



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information
provided by Lifetrack

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The Early Years: What Children Need

The early years are a highly sensitive period of development. What happens then has life-long effects on how a person learns, loves, and lives. Even with high-quality child care and preschool, parents are a child's most important and influential teachers. So what can parents do to support their child's path to becoming a caring, competent, contributing adult?

A healthy birth. It is important for the mother to have good nutrition and avoid tobacco, alcohol and other toxic substances. Medical pre-natal care as well as support for the mother to remain calm and healthy is also important.

A secure foundation. Babies thrive with parents who respond sensitively to their cues and signals, creating a strong sense of security.

A rich language environment. How and how much parents talk to their young children matters a great deal to future learning. Talk to children well before they are able to talk back. Tell stories, sing songs, and ask "how?" and "why?" and "what if?"

Time to play and explore. Infants and young children are naturally curious and eager to explore. Guide your child as they explore the world around them in a safe environment.

Clear and reasonable limits. To learn and grow, children need limits expressed in clear, simple language.



Without limits, children feel insecure and overwhelmed by their impulses.

Opportunities to make choices. Making choices prepares children for independence. Give your toddler a choice between two healthy snacks or wearing a red shirt or a blue shirt.

Safety from violence and trauma. Not only does physical and emotional abuse negatively impact a child's development, studies show that even seeing violence does equal harm to young children.

The most important thing a child needs in the early years is YOU! Sensitive, loving parents who respond to their child's needs create a solid foundation for optimal development and growth.

Source: "Parenting in the Early Years," by Marti Erickson, Ph.D., National Council on Family Relations Report, Summer 2014.

Smart Road Trip Snacks

Summer is a perfect time for family road trips - often filled with adventure, fun and not-so-healthy fast food eats. You can freshen up your travel (and keep young children's hunger pains away!) by packing healthy snacks when you are on the road. Keep treats in mind that:

- Are tasty and healthy
- Can be eaten without dishes or utensils
- Fit into a travel-sized cooler
- Won't make a mess in the car

Here are some ideas:

Fruit. Pack fresh berries and grapes. They are naturally snack-sized and easily portable. Other ideas include dried fruit, apples and bananas. Be sure to pack plastic baggies to store apple cores and banana peels.

Grains. Mix your own trail mix for the drive. Ideas to include are pretzels, mini marshmallows, whole-grain Cheerios™, raisins, and a few M&M™'s.

Hard-Boiled Eggs. They're a great source of protein that can make you feel full longer. Be sure to peel the eggs before you leave.

Low-Fat Cheese. Choose part-skim individually wrapped string cheese, or cube up your favorite low-fat block

Continued on page 2

Smart Road Trip Snacks Continued from page 1

cheese for the car. Dip pre-cut and washed veggies like cucumber slices, snap peas or cherry tomatoes in a low-fat spreadable cheese.

Nuts and Seeds. A good combination of healthy fats and protein, nuts and seeds can be great snacks on the road if you keep the portions reasonable and watch the sodium levels.

It's a good idea to pack some paper towels or wet wipes in a plastic baggie for easy clean up after snacking. By planning ahead, you can avoid the fast-food trap and have healthier snacking as you put on the miles!

Source: "Smarter Road Trip Snacks," YMCA Twin Cities, 2014, http://www.ymcatwincities.org/resources/smarter_road_trip_snacks/.

What's Earwax?



Most parents don't need to do anything special to remove earwax. If you wash their hair regularly, this is enough to keep their ears clean. You can wipe the outside of the ear with a washcloth but don't use a cotton swab, your finger, or anything else to poke around inside the ear to remove earwax. This can cause damage to the eardrum and push the ear wax further into your child's ear.

Earwax is shiny, sticky and made in the outer ear canal. This is the area between the fleshy parts of the ear on the outside of your head. The skin in the outer ear canal has special glands that produce earwax. After the wax is produced, it slowly makes its way through the outer ear canal to the opening of the ear. Then it either falls out or is removed when you wash. In most people, the outer ear canal makes earwax all the time, so the canal always has enough wax in it.

Some children make extra earwax in one or both ear canals. If this sounds like your child talk with your child's doctor. They can prescribe special medicines that are placed in the ear to get rid of the extra wax.

Source – "What's Earwax," <http://kidshealth.org>, July 2014.

Test your knowledge on earwax...

1. T F Earwax contains special chemicals that fight off infections that could hurt the skin inside the ear canal.
2. T F There are no benefits of ear wax to your child's ear.
3. T F Using a cotton swab to poke around inside the ear to remove earwax can cause damage to the eardrum and push the ear wax further into your child's ear.

The benefits of earwax to your child's ear include:

- Protects and moisturizes the skin of the ear canal which helps to prevent dry and itchy ears.
- Contains special chemicals that fight off infections that could hurt the skin inside the ear canal.
- Traps dust, dirt and other things so they can't travel further into the ear canal.



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

Answers: 1) T, 2) F, 3) T

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