Growing up healthy

A child health guide for parents and those expecting
available in 7 languages

ENGLISCH
Growing up healthy
Impressum

Gesund aufwachsen
Ein Leitfaden zum Thema Kindergesundheit für Eltern und werdende Eltern

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Introduction

Health for all. Health from day one.

MiMi – ‘With Migrants for Migrants’ – is a health project that advocates for better access to the health system and health topics for people with a migration background. It has been operating in Germany since 2003, and since 2012 also in Austria.

To achieve this, migrants are trained to become health mediators. They then organise native language information sessions in their own communities around the topic of health.

To support their work, they have access to materials in multiple languages, such as the health guide ‘Hand in Hand for Health – The Austrian Health System’. There is also information material in multiple languages on ‘Nutrition and Exercise’, ‘Old Age, Care Services and Health’ as well as ‘Mental Health’.

This guide is another addition to the topics covered by MiMi.

We have created it in response to many migrants requesting more information about child health in their native language. The aim is to offer the reader options for improving and protecting the health of children and the whole family.

The first part provides information about the Austrian health and social security system’s services for parents, children and adolescents. The second chapter deals with the importance of family in modelling and passing on health promoting behaviour.

The three subsequent chapters offer advice and tips for a healthy diet, physical exercise and for promoting the mental health of children and adolescents. Finally, there is also information on the topics of dental health and accident prevention.

We would be pleased if the information presented in this guide contributed to children growing up healthy.

Your MiMi team Austria
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Some information is especially highlighted, displayed in separate boxes and marked with symbols, which have the following meanings:

💡 A useful tip
ℹ️ Reference to further information
⚠️ ‘Attention! Particularly Important!’

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A Message About the Child Health Guide from the Federal Minister

Human health is a valuable asset, one that we are charged with promoting and protecting as best we can, from the very beginning of life. It influences significantly to what degree people are able to participate in social processes. Therefore, safeguarding and promoting health always and at the same time serve as measures of integration.

The ‘MiMi Health Mediators’ project has now been contributing since 2012 to the improvement of the health of migrants in Austria through providing low-threshold and culturally sensitive information.

Based on the large demand for specific information on child health, a separate module has now been dedicated to this important topic. This guide offers a broad overview of the Austrian health system for children and adolescents and therefore helps migrants to find ways of accessing prevention and health services.

In addition, it deals with important topics such as dental health, accident prevention, exercise, nutrition, and promoting mental health in children and adolescents.

It is necessary to familiarise migrants with the system right from the start and to promote the prevention principle in order to avoid potential negative effects on health later. It must be our explicit goal to offer the same opportunities for a healthy life to all children and adolescents in our country, independent of their background, and to give them the best possible start in life.

Sebastian Kurz
Bundesminister für Europa, Integration und Äußeres
Dear Reader,

health is important for everyone. Its foundations are already laid down in childhood. The causes of many adult health problems often lie in childhood or adolescence. Promoting the health of our youngest is therefore of great concern to the Wiener Gebietskrankenkasse (WGKK).

Promoting and maintaining health is, however, not only a task for each individual, it also requires the joint responsibility and involvement of all of us, so that health promotion can be implemented effectively in all areas of society.

Although all those who are insured and their relatives have access to the health system, not all population groups have the same opportunities to promote their own health, to maintain and to restore it. Through reducing language and cultural barriers, it is our goal to make access to prevention and health promotion easier for Viennese citizens with a migration background. ‘MiMi Health Mediators’, our joint project with Wiener Volkshilfe, is an important cornerstone of this endeavour. I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to the health mediators, whose great dedication and expertise have made the project’s success possible.

Mag.a Ingrid Reischl
Chairwoman, WGKK
Health from Day One!

When compared internationally, Austria has a very good health system. However, studies show that our country is doing badly in respect to individual health knowledge. This affects migrants in particular: often there is not enough orientation to the network of health and therapeutic services, and health promotion very often doesn’t receive sufficient attention.

For children in particular, parents’ lack of knowledge is a disadvantage, as the foundations of good health begin to be built very early in life. For babies and toddlers a healthy diet, a smoke-free and secure environment and, above all, stable relationships are of enormous importance. They can help avoid many illnesses. Regular paediatric care guided by the Mother - Child Health Passport (Mutter-Kind-Pass) serves to provide advice and early detection. Diligent dental care right from the start prevents pain and expensive treatment. Vaccinations, partly provided free-of-charge, protect children from catching severe infectious diseases.

As MiMi health mediators you also contribute to the children around you growing up healthy. You assist parents to find their way around the health system and you inform them about health promotion. We are therefore glad to be able to support you through the MiMi training course and this additional training workshop.

My sincere thanks for your commitment, and please enjoy the workshop!

Albert Maringer
Chairman, OÖ Gebietskrankenkasse
Health for all Children!

Despite the comprehensive services of various health institutions, too many children and adolescents in this country are still disadvantaged regarding their health. Children of parents who migrated here are affected particularly strongly because their parents do not have sufficient access to services regarding health and a healthy lifestyle. Apart from language, we recognise as significant barriers familiarity with completely differently designed systems in the countries of origin and, above all, the often extremely precarious and tiring living and working conditions for migrants in Austria.

This guide supports the committed and voluntary efforts of our MiMi health mediators, who have a migration background themselves and who possess the necessary language skills. We have trained them on specific health topics so that they can conduct native language information events.

To enable this guide to contribute to the health of all children in Austria we needed the far-sighted supported of our funders, for which we would like to express our sincere thanks to the Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres and the Gebietskrankenkassen Wien and Oberösterreich.

We also thank the various experts who contributed to this guide and who will also take on the training of our mediators.

We would further like to thank our editorial team, comprising Barbara Kuss, Petra Dachs, Klara Markin und Lea Bröckmann. We can now present a multilingual product that can be used across all of Austria.

Now it is our committed MiMi health mediators who will make their significant contributions as they distribute this Guide at their events and use it to take information about child health to parents and those expecting – thank you very much for your efforts!

Ramazan Salman Dip.Soc.
Managing Director
Ethno-Medizinisches Zentrum

Stephan Amann, MLS MAS MBA
Project Manager, MiMi Austria
Section Head for Integration and Intercultural Affairs,
Volkshilfe Wien
1. The Austrian Health System for Children and Adolescents

Austria provides a large range of health services to parents and children. The following information is designed to give you an overview of

- benefits and services around pregnancy, childbirth and caring for children;
- obligations you must fulfil to be eligible for these benefits;
- financial assistance during and after pregnancy;
- a healthy lifestyle before and after pregnancy.

