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33 Months

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children

33 MONTHS

This Is the Time for Memories

Children love to learn about themselves and their past. It helps them to feel important and special. A very nice thing you can do for your child and yourselves is to collect and organize reminders of these early years.

Chances are you have some memory makings already. You can use photographs, birthday cards, certificates, and so forth to start a memory book or memory box. Add pictures your child draws, a piece of her favorite blanket, an outline of her hand or footprint, her holiday cards, newspapers published on her birthdays, notes from favorite relatives—and anything else you and she want to save. Let your child know this is a special book you want to keep for both of you. Let her only look at it with you so you can keep it from getting torn and dirty.

All too soon, these early years pass. A memory book will help you and your child enjoy remembering these special years.

Nutrition: Some Toddlers Don't Get Enough Iron

The nutrient that is often low in the diet of toddlers is iron. Iron is a very important nutrient for healthy red blood and for energy. You can make sure that your toddler is getting enough iron by giving her foods that are good sources of it.

Look over the list of food below and ask yourself, "Does my child eat at least two or three of these foods every day?" If he doesn't, he may not be getting enough iron.

- Foods with lots of iron include: beans, such as kidney beans, pinto beans, red beans, great northern beans, blackeye beans, navy beans, small white beans, and lima beans, lentils, organ meats like heart and liver, sunflower seeds
- Foods with some iron include: dried fruit, such as raisins, apricots, and prunes (cut into small pieces to prevent choking), egg yolk, enriched macaroni, noodles, and rice, enriched breads and cereals, whole wheat breads and whole grain cereals, beef, pork, chicken, fish, nuts (remember to break these into small pieces to prevent choking), split peas, spinach, greens, broccoli, and green peas

Vitamin C helps your body use iron, so offer some orange juice when you serve iron rich food. As an infant, your child probably ate iron fortified baby cereal. Now she probably eats adult cereal. To find out if a cereal is high in iron, look for the nutrition label on the side of the box and see how much iron each serving of cereal has. The amount of iron will be given as a percentage of the U.S. RDA (U.S. Recommended Dietary Allowances). Try to give your child only those cereals that have at least 25 percent of the U.S. RDA for iron. Take your child to a doctor for regular checkups to see if your child is getting all the iron he needs.

Vision Testing

Vision testing should be a part of every child's regular health checkup. A vision test determines each eye's ability to see sharply. When a child is under 3 years of age, his vision is tested by his ability to follow an object moving from about 12 to 15 inches from his face to a few inches from his nose. Each eye is tested separately, by covering one eye and observing the other eye as it follows the vision tester's finger.

At 3 years of age, most children can learn how to take a formal vision screening test. The most widely used vision screening test is called the Snellen test and uses a wall chart headed with a large letter E. Some wall charts use pictures of things that are familiar to the child. The child covers each eye in turn and identifies what he can see.

Some toddlers have a "lazy eye." These children need regularly scheduled vision tests to make sure that eye problems are identified early. An early discovery, followed by prompt medical care, may prevent permanent loss of vision.

Vision problems often go unnoticed by parents, and since the small child has no knowledge of what good vision is, he does not complain. Your child's ability to see is essential for learning. You can provide your child with a head start for preschool and kindergarten if you make sure his eyesight is normal.

Games for Growing

Take Away

Purpose of the Game: To encourage your child's attention to detail and memory.

How to Play: Put several different things on the table or floor. Ask your child to close her eyes as you take one thing away. Then ask her to open her eyes and guess which one was removed. You can play the game at first using only two items. Later, to make the game harder, you may use more things. Let your child have a turn at taking things away for you to guess which one has been removed. Stop playing when the game is no longer fun for you or your child.

Matching Pairs

Purpose of the Game: To help your child learn how things can be by the same or different.

