

Raising a healthy and happy child.



How to talk to
your pediatrician.

Your child's social and emotional development is just as important as their physical health.

That's why it's important to talk to your pediatrician about how your child feels and acts – if they have trouble getting along with others or sharing; if they get upset when you leave; if they don't sleep well or can't concentrate.

If you have any concerns it is important to discuss your concerns with your pediatrician.

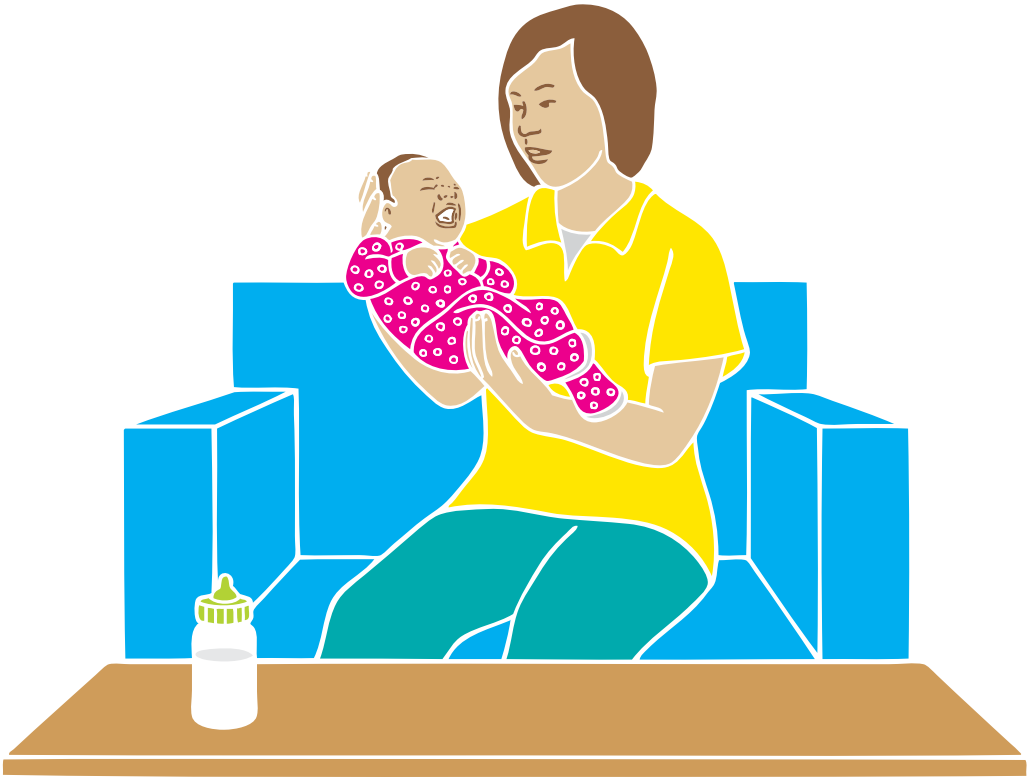
The cards in this pack will help you start a conversation with your child's doctor.

Together, you and your pediatrician can support your child's social and emotional growth, and help raise a healthy, happy child.



For more information visit ECMHMATTERS.ORG

0 - 6 MONTHS



Does your baby cry a lot?



All babies cry, but some babies experience colic, a pattern of intense, unexplained crying or fussiness for more than 3 hours per day. Try these tips:

- Soothe your baby with firm, but not too tight, swaddling and rocking.
- Make steady, loud whooshing sounds.
- Rub your baby's back or tummy.
- Take your baby for a walk or ride outdoors.
- Remember, caring for a baby who has colic is very stressful. Do not be too hard on yourself if it is near impossible to soothe your baby during a colicky time. Remember, it will end.

0 - 6 MONTHS



Do you recognize how your
baby “talks to you?”



Babies at this age love to communicate, and even though they can't talk yet, you can help them express their feelings. Try these tips:

- Talk to your baby and make silly faces. They love it!!
- Give your baby attention when they smile or make talking sounds.
- When your baby turns away, they are telling you they need a quick break from “talking.” Watch for signs that she is ready to engage you again.
- Give your baby rattles and other safe toys to hold and shake. It doesn't have to be anything fancy.
- Babies love faces, yours and theirs. Show her a mirror and watch her light up.

