



Milestones for your **GROWING CHILD**

As your child grows and begins school, you will deal with very different issues than you did while he or she was an infant or toddler.

Social life

As children start attending school, they begin to make friends. Since children spend a lot of time in school, their friends become more and more important. Many children also join sports or group activities, such as Little League or Girl Scouts – allowing them to develop even more friends. You may find your child will talk about his or her friends a lot more and may want to see them after school and during weekends. As a parent, you may find it tough to adjust to your child's newfound independence. But you are still in the picture. They will always need your love and support.

The school world

School will become a major place in your child's life, and teachers will be very influential. During these early school-age years, children often talk about what they do in class and repeat what their teacher says. Reading and comprehension skills develop rapidly. As they soak up the world around them, children learn what to say and how to behave by imitating others. For instance, your child may begin to use words you use, even if he or she doesn't know what they mean. Use these as teachable moments and explain these new terms at an age-appropriate level.

Going to school can also bring to light some issues you have not yet seen. Children may start to display learning or behavior difficulties simply because these issues surface more easily in a school environment. If this happens, it's important to know that you are not alone. Rely on your child's teachers, doctor, the school counselor or

psychologist and friends to help you find the appropriate resources for you and your child.

A new sense of independence – with your guidance

During these years, children gain better control of their physical coordination skills, giving them a new sense of independence. This means less help and supervision from you. Your child may want to tie his or her own shoes or pick out an outfit for school without your help.

At the same time, this is also a delicate age. Children during this time can become self-conscious, as they compare themselves with others. Your assurance can help your child move past any awkward growing pains. If they tend to stick to themselves, encourage them to try something they might enjoy, such as music, sports or volunteering. Look for opportunities and activities that will help build your child's self-esteem in positive ways.

As your child grows, you quickly realize that you can't be there for every aspect of his or her life. But with support, wisdom and love, you help your child find out more about himself or herself and the world.

For more information on your child's development, visit the HealthPartners Health Information Library at healthpartners.com/healthlibrary.

These are suggestions from HealthPartners and cannot be used to diagnose individual cases. Speak to your doctor for information on your specific situation.

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