

Since the foundation for all healthy habits, from nutrition to brushing teeth, is laid down during this age group, this is a great time to set the stage for a healthy life. In addition, your preschooler and grade-schooler begin to spend more time at school and with peers. It's important that you continue talking to your child about a healthy lifestyle. Stress that of **all** the voices your child hears, yours should be the guiding force. Above all, make sure your child can talk to you!

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

1. Explain the importance of taking good care of our bodies-eating right, exercising and getting a good night's sleep.
  - Discuss making good choices. Talk about how you feel good when you make a good choice. Follow up with questions like:
    - ◇ What is a good choice you made today?
    - ◇ What can happen if we make bad decisions?
  - I'm glad I'm healthy because... Then ask your child why they are glad they are healthy.
  - What are things we do to stay and be healthy?
2. Discuss what can happen when people make decisions that are unhealthy and/or dangerous
  - Help them understand the "Risk" element in decision making
  - Talk about what can happen when you make a bad decision.
    - ◇ What can happen to their bodies?
    - ◇ How it would possibly harm them?
    - ◇ How it would affect you and others?
3. Point out poisonous and chemicals and medications commonly found in homes. Read the products' warning labels out loud to your child. Explain that they should only eat food or take a prescribed medicine that you, a relative or other known caregivers give to them. Follow up with questions like:
  - What do you think would happen if someone swallowed or drank...?
  - Where do people get medications from?
  - When is it ok to take medicine?
  - What would happen if you took medicine that wasn't yours?

**CONVERSATION STARTERS (CONTINUED):**

4. It can be hard to tell the difference between candy and medicine, especially if they are flavored and colorful. Chewable medicine can look a lot like small, round candies. Medicine generally has a name or other label on the pill as well. Vitamin pills do not always have a label on the pill. Since candy, vitamins, and medicine can look similar, it can be dangerous to have different pills out on the counter because it can be mistaken for candy. The best practice is to keep medications up where children cannot reach them or in a locked box. It is important to still talk to children about the dangers even though they may be out of reach or in a locked box
  - Ask your child, how can you tell the difference between medicine and candy?
  - Talk about why it is important to ask an adult before eating or drinking anything you are unsure of.
  
5. Even your young 4-year-old may know a little bit about drugs and alcohol. They may have seen things on television or heard conversations about it.
  - Ask your child what they know about drugs and alcohol
    - 1 Ask your child how they feel about the things they have seen and/or heard. You will learn a great deal about what they are thinking.
  
6. Your child is at an age where they are learning how to handle strong emotions like anger, frustration and sadness.
  - Start to ask your child about how they feel during challenging situations.
  - Help your child identify and put words to their feelings when they are upset.
  - Your child may yell or hit when they are upset, use this time to explain appropriate ways to express themselves.
  - Be a role model and use positive coping skills to express yourself.

End the conversation by teaching your child ways to say “No!” to people when they want them to do things they don’t want to do.

It is much easier to say “No!” when they are prepared ahead of time.

**ACTIVITIES:**

1. Giving your child a daily vitamin.
  - When you give your child his /her vitamins explain why they take it every day. You can read the label to them and/or the instructions and discuss why it is important to take only the recommended dose. Use this as a teachable moment to discuss what could happen if you took more than the label says.
2. Create a collage
  - Go through a magazine and cut out healthy things you can do for your body such as healthy foods, someone exercising, sleeping, brushing their teeth, and create a collage.
3. Print out a coloring page and talk about it while they color. Coloring pages can be found at:
  - [www.cdc.gov/injury/pdfs/ColorMeSafe\\_eng-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/injury/pdfs/ColorMeSafe_eng-a.pdf)
  - [www.preventionpartners.com/stuff/coloring\\_pages.cfm](http://www.preventionpartners.com/stuff/coloring_pages.cfm)
4. Candy vs. Medicine Game
  - [www.pillsvscandy.org](http://www.pillsvscandy.org)

**FACTS:**

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that every day, over 300 children in the United States ages 0 to 19 are treated in an emergency department as a result of being poisoned.
- Everyday items in your home, such as household cleaners and medicines, can be poisonous to children. Medication dosing mistakes and unsupervised ingestions are common ways that children are poisoned. Active, curious children will often investigate—and sometimes try to eat or drink—anything that they can get into.
- Tobacco is considered to be a "gateway drug" which may lead to alcohol, marijuana, and other illegal drug use.
- Substances in your child's world can include tobacco, alcohol, cleaning supplies, and medication.
- Good communication between parents and children is the foundation of strong family relationships. Developing good communication skills helps parents catch problems early, support positive behavior, and stay aware of what is happening in their children's lives.

**SOURCES & RESOURCES**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

[www.kidshealth.org/en/kids/know-drugs.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/en/kids/know-drugs.html)

[www.upandaway.org/](http://www.upandaway.org/)

[www.cdc.gov/safecild/Poisoning/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/safecild/Poisoning/index.html)

[www.medicinabuseproject.org](http://www.medicinabuseproject.org)

[www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/Talking-To-Kids-About-Mental-Illnesses-084.aspx](http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Talking-To-Kids-About-Mental-Illnesses-084.aspx)

[www.today.com/parents/experts-explain-how-talk-about-suicide-kids-age-t130589](http://www.today.com/parents/experts-explain-how-talk-about-suicide-kids-age-t130589)