Before Pregnancy

Health Check

If you wish to have a child, you can be proactive in getting prepared for the pregnancy - by having a health check and making suitable lifestyle choices even before pregnancy. For your health check you have access to the so-called ‘Gesundenuntersuchung’ (medical examination for healthy people). It is an examination to find out whether you are at increased risk of chronic heart or metabolic diseases.

Go for a health check and medical consultation before your pregnancy.
Risk factors include overweight, stress, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. You can get a health check (Gesundenumuntersuchung) once per year free of charge at a health fund outpatient clinic (Krankenkassenambulatorium) or from your general practitioner.

At parent and child centres (Eltern-Kind-Zentren) or family planning services (Schwangerschaftsberatung) you can also get information regarding all questions around conception and pregnancy. These services also often offer consultations in your native language.

In general, your gynaecologist will provide your medical care before and during pregnancy, during childbirth and afterwards.

Make sure you are informed and personally advised on all supporting measures and also on all potential stresses and risks!

Also have your immunisation status checked before becoming pregnant. It is important because some diseases can cause complications during pregnancy. This is particularly the case with measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough and rubella. Especially rubella, if it occurs during pregnancy, carries a high risk of the child being born with a disability.

You should also get tested for Chlamydia (a type of bacterium). These can trigger ectopic pregnancy and both you and your partner should be treated for them before pregnancy.

If you are taking any medicine, you need to check which ones you can keep taking if you wish to conceive or during pregnancy, and which ones should be substituted.
Family Planning

It sometimes takes several months before you become pregnant. This is nothing unusual. If you have been trying for a long time and haven’t got pregnant, you have the option of seeking advice from a **specialist counselling service** or a **fertility clinic** (Kinderwunschambulanz) to discuss potential causes and treatment options.

It is very important that both partners attend counselling together, as the causes of infertility can be found in the woman as well as the man. There are also psychological services to support people in this often emotionally stressful situation.

The Bundesministerium für Gesundheit’s brochure entitled ‘**We want to have a child**’ (2015) provides information about covering the costs for medically assisted conception through the IVF-Fonds.

Link: bit.ly/bmgBaby

During Pregnancy

Pregnancy Testing

The first indications of pregnancy often appear in the form of physical changes such as nausea, cravings, tender breasts or vertigo as well as missing periods. You can perform your own urine test in order to be sure. You can obtain the test at pharmacies without a prescription. If the result is positive, you should have it confirmed by your gynaecologist as soon as possible.

The Mother - Child Health Passport

As soon as a pregnancy is confirmed, your gynaecologist will give you a ‘Mother - Child Health Passport’ (Mutter-Kind-Pass), which is all about **prevention** for yourself and your child.

In this passport, the development of the unborn child up to the birth and until her 62nd month of life afterwards is **documented**.
The health status of the mother is also described. This can help detect and medically treat possible complications and risks early.

Every pregnant woman can obtain a Mother - Child Health Passport, even if she does not have Austrian citizenship.

Should you not have health insurance, you can still receive the health checks free of charge. However, you need to obtain a certificate from your Gebietskrankenkasse that confirms your eligibility.

The following health checks are recommended:

**Before childbirth – examinations for pregnant women:**

- five general health checks for the mother;
- a range of blood tests;
- a survey of risk factors for both mother and child (asking about possible health stresses that could cause problems later);
- three ultrasound examinations.

**After childbirth – examinations for the child:**

- ten child health examinations;
- one orthopaedic examination
- one ear-nose-throat examination;
- two eye examinations.

You will be handed the exact schedule of examinations in the course of the Mother - Child Health Passport appointments.

Up until the birth of the child, your gynaecologist carries out the examinations; afterwards the paediatrician takes over. They are free of charge, but only if the doctor is under contract with a health insurance provider.
Financial Support: Confinement Benefit

Maternity leave for expecting mothers starts at the beginning of the 8th week before the expected date of confinement. This means that expecting mothers must no longer be in paid employment from that time onwards. In some occupations (e.g. in gastronomy), you are no longer allowed to work from the day on which a doctor confirms the pregnancy.

If you are an employee (on a wage, salary or freelance retainer), you will receive a support payment called **confinement benefit** (Wochengeld) from the beginning of maternity leave until eight weeks after the birth (twelve weeks in case of multiple births). The amount is the same as your current net salary.

If you are in a mini-job, the amount of confinement benefit you receive is fixed.

If, at the beginning of maternity leave, you are on unemployment (Arbeitslosengeld) or social safety net benefits (Notstandsgeld), you can in some circumstances also receive the confinement benefit. Please clarify this with the employment agency (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS).

Those ensured as family members and those who are privately insured are not eligible for the confinement benefit. Please make sure you enquire with your health insurance provider regarding your eligibility.

You need to submit your application to your social insurance provider after you have been issued the Mother - Child Health Passport. You must bring the following documents:

- Mother - Child Health Passport with the **expected date of confinement** confirmed by a doctor;
- your valid **bank account details including IBAN**;
- official photo identification;
- proof of employment and remuneration;
- If you are on early maternity leave, you must bring the **certificate of leave** (‘Freistellungszeugnis’ – the medical certificate confirming that you are no longer allowed to work) in the original.

Ask your social insurance provider whether you can also send the documentation by mail and whether any documents in addition to those listed above are required. **Ask for a complete list of the documentation required for the application and follow the instructions accurately.**
Before and After Childbirth

Getting Ready

Birthing classes – whether you attend with or without a partner - are important for becoming informed about everything to do with childbirth. They also help you to prepare physically, mentally and emotionally for the event. You should attend classes from the 25th week of your pregnancy onwards.

Further support services include e.g. exercise or yoga classes for pregnant women.

Birthing classes are offered by the birthing clinics of hospitals, by midwives, adult education institutes or by private associations. You must pay for them yourself. Costs are between 100 and 150 Euros.

Exercise classes for pregnant women are offered by midwives, at Parent-Child-Centres or by private associations and you also have to pay for these yourself. An hour’s class costs between 7 to 15 Euros on average.

You can obtain information about upcoming courses in your area e.g. at parent-child-centres.

Where to Give Birth

You can choose where and how you would like to give birth. There are three options:

• the hospital;
• an outpatient birth;
• a home birth.
If you would like to give birth at a **hospital**, you should book a bed early. You can choose your own midwife to support you during the birth. If you do not make a choice, the midwife who is on duty at the time will care for you.

An **outpatient birth** means that you give birth at a hospital, but return home afterwards - as long as there are no complications. For this option you have to register at a hospital. In addition, you have to find a midwife and a paediatrician who will provide care for you and your baby at home after the birth.

A **home birth** means that you deliver your child at home. In this case, a midwife of your choice will care for you during the pregnancy as well as during and after the birth.

