



The most precious gift a parent  
can give their child is to help them  
become independent.



# SELF-CARE MILESTONES

## A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SELF-CARE MILESTONES Early childhood – 8 years

Self-care activities are those basic everyday activities like eating, bathing, dressing, and toileting that help us keep a healthy pace with life's momentum.

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**Self-care activities are often referred to as activities of daily living (ADL) as they are essential for our everyday living. These activities are typically supported by the parent but children are expected to become independent as they mature. As the child becomes independent and self-sufficient in their daily activities, they establish a sense of accomplishment and confidence that help build other essential skills.**

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# SELF-CARE MILESTONES

Though each child develops at his or her own pace, most children achieve important functional skills within a certain age range. We have classified self-care developmental milestones into four categories such as feeding, dressing, grooming, and toileting and compiled age-appropriate self-care expectations in these four categories for better understanding.

## 01

### Feeding

Typical feeding development happens between 0-3 years. However, this may change depending on the child's cognitive and physical development.

## 02

### Dressing

Developing dressing skills is important before a child starts schooling. Typical dressing development happens between 1-8 years.

## 03

### Grooming

Grooming helps the child to look neat and clean. Grooming skills are generally developed between 1-7 years. These skills lay the foundation for later personality development.

## 04

### Toileting

Typical toileting skills are developed between 1-8 years. By the time a child is ready to start schooling, it is expected that he/she is fully toilet trained.

# Age 0-6 months

## Feeding

- Latches onto the nipple or bottle
- Shows interest in foods
- Opens mouth when spoon reaches the mouth
- Begins to eat smooth, pureed foods

## Toileting

- No control over bladder or bowel movements

# Age 6-12 months

## Feeding

- Sits supported and eats food
- Holds and drinks from a bottle
- Begins to eat thicker, pureed and mashed food

## Toileting

- No control over bladder or bowel movements



Promoting self-care skills  
in your child is promoting  
independence and  
confidence in them.



**Helping your child build healthy habits is helping them develop healthy self-esteem.**

# Age 1-2 years

## Feeding

- Wean off bottle feeding
- Can eat finger foods, soft-cooked vegetables, soft fruits
- Biting skills start improving
- Can drink from an open cup
- Ready to try using a spoon for self-feeding
- Can eat coarsely chopped foods
- Chews with lips closed

## Dressing

- Co-operates with dressing
- Able to remove and wear a loose fitting hat
- Pushes arms through sleeves and legs through pant openings

## Grooming

- Allows wiping of the nose
- Attempts to bring a comb to hair
- Tries to blow nose
- Tolerates haircut
- Maintains a safe body position while bathing
- Holds toothbrush
- Allows brushing of teeth

## Toileting

- Indicates discomfort when wet/soiled by crying or stopping an activity abruptly for a few seconds, or clutching on his/her diaper
- Has regular bowel movements
- Sits on the toilet seat when made to sit, under supervision for some time
- Begin to wean off diapers
- Need reminders to go to the toilet



# Age 2-3 years

## Feeding

- Eats all table foods
- Has definite food likes and dislikes
- Starts to serve themselves with minimal spills
- Uses spoon without spilling and stabs food with a fork
- Tolerates various food textures
- Using hand, can eat rice and other foods made into balls
- Imitates the way an adult eats

## Dressing

- Helps pull down pants
- Finds armholes in a T-shirt, once it is worn over the head
- By 2.5 years, pulls down pants with elastic waist
- Unbuttons large buttons
- Puts on the shirt but needs help with zippers and buttons

## Grooming

- Wipes nose
- Brushes hair
- Brushes teeth but not intact and independently

## Toileting

- Urinates regularly with occasional daytime accidents
- Flushes by self
- Stays dry for 2 hours or more
- Tells someone that he or she needs to go to the bathroom
- Needs reminders and/or diapers at night
- May need help with getting on the toilet
- Child may begin to initiate interest in potty training

**Kids start by imitating and learn by exploring. Show them what you want them to do and allow them to explore.**



# Age 3-4 year

## Feeding

- Eats well with no spillage
- Mixes food and eats with hand
- Eats by themselves
- Achieves independence

## Dressing

- Puts on a T-shirt with minimal assistance
- Pulls down pants independently
- Puts on shoes/sandals/slippers but needs help with straps/laces (may have right and left confusion)
- Unzips and zips jacket
- Buttons large front buttons
- Can find the front of a clothing
- Snaps or hooks front fasteners
- Unbuckles belt or shoes
- Dresses with supervision

## Grooming

- Brushes teeth well
- Can squeeze the toothpaste onto the toothbrush

## Toileting

- Rarely has bowel accidents
- Goes to the toilet independently
- Sits on the toilet seat by themselves
- Needs help with cleaning
- Needs help with fasteners or difficult clothing
- Stays dry at night with almost no bedwetting
- At night occasional accidental bowel movements
- May wear diapers at night

Parenting is all about equipping kids with the right skill to soar high on their own.



