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# AAP News

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## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### Father knows best: Tips on how dads can help kids grow

Dads can help kids learn many things — from developing relationships and handling their frustration to solving problems and expressing their creativity.

Take a minute and think about your dad. Was he the one who played catch with you in the front yard? Did he push you to get good grades in school? Was he there with wise advice whenever you were in a tough situation?

There's no denying that fathers do a lot for their children. They are a key part of families.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages fathers to be active in their children's lives, whether they live with them or not. Studies have shown that a strong father-child relationship from birth is good for kids.

Following are ways that fathers help their children grow and learn in ways you might not know about.

- **In infancy.** In the first few days of life, infants will turn their heads toward their fathers' voice more than another person's voice. Infants who bond with their fathers are more likely to breastfeed, which has many health benefits. In addition, the infants develop better language skills, will be better equipped to handle strange situations and are more curious. Babies born early also gain weight faster if their fathers are involved.

- **Learning social skills.** Children whose fathers show them affection get along better with friends and siblings. As children grow, fathers begin to set an example of how to maintain a relationship, based on the relationship he has with the child's mother.

- **In school.** Fathers are more likely than mothers to push their children to succeed in school. Their kids are more likely to get good grades. Fathers also encourage kids to be curious and work at problem solving and communicating.

- **Control of feelings.** Fathers tend to rough-house when playing with their children. This type of play helps kids learn where and when to use their own anger or aggression, and when to calm down. This life skill also helps prevent behavior problems.

- **Creativity.** Fathers themselves are creative, and they are more likely than mothers to find new ways to play with old toys. This style of play leads kids to be creative thinkers.

The AAP encourages families to include fathers in their children's lives. It's not only fun, it's also healthy for everyone.

— Shayna Starr



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