**Midwifery Care**

Any additional consultations with a midwife you must pay for yourself at a cost of ca. 50 Euros per hour.

Midwifery care is covered by health insurance and is available to all women. However, there are precise regulations about when and how often midwifery care is covered. The midwife concerned must also be under contract with the health insurance provider that is responsible for you.

You should therefore enquire in advance about which costs are covered!

All women can use the assistance of a midwife. The following midwifery services are covered by statutory health insurance:

**Midwifery advice:**

- one consultation provided by a midwife between weeks 18 and 22 of the pregnancy.

**Outpatient birth:**

- during pregnancy, two home visits or consultations during clinic hours at the midwifery centre;
- one home visit per day for the first five days after the birth;
- if required, up to seven further home visits until the end of week 8 after the birth.
Early discharge from hospital (before the 4th day after the birth):

- one home visit per day after discharge from hospital until the 5th day after the birth.

Early discharge from hospital after a caesarean section, a premature birth or multiple birth (before the 6th day after the birth):

- one home visit per day from the day of discharge from hospital until the 6th day after the birth.

Home birth:

- up to four home visits or clinic consultations until the end of the 40th week of pregnancy;
- up to three further home visits or clinic consultations during weeks 41 and 42 of the pregnancy;
- midwifery care during the home birth;
- one home visit per day from the first to the fifth day after the birth.

From the 6th day after the birth (in case of early discharge from hospital, outpatient birth or home birth):

- in case of particular problems (e.g. breastfeeding difficulties, injuries to the perineum) up to seven further home visits or consultations at the midwifery centre from the 6th day until the 8th week after the birth.

After Childbirth

Important Administrative Errands

Birth certificate and registering place of residence

After the birth you have to have a birth certificate issued within one week. At the same time you can also register the child’s place of residence (‘Meldezettel!’).

Both are carried out at the Standesamt of your local district. You will have to take several documents with you, so please find out exactly what they are before you go!
Social insurance for the child / e-card

As part of registering the birth, your child is automatically registered with her parents’ social insurance provider. The child is insured as a dependant of each parent. The child will receive his own e-card with a separate insurance number. You will receive it within 14 days by mail to your registered address.

Should your child become ill before you have received the e-card, you can present your Mother - Child Health Passport at the doctor’s practice and take the e-card there later. Otherwise you will have to pay a deposit, which, depending on the practice and type of examination, will amount to between 30 and 100 Euros. You will get the deposit back once you present the e-card.

Financial Benefits: Family Support Benefit (Familienbeihilfe), Parenting Allowance (Kinderbetreuungsgeld), Supplementary Earnings  

Family Support Benefit (Familienbeihilfe)

With registration of the birth of your child at the Standesamt, your child’s details are automatically transmitted to the office for financial administration. If you are entitled to the Family Support Benefit (Familienbeihilfe), you will be informed in writing and the payments will be transferred to your account.

Parental leave

After the birth, you are entitled to parental leave, i.e. leave of work for parenting purposes. This entitlement lasts until your child's second birthday. During this time, your employment status is legally protected against termination or dismissal.

The entitlement to parental leave with employment protection only lasts for two years. However, you and your partner may receive parenting allowance (Kinderbetreuungsgeld) over a period of up to three years if you are sharing your parental leave entitlement. If you would like to go on parental leave beyond your child’s second birthday, you have to negotiate this with your workplace. You then no longer have legal protection against termination of employment.
Parenting Allowance (Kinderbetreuungsgeld)

While on parental leave, you do not receive your salary, but Parenting Allowance instead.

You can choose between five different payment schemes: four schemes using fixed amounts and one income-dependent scheme. The decision rests solely with you, or you and your partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed payments 2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting allowance per day</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Income-dependent payments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting allowance per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If parents share their parental leave entitlement, it can be used for longer: for example for up to 30 months if only one parent goes on parental leave, but for up to 36 months in total if both go on parental leave.

The amount of Parenting Allowance you receive per day depends on the scheme you choose.

At the earliest, Parenting Allowance can be applied for on the day of the birth. You must decide on one of the payment schemes at the time you apply to your health insurance provider.

Changing to one of the other payment schemes is only possible within 14 days of application (the other parent is also bound by the chosen scheme). There are no exceptions to this statutory regulation!

Receiving Parenting Allowance is tied to the health checks listed in the Mother - Child Health Passport. This means that you must provide proof of completion of the examinations. Excepted are ultrasound and hip ultrasound examinations as well the 6th to the 9th child health checks.
Supplementary earnings

It is possible to earn some income to supplement the Parenting Allowance. How much you can earn depends on the Parenting Allowance payment scheme you choose. Find out exactly what the limit is for the scheme you want to choose, and for your personal situation.

You can find information on financial benefits at bit.ly/bmfjInformation

Childhood and Adolescence

Child and Adolescent Health Checks

The compulsory, publicly funded preventive health programme ends with the 62nd month of the life of the child and the school entry health check.

Further publicly funded services are mainly offered in kindergartens and schools. There are, for example, projects on healthy eating, weight control and dental health. Health checks also happen in schools at different times, especially before joint activities such as the first school skiing course or the first sports week.

Regional health funds invite working adolescents to have a special annual youth health check ('Jugendlichenuntersuchung').

Childhood Vaccinations

Many infections are very dangerous for babies and toddlers, as they can cause severe disease and permanent health defects. For this reason it makes sense to have your child vaccinated.
However, vaccinations are not compulsory in Austria. The vaccinations listed here are recommended by the Oberster Sanitätsrat. They are free of charge. You find out when and how often vaccination can be obtained as part of the health checks in the Mother - Child Health Passport. Whether and against which infections you have your child vaccinated, however, is your decision as parents.

### Free vaccinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Vaccinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babies/toddlers</td>
<td>Rotavirus, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Poliomyelitis,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Haemophilus influenzae B</em>, Hepatitis B, Pneumococci, Mumps/Measles/Rubella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(MMR)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-age children</td>
<td>Diphteria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis B,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mumps/Measles/Rubella <em>(MMR)</em>, Meningococci, Human papilloma virus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can find the current vaccination schedule and vaccination brochure of the Bundesministerium für Gesundheit on the online health portal bit.ly/impfInformation

### When your Child is Sick

Up to 18 years of age, your paediatrician is responsible for the health of your child, after that it is your general practitioner.

In extreme emergencies, such as bone fractures, breathing difficulties, loss of consciousness or strong bleeding, you should call the emergency services.

If your child is fit to travel, you can take him to a hospital yourself.

