



Developmental Notes – Seven/ Eight Years

Milestones:

By this age, children can skip, ride a two-wheeled bicycle and draw pictures of a person with more than eight body parts. They should also be able to follow a three to four part command and recount a story about a recent and personal event. They can play competitive board games and abide by rules. Children at this age should help out with house chores and may engage in after school activities.

Nutrition:

Refer to www.choosemyplate.gov for suggestions on healthy eating and proper food portions.

Encourage your child to eat a well-balanced diet and avoid excessive amounts of “junk food”. Also, discourage eating while watching television as this can lead to frequent unhealthy snacking and obesity. Television advertising, incidentally, can also be a serious obstacle to your child’s good nutrition as children at this age are extremely receptive to ads for sugary snacks. To combat this outside influence, keep your kitchen stocked with low sodium, low sugar and low fat foods and reserve sweets for special occasions. Some examples of healthy snacks include fruit, carrot or celery sticks, yogurt, crackers, oatmeal cookies, bran muffins and cheese.

Vitamins:

If your child is an extremely finicky eater or drinks less than six ounces of fluoridated water each day, please ask our physicians regarding supplementary vitamins. Continue fluoride supplementation when indicated, and make sure your child brushes his teeth at least twice a day and sees a dentist once to twice a year.

Elimination:

Some children continue to wet their beds at night past the age of five. This is referred to as nocturnal (nighttime) enuresis, or bedwetting. It affects one out of ten children greater than five years old, is more common in boys, and there is often a family history of bedwetting. It is usually due to a lack of control over a child’s “full bladder alarm systems” so that a child sleeps right through the sensation of a full bladder. A much smaller number of children at this age have daytime wetting problems and an even smaller group is unable to hold urine both day and night. If your child has any problems with excessive bedwetting that causes significant family disruption or distress to your child, or if there are other indications that wetting is due to more than just slow development of the full bladder response, consult with our physicians to see if any testing and/or treatment is recommended.

Sleep:

Naps are usually not taken by this age. Children at this age sleep between ten to twelve hours per night. Always reinforce a regular bedtime and create a calm and relaxing bedtime atmosphere to help your child settle down.

Developmental Activities:

Reinforce your child's independence and self-responsibility. Set rules to be followed at home such as regular bedtime routines, limit and supervise television viewing, and assign chores such as setting the table or keeping their bedroom neat. Encourage reading by giving your child his own library card and taking family trips to the public library. Consider enrolling your child in youth sports or encourage family physical activities such as biking and swimming. If your child is involved in an organized sport, make sure that the coach emphasizes teamwork and fun play rather than competition and winning.