How to Play: Collect pairs of things that are the same, such as two spoons, two bars of soap, two playing cards, two plates, two toothbrushes. Mix the sets up, then hold one and ask your child to pick another just like it. You can take a turn at guessing. To make the game more difficult, choose pairs of pictures, numbers, letters, or playing cards and ask your child to match the one you hold up. As always, take turns leading and stop before your child loses interest in the game.

Homemade Toys that Teach: Costume Box

This box of costume makings will encourage your toddler's imagination, creativity, and pretend play.

Materials:

- Large, cardboard box
- Cast off clothing, hats, scarves, shawls

Playing: Your toddler will know what to do with this box of costumes; he has lots of imagination. Encourage his pretend play by suggesting people he can pretend to be. Suggest that he act out characters you've read about in stories or ask you to guess who he is dressed up to represent. Sometimes, he'll enjoy having you dress up and pretend with him.

Look at Me

Your child is still developing her own idea about who she is. Give her a chance to see and talk about herself with the following activity.

The only special equipment you'll need is a large sheet of paper. Butcher paper works well, and you can probably get a big piece from any butcher shop.

Ask your child to lie down on the paper that you have spread out on a smooth surface like the floor. Now, use a crayon or marking pen to draw in between fingers and around ears—get as much detail as possible!

When you have finished the outline, you and your child can fill it in. Name the body parts and items of clothing as you color them. Let your child look in a mirror so she can draw her eyes, nose, and mouth into the picture. Don't be afraid to be imaginative! Green hair is okay! When your child's picture is finished, hang it up where everyone can admire it.

You can repeat this activity every few months, or at each birthday, so you can see changes and talk about them. "See how much bigger you are getting" or "your hair is getting longer" or "you're wearing a dress here."

Tips for Feeding Tots

Your child is forming important food habits. You can start your child on the road to good health and fitness by helping him or her develop good eating habits at an early age.

Create a pleasant eating environment. This is a key to enjoyable meals for you and your preschool child.

Set a good example. One of the best ways to get a preschooler to eat nutritious foods is for the parents to set a good example. Children imitate those around them.

Introduce new foods when your child is healthy and hungry. Preschoolers like the security of things they know and this includes food. In general, the more children are exposed to a food, the more likely they will try it and slowly learn to like it.

Take advantage of your child's natural curiosity and encourage exploration of new foods.

Offer small portions of a new food in a calm, matter-of-fact manner.

Eat a variety of nourishing foods yourself. Your child is likely to follow the same pattern.

Recognize that children are different from adults in their food likes and dislikes. Children may prefer to eat all of one food before beginning another. They may go on food jags when they will eat only certain foods or combination of foods. If this happens, do not make an issue of it but substitute another similar food and offer the refused food at a later date.

If your child repeatedly refuses a food, accept the dislike. Everyone, even a child, is entitled to a few food dislikes.

Children need the same foods as older children and adults but in smaller portions. A good rule is one tablespoon per year of age.

Build positive attitudes toward food by letting children help with food preparation.

- Pouring from a small pitcher into a cup encourages children to drink milk.
- Crumbling crackers or cracking eggs helps develop motor coordination.
- Tasting introduces new flavors and textures.
- Washing fruits and vegetables teaches food safety.
- Learning the difference between ripe and unripe teaches food science.

Toddler Talk: I'm Learning about Sounds and Weights

- Let me hold heavy and light things. Use the words "heavy" and "light" when you tell me about them so I can learn the difference. Ask me to pick up the heavy thing or the light thing so I can practice what I have learned.
- Help me learn about the sounds of things. Ask me to close my eyes. Ring a bell, shake a rattle, or jingle some coins and let me guess what is making the sound.

Magic Closet

The magic closet (or box or basket) is a place full of happy surprises for your child. You can rotate your child's toys through the magic closet. You can bring out one thing at a time when your child is sick, or bored on a rainy day, or when you and she need something very special to do. Children like to rediscover old toys. A few new toys can be kept in the magic closet, too. Surprises are fun for everyone, and you will enjoy seeing your child playing with her magic closet discoveries.

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