6 - 18 MONTHS



**Does your child
cry or get upset when
you leave him?**



It's natural for young children to get upset when they are separated from their parents or caregivers. Next time this happens, try these tips:

- Stay calm and explain to your baby where you are going and when you will be back.
- Repeat the same message each time you go. Your baby will start to learn patterns, like the fact that you go to and return from work each day, for example.
- It's hard to hear your baby cry but he needs to know you are comfortable with the separation and you are looking forward to seeing him again. Try saying, "I will miss you too, but you will have so much fun and I will be glad to see you at the end of the day."

6 - 18 MONTHS



**Do you talk to
your baby whenever
you get the chance?**



That's a great thing to do because you are your baby's tour guide to the world.

Try these tips to help their learning:

Tell your baby about each new thing you are doing. Here are some examples:

- "Now we are going in the stroller."
- "Mommy is putting on her coat to take you out."
- "Daddy is getting your snack."

-Talk about what your child sees around them. When they point to something, explain what it is.

18 - 36 MONTHS



Does your child ever get upset when they have to share with others?



That's okay because sharing things like toys or treats can be hard for children at this age. Next time your child gets upset about sharing, try these tips:

- When you have two or more children, always try to have more than one toy. When kids are playing together, have them switch toys back and forth occasionally so they learn how to share.
- If your child gets upset about having to share something, re-direct their attention so that they find something new and interesting to play with.
- Let your child know that it's okay to be mad or sad, but it is not okay to grab, hit, or hurt anyone when they're upset.
- Children need help with their feelings about sharing. Teach turn taking before a child is very upset.

18 - 36 MONTHS



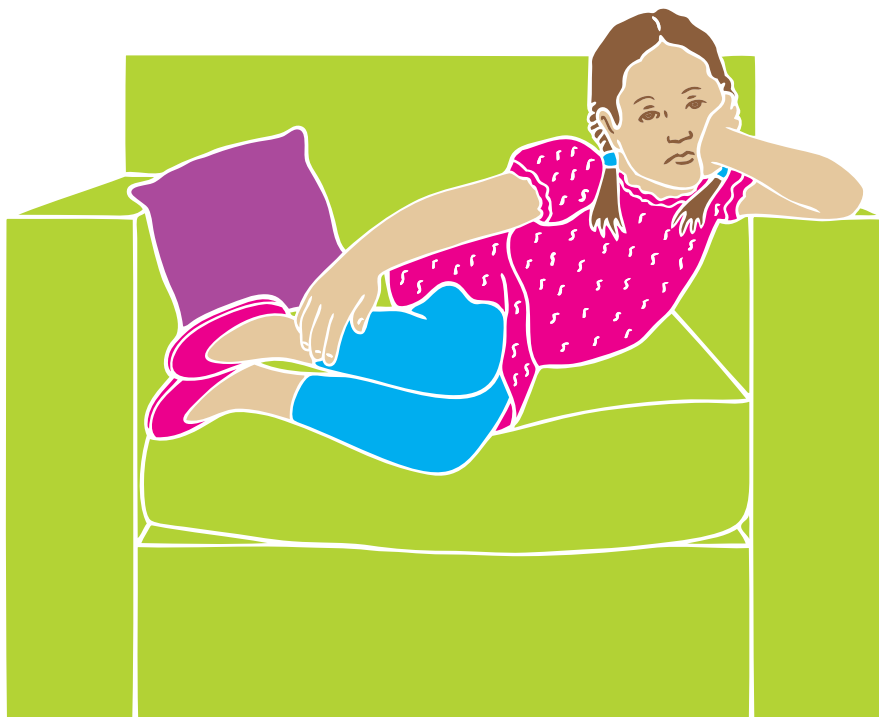
**Does your child have
tantrums when she
doesn't get her way?**



You can help ease your child's anger and begin to teach her to clam down during a tantrum. Try these tips.

- Remind yourself to remain calm even when your toddler is very upset.
- Acknowledge your child's strong feelings about what she wants or does not want in a situation, and remember that it can be tough for her to manage her feelings at this age.
- Avoid situations that can easily trigger tantrums like bringing a tired child shopping or giving their favorite toy to a friend that has come over to play.
- Before you remind your child of how you'd like her to behave, repeat what she has told you about her feelings so they know you're listening.
- When your child is really upset, don't try to talk or teach. Wait calmly for the feelings to get smaller. They WILL!