In contrast to other emergency departments, the paediatric emergency departments are policlinics and treat all kinds of emergencies.
**Caring for a Sick Child**

When your child is sick, you can take **carer’s leave** for up to 5 days per year in total, and for children under the age of 10 for up to 10 work days per year. You will need a medical certificate for the child and you must notify your employer of your carer’s leave on the first day.

If your child is sick for more than 10 days in one year, you can take recreational leave even without prior agreement with your employer, as long as you have a recreational leave entitlement remaining. In agreement with your employer, you may also be able to take unpaid leave. You will have to check this individually with your work place as there is no legal entitlement.

You can find tips around carer’s leave on the internet pages of the Arbeiterkammer at www.arbeiterkammer.at/beratung/arbeitundrecht/krankheitundpflege/pflege/Pflegefreistellung.html

In some cities, you have access to a mobile child care service if you are unable to stay at home with your sick child in a particular instance. A carer will come to your home and look after the child.

If your child becomes acutely ill and you have no access to care, you can call the Verein KiB for a small fee. This association will try to find a service or volunteer in your state that can provide the care you need.

KiB is available 24 hours by calling 0664 / 620 30 40. 
Website: www.kib.or.at

**If your child is chronically ill or has a disability**

There are private organisations (e.g. associations, medical practices) that offer non-bureaucratic information, advice and care regarding the physical, mental and psychological development or disability of your child.
In some states, there are also counselling and diagnostic services for children and adolescents as part of the respective Landesstelle des Sozialministeriums. These services include:

• medical and psychological examination, diagnosis, advice and care;
• assistance and advice regarding social, legal and financial matters;
• orthopaedic and ergotherapeutic consultations.

All information is free of charge and all matters are treated confidentially. Whether you are entitled to care allowance is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Additional Information Around Pregnancy and Childbirth

A Healthy Lifestyle from Day One

A healthy lifestyle should begin even before, and is especially important during pregnancy. Pay attention to a healthy, varied diet with lots of vitamins, minerals and trace elements, little fat and few sweets. Sleep and exercise sufficiently and drink enough fluids (1.5 – 2 Litres). This provides a good foundation for the growth of your unborn child.

In addition, you should have a sufficient intake of folic acid before and during pregnancy. Folic acid is important for the child’s metabolism, cell division and blood formation. Folic acid is contained e.g. in wholemeal products as well as in vegetables such as spinach, carrots and tomatoes.

Kitchen hygiene is also especially important, particularly when animal products are used. Raw animal products can carry Salmonella, Listeria and toxoplasmosis germs, which can harm the child in some circumstances.
During pregnancy, you should completely avoid the following foods:

- raw meat, raw fish and raw seafood;
- liver (at least until week 13);
- raw milk products and soft cheeses;
- raw eggs (also contained in foods such as tiramisu or mayonnaise);
- Drinks containing quinine (Tonic Water) and energy drinks containing caffeine;
- tuna, swordfish, halibut and pike, as they can be contaminated with heavy metals.

Also pay attention to your weight, as both overweight and underweight influence fertility and the development of the child. If necessary, start early with bringing your weight back into the normal range (losing or gaining weight respectively).

You should definitely avoid any addictive substances, such as cigarettes and alcohol, as these are proven to damage the unborn child.

Potential Stresses

**Life changes with childbirth**

Pregnancy and childbirth are major life-changing events. Often, there are great expectations of this new life with a child, and they bring much joy with them. Many couples have wanted a child for a long time and now it has finally happened. Surely, all must be well now?

No, this is not always the case! Around a third of all women experience mixed emotions, at times feeling very strong and positive and then deflated or unhappy in turn. This is completely normal! Apart from joy, motherhood can also bring up fears, feelings of being overwhelmed and insecurity.
Pregnancy and childbirth also present great physical challenges. After a period of adjustment and with increasing confidence in caring for a baby, these feelings normally resolve themselves.

Reading suggestion: „... eigentlich sollte ich glücklich sein ...“ (‘...I know I should be happy, but...?’) Emotional and social stress during pregnancy and after childbirth. A guide for mothers, fathers and relatives.

Bundesministerium für Gesundheit (2013)

**Emotional crises after childbirth**

If you still experience strong emotional stress after childbirth, it is possible that you are going through an emotional crisis. Indications can be joylessness, fears and a lack of confidence in ‘being able to cope’.

If you suffer from this kind of stress, talk to your doctor or go to e.g. a women’s counselling centre. Fathers can also be affected at times and should also seek assistance!

**Services for Parents and Children**

A large range of activities that you can join with your baby right from the start, or later with your toddler, are on offer. This promotes the child’s development as well as building the relationship between the parents and the child.

Activities are offered by different organisations and there is a wide range available, including, for example: baby swimming, baby yoga, play groups, early music development, parent-child exercise classes and many more.

These activities must be paid for privately. Adult education institutes and parent-child centres often offer well-priced courses. Contact them to find out more!
2. How the Family Influences the Health Promoting Behaviour of Children

The family has a crucial influence on the health promoting behaviour of children and adolescents because values and norms are formed and behaviour is shaped within the family: what you teach your children, but, above all, how you live by example and how you treat them, influences their whole lives. Some of these influences are hard to change in adulthood.

For this reason we offer some advice in this chapter about how you can positively influence the health promoting behaviour of your children in day-to-day family life.

In chapters 3 to 8 you will then find comprehensive information about promoting the health of children and adolescents.

Which areas can parents influence?

For all areas of life, the foundations are laid in the family: diet and exercise, how to communicate, education, dealing with addictive substances, dealing with media etc.

The more behaviour that promotes health is modelled for the child, the more likely he will internalise the behaviour and take it on for the long term.
Promoting Healthy Behaviour

In regard to nutrition and the development of healthy eating habits in children, it is helpful:

- to offer a variety of healthy meals so that children get used to eating healthy food;
- that the family eats together at least once per day;
- not to fill plates completely to start with;
- for children not to have to eat up when they feel full already;
- to offer fruit and vegetables in attractive ways;
- to offer small snacks such as yoghurt or an apple in between meals so that children do not get too hungry;
- for every child to have his regular seat at the table;
- when unhealthy foods (high in fat, salt or sugar) are not even stocked at home all the time;
- to drink water or unsweetened tea when thirsty.

The whole family’s attitude towards exercise can be positively influenced, for example by

- building exercise into the daily routine, e.g. by frequently going places on foot or by bicycle instead of by car;
- using exercise as a joint leisure activity;
- finding out what kind of exercise your child enjoys most;
- making sure that everyone in the family enjoys the chosen form of exercise.

