

# PLAIN TALK



## About Your Three- to Four-Year-Old Child

### *Every Child and Parent is Unique.*

This brochure highlights some general patterns of growth and development that apply to most children.

As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you will discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills.

You will find your own ways to use old and new ideas, to fit your individual personality, your family life, and your child's needs.

#### General Traits

- Enjoys walking, running, jumping, riding, and climbing
- Likes activities such as play dough, blocks and cars, drawing, simple puzzles
- Stuttering, nail-biting, thumb-sucking, and similar habits are normal at this age
- Friends are extremely important, but skills in dealing with them are few
- Many children are consistently dry, at least in the daytime
- Likes to ask questions: Why? How? What? When?
- Wants to do everything a certain way, likes routines
- Occasionally still reverts to baby-like behavior
- Make-believe play is beginning

#### What a Parent Can Do

- Allow your child to talk about feelings and help by giving names to feelings (sad, happy, scared, angry, confused).
- Friends are important now. Look for ways for your child to spend time with other children. One way might be to arrange a special weekly playtime with two or three friends of the same age.
- Find a regular time to read and look at books with your child.
- Be consistent with rules.
- Encourage independence with simple tasks. Your child may be able to help with supper by washing vegetables, tearing lettuce, or by setting the table.
- Teach the importance of privacy. Practice showing (like a game) that a shut door requires respect and a knock on the door may help gain entrance.
- Don't worry if your child dislikes certain foods. Offer small food portions with a choice, if possible.
- Give short simple answers to your child's questions about sex, as you do to questions about other things.

#### Toys for the 3- to 4-year-old

- Puzzles with 6 to 8 pieces • Balls • Books
- Play dough • Riding toys • Musical toys
- Dolls and teddy bears • Pegs and pegboard
- Variety of blocks • Cars and trucks
- Colored paper, paste, finger paints
- Crayons, markers, chalk and large pencils
- Blunt scissors (sturdy and fairly large)
- Soap bubbles and a straw for blowing
- Costume box: hats, gloves, clothes, shoes, purses, belts, scarves
- Small toy animals and people



This information was adapted from St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center Guide to Health with their permission.

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families  
Division of Early Care and Education  
PO Box 8916, Madison, WI 53708-8916

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