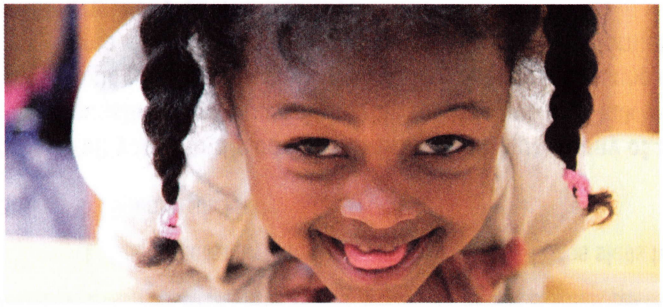
Your Child at 4 Years

Talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What children do at this age



Social/Emotional

- ❑ Enjoys doing new things
- ❑ Is more and more creative with make-believe play
- ❑ Would rather play with other children than by himself
- ❑ Cooperates with other children
- ❑ Plays "Mom" or "Dad"
- ❑ Often can't tell what's real and what's make-believe
- ❑ Talks about what she likes and what she is interested in

Language/Communication

- ❑ Tells stories
- ❑ Sings a song or says a poem from memory such as the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or the "Wheels on the Bus"
- ❑ Knows some basic rules of grammar, such as correctly using "he" and "she"
- ❑ Can say first and last name

How you can help your child's development

- → Play make-believe with your child. Let her be the leader and copy what she is doing.
- → Suggest your child pretend play an upcoming event that might make him nervous, like going to preschool or staying overnight at a grandparent's house.
- → Give your child simple choices whenever you can. Let your child choose what to wear, play, or eat for a snack. Limit choices to 2 or 3.
- → During play dates, let your child solve her own problems with friends, but be nearby to help out if needed.
- → Encourage your child to use words, share toys, and take turns playing games of one another's choice.
- → Give your child toys to build imagination, like dress-up clothes, kitchen sets, and blocks.
- → Use good grammar when speaking to your child. Instead of "Mommy wants you to come here," say, "I want you to come here."

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ❑ Names some colors and some numbers
- ❑ Understands the idea of counting
- ❑ Starts to understand time
- ❑ Remembers parts of a story
- ❑ Understands the idea of "same" and "different"
- ❑ Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- ❑ Uses scissors
- ❑ Starts to copy some capital letters
- ❑ Plays board or card games
- ❑ Tells you what he thinks is going to happen next in a book

Movement/Physical Development

- ❑ Hops and stands on one foot up to 2 seconds
- ❑ Pours, cuts with supervision, and mashes own food
- ❑ Catches a bounced ball most of the time

How you can help your child's development

- → Use words like "first," "second," and "finally" when talking about everyday activities. This will help your child learn about sequence of events.
- → Take time to answer your child's "why" questions. If you don't know the answer, say "I don't know," or help your child find the answer in a book, on the Internet, or from another adult.
- → When you read with your child, ask him to tell you what happened in the story as you go.
- → Say colors in books, pictures, and things at home. Count common items, like the number of snack crackers, stairs, or toy trains.
- → Teach your child to play outdoor games like tag, follow the leader, and duck, duck, goose.
- → Play your child's favorite music and dance with your child. Take turns copying each other's moves.

Act early by talking to your child's doctor if your child:

- ❑ Can't jump in place
- ❑ Has trouble scribbling
- ❑ Shows no interest in interactive games or make-believe
- ❑ Ignores other children or doesn't respond to people outside the family
- ❑ Resists dressing, sleeping, and using the toilet
- ❑ Doesn't understand "same" and "different"
- ❑ Doesn't use "me" and "you" correctly
- ❑ Doesn't follow 3-part commands
- ❑ Can't retell a favorite story
- ❑ Speaks unclearly
- ❑ Loses skills he once had

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your local public school. For more information, go to **www.cdc.gov/concerned**.