



Starting School: Kindergarten and Your Child

The Move to Kindergarten

Starting kindergarten is an important first step in your child's education. It lays the foundation for future schooling and is where your child can truly develop a love of learning. It is also where children begin to learn social skills and how to interact with peers.

The transition to kindergarten is a big move for you and your child. Your child may be excited, happy or anxious. You may be sharing in some of these same emotions. Staying positive and showing enthusiasm for this change will help your child also feel more comfortable as the big day approaches.

Is My Child Ready?

Not all children start kindergarten at the same level. Some children may still be learning to recognize letters while others might be able to read short words. Some kids may play well with others while others are still learning to share toys.

Do not worry if your child is still trying to learn some of these skills. Avoid comparing your child with others.

Encourage your child to learn, but don't pressure him or her excessively. Kids need time to play and explore the world.



Kindergarten Readiness: Skills to Practice

- Playing cooperatively with other kids
- Listening without interrupting
- Following directions and obeying rules
- Using the bathroom without help
- Writing his or her first and last name
- Recognizing and writing numbers 0 to 10
- Counting objects
- Naming and writing letters
- Recognizing basic colors and shapes
- Reciting address and phone number
- Coloring within the lines
- Cutting on the lines

Building Confidence

Encouraging independence helps to build your child's self esteem. As they grow, children are expected to take on more responsibility. To help your child become more independent, allow him or her to:

- Choose which clothes to wear and get dressed alone.
- Put on and remove shoes and coats.
- Make choices whenever possible; let him or her pick between healthy snacks or choose which books to read before bed.
- Have responsibility for one or two household chores like clearing the table or making his or her bed everyday.

Preparing for the First Day

Starting kindergarten is sure to cause changes in your family's daily routine. Below are some tips to help make the transition smoother.

- Attend an open house, or arrange a visit to the school and classroom in advance.
- Meet the teacher and the parents of the other students.
- Ask for a copy of the school newsletter or monthly calendar.
- Practice your new morning routine the week before school starts.
- Encourage your child to eat a healthy breakfast every morning.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends in front of a TV or computer or playing video games.
- Enforce a reasonable bedtime. Children need 10 to 12 hours of sleep a night.

The Kindergarten Physical

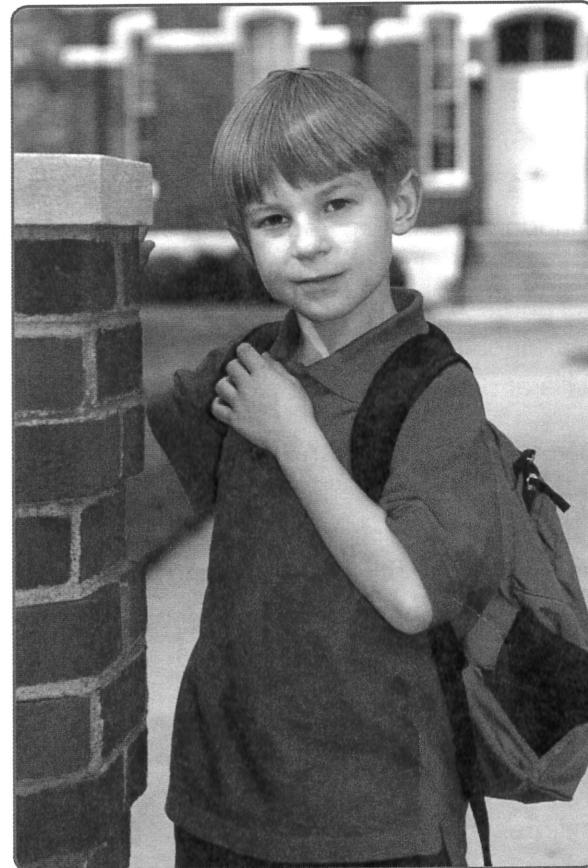
Preparing your child for school includes a visit to your child's health care provider. This visit should occur in the spring or summer before your child starts kindergarten.

During the visit, your child's provider will:

- Review your child's growth.
- Perform vision and hearing tests.
- Ensure your child's immunizations are up to date and recommend any necessary booster shots including DTaP, polio, MMR and chicken pox vaccines.
- Determine if a skin test is needed to screen for tuberculosis (PPD). You will need to return in 48 to 72 hours with your child so the skin test can be read. Your child's provider may also order a blood test to screen for anemia (low hemoglobin) and/or urine test.
- Address questions you have about your child's readiness for school. It may be helpful to make a list of the questions you would like to discuss during the visit.
- Complete and sign enrollment forms for your child. Remember to bring these with you to your visit.

