

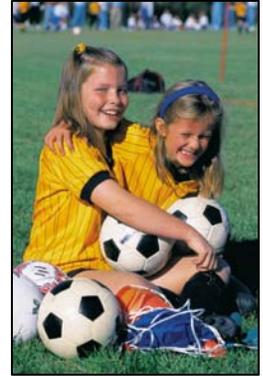
# Positive Parenting Tips for Healthy Child Development



## Middle Childhood (9 - 11 years old)

### Developmental Milestones

Your child's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now, especially for girls. Another big change children need to prepare for during this time is starting middle or junior high school.



During this time, your child might:

- Form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
- Experience more peer pressure.
- Become more independent from the family.
- Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches. Body image and eating problems sometimes start around this age. For information on healthy eating and exercise for children and teenagers, visit [http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_fit/index.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/index.html).
- Face more academic challenges at school.

(Adapted with permission from Bright Futures: Green M, Palfrey JS, editors. Bright Futures Family Tip Sheets: Middle childhood. Arlington (VA): National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health; 2001.)

For more information, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Developmental Stages website at <http://aap.org/healthtopics/stages.cfm>.

### Positive Parenting

You can help your child become independent, while building his or her sense of responsibility and self-confidence at the same time. Here are some suggestions:

- Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events; meet your child's teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a team sport, or to take advantage of volunteer opportunities.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends may pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.

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- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks. Talk to your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child’s friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage your child to help people in need. Talk with him or her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk to your child about what you expect from her when no adults are supervising. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help your child to know what to do in those situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with her about her homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.

## Child Safety First

More independence and less adult supervision can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children of this age.

- Protect your child in the car. All children younger than 12 years of age should ride in the back seat with a seat belt properly fastened. Children should ride in a car seat or booster seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall (because adult seat belts do not fit people under this height). Visit the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/newtips/index.htm>) for more information.
- Know where your child is and whether an adult is present. Make plans with your child for when he will call you, where you can find him, and what time you expect him home.
- Many children get home from school before their parents get home from work. It is important to have clear rules and plans for your child when she is home alone. Visit **KidsHealth: When It’s Just You After School** (<http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/house/homealone.html>) for safety tips for your child at home when you can’t be there.

## Links for Parents

**CDC’s Healthy Youth!** webpage (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/healthtopics/index.htm>) has information about six kinds of health behavior that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability for teenagers and adults. Other important issues affecting children and teenagers are also addressed.

**KidsHealth** (<http://kidshealth.org/index.html>) by the Nemours Foundation has very useful information for parents, teens, and kids.

**Talk With Your Kids** (<http://www.talkwithkids.org/>) is a national initiative by **Children Now** (<http://www.childrennow.org/>) and the **Kaiser Family Foundation** (<http://www.kff.org/>) to encourage parents to talk with their children early and often about tough issues like sex, HIV/AIDS, violence, and alcohol and drug abuse.

**The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/newtips/index.htm>) has information on safety recalls, and safety tips for children riding in motor vehicles, walking, biking, playing outside, waiting at school bus stops, and more.

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