How addictive substances are dealt with in the family also strongly influences children. It is scientifically proven that children whose parents smoke or drink regularly and excessively also often smoke and/or drink alcohol themselves. This behaviour is passed on especially if cigarettes or alcohol are used to relieve stress.
The Austrian Child Protection League recommends that **parents reflect on how they deal with stress**, that they do not smoke in the presence of the child and do not drink regularly and/or excessively.

For **dental and oral health**, parents can be good role models for children by brushing teeth regularly. They can, for example, introduce a family ritual of brushing teeth together.

**Promoting Mental Health**

The more appreciation and interest a family member receives, the better it is for the health of the whole family. Especially in children and adolescents who are still maturing, both are more or less essential for emotional wellbeing.

It is especially supportive of the development of self-esteem, and therefore the mental health of children and adolescents, when:

- love is expressed openly;
- people talk openly with each other;
- taking responsibility is expected and supported;
- differences between individual family members are acknowledged;
- rules are applied flexibly;
- there are opportunities to learn from mistakes.

**Supporting Education**

Children are naturally curious, they have many questions and want to explore and understand the world.

You can support them by e.g.:

- taking your child’s questions seriously and trying to answer them;
- looking for answers together with your child (e.g. using the Internet or an encyclopaedia);
• Explain the rules to the child, e.g. why it should walk on the left side of roads without footpaths;
• Read to the child a lot – it encourages curiosity, a thirst for knowledge and promotes language comprehension, creativity, imagination and social competence.

It helps the child if parents speak with her in the language they are most proficient in. This way the child will learn his native language really well and this will assist her in learning other languages. The native language is also very important emotionally, because in general it can transmit emotions more effectively.

Controlling Media Consumption

Watching TV

Watching TV regularly is now a standard part of spending free time and also offers a lot of interesting information.

It is important that TV is used sensibly, including:

• watching TV out of interest, not out of boredom;
• watching age-appropriate TV programmes;
• watching TV together with the child, especially with smaller children;
• limiting TV time.

Children who watch too much or age-inappropriate TV may have reduced cognitive abilities (ability to concentrate, reading skills, language comprehension, mathematical skills), worse eating habits, exercise less and are also more likely to be overweight compared to children who do not watch much TV.

Recommended TV time (according to the Bundesministerium für Gesundheit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>3 to 5 years</th>
<th>6 to 9 years</th>
<th>10 years and older</th>
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<tr>
<td>per day</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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Digital Media

It is impossible to imagine our lives without digital media. Most communication is digital, not only at work, but also at school. Even kindergartens already have projects on learning to deal with digital media at a young age. Email, smartphones and social media like facebook and twitter are used very frequently for private communication, shopping, and to pass the time.

Dealing with the different media can be a big challenge for the family, especially regarding decisions about what is used how often and how much. It is therefore important for you as parents or guardians to lead by example, to be aware of your own media use and to reduce it if appropriate.

Excessive Consumption?

It is not necessarily unusual if your child uses media intensively for particular periods. However, if you notice changes in behaviour such as depression or aggression, or drops in performance (at school, sport or work) or if real social contacts are reduced, you should respond.

A more recent phenomenon is cyber-bullying. Especially among children and adolescents, massive and systematic harassment, humiliation or exclusion can happen via social media such as facebook, twitter or special internet forums for school students. This can occur at any time of the day or night, as the Internet is always accessible. If someone is affected, it can cause severe stress.

• It is important here that you make your child aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet from a young age.

• If your child is affected by systematic harassment, humiliation or exclusion on the Internet, you must talk about this and seek advice on how to take action.

Reading tip: The ‘Media in the Family – Advice for Parents’ guide from the Bundesministerium für Familien und Jugend (BMFJ) is available in German, English, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Turkish.

You can find information and order copies at www.saferinternet.at/familieundmedien
3. Child Nutrition

In this chapter, you will find a lot of information and practical tips regarding a healthy diet for your child, from infancy to adolescence.

Babies

Breast Milk and Substitutes

Breast milk provides the best nutrition for the baby. It is easy to digest and protects from constipation, infections and allergies. Breastfeeding also supports healthy jawbone development and has a positive effect on the bond between mother and child.

Should you on occasion not be able to breastfeed for several hours, you can express the breast milk using a breast pump and feed the baby using a baby bottle. This way your baby still gets breast milk and your milk production continues.

If you have trouble breastfeeding, you can access a women’s counselling centre, a breastfeeding advisor or a midwife. They can support you. However, it may be that you are still unable to breastfeed, or you may not want to. In this case you can buy baby formula marked PRE (PRE-Nahrung) from supermarkets or chemists, which is the formula modelled most closely on breast milk and contains similar nutrients. If parents or siblings in your family suffer from allergies such
as hay fever, neurodermatitis or asthma, ask your paediatrician whether to feed a hypoallergenic baby formula to respond to a potentially existing higher risk of allergies.

It is important to exactly follow the instructions for preparation that are indicated on the package (amount, temperature and mixing proportions). The hole in the teat of the baby bottle should be rather small so that the baby doesn’t choke and the natural sucking reflex is encouraged. The child should be having to make the same effort as with breastfeeding. Guidance is also available for matching the size of the hole to the age of the baby (in months).

Cow’s milk and soy milk – whether diluted or undiluted – are unsuitable for babies!

By the way, up to the age of six months a baby doesn’t need any fluids in addition to their breast milk or baby formula. The only exceptions are when the baby has fever, diarrhoea or vomiting.

All addictive substances should also be off-limits for a breastfeeding mother, as toxins are passed on to the baby via the breast milk. Breastfeeding mothers should also pay attention to a balanced diet and drink sufficient fluids.

You can find more information at www.richtig-stillen.at.

Here, you can find out important facts around breastfeeding and breast milk: from possible breastfeeding positions to the right diet while breastfeeding as well as specific help with breastfeeding difficulties and problems.

First Food

**First solid food from month 5**

Between the child’s 17th and 26th week of life – depending on how far she has developed – is the time for beginning to feed baby food (‘solids’). ‘Feeding solids’ means feeding baby food in addition to breast milk or baby formula. It is recommended to watch for signs of maturity such as sitting upright and coordinated hand and finger movements in order to decide when to begin with solids.

You can make baby food at home or buy it ready-made in jars. What is important is that the food consists of few ingredients to start with (i.e. one type of vegetable only, slowly introducing combinations later). Until the end of the first year of life, no spices (e.g. salt or pepper) and, if possible, no sweeteners or other additives should be contained in baby food.
If you make the baby food yourself, it is recommended to use well-rinsed and peeled organic fruit and vegetables.

As soon as the child eats solids, it needs to drink additional fluids, preferably water and unsweetened herbal tea. Drinking water does not have to be boiled.

Solids should be fed steamed, warm and mashed, and also in small quantities. The older the child, the less finely you have to mash the food.

