

### **Community immunity**

Community (or herd) immunity helps slow down or stop the spread of disease among people. It only works when the majority of a population has immunity to the disease. For some diseases, such as measles, at least 9 out of 10 of us must have immunity to keep the virus from spreading. When you choose to immunize yourself and your family, you also protect others at risk, such as those who:

- Have weak immune systems, such as people with heart disease or cancer.
- Are not fully immunized.
- Can't get shots because they're too young, too old, or have certain medical conditions that prevent them from getting vaccinated.

If your child is not fully immunized, or if you have questions about vaccines, talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic. For more information, visit [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov) or call your local health department.

### **Care for your growing child's teeth**

Help your child brush well at least twice a day with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Floss in between teeth. Avoid snacks with sugar and starch. Watch for the permanent six-year molars which may come in now. To prevent cavities, talk with the dentist about getting dental sealants.

For active children, ask the dentist about using a mouth guard to prevent teeth from being damaged or knocked out during sports. This is important as all teeth, baby teeth and permanent teeth, are needed for speech and to keep other teeth in place. Protect the teeth, jaw, and head from injury by using:

- A booster seat on every car ride.
- A helmet for active sports, such as bicycling, skateboarding, skating, skiing, and riding a scooter.

If a permanent tooth is lost or knocked out, take your child to a dentist within two hours. The tooth can often be reattached. Hold the tooth by the crown (biting side). Rinse it gently in cold water. Do not scrub. Place the tooth in a secure container of cold milk or a wet cloth. Be sure to list the dentist's phone number on emergency contacts.

### **Learning about others**

As your child gets older and begins to be around more people, he or she will meet children who are not like him. They may look or sound different, have different abilities, or be part of other kinds of families or cultures. Help your child understand that every person is unique and special. If you notice your child staring at someone, remember he or she is just being curious. Talk to your child about what he or she sees and answer any questions about the differences he or she notices in others. Encourage your child to make friends with all kinds of people. Try to set a good example yourself.

### **Make healthy food choices**

Talk with your child about the importance of eating foods that help him or her grow and be healthy. Go to [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for ideas on how to make sure everyone in the family gets the vitamins and minerals they need. Here are some tips:

- Every meal and snack should include at least one serving of a fruit or vegetable. One serving for a child this age is about ¼ to ½ cup of fruits or vegetables. Half a medium-sized apple or six baby carrots is about a ½ cup. Let your child choose a favorite fruit or vegetable for a snack.
- Ask your child to make a list of his or her favorite foods from each food group. Use this list to help plan meals. Go shopping together and pick out foods from each food group.
- Remember, your child may need to try a food many times before he or she likes it. Give him or her lots of chances to try new foods.

# Keeping Your Child Healthy and Safe

## Help your child deal with stress

Many things may cause stress, including both happy and sad things. Starting school, family changes (such as a new brother or sister, a move, or a divorce), or broader world events may all be stressful. Learn when your child is feeling stress by noticing changes in how he or she behaves. Your child may:

- Feel sick or cry and whine more often than usual.
- Have temper tantrums or trouble getting along with others.
- Not want to do things he or she usually enjoys.

There are things you can do to help your child cope in any stressful situation, such as:

- Keep your daily routines the same as much as possible. This helps your child feel safe.
- Talk with your child to find out what he or she is feeling and thinking.
- Give your child simple, honest answers. Be sure to answer all questions, but remember, too much information may be scary or confusing.
- Help your child express and release feelings by doing things, such as drawing, playing with dolls or puppets, and being physically active.

## Help your child learn to handle strong feelings

You are a role model for your child. Children learn how to treat others by watching you. You set a good example when you show your child respect as you talk about strong feelings and solve problems.

It may be hard to listen to your child when he or she is very angry or upset. When your child is mad at you it's even more difficult. Listen to your child to help him or her calm down and talk. If you need to calm down, take a deep breath and count to 10. Try to listen without interrupting. Kneel or bend down to your child's level. Tell your child you want to hear and understand his or her feelings. Then you can find ways to solve the problem together.

## Questions about sex are normal

You may be uncomfortable or worried about how to answer your child's questions about sex. If you need help, ask your doctor, nurse, or a trusted friend for help and ideas. You can also find helpful books at your local library.

When your child asks you a question about sex or private body parts, keep your answer short and simple. Use the correct words for body parts and try not to seem embarrassed. Find out why your child is asking the question. This may make it easier to answer.

## Gun safety at home

It's important to lock up all guns. It's very hard to keep things hidden from curious children. If you have guns in your home, your child will find them and want to play with them.

Storing guns safely is even more important than teaching your child that guns are dangerous. Here are some tips:

- Always remove ammunition (bullets) from guns.
- Lock up guns and ammunition separately.
- Use a locking device, such as a gun safe or lock box.
- Go to <http://oag.ca.gov/firearms/fsdcertlist> to make sure the storage device is approved.

To learn about safe gun storage, go to  
[www.lokitup.org](http://www.lokitup.org)

## Gun safety away from home

In Washington State, 35 percent of children live in a home with a firearm. An estimated 55,000 of these children live in a household with loaded and unlocked firearms. Before your child goes to other children's homes, ask the parents about firearms and how they are stored. Ask about guns just as you would ask about other safety issues, such as booster seats or swimming pools. Then decide whether or not to let your child play there.

## Prepare for an emergency

Begin to teach your child how and when to call 911 in case of an emergency. Here are some tips:

- Use a toy phone and pretend your child is making a call. Help your child practice giving his or her phone number, address, and parents' full names. Make sure your child knows where cell phones are kept and how to make a call, especially if there isn't a landline.
- Make sure your child knows he or she should stay calm and answer all the operator's questions. Tell your child that help will be on the way even though the operator may continue to ask questions.
- Teach your child not to hang up until the operator says it's OK.

Teach your child that 911 is for people emergencies only. (Your child should not call 911 for hurt animals.) Make sure your child knows never to call 911 as a joke or just to see what might happen. To learn more about teaching children to use 911, call your local fire department.

