



Bright Futures™

prevention and health promotion for infants, children, adolescents, and their families™

Families +
Health Care Professionals
= Partners for Healthy
Children



WHAT IS A FAMILY?

The typical family has changed significantly in recent years. Fewer children now live with their biological mother and father. Many children are being raised in single-parent families, families headed by grandparents, step-families, foster families, or with same-gender parents. There are many cultures even within families, including racial, ethnic, and language differences. And, the roles of parents have shifted from the traditional, as fathers increasingly share the care of their children. But, one thing has not changed: All families want the best for their children, including good health.



Families make health decisions for their children every day. Ideally, they know the importance of immunizations and regular check-ups. They understand that good health depends on family routines, including healthy meals, physical activity, and discipline. And, families work with health care professionals to build the strong partnerships that are so important in supporting healthy children.

Not only do parents have much to learn from health care professionals but health care professionals also can learn from families. In addition to discussing questions and problems, families should share what is going well. They can offer real-life feedback about which health recommendations were useful and which were not. Since parents are caregivers themselves, they often have learned things that might help health care professionals or other families. Health care professionals who encourage parents to contribute information and ideas — verbally, on bulletin boards, or in other ways — will find an increasing wealth of ideas to benefit children and families. And, families will be reinforced in their roles as partners in their children's health care.

Communication is vital in this partnership to raise healthy children. Communication empowers families, promotes cooperation, and creates a comfortable environment where patients, families, and health care professionals can discuss any issue.

How can you and your family foster communication in this partnership?

- Understand that strong communication with health care professionals doesn't happen in one visit, but develops — with work — over time.
- Share information with your child's health care professionals. Come to the visit with notes on things you want to discuss, ask questions, and don't be afraid to take notes on what your child's health care professional says during the visit.
- Get more information. Often, health care professionals will have handouts and will be able to guide you to other materials or community resources.
 - Ask what is likely to happen in the next phase of your child's development.
 - Find out how and when to contact your health care professional between visits.



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Bright Futures and others provide a wealth of information how families can help grow healthy children.

- **Bright Futures**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has been working on the Bright Futures initiative in partnership with the federal government's Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Bright Futures is built on the principle that every child deserves to be healthy, and that optimal health involves a trusting relationship between the health care professional, the child, the family, and the community. The crucial role of the family in preventive health care for children is stressed throughout all Bright Futures materials and it is particularly emphasized in *Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, Third Edition, a cornerstone of the initiative. Further information on Bright Futures is available online at www.brightfutures.aap.org.

- **Bright Futures for Families**

A national initiative of Family Voices, with support of the federal government's Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Bright Futures for Families encourages families and communities to promote and improve the health and well-being of children of all ages. Bright Futures for Families offers resources for families based on the Bright Futures initiative. Further information on Bright Futures for Families is available online at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org.

- **National Child Health Day**

To bring attention to the health of the nation's children, the federal government — through the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and other agencies — and the American Academy of Pediatrics have established October 1st as National Child Health Day. Further information on National Child Health Day is available online at <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/childhealthday> and at www.brightfutures.aap.org.

WHAT IS THE MEDICAL HOME?

The Medical Home is not a building, house, or hospital. It's an approach to providing high-quality, cost-effective health care that is accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective. For more information on the Medical Home, visit www.medicalhomeinfo.org.