**Solid food for months 10 to 12**

From month 10 onwards you can add solid food that is finely sliced, diced or chopped.

Be careful with unprocessed nuts, seeds, grains, berries and pulses, as these can easily get into the windpipe and cause breathing difficulties.

**Feeds on demand**

In the old days, children received their ‘feeds’ according to the clock. Today it is recommended to feed following signs of hunger or satiation respectively. Signs of being full are, for example, that the baby slows down eating, hits at the spoon or just turns his head away.

**Eating Properly from Day 1**

Gebietskrankenkassen in all federal states offer special nutrition counselling services. There you learn how you can eat healthily, even before and during pregnancy, and about which types of food are best for the baby. However, you can also attend a workshop. Brochures and workshops are available in Russian, Turkish and Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian.

You can find more information at www.richtigessenvonanfangan.at

You can order brochures by calling 0810 / 81 81 64.
Children and Adolescents

The Food Pyramid

The food pyramid illustrates how much of each type of food children and adolescents should eat per day or per week.

Portionsgröße

The size of the child’s hand is used as a measure for the correct portion size. This means that small children with small hands need less food than larger children with larger hands. The portions for fluids are equivalent to everyday quantities such as ‘a glass of’.

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>drinks</td>
<td>6-7 portions per day and between meals, preferably drinking water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>vegetables, pulses, fruit</td>
<td>5 handfuls per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>grains and potatoes</td>
<td>4 portions per day, with each meal and for snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>milk and dairy products</td>
<td>3 portions per day, of which 2 are ‘white’ (milk, buttermilk, yoghurt etc.) and 1 is ‘yellow’ (cheese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>fish, meat, processed meat, eggs</td>
<td>fish: 1-2 portions per week meat &amp; processed meat: max. 3 portions per week eggs: 1-2 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>fats and oils</td>
<td>2 teaspoons per day: vegetable oils (e.g. rapeseed oil, olive oil) or nuts and seeds (ground finely); use spreads, baking and frying fats sparingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>fatty, sweet and salty foods</td>
<td>max. 1 portion per day, sweetened drinks only now and then</td>
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</table>

Timing meals

Children and adolescents should eat five meals per day: three main meals, namely breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus two smaller meals (snacks): one in the morning and one in the afternoon. It is also good if one of the main meals is a hot meal.
Healthy Snacks

From kindergarten onwards and later in school, healthy snacks and healthy drinks for the breaks are of great importance. It is your responsibility as parents to provide them.

What should be part of a healthy snack?

‘A little bit of everything’ is best, e.g. an apple, sliced peppers, a piece of bread, cheese, nuts, yoghurt and a bottle of water or strongly diluted fruit juice.

Drinks containing caffeine or sugar such as cola and energy drinks are not suitable.

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<tr>
<th>sparingly</th>
<th>moderately</th>
<th>plenty of</th>
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<tr>
<td>fatty, salty foods</td>
<td>meat and dairy products</td>
<td>plant-based foods and drinks</td>
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<tr>
<td>and sweets</td>
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Eating Disorders

The current western beauty ideal is ‘slim and fit’. Girls are supposed to be as slim as possible and have the measurements of a fashion model; guys are supposed to be as muscled and physically fit as possible. If they don’t match these ideals, adolescents, especially during puberty, are in danger of developing an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia.

Anorexia means rejecting food. Bulimia means eating excessively and then self-inducing vomiting. This means that bulimia is difficult to recognise, as those affected may eat normally at the table and their food binges often go undetected. Be sensitive to signs of unusual eating behaviour in your child.

Eating disorders are diseases that are to be taken seriously, and above all require emotional support and psychological treatment.

You can access support in case of eating disorders in children here:
Tel.: 0800 / 20 11 20
hilfe@essstoerungshotline.at; www.essstoerungshotline.at
Overweight

At the same time it is important to make sure that your child does not eat excessively and becomes overweight. This can create social difficulties, as fat children are often teased, their self-esteem drops and they may become isolated.

Moreover, overweight and, especially, obesity impact the entire organism. For example, overweight can cause the early onset of puberty in girls and, conversely, delay it in boys. Above all, orthopaedic diseases and skeletal deformities can already develop during childhood. The long-term effects on adulthood, e.g. high blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease as well as skeletal and muscular diseases can, in some cases, be fatal.

According to the Austrian Nutrition Report 2012, 24% of school children aged 7 to 14 years are either overweight or obese. 55% of overweight children continue to have problems with their weight in adulthood.

You can use height and body weight (using the body mass index or BMI) to work out whether a child or adolescent is considered overweight. The BMI is a preliminary indication that does not take into account the fat to muscle ratio. It is therefore important to seek medical advice if over- or underweight is suspected.

The formula to calculate the BMI is:

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{body weight in kg}}{\text{height in m} \times \text{height in m}}
\]

You can find online BMI calculation tools at www.bmi-rechner.net/bmi-kinder.htm
4. Physical Exercise

Children – boys as well as girls – have a natural need to move and discover the world. Physical skills show the child what she can and what she can’t do yet. This motivates the child to keep practicing until she finally succeeds at a particular activity. This is driven by the need to become more independent and self-reliant.

The following section offers background information about why exercise is so important for children.

Exercise Equals Development

Exercise has many effects and is essential for the healthy development of human beings.

Exercise strengthens bone growth and muscle growth. It is important to exercise the whole body, and in a range of ways: hopping, jumping, climbing, turning, running and many more. This way all muscle groups are built. It also develops coordination and balance. Children who don’t move in a variety of ways have more falls and also injure themselves more severely.

Motor skills development is also a prerequisite for mental development. At birth, every human has eighty-six billion nerve cells, which all have to be connected to each other. Exercise stimulates the brain and promotes the development of these connections (synapses).
Exercise also promotes **social development**. By playing sports together, e.g. in sports clubs, children acquire skills such as understanding rules, making contact and cooperating, managing conflicts, considering others, dealing with frustrations and empathising.

Through exercise, children also experience their own **performance ability**. This builds trust in their own skills and promotes **self-awareness** and **self-reliance**. And above all: exercise is fun!

**The Consequences of Lack of Exercise**

Lack of exercise can have a range of negative effects: many children are already overweight at a young age (see also Chapter 3: Nutrition). Bad posture, back problems, lack of body awareness, and lack of coordination and balance can occur. Long-term consequences can include high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol.

**Exercise Advice**

According to the Austrian recommendations for exercise to promote health,

- children and adolescents should be physically active for 60 minutes per day;
- vigorous forms of exercise should be performed on a minimum of three days each week;
- if sedentary activities last longer than 60 minutes, they should be broken up by short periods of physical exercise.

