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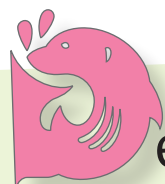
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TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #1 of 11

Language



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child’s first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

of toddler development (thinking, social skills, physical growth, eating, and nutrition). The goal is to help you learn about and enjoy the wonders of your child’s development during this most exciting time.

Toddlers can’t do it on their own! They need you to interact with them and teach them the skills they need. In order to take care of your toddler, you need to take care of yourself. To help you learn how to relax and cope with the stress of parenting, each publication also includes a section called “Take Care of Yourself.” With a healthy environment, your toddler will learn and grow into a happy young child. Remember that every toddler is unique. Even though most toddlers develop skills at similar ages, they each develop at their own pace.



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This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. When we write “him” or “her,” we are talking about all toddlers.

Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Toddlers learn language very quickly. At 13 months toddlers can say an average of 10 words. But by 18 months they can say over 100. While toddlers are learning to produce words, they understand a lot more words than they can say. That means that the toddler years are an important time for your toddler to hear, see, and practice using language. Toddlers learn words by listening to you. Toddlers who have good language skills are able to make friends, develop thinking skills, and get ready for school.

Toddlers start using words that are most familiar to them, like names of people and objects. Then they say two or three words together, like “mommy hat.” Between 2 and 3 years of age toddlers begin to sing, describe things, say full sentences, and sometimes talk to themselves.



Questions Parents Ask

- Q. My friend's daughter has been talking for a long time. Why isn't my son talking yet?
- A. There could be many reasons why your son isn't talking. First, girls tend to talk sooner than boys. Second, all children, whether they are girls or boys, learn language in different ways and at different rates. Some may start saying a few words as early as 9 months, but others won't speak until about 2 years of age.



Tips

- ✦ Reading and talking to your toddler every day are the most important things you can do for his language development.
- ✦ Not learning to talk can mean he has a language delay or developmental problem that needs help.
- ✦ Let your doctor know if your toddler used to know a word and now doesn't say it, or if his talking has decreased or stopped.
- ✦ If you are concerned about your toddler's language development, check with your toddler's doctor for language delays or hearing problems.

Read with Your Toddler

Reading to your toddler is very important. Reading books helps her learn that words relate to things in the world. She will also learn that reading and learning are fun. All of this will help her brain and language develop. The more language your toddler sees and hears, the more she learns.



Talking for Play

To learn language toddlers must hear you use language. It is important to listen to them and respond to their words and sounds. Sometimes toddlers say words wrong the first few times. You can help them learn by letting them hear you say it the right way. Your toddler learns from your excitement about language.

Tips

Talk with your toddler:

- ✦ Make collections of things, like leaves, rocks, and flowers. Name them and talk about them.
- ✦ When your toddler makes sounds, treat them like words. "Are you trying to say flower? Yes, that's a flower!"
- ✦ Respond to the meaning instead of how to say it right. Toddlers may pronounce words the wrong way, but they know what the word means.



Tips

When choosing books for toddlers, look for

- ✦ simple, clear, and repeated words
- ✦ large and brightly colored pictures
- ✦ topics your toddler likes

Or, make up a story of your own using family photos, dolls, or your imagination.

- ✦ Find a good daily time to talk. Bedtime is a good time for many families.

Help your toddler talk to you:

- ✦ Ask her questions: Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- ✦ Make sure you take turns talking. This helps her learn communication skills.
- ✦ Help your toddler make up songs.
- ✦ Listen with excitement to what she says.
- ✦ Play language games, like peek-a-boo and patty cake.

Using Language with Friends

Language is an important social tool. Children who have good language skills have an easier time making friends and getting along with other children. Toddlers are learning how to use language with other people by first using it with their parents. Your toddler's relationship with you helps him learn how to act with others.



Tips

- Help him use language when he meets new people. Encourage him to say “hello” and “good-bye.”
- When your toddler whines or cries, give him the words for his emotions. “Are you crying because you’re sad?”
- When your toddler points, help him use the words. “Do you want to touch the flower?”
- Help him learn to ask for toys or objects before taking them. “Can I play with that now?”

Make Meals Family Time

Family meals help to build strong family bonds. They are good times to talk and catch up with each other. You may feel like you don't have time for family meals, but making the effort can be valuable for your toddler.



Tips

- Make family meals a priority.
- Plan ahead—look at family schedules.
- Keep it simple. Purchase foods that are easy to prepare.
- Use mealtime to have pleasant family conversations. Talk about fun things.
- Ask your toddler about her day. Talk about future plans you have together.

Keep it simple, keep it fun...just keep it!

Language for Safety

Language is an important tool for you in teaching your toddler safety. Talk to your toddler about your rules for both inside and outside the house. The more you talk to your toddler, the more she will understand.



Tips

- Explain your rules and why you need them.
- Remind her about the rules when she breaks them. "You can't throw things at people."
- Avoid just saying "no." Use phrases like "That's dangerous" or "That's hot."
- Talk with your toddler often about the rules.
- Enforce all rules the same way every time.
- Choose your battles. Safety rules are always important: "Please do not go into the street. A car can hit you." Or "Stay away from the oven. You can get burned."

Encourage Activity with Language

Toddlers are very active. Running, jumping, and hopping are common activities, and they help children learn balance and coordination. You can use language to help your toddler stay active and learn.

