



Growth Milestones - FIVE YEARS

"Leaving the Nest"

Your 5-year-old is about to begin "real" school for the first time. Your child changes from a little one, protected by home, to a kindergartner, with the demands of a new school and new expectations. Children this age need approval, praise and encouragement. They want to please and are proud of their work.

School Readiness

Is my child ready for kindergarten? Should you send your child with a late summer or fall birthday to kindergarten, or should you wait another year? These are some of the questions parents of 5-year-olds ask themselves. Ideally, kindergarten should be ready for the child rather than getting the child ready for kindergarten. Use the following to see how well your child is doing in acquiring the skills found on most kindergarten checklists.

- Good physical health, can see and hear well and visits the doctor and dentist regularly.
- Has self-care skills (dressing, feeding, washing, manages bathroom needs).
- Follows directions and rules. Pays attention for short periods of time to adult-directed tasks.
- Able to work independently for short periods.
- Tolerates frustration and failure.
- Knows his or her full name as well as the name of his or her parents.
- Easily makes changes and accepts adult supervision and help.
- Able to play in small groups with other children.
- Begins to share with others.
- Listens to stories without interrupting.
- Recognizes rhyming sounds.
- Speaks clearly with age-appropriate language skills; Talks in complete sentences of five to six words.
- Understands that actions have both causes and effects.
- Shows understanding of general times of the day.
- Cuts with scissors.
- Holds crayon or marker; has a collection of paper, pencils, crayons.
- Separates from parents without being upset.
- Looks at pictures and then tells stories.
- Is able to recognize authority.
- Identifies some alphabet letters and most colors.
- Buttons shirts, pants, coats and zips up zippers.
- Begins to control himself or herself.
- Recognizes groups of one, two, three, four and five objects.
- Sorts similar objects by color, size and shape.
- Recognizes some common sight words like "stop."



- Counts to 10.
- Uses words like bigger, smaller or heaviest to show comparison.
- Rides a tricycle.
- Draws a picture of herself or himself including head, body, arms and legs.
- Knows her or his body parts.
- Understands concepts such as: in, out, under, on, off, front and back.
- Follows through when you give him or her one or two directions.
- Attempts to write his or her name.

Parenting and Behavioral

- Listen to and show respect for your child.
- Continue reading to your child or read together. Get a library card and use it regularly. Ask the librarian to pick out age appropriate books.
- By the end of this year many 5-year-olds can recognize simple words and may even be reading. Praise your child's progress.
- Children this age show concern for each other so parents should encourage diversity, respect and tolerance.
- The 5-year-old enjoys crafts, coloring and painting. He or she may also begin enjoying simple board games (like "Candyland," etc.).
- It is not unusual to have occasional accidents at night and during play. Be understanding and do not make a big deal out of it. However, if it happens frequently, it would be a good idea to discuss the matter with the child's doctor.
- Enhance your 5-year-old's experience with trips to parks, libraries, zoos and other points of interest.
- Teach your child the difference between right and wrong.
- Begin age appropriate chores.
- Always show affection.
- A 5-year-old is usually imaginative and has lots of energy. Be sure to praise children. Building self-esteem is very important at this age. Give your child encouragement and praise not only for completing a task but also while working on the task. Avoid physical punishment - it only promotes fear and guilt and teaches the child that violence is acceptable in certain situations. Instead, send the child to a quiet, boring place without anything to do for five minutes as a form of discipline.

Development

- Skips, can walk on tiptoes and jumps forward.
- Throws a ball overhand.
- Washes and dries hands and brushes teeth unassisted.
- Can cut and paste.
- Can name four or five colors.



- Can state his or her age.
- Has a vocabulary of six to eight word sentences.
- Can tell a simple story.
- Can dress and undress without supervision.
- Knows his or her own phone number, address and several nursery rhymes.
- Can copy a triangle from a picture.
- Draws a person with a head, body, arms and legs.
- Understands right and wrong, fair and unfair.
- Understands games that have rules.
- Engages in make-believe and dress-up play, in which your child may assume a specific role ("mommy or daddy").

Oral Health

- Encourage teeth brushing twice a day with small amount of fluoride toothpaste.
- Continue to give fluoride supplements if not in the water supply.
- Continue seeing a dentist at least twice a year.
- Consider the use of dental sealants.
- Learn how to prevent dental injuries and what to do in case of a dental emergency, especially the loss or fracture of a tooth.

Feeding

- Appetite is usually much better at 5 as the child begins the second of three growth spurts. Continue to offer your child a selection from the basic food groups.
- Make meal time pleasant, turn off the TV and encourage conversation.
- Limit carbohydrate snacks like soft drinks, chips, candy and cookies. Instead, encourage healthy snacks, such as fruit and vegetables.
- Ensure your child eats a balanced breakfast and a nutritious lunch at school.
- Your child may enjoy helping to choose and prepare meals with supervision.

Sleep

- At this age expect an occasional nightmare or night terror. If the behavior become frequent, speak to your child's doctor about it.

Sexuality



- Now is the time to begin to teach your child the names of all body parts including genitals. Give your youngster a vocabulary to avoid unwanted touching. If this is a difficult subject for you to discuss, ask the help of your doctor or the child's teacher.
- Recognize that a child's sexual curiosity and exploration are normal.

Safety

- Continue to use a seat belt in the back seat of the car at all times.
- Teach your 5-year-old how to swim.
- Make sure all swimming pools in your area are secure.
- Always use sun screen when your child is outside playing or swimming.
- Keep your child's environment free of smoke.
- Conduct fire drills and make sure all smoke alarms are operating properly.
- Make sure any guns in the home are locked up and the ammunition is stored separately. A trigger lock is an additional precaution. And make sure these same safety precautions are followed at friends' homes. Never allow your child to handle firearms.
- Teach bicycle safety and make sure your child always wears an approved helmet as well as shoes while riding a bicycle.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.
- The purchase of a trampoline is not recommended because of the risk of serious injury.
- Begin to teach your child rules for interacting with strangers, either on the phone or at the door.
- Never let your child play unsupervised outside.

Immunizations

Since immunization schedules vary from doctor to doctor, and new vaccines may have been introduced, it is always best to seek the advice of your child's health care provider concerning your child's vaccine schedule.

- Your child may receive one or more immunizations depending on your doctor's schedule. Some doctors prefer to wait until the child actually starts kindergarten (if not at 5) or has already given the recommended immunizations at the 4-year checkup.
- Annual flu vaccines for children with chronic illnesses like asthma and heart defects. Check with your doctor.
- Vision and hearing are usually checked at this visit. Other screening done at this age may include a tuberculin test (if indicated) and blood pressure. If there is a family history of elevated cholesterol, some physicians will also obtain a screening blood test.



- The following immunizations *may be* given at the 5-year old checkup.

- 1 dose of DTaP vaccine
- 1 dose of the MMR vaccine
- 1 dose of the Inactivated Polio Vaccine
- 1 dose varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

▶ [Kidsgrowth Vaccine Guide](#)

▶ [The Vaccines and the Diseases they Prevent](#)

▶ [Keep a record of your child's immunizations.](#) (Click to download a blank immunization record)

Check your child's progress with our [Growth Charts](#).

The information presented in Growth Milestones was obtained with the help of our pediatric experts and with material from The American Academy of Pediatrics' Guidelines for Health Supervision and Bright Futures' Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents. Bright Futures is supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.. Updated 05-08-07