**Sixty minutes of daily exercise are a good foundation for the healthy development of children and adolescents!**

Important is also the promotion of exercise as part of the daily routine (see also Chapter 2: The Family), e.g. cycling, walking, playing ballgames, going for a romp in the park, climbing stairs etc.
Feeling secure in moving around is also important for accident prevention (see Chapter 6: Accident Prevention). Lack of exercise can lead to a lack of awareness of body movement sequences and therefore to insecurity and instability. This makes children more accident-prone.

Sports Clubs

It is useful for children to be a member of a sports club because it is there that they will exercise regularly, make friends and strengthen their social skills (see above.)

From as early as 1½ years old, children can attend parent-child exercise classes together with a parent. For children aged 4 years and older, many clubs offer toddler classes that no longer require parental supervision. In most clubs, children have the opportunity to learn particular sports beginning at between 6 to 8 years of age.

Physical Education

Physical education (‘Sport und Bewegung’) is a compulsory school subject in Austria. Children who do not attend these classes cannot pass their year level.

If you have concerns, e.g. because boys and girls may be attending physical education classes together, please discuss them with the teachers. Surely, a solution can be found in many cases.
5. The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents

Being healthy not only means to be free of pain, but also to feel well emotionally. We are then also much more capable to reach our potential, to lead a contented life and to have good relationships with others.

Building a Foundation

Attachment and Basic Trust

In order for good mental health to develop, it is essential for children and adolescents to have a stable emotional attachment to at least one primary care giver. ‘Attachment’ is the special relationship between a child and those people who care for him consistently and ensure his needs are met. Attachment is rooted in emotions and connects individuals with each other.

Basic trust can only develop within the framework of secure attachment. Basic trust is a term from the field of psychology. It means that a human being fundamentally trusts life and knows instinctively which situations and people he can trust. This way he also gains trust in himself and develops a basic attitude that is generally positive.
With basic trust, a specific strength to meet challenges develops, which is called **resilience**. It means that a person can cope with difficult situations in life without falling apart emotionally.

To develop healthily, a child needs the secure attachment to its primary care givers. If basic trust cannot be established, the consequences for later life can be more or less severe. They range from ‘simple’ distrust in others to specific behavioural problems such as the inability to form attachments at all.

**Self-esteem and Confidence**

In general, children form attachment(s) within their own family. **Consistent affection, appreciation and interest** strengthen self-esteem and self-reliance.

For babies, many trust-building interactions are connected to meeting their basic needs, e.g. feeding, changing nappies, rocking to sleep …

For older children who basically no longer need to be looked after in every respect, other signs of love and affection are also important. For example, in a conversation a child might clarify something for herself by asking questions and feel important and taken seriously. It is also important to tell a child when he has done something well and not assume that this goes without saying.

**Children need signs of love, affection and appreciation to develop self-awareness, confidence and empathy towards others.**

Any form of corporal punishment or psychological abuse, on the other hand, has lasting negative effects on the self-esteem and confidence of a child.

In Austria, violence in parenting and education is prohibited and therefore also punishable by law*.  

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* ‘The use of violence and inflicting physical or psychological suffering are prohibited’  
(§ 146a of the Austrian Civil Code, ABGB)
Peer Groups

Apart from the family, friendships are very important for children. The first true friendships are already formed in kindergarten. These early ties are important for children, as for the first time they learn about the social collective and the value of relationships outside the family. From the age of about six years, friendships acquire additional meaning – at that time, shared interests and shared experiences become important.

During puberty, peers (‘similar-minded people’) become very important. Adolescents may openly share problems with them in a way that wouldn’t be possible within the family. A peer group supports the development of identity as well as separation from the adults and other adolescents, but also sharing.

Challenges

Peer Pressure

The demands of our modern (knowledge) society are extremely high. Especially adolescents are increasingly under pressure to prove themselves to their peer group, to be cool, to own the latest mobile phone, to be popular in digital social networks and to look good. At the same time, professional qualification requirements are rising because the less education and knowledge adolescents have, the higher the risk that they will be socially excluded. This often leads to increased stress and, as a consequence, to unhealthy behaviours in order to cope with it.

Different children may express their experience of stress very differently. Emotional and behavioural changes, but also a range of medical symptoms can point to an increased level of stress. Indications of feeling overwhelmed may include aggression, sadness, tiredness, sustained social retreat, stomach aches, headaches etc.
Therefore please make sure that your child has opportunities for relaxing activities after stressful periods, e.g. for just listening to music. A healthy diet, exercise and outdoor activities as well as sufficient sleep also promote recreation.

Children, by the way, require much more sleep than adults (children aged 2 to 4 years: 12 to 13 hours/night; children aged 4 to 5 years: ca. 11 hours/night).

**Puberty**

Adolescence is a period of upheaval and of many changes. This period of development is called puberty. Trying out new things as well as testing and transgressing limits are part of the transition from child to adult.

In many children, hormonally induced puberty begins very early (on average from age 10 in girls and from age 12 in boys – but sometimes up to two years earlier than that) and brings with it significant changes.

On the one hand, physical changes are taking place in the body. These often cause feelings of insecurity in relation to the unfamiliar, changed physical characteristics.

On the other hand, adolescents often lose their emotional balance during puberty, are moody and annoyed by everything and everyone. At the same time they often don't know what to do with themselves.

Many come into conflict with their parents – they want to be more independent and already feel grown up. They also want to take more responsibility and no longer want to be ‘told’ by their parents. They may also be more prepared to take risks. Often, they distance themselves socially and are less willing to perform at school or work. At the same time they still feel insecure and need familial love and protection.

These processes are normal in the context of such great changes and are more or less pronounced in girls and boys.
Sometimes, however, the stresses become too great and psychological problems can develop.

The symptoms can be very varied and it is often difficult to detect which behaviour is normal and which is not.

It is therefore important to be informed, but also to confide in someone else. Counselling or therapy may become necessary.

Therapy does not seek to work out who is to blame for the behaviour, but to find out how to help the child or the adolescent concerned.

Addiction and Drug Dependence in Adolescents

Addiction is a complex phenomenon. There is no single cause leading to addiction. Rather, it stems from a combination of causes, with biological, psychological and social factors all playing a role. Unresolved crises or dramatic childhood events are considered determining factors for drug dependence later in life. High alcohol consumption or addiction in the family (of origin) as well as experiences of violence, such as sexual or psychological abuse, are often found in the life stories of people with drug dependence.

A child's addiction is a heavy load to bear for all members of the family. Early crisis intervention is also essential for the parents, who are often overwhelmed.