Special Considerations

If your child has special health needs, like food allergies, or your child needs to take medications during school hours, be sure to discuss these needs with your child's teacher and other school staff before school starts. Your provider may need to fill out special forms for the school, so ask about this as well.



Q: My child was born in the fall and will turn 5 years old after kindergarten starts. He will be one of the younger kids in his class. Should he start kindergarten this year or wait until next year?

A: There is no "right" answer to this question. This is an individual choice for every family. Consider your child's readiness both socially and academically. Get input from your child's preschool teacher. Talk to other parents about their experiences. Speak with the principal or teacher at your new school. You may also want to discuss your concerns with your child's provider.

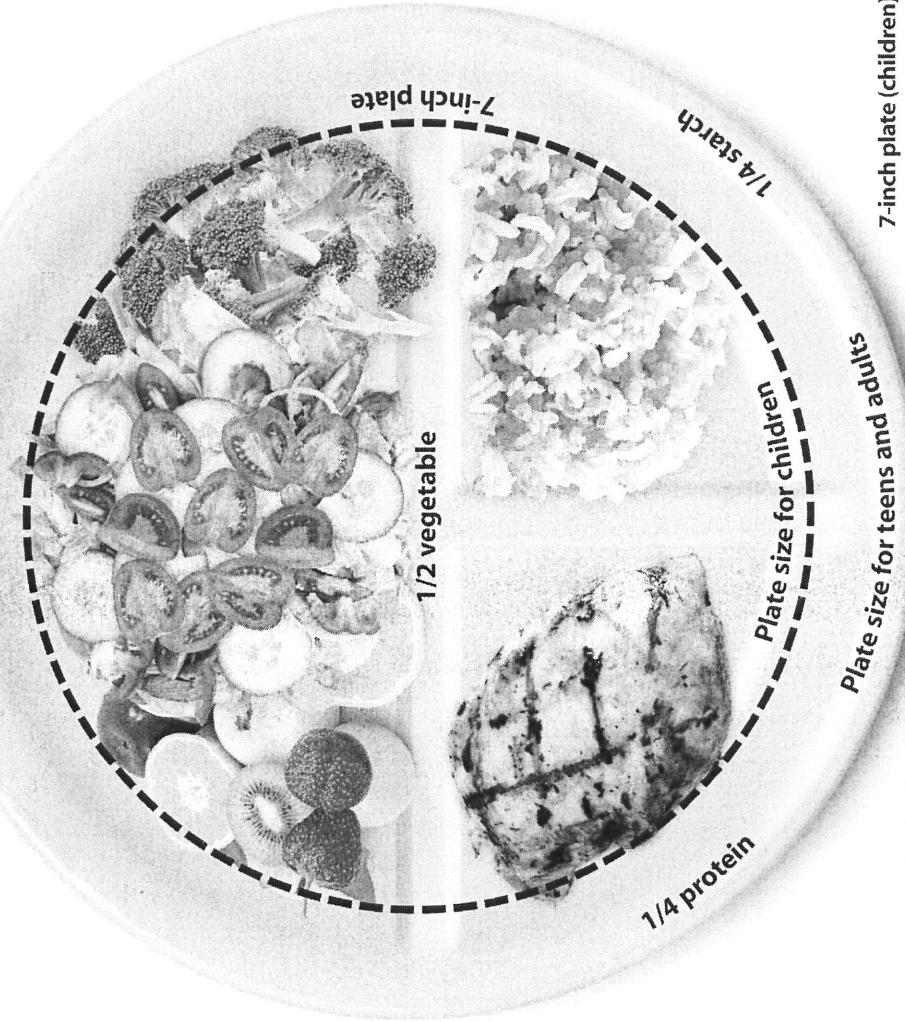
Activities for Children 60 - 66 Months Old