Don't make your child a handicap by making tasks easier for them.

# Age 4-5 years

## Dressing

- Buckles belt or shoes
- Can zip the jacket zipper
- Puts on socks correctly
- Ties shoelaces
- Identifies the front and back of clothing independently

## Grooming

- Washes, rinses, dries body well
- Brushes teeth well and independently

## Toileting

- Able to toilet independently
- Pulls up and adjusts clothing
- May require reminders for toileting at night

# Age 6-7 years

## Dressing

- Can close the back zipper
- Ties bows
- Can button the back buttons
- Can snap the back snaps

## Grooming

- Brushes hair and manages tangles
- Styles hair

## Toileting

- Stays dry at night-time

**"Encouraging a child means that one or more of the following critical life messages are coming through, either by word or by action:**

**I believe in you,  
I trust you,  
I know you can handle this,  
you are listened to,  
you are cared for,  
you are very important to me."**

**- Barbara Coloroso**





# Age 7-8 years

## Dressing

- Independent in dressing and able to use various fasteners such as buttons, snaps, zippers, hooks, laces etc.

## Grooming

- Uses personal care devices such as glasses, contacts, hearing aids, etc.

## Toileting

- Stays dry at night\*

\*About 15% of children may still experience regular bed wetting. If you feel concerned, feel free to contact our team for guidance.



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# How to help?

## How to promote self-feeding habits in your child?

- Once your child is ready to finger feed, let them explore foods with their hands and mouth. Provide adequate time to the child to enhance their participation. Don't hurry or worry about getting messy.
- Ensure a routine meal time is set and keep it fun-filled and exciting. Give interesting funny names to food. You can also play veggie guessing game or Tic, Tac, Toe.
- Make sure that your child's back, neck, and head are well supported in the sitting posture during meal times.
- Keep aside toys and screens that distract your child's attention. Ensure that your child is fully present during meal times.
- Encourage self-feeding skills during pretend play by using spoons, cups, etc.
- Be creative with your child's food - add colors, shapes, and create their favorite characters to make it attractive and interesting. If running short of time, use a cookie cutter to create different shapes.
- Allow your child to help in cooking. For example, let them roll their chapati / bread. It can make the process more interesting, persuading them to eat the food they prepared.

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# How to help?

## How to promote dressing skills in your child?

- Make dressing fun using rhymes and songs.
- Play dress dolls or dress-ups during pretend play with your child.
- To help your child learn tasks like tying shoelaces, buttons, buckles, and zips, practice fine motor skills such as threading beads and sorting different types of pasta or beads. It teaches them how to manipulate small objects using their fingers.
- Begin by providing opportunities for the child to participate in simple tasks such as putting arms in the sleeves and legs in the pant holes. Teach your child to sit while wearing pants, socks, or shoes. This makes dressing easier.

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# How to help?

## How to promote grooming skills in your child?

- Make your child's bath times fun and interesting with songs, bath toys, and water play.
- Introduce routines for bath and brushing teeth.
- Include showering and brushing teeth in pretend play and role play activities with your child.
- You can use songs or visual cues to help them follow the steps in showering, washing their hands, and brushing teeth.

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# How to help?

## How to promote toileting in your child?

- Incorporate a toileting routine. Rewarding your child can motivate them to follow the routine.
- Make sure of a comfortable toilet set up where your child feels secure and relaxed while using it.
- While sitting on the toilet seat, use a secure stool to rest their feet.
- A balanced diet and plenty of water help with good digestion

# Final Words

This self-care milestone list is intended as a general guide for parents. Remember, every child is unique and the milestones may vary from child to child due to various factors. If you have any concerns regarding your child's self-care skills, it is recommended to consult an occupational therapist. You may also contact our team at 9746303555 or write to us at [enquire@prayatna.net](mailto:enquire@prayatna.net) for more information and guidance.

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