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Your 8-10 Year Old

Eight to ten year olds are well into their life outside your home – a life involving friends, school, team sports, and other group activities. Achievement at school reflects your child's strengths in dealing with new situations, getting along with others, and benefiting from the direction of adults. School challenges your child with tasks that develop his/her initiative and confidence. You are probably learning that having an elementary school aged child is just as much of a challenge as the younger years!

As always, family communication is very important. Children need to be able to express their feelings, share clear messages, and spend meaningful time with their family. He/she will experience various life styles and values in these years. Your continuing help and support is needed in sorting out the many new ideas and issues that will inevitably come up. Helpful ways to do this include:

- ✓ Asking your child about his/her feelings – and looking for feelings behind the actual words used.
- ✓ Sharing your feelings
- ✓ Showing genuine respect for what your child has to say.
- ✓ Showing interest in your child's daily activities.
- ✓ Offering praise and encouragement instead of pressure or criticism.
- ✓ Finding easy ways to support your child's interests and facilitating self-esteem.
- ✓ Continuing to show physical affection.
- ✓ Laughing together every day if possible.
- ✓ As difficult situations come up – deaths, moves, separations, etc. – maintaining open communication so that your child's feelings can be heard.

By giving attention to these issues you will be better able to provide your child with the safe refuge at home we all need in our busy world.



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Thankfully, school aged children are generally very healthy. This is when children become more aware of healthy habits and the “whys” of these practices. Model healthy behavior and continue to encourage a positive outlook on life. Reward and value a healthy lifestyle. If a change is needed, work on one thing at a time. Give children reasons for your values. Consider some of our health ideas as a guide.

Behavior and Guidance

Try to balance study hours and play with physical activity. Activity promotes healthy bodies, improves mental health, and most often develops confidence and friendships. Be active as a family and allow team sports if your child wishes. Close supervision of leaders and equipment in team sports is advised.

Television and Other Electronic Media

Television offers much information for children but also has been associated with passive or violent behavior, mindless eating which may lead to becoming overweight, unrealistic views of the world, and over exposure to advertisements. To encourage proper balance, monitor the types of programs and the amount of time spent watching. The AAP recommends no more than 2 hours per day of combined electronic media (TV, movies, video game, computer, etc.).

Nutrition

Continue to offer nutritious foods for optimum growth. Value family meals (with TV off) as a time to eat together and share conversation. Help your children learn more about nutrition in food – read labels, shop together, and avoid excess fat and sugar. Buy wisely - especially with snack foods. Continue to give a quality breakfast as a good start to the school day. Encourage children to help you prepare meals. This not only encourages healthy eating but reinforces math and reading skills too!

Discipline

Your child is making steady gains in self-discipline but learning to live successfully with others remains an important issue. Offering children choices as often as possible, giving consequences related to behavior, and providing chances to improve are useful techniques. Sharing your feelings in non-judgmental ways has been found to be effective in allowing children to accept responsibility for their behavior.



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For instance, using statements such as “When... I feel...”

- ✓ When you track mud in the kitchen, I feel angry because I have to stop fixing dinner to deal with it. What can you do to help?

Regular responsibilities at home are a good idea. Continue to encourage your child to learn the value of contributing to family and household functions by accepting and performing regular responsibilities (taking out trash, cleaning room, caring for pets, etc.). Don't forget the value of showing physical affection – HUGS!

Healthcare

Regular check-ups are recommended at this age. Most schools will require a yearly sports physical if your child is participating in any sport.

Sexual Education

By this age, children should know the facts about reproduction and will be learning information and values from other children that you may need to correct or interpret with your child.

Often, by age 9-10, some girls will enter the early stages of puberty (breast development, pubic hair) and a few by age 10-11 will begin menstrual periods. Development in boys usually begins as early as age 11-12.

Boys and girls need to know about the normal development of their own sex and the opposite sex – so do discuss these subjects. Listening for opportunities to teach and discuss, using available books, and answering questions is essential.

Safety

- ✓ Sit in the backseat of the vehicle until 13 years of age.
- ✓ Walk your child's route to know likely trouble spots. Teach caution for cars while walking and boarding a school bus.



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- ✓ Supervision around water is necessary. Teach your child to swim and enforce the buddy system of NEVER swimming alone. Life vests should be worn at all times in boats. Diving should be only from an official diving board.
- ✓ Supervise matches and all other sources of fire. Maintain smoke detectors in your home. Teach “STOP-DROP-ROLL” method to deal with clothing on fire. Have a family evacuation plan and a meeting spot outside. Discourage fireworks of any kind.
- ✓ Firearms are the vehicle for most homicides and can cause accidental or unexpected deaths. BB and pellet guns can also be dangerous. Firearms should be unloaded and locked up. NO firearms around is the safest and best approach.
- ✓ Proper bike size and maintenance is essential – as is regular use of helmets. Teach riding safety and limit areas for riding.
- ✓ Helmets, knee pads, and elbow pads are recommended when using skateboards, roller skates, scooters, etc.
- ✓ Injuries to the head, arms, legs, and eyes are especially common and serious at this age. Avoid trampolines. Supervise sports and play equipment. The gym and playing field are the most common locations of school injuries, so careful surveillance makes sense.

A Few Words on Being a Parent

As your child grows, so do you. Your eight to ten year old has crossed over to a more mature child. The natural hugs and kisses are just a little more strained now. Children are well aware of their increasing competency. As parents, we need to loosen our ties a bit and support the gains each child is making on his/her own.

We are available to discuss any issue your school aged child may have getting along with friends and siblings, disobedience, communication, family social issues, mood changes, etc. Please consult with us as concerns arise about your child.

Suggested Reading



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NEXT CHECKUP: 11 YEARS OF AGE