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[www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com](http://www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com)

## **Your Four Year Old**

Four year olds are active and enthusiastic! Your challenge will be to keep up during this special year. Your child will may show a strong identity with the opposite sex parent. Encourage family togetherness.

Children will ideally have opportunities for social experience – away from you. Encourage a few household jobs and situations in which your child is allowed to figure things out. Preschool programs are encouraged. During this year your child will become more aware of social issues, gender, race, and handicaps. This is a prime time to continue open minded and positive attitudes and dispel untruths.

Four year olds are enthusiastic rule keepers and enforcers. Use this tendency to teach car seat use, hand washing, tooth brushing, and why we eat nutritious foods. Some regrets about misbehavior and the concept of right and wrong is developing. However, they often realize the rule itself and the whys.

At this age, children learn by doing. Provide lots of activities. The more opportunities provided the more they learn. Fantasy and “pretend” friends are common. Your child may also tell untrue stories or tall tales. These exaggerations represent what children believe and wish was true in their imagination. Continue to stress reality.

Your four year old may become bossy and express a “know it all” attitude. This may frustrate parents but in part this reflects positive confidence and self-esteem. He/She may use “big” words and speech may sound adult at times. Smart talk and four letter words may also creep in. Your child will be prone to strong reactions. Moderate feelings are not common at this age!

## **Nutrition**

It is safe to decrease saturated fat in their diet – especially with the use of lower fat milk. We recommend 2% or less. Try to avoid high fat meals. Lean meat, poultry, low fat dairy products, and whole grains are recommended in moderation with emphasis on fruits and vegetables.



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## **Dental**

Regular brushing and dental care is necessary. Dental visits are recommended every six months.

## **Sex Education**

This is the age where interest in where babies come from and how boys and girls are different emerges. There are many books available to help you discuss this with your child. Please see our suggested reading section. Whether your child asks questions or not, it is a good time to be prepared and use books and/or opportunities to teach your child beginning information.

## **Safety**

Supervise your child at all times - especially for outdoor and water activities.

Prevent access to electrical tools, matches, or lighters. Discuss fire safety and have smoke alarms on every level of your home.

Lock up firearms! Keep firearms and ammunition in separate, safe places. Firearms should be unloaded and NEVER available to children.

Think toy safety! Avoid toys with projectile parts or violent intent. Explosives or fireworks should never be around children.

Use helmets for bicycles, scooters, skateboards, etc.

Teach children to NEVER go with or accept items or food from people they do not know. Avoid strange dogs, too. (See Body Safety Handout)

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

Strong responses, greater verbal abilities, and inflexibility of thinking often lead many parents into power struggles with their four year olds. The guiding theme is unconditional love.



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**NEXT CHECKUP: 5 YEARS OF AGE**

**Please ensure your child's immunizations are completed to this age. If not, please arrange to complete them.**