<p>Make a nature collage. Collect leaves, pebbles, and small sticks from outside and glue them on a piece of cardboard or stiff paper. (Cereal and cracker boxes can be cut up and used as cardboard.)</p>	<p>Practice writing first names of friends, toys, and relatives. Your child may need to trace the letters of these names at first. Be sure to write in large print letters.</p>	<p>Encourage dramatic play. Help your child act out his favorite nursery rhyme, cartoon, or story. Use large, old clothes for costumes.</p>	<p>Play simple ball games such as kickball. Use a large (8"-12") ball, and slowly roll it toward your child. See if your child can kick the ball and run to "first base."</p>	<p>When reading stories to your child, let her make up the ending, or retell favorite stories with "silly" new endings that she makes up.</p>
	<p>Let your child help you with simple cooking tasks such as mashing potatoes, making cheese sandwiches, and fixing a bowl of cereal. Afterward, see if he can tell you the order that you followed to cook and mash the potatoes or to get the bread out of the cupboard and put the cheese on it. Supervise carefully when your child is near a hot stove.</p>	<p>Play "20 Questions." Think of an animal. Let your child ask 20 yes/no questions about the animal until she guesses what animal it is. (You may need to help your child to ask yes/no questions at first.) Now let your child choose an animal and you ask the 20 questions. You can also use other categories such as food, toys, and people.</p>	<p>You can play "license plate count-up" in the car or on the bus. Look for a license plate that contains the number 1. Then try to find other plates with 2, 3, 4, and so forth, up to 10. When your child can play "count-up," play "count-down," starting with the number 9, then 8, 7, 6, and so forth, down to 1.</p>	<p>Practice pretend play or pantomime. Here are some things to act out: 1) eating hot pizza with stringy cheese; 2) winning a race; 3) finding a giant spider; 4) walking in thick, sticky mud; and 5) making footprints in wet sand.</p>
	<p>After washing hands, practice writing letters and numbers in pudding or thinned mashed potatoes spread on a cookie sheet or cutting board. Licking fingers is allowed!</p>	<p>Make an obstacle course either inside or outside your home. You can use cardboard boxes for jumping over or climbing through, broomsticks for laying between chairs for "limbo" (going under), and pillows for walking around. Let your child help lay out the course. After a couple of practice tries, have him complete the obstacle course as quickly as possible. Then try hopping or jumping the course.</p>	<p>Play mystery sock. Put a common household item in a sock. Tie off the top of the sock. Have your child feel the sock and guess what is inside. Take turns guessing what's inside.</p>	<p>Play color rhymes. Take turns rhyming a color and a word: blue, shoe; red, bed; yellow, fellow. You can also rhyme with names (Dad, sad; Jack, sack). Take turns with the rhyming.</p>
	<p>Play "what doesn't belong?" Let your child find the word that doesn't belong in a list of six or seven spoken words. The one that doesn't belong can be the word that doesn't rhyme or the word that is from a different category. Some examples are 1) fly, try, by, coat, sign, my; 2) Sam, is, ram, am, spam, ham; 3) red, orange, purple, green, yellow, beetles; 4) spoon, fork, shirt, pan, spatula, knife. Have your child give three to four words with one that doesn't belong.</p>	<p>Play the "memory" game. Put five or six familiar objects on a table. Have your child close her eyes. Remove one object, and rearrange the rest. Ask your child which object is missing. Take turns finding the missing object.</p>	<p>Play the old shell game. Get four cups or glasses that you cannot see through. Find a small ball, object, or edible item such as a raisin or cracker that fits under the cups. Have your child watch as you place the object under one of the cups and move all of the cups around. Have your child try to remember which cup the object is under. Have your child take a turn moving the objects while you guess.</p>	<p>Play "mystery sound." Select household items that make distinct sounds such as a clock, cereal box, metal lid (placed on a pan), and potato chip bag. Put a blindfold on your child and have him try to guess which object made the sound. Take turns with your child.</p>

My Plate Planner

A Healthy Meal Tastes Great



7-inch plate

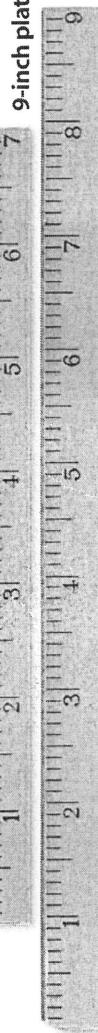
Plate size for children

Plate size for teens and adults

7-inch plate (children)

7-inch plate (adult)

9-inch plate (adult)



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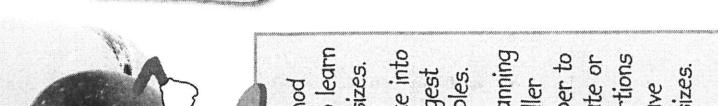
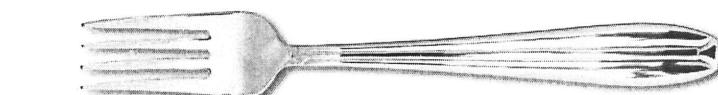


Note to adults preparing meals for children:
Use your child's hand to measure portion sizes.



The plate method is a simple way to learn healthy portion sizes. Just split the plate into 3 parts, the largest part for vegetables.

Note to adults planning meals for smaller children: Remember to use a smaller plate or serve smaller portions if you don't have different plate sizes.



