



SUNDHEDSSTYRELSEN

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# NEW IN DENMARK

Health Guidelines for Parents with small Children



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## Health Guidelines for Parents with small Children

When you are new in a foreign country and have young children, there are often many things which are very different to your home country. This leaflet is intended for mothers and fathers, to provide you with the most important advice which is given to parents in Denmark about infant health.

### **Health visiting nurse**

The health visiting nurse is a nurse who is trained within the field of child health. The nurse is able to provide useful advice if you are in doubt about anything, and she will help to ensure that your child has a healthy start to its life in Denmark.

### **Breastfeeding**

The healthiest food for your newborn infant is your breast milk. Breast-feeding protects both your child and you against many illnesses. If this is your first child, you may need help with breastfeeding to begin with. Only give your child breast milk for the first four to six months. Then your child can start to eat solids with a spoon.

The health visiting nurse will be able to provide advice on breastfeeding. She will also advise you on what type of food your child needs once your breast milk is not sufficient to fully meet your child's needs.

### **Infant formula**

If you are unable or do not wish to breastfeed, you need to give your child infant formula. It is safest to buy Danish products, because they are subject to legislation which ensures that the formula resembles human milk to the greatest possible extent. The composition of foreign products may be such that it cannot be guaranteed to give your child the nutrients it needs.

Always follow the instructions on the packaging, and never save on powder or use more than specified, as otherwise the composition of the formula will not be right for your child.

The health visiting nurse can also give you useful advice about cleaning bottles and teats.

In Denmark, it is recommended that children only use feeding bottles until they are 12 months old. Then they need real food several times a day and only milk in a cup for their bodies to grow up strong and healthy.

### **Milk after the first six months**

It is recommended that your child is only given breast milk or infant formula for the first year. Once your child is 12 months old, you can give it cow's milk. From the age of about six months, your child can start learning to drink milk and water from a cup.



Between one and two years of age, it is best to give your child semi-skimmed milk. Once your child is two years old, you can give it skimmed milk. This is also the healthiest milk for the rest of the family to drink.

If your child drinks 350-500 ml a day, it will get all the milk it needs. If you give your child more milk than this, there will not be space in your child's stomach for solid food.

### **Vitamin D**

In Denmark, it is recommended that children up to the age of two years are given vitamin D supplements every day. Vitamin D is necessary to ensure that your child develops strong bones, as there is not enough vitamin D in breast milk. Your child needs 10 micrograms of vitamin D a day in drop form, which is given on a spoon. Do not add the drops to milk in a bottle, because if your child does not finish the bottle, it will not get all the vitamins.

Vitamin D is also produced by the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. If you have dark skin, it is recommended that both children and adults take vitamin D supplements every day. This is because dark skin does not form as much vitamin D as pale skin, and everyone needs vitamin D to stay healthy.

### **Iron supplement**

Your family doctor or the health visiting nurse will tell you whether your child needs iron supplements.

### **Weaning your child**

It is recommended that you start weaning your child (i.e. giving your child food and not just milk) once it is about six months old.

It is a good idea to start with porridge or stewed fruit, or mashed vegetables with potatoes. Gradually, as your child learns to eat food and chew it, you can give it food which has just been mashed with a fork, and later on food which has simply been cut into small pieces. Feed your child meat or fish every day, ideally at several meals, and it should also be given fruit daily. You can also give your child bulgur wheat, couscous, rice, pasta etc., so it learns to eat a varied range of foods from an early age. The best bread for everyone in the family is dark bread. In Denmark, both children and adults eat rye bread. You can give your child rye bread from about eight months of age.





Once your child is about nine-to-ten months old, it can eat the same food as the rest of the family.

The health visiting nurse will give you good advice on how best to combine your dietary habits with what a young child needs to eat and what is available in the shops in Denmark. This will ensure that your child has every chance of growing strong and healthy.

### **Vaccinations and medical examinations**

Your child can be examined by your family doctor free of charge when it is five weeks old, five months old and 12 months old as well as when it is two, three, four and five years of age.

You will be offered a vaccination for your child free of charge when it is three months old, five months old, 12 months old and 15 months old, as well as when your son or daughter reaches four and five years of age. All young children are vaccinated against the following diseases:

- Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio (3 months, 5 months, 12 months and 5 years)
- Meningitis – caused by two different bacteria (*Haemophilus influenzae B* and the pneumococcus bacterium (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*)) and other serious illnesses caused by the pneumococcus bacterium (3 months, 5 months and 12 months)
- Measles, mumps and German measles (15 months and 4 years)

Some children are also vaccinated against hepatitis B. This is decided by the doctor.

## **Avoid smoking indoors**

It is healthiest for your child if it grows up in a home where it is not exposed to tobacco smoke. If you smoke, it is recommended that you try to stop. If this is not possible, then it is best for your child if you only smoke outdoors. In so doing, you will protect your child against a wide range of diseases such as pneumonia, bronchitis and inflammation of the middle ear.

## **When your baby goes to sleep**

It is recommended that your child always sleeps on its back until it is able to turn onto its side by itself. This will reduce the risk of cot death. When your child is awake, it is best if it spends as much time on its front as possible. This will ensure that your child develops strong arm and back muscles.



## **Accident prevention**

Young children are often involved in accidents because they cannot predict what happens. Young children are often hurt after falling, for example from the changing table, off a bed or sofa or down the stairs, or by being burned, for example after coming into contact with hot coffee or tea or other beverage, boiling water in an electric kettle, or by getting their fingers or toes caught in a door etc.

It is always a good idea to check your home for potential hazards as if you were a child. Then you can ensure that your child does not suffer an accident.

## **Bringing up your child**

In Denmark it is not permitted to hit your children – even in connection with disciplining. The health visiting nurse will be happy to advise you on the best way to raise your child.

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