Seek professional help from a counselling service that offers advice to parents about how to deal with the addictive behaviour of a child.

Get advice, e.g. by dialling 147 for the Rat auf Draht (‘savvy advice just a phone call away’) hotline

Here you can receive psychological counselling to address problems. You can remain anonymous and call around the clock, without the need for an area code and free of charge across Austria.
6. Accident Prevention

Accident prevention begins even while children are still very small. Promoting motor skills and coordination are very important for this (see Chapter 4: Exercise). But you also need to take precautions to prevent accidents.

The majority of accidents involving children less than 4 years old occur in the home, the rest in traffic or in the playground. The Kuratorium für Verkehrssicherheit offers the following safety tips:

Safety Tips

At home

General household tips

• Secure furniture with edge protectors, book cases against toppling over, drawers, wardrobes, cupboards, windows and balcony doors with safety catches, doors with doorstops, carpets with rubber underlay and stairs with safety bars to avoid knocks, falls, pinching and stumbling.

• Mark large glass panes not made from safety glass, as children often don’t see them.

• Remove anything that can be climbed on from balconies and the vicinity of windows.

• Keep medicines in a lockable cupboard.

• Store cleaning agents up high and use the original packaging to avoid confusing the contents.
In the kitchen / dining room

• Use guards for the stovetop, oven and control knobs to avoid burns.
• Cook on the rear hotplates and turn handles back to prevent pots and pans of hot food from toppling over and onto children.
• Make do without tablecloths, as they can easily be pulled off, taking objects down with them.
• Be careful with electric kettles and teapots: scalding hazard!
• Also avoid candles, as they can easily cause a fire.

Installing a smoke detector is ideal, as it immediately sounds an alarm and allows you to react accordingly.

In the bathroom

• Use a stable baby bathtub with an anti-slip lining.
• Check the water temperature (38° C) using a thermometer and your lower arm to prevent scalding.
• Clear small electrical appliances such as hairdryers and shavers away while bathing. Electrocution hazard!
• Never leave your child unsupervised in the bath (nor near swimming pools, garden ponds or similar bodies of water)! Children go rigid in water and do not react. This is why they can drown silently, even if the water that is only a few centimetres deep.

Toys

• Avoid toys with small parts and also clear small objects (e.g. buttons or watch batteries) out of reach of children: choking hazard!
• Do not use baby walkers. They are accident-prone because children are unable to control the speed of the wheels.
In the Playground

• Dress your child in appropriate clothing for playing in the playground: hardwearing clothes without loose strings or loops (strangulation hazard!) and non-slip shoes to protect the ankles and soles of the feet.

• Inspect the playground equipment and look for protruding screws or splinters. Check that ladders, rungs, ropes etc. are intact and attached securely, and that slides and swings are free from tears and cracks.

• Ideally, choose playgrounds that are mulched with bark chips or have rubber surfaces, as these soften falls.

• Always stay close to smaller children.

• Unfamiliar sandpits should be checked over for rubbish, broken glass and similar hazards.

• Make your child aware that he should not run too closely past swings or merry-go-rounds.

On the Street

Bicycles

• Children are legally obliged to wear a helmet! Always buy a helmet that fits well and use it consistently, including when in the child seat or in the trailer.

Child Safety Seats for Cars

• It is always compulsory to wear a seat belt! Use a child safety seat that is appropriate for the weight and height of the child and ask an expert to explain how to install it.

At www.kfv.at/mediathek/kfv-tv, you can find videos that show clearly how easily accidents can happen and what you can do to prevent them.
7. Dental Health

The final chapter of this guide is dedicated to the teeth. To ensure your child can enjoy healthy teeth that last a lifetime, comprehensive dental care beginning in infancy is important.

A ‘Healthy Teeth’ Diet

Our diet has a significant influence on whether our teeth remain healthy or not. It is therefore important that children don’t snack constantly because this leads to tooth decay (caries). Particularly dangerous for teeth are sugary drinks. Give your child therefore only unsweetened drinks. Your child won’t know any different then, and will not so readily ask for something sweet.

To help protect against tooth decay, you can use cooking salt containing fluoride in the kitchen – it strengthens teeth.

Cup instead of bottle

From the appearance of the first tooth, you should serve your child drinks in a cup. The earlier your child stops drinking from the bottle, the better it is for the health of teeth and jaw.
Dental Checks

Just like adults, children should have a dental check twice a year, beginning with the first tooth.

There are dentists who specialise in child dentistry. There, you can get advice on diet, sucking habits (thumb/pacifier), brushing technique, fluoride preparations and bacterial transmission, and there will be a tooth decay risk assessment for your child.

Malpositioned Teeth

Not every child has teeth that are naturally well positioned in the jaw. Malpositions should be corrected, as they can lead to pain and increased risk of gum disease (periodontitis) and tooth decay. Crooked teeth or an overbite are also a cosmetic problem for many people. It is therefore best to have the alignment of your child’s teeth checked, and treated if necessary, just after the incisors (front teeth) have broken through at around 8 years of age.

Oral and Dental Hygiene

Oral and dental hygiene are extremely important for the whole organism.

You should therefore begin to clean the teeth of your child on all sides with a soft brush as soon as the first tooth has appeared. Use special children’s toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Brushing teeth should be part of the daily ritual and be performed twice a day for at least two minutes.

Most children don’t like this, but in this case you should remain firm as parents.
You could make the whole ritual a playful affair: invent a teeth-brushing song, have the whole family brush teeth together and don’t be too rigid about the place where it takes place – does it really have to be the bathroom? Maybe it is easier in a different place? You have to take over the task of brushing your child’s teeth until she can do it reliably and thoroughly herself. This normally takes until primary school age (about the time your child has learnt to write cursive script).

**Tooth decay is infectious**

To avoid transmitting bacteria from the mother or father to the child, it is important that you as parents have healthy and well cared-for teeth. It is also important that every family member eats with his own set of cutlery: tooth decay is an infectious disease and bacteria can be transmitted from one person to another!

Dental and oral hygiene are not only important for preserving the teeth, badly maintained teeth can also be the cause of chronic diseases. Good teeth are also somewhat like a ‘calling card’.
8. In Closing …

About the Regional Supplement with Addresses and Links

This guide is written for parents and those expecting who live no matter where in Austria. This is why it contains Austria-wide addresses and links regarding each topic.

To complement this guide, there is what is called the Regional Supplement. Here, you can find a comprehensive list of addresses, telephone numbers and links that relate to each topic described in the ‘Growing Up Healthy’ guide and are specific to your federal state. It is also available in seven languages.

Thank You

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‘Roots and wings are the two things that parents should give their children.’

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (German poet, 1759 – 1832)