Calcium and Vitamin D

Calcium is an Important Mineral That Helps:

- Our bones and teeth stay strong
- Our muscles move when we exercise
- Our body stay at a healthy weight
- Our skin to form scabs when we get cut
- Our body maintain a healthy blood pressure

Vitamin D is an Important Nutrient That Helps:

- Our body absorb calcium and prevent osteoporosis
- Regulate insulin and blood sugar and prevent type 2 diabetes and heart disease
- Prevent the following types of cancer: bladder, breast, colon, ovarian, prostate and rectal
- Prevent falls and muscle weakness
- Regulate immune function

Men, women and children have different calcium needs, which change with age. Vitamin D is a nutrient that works together with calcium and is essential for children and adults.

Calcium and Vitamin D Requirements

Age	Daily Calcium	Daily Vitamin D
1 to 3 years	700 mg	600 IU
4 to 8 years	1,000 mg	600 IU
9 to 18 years	1,300 mg	600 IU
19 to 49 years, men up to 71 years	1,000 mg	600 IU
Women over 51, men over 71	1,200 mg	600-800 IU
Individuals with osteoporosis	1,500 mg	800 IU
Pregnant & Breastfeeding:		
Below age 18	1,300 mg	600 IU
19 and older	1,000 mg	400-800 IU

How to get the Calcium and Vitamin D Your Body Needs

Many foods, especially dairy products, are naturally rich sources of calcium. You can identify the good sources of calcium (both natural and fortified) and the amount a food provides on the food lists on the back of this page.

Few foods, other than fatty fish and fish liver oil, are naturally rich sources of vitamin D, and some foods are fortified with vitamin D, such as milk. Vitamin D is usually produced in your body when your skin is exposed to sunshine. Talk with your doctor to determine if you should rely on sun exposure for vitamin D.

If you don't get enough calcium from your diet and if your doctor tells you that your vitamin D levels are low, you can take over-the-counter supplements. Talk to your health care provider to determine if a calcium or vitamin D supplement is necessary and how much you need to take.

Calcium Content of Foods

Dairy

Food	SERVING SIZE	CALCIUM (MG)*
MILK		
Milk, non-fat, dry, instant	1/3 cup	500
Milk: whole, low-fat, nonfat, buttermilk and chocolate	1 cup	250 - 300
Pudding made with milk	1/2 cup	155
Rice milk & Soy milk, <i>fortified</i>	1 cup	300 - 370
Soy milk	1 cup	55
YOGURT & ICE CREAM		
Frozen yogurt	1/2 cup	100
Ice cream	1/2 cup	85 - 110
Yogurt (whole, low-fat, and nonfat) plain and fruit-flavored	1 cup	275 - 450
CHEESE		
American cheese	1 oz.	160
Brie cheese	1 oz.	50
Hard cheese (cheddar, Swiss, mozzarella, provolone)	1 oz.	200 - 220
Soy cheese, <i>fortified</i>	1 oz.	200
Cottage cheese	1/2 cup	80
Ricotta cheese (<i>part skim</i>)	1/2 cup	335

Non-Dairy

	SERVING SIZE	CALCIUM (MG)*
VEGETABLES & SOY		
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	30
Dried beans and peas	1/2 cup	50 - 100
Leafy greens (mustard, beet, kale, collards, dandelion, spinach) cooked	1/2 cup	70 - 180
Soybeans	1/2 cup	130
FISH		
Salmon, canned (<i>with bones</i>)	3 oz.	180
Sardines, drained(<i>with bones</i>)	3 oz.	325
Tuna, light, canned in oil, drained	3 oz.	10
NUTS & SEEDS		
Almonds	1 oz. or 23 nuts	75
Nuts – most varieties	1 oz.	30
Seeds	1 oz.	20
Tofu, <i>fortified</i> with calcium sulfate or lactate	1/4 cup	215
OTHER		
Cereal bar, calcium <i>fortified</i>	1 each	300
Orange juice, calcium <i>fortified</i>	1/2 cup	175 - 200
Molasses, Blackstrap	1 Tbsp	170
Tortillas, corn (6 inch)	2 each	100

Vitamin D Content of Foods

FOOD	SERVING SIZE	VITAMIN D (IU)
Cod liver oil	1 Tbsp	1360
Salmon, wild caught	3 oz.	400 - 800
Catfish	3 oz.	425
Tuna (canned in oil) or Mackerel	3 oz.	230 - 345
Milk, <i>fortified</i>	1 cup	90 - 125

* Values are rounded to the nearest 5 mg and may be averaged with similar foods in group

Source: American Dietetic Association Nutrition Care Manual Calcium Content of foods

To look up other foods, visit the USDA Nutrient Database online at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/