3 - 5 YEAR OLDS



**Does your child
become bored?**



Children at this age are constantly looking for activities to keep them busy. You can use their energy to learn about “helping out.” Ask them to help you with your daily activities. Find ways to let them help you organize toys, prepare meals, clean up the house, or go shopping.

- Slow down a little when you do these familiar activities. Letting your young child take part might mean things take slightly longer, but this is a great chance to make your child feel like she’s being a helper.
- Break activities into short, simple steps, like, “pass me the pot,” or “put the cereal in the basket. This will make your child feel good and excited about helping.

3 - 5 YEAR OLDS



**Does your child
sometimes appear shy,
or disconnected from
people around him?**



Children at this age are still learning about how to interact with other people, and you can play a big role in developing these skills with them. Try these tips:

- Observe your child’s behavior, and talk to him about how he might be feeling. For example, if you notice that he seems sad, tell him, “You don’t seem very happy right now.” Listen to how he reacts to your statement, and then talk to him about how he’s feeling and what would make him feel better.
- Help your child meet other children who like to play the same sort of games.
- Choose activities that your child can do alone but close to other children, such as art. This will help to develop their sense of independence while also being part of a group.

3 - 5 YEAR OLDS



Is your child a picky eater?



Picky eating is very common. Help them explore new and different foods in creative ways. Try these tips:

- **Dunk fruits and veggies** in healthy sauces or dips to make them more appealing.
- Use cookie cutters to make **cucumber stars** or **apple suns** so that your child gets excited about the shapes.
- Minimize distractions and turn off the TV during meals. Make the meal a special time for being together and eating.
- **Shred carrots and zucchini** in casseroles and spaghetti sauce so that your child is eating healthy foods even if she doesn't know it.
- Top cereal with **fruit slices instead of sugar**.
- **It's okay if your child doesn't eat everything on the plate.** Encourage her to try at least one bite of every item though.

6 - 8 YEAR OLDS



Is your child becoming more and more independent when it comes to daily activities?



It's natural for your child to need less help doing basic tasks as he or she gets older. Encourage and support their growth with these tips:

- Share control with your son or daughter, and let them start to make choices for themselves. For example, let he or she choose what to have for breakfast or what to wear to school.
- Demonstrate problem-solving skills by showing how tasks can be broken down into small, manageable steps to encourage their success and independence.
- Help your child develop confidence by expressing interest in his projects and efforts. Ask about a character in a book or about a picture they have drawn.
- Build her self-confidence by showing her that you like it when they try new things.

6 - 8 YEAR OLDS



**Has bedtime
become a battle?**



As children grow up, they won't always be happy about the bedtimes you set for them. Try these tips to help make bedtime less stressful for everyone:

- **Establish routines.** Taking a bath, dressing in pajamas, and then brushing teeth are common bedtime routines. You could serve a light snack (before brushing teeth) or read a book. Tucking in a child and giving him a kiss also promotes a sense of security that helps kids when going to bed.
- **Expect resistance.** Children who resist going to sleep often do so out of anxiety. Reassure your child that you will be close by and encourage them to sleep by reminding them of tomorrow's plans.
- **Rise and shine early.** Allowing your child to sleep late in the morning can lead to him wanting to be up later at night. Wake your child up at the same time every morning to begin the day so that wake up becomes a routine just like bedtime.

6 - 8 YEAR OLDS



Is turning off the TV
or other screens a
problem for your child?



TV, video games, and other electronic screens can be an easy distraction for a restless child, but you should be mindful of how much screen time your child gets. Try these tips next time you have trouble turning the screen off:

- Pull out board games, go for a walk, sit and talk, or turn on some music and dance around the living room. You can find a lot of other ways to entertain your child, and most of them won't cost you a dime.
- Pick one or two nights a week that routinely become "unplug" nights for the whole family. Plan other ways to have fun that doesn't involve TVs or computers.
- Put your devices aside to show your child that you are excited to spend face-to-face time with him. Letting your children know that you are also willing to turn off the electronics is an important idea to share.
- Let your child see you reading. This will encourage her to pick up a book too.
- All screen time should end at least one hour before bedtime to encourage ease in falling asleep and staying asleep.



Building a Healthy Boston

For more information visit
ECMHMATTERS.ORG