Preparing for Kindergarten
Many children, as well as their parents, will be very nervous about the start of kindergarten. This is a major step in a child’s life, and includes a lot of changes which you and your child should discuss. She will be given a new sense of independence, and with that a new set of responsibilities. If possible, bring your child for a visit to the school to see the grounds, classroom facilities, and to find the location of the bathroom a few weeks before school starts. Meeting the teacher ahead of time will also make the first day more comfortable. Talk to your child often and positively about the new changes she will find.

Explain that there will be new friends to meet and a lot of older children near by. Tell your child how proud you are of her abilities to meet this new challenge. Your child will also feel more enthusiastic about the new step by being made a part of school preparation like buying back-to-school clothes and supplies.

A Few Words About Violence
Your disciplinary measures should be appropriate to the behavior and age of your child. Teach your child to express emotions verbally, in a calm manner, by exemplifying that behavior. Physical abuse, whether it comes from parents in the guise of discipline, from siblings, or from elsewhere, deeply affects children’s self-esteem and ability to negotiate disagreements. It also increases aggressive behavior, as well as becoming a cycle in which abused children become abusers themselves. If you begin to feel out of control, separate yourself from your child and call for help.

Multiple Intelligences
It is important to keep in mind that children each have very different areas in which they will excel. The only way to discover these is to give your child a lot of opportunity for exploration, and not to pressure them with things to which they’re not naturally drawn. Standard IQ tests measure only one skill to predict so-called “success outcomes” relating to intelligence. However, there are other multiple intelligences such as spatial abilities required for dancing and athletics, musical giftedness, interpersonal intelligence needed to understand others, and intrapsychic capacity which facilitates self-knowledge and affects feelings of contentment.

Each of these intelligences, if encouraged to the fullest, will provide your child with valuable self-esteem and a sense of their own abilities that will contribute to a successful future.

When your child achieves the early milestones, such as first steps and first words, is not determinative or reflective of your child’s intelligence. Rather, milestones are mostly biologically determined, similar to when your child cuts her first tooth. (continued on next column)
Sibling Rivalry

Many sudden behavioral changes that parents find problematic are actually positive milestones in your child’s development, difficult as they may be to deal with. Sibling rivalry, for example, reflects a child’s emerging self-awareness in terms of his relationship with parents, siblings, and objects. The best way to deal with fighting among your children is by improving their interactions:

• Promptly limit aggressive behavior and the things which cause it (television, corporal punishment).
• Acknowledge your child’s positive and negative feelings.
• Reinforce and encourage good behaviors through praise.
• Teach such strategies as distraction, trading, and taking turns.
• It might also help if you encourage your children to engage in activities with joint goals, promote non-competitive games and give plenty of individualized treatment.

Healthy Teeth

• Help your child brush his teeth twice a day.
  • After breakfast.
  • Before bed.
• Use a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride.
• Your child should see the dentist every 6 months.

Staying Healthy

• Eat breakfast.
• Buy fat free milk and low fat dairy foods, and encourage 3 servings each day.
• Limit candy, soft drinks, and high fat foods.
• Provide healthy snacks as well as well-balanced meals. Good foods to have on hand for after-school snacking are: yogurt, fruit, cheese and crackers.

5-2-1-0...guide for health

• Offer fruits or vegetables at least 5 times a day.
• Less than 2 hours of screen time (TV & computer combined.)
• Do not have a TV in your child’s bedroom.
• At least 1 full hour of exercise or physical activity every day.
• Encourage physical activity for your whole family at least 3 times per week. Even if sports aren’t your thing you can still exercise and have family time by going for bike rides, long walks and taking trips to the pool.
• 0 sugared drinks most days. Remember: even fruit juice contains sugar and calories.

YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT IS FOR A WELL CHILD EXAM IN 1-2 YEARS.