans or small pieces of pasta onto this mouth like "teeth." Once the glue has hardened, give your child a piece of dental floss, and let her practice sliding it between the crazy teeth. Once she understands the idea of flossing to keep her teeth clean and her gums healthy, she'll be more likely to try in her own mouth, and to let you floss when she needs help. (At this age, you will still need to floss for her once a day.)

# Notes