Tips

- Praise your child for specific behaviors that he does. "You hop so well!" Toddlers like doing things you that praise them for.
- Label his actions to help him learn the words. "You're running so fast." "Are you walking to the swing?"
- Set up an obstacle course indoors and talk your toddler through it. "Hop over the pillow, climb under the coffee table, roll on the blanket, turn down the hall, and crawl back to the start." Start with two directions for younger toddlers, and add more steps as they get older.
- Play language games that use activity. "Let's hop like a frog. Now let's crawl like a cat."
- Label your toddler's body parts when you play games. Sing "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" while touching each body part as it is mentioned. This helps him learn the names of his body parts.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are children's first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help her learn.

1. **"Sounds Things Make."** This game helps your toddler pronounce difficult words and learn to connect objects with sounds.

Sit together in any relaxed position. Use your body to show action, and make the sound with your voice, like when a jet goes "zoom," a duck goes "quack," a fire engine goes "ding-ding-ding," etc. After each sound you make, ask your toddler "How does a jet sound?" or "What does a dog do?"

2. **Picture Book.** Read a picture book to your toddler. Encourage her to find things in the book. It is okay if she cannot do this at first. Name pictures that your toddler points to.
3. **"Where Is It?"** This game helps your toddler learn important words for positions, such as inside, under, next to, on top of, and behind.

Ask your toddler to move objects around, and then ask her where they are. For example, ask your toddler to put a ball in a basket, or behind a basket, etc. You can ask her to put her hat on her head, under her foot, or behind her back. Help her with actions that are hard for her to do.



Take Care of Yourself

Talking to your toddler can be a lot of fun. It can also be tiring. Make sure you give yourself opportunities for adult language too.

Tips

- ♦ Talk to other adults.
- ♦ Read books or magazines.
- ♦ Listen to music.

Taking this time for yourself will help you be happier and more relaxed when you are with your toddler.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Unlike the issue-oriented format of the online newsletters, organized according to areas of toddler development, the printed version follows the growth of toddlers according to their age, from 13 to 36 months old.

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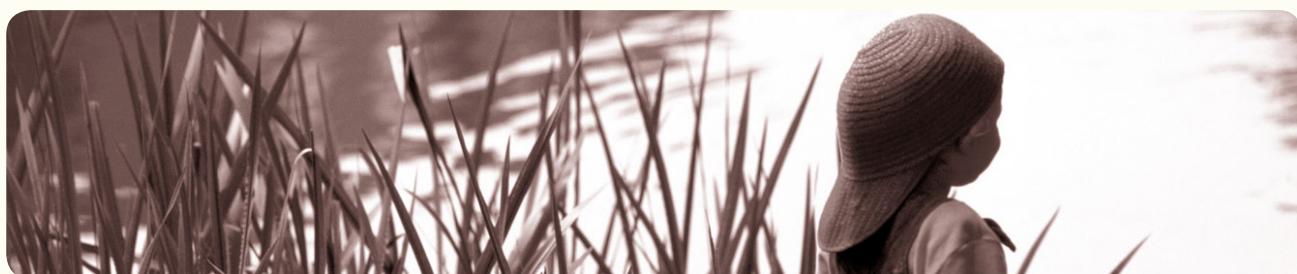
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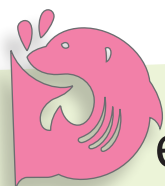


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #2 of 11

Communication



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Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Toddlers love to talk and express themselves. By the time your toddler enters preschool, she'll be able to have short conversations and even joke with you. You'll notice how fast your toddler learns to communicate by using both her words and her body. All these things help your toddler's growth and development:

- ✦ Make a special time to talk together—bedtime, meals, or in the car.
- ✦ When your toddler talks to you, make eye contact, listen, and then reply to what she said.
- ✦ Communicate with love. Praise her and give her affection.
- ✦ Be enthusiastic—praise her attempts to talk and communicate.



Questions Parents Ask

Q. My toddler sometimes lies to me, and yesterday he stole a toy from his cousin's room. What should I do?

A. Your son isn't trying to misbehave. Toddlers your son's age don't understand about lying or stealing. It is common for them to say things that may not be true. They also may take things they want even if these things do not belong to them.

What he needs from you is teaching about proper behavior, not punishment. Tell him your rules: he cannot say things that are not true or take things that aren't his. Explain why you have these rules. Let your son return the toy he took. Remind him that you want him to be truthful. Don't call your toddler a liar or a thief. He could come to believe these labels and feel there is nothing he can do to change.

Learning about right and wrong and how to use self-control takes time. Be patient, firm, and loving, and set a good example. Show him that you don't lie or steal. In time, your son will come to imitate you, not because he's afraid of punishment, but because he wants to do what is right.

Learning to Communicate

Young toddlers who are too young to talk much can still tell you a lot. They use their body to communicate—like turning away or moving toward something, making faces, moving their hands and arms, making sounds, and saying words. By the end of the toddler years, they can have short conversations about ideas, problems, and plans. You can help your toddler learn the skills she needs to have a conversation.

Tips

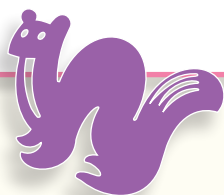
- Talk clearly and take turns talking.
- Look directly at her when you are talking to her.
- Ask her questions and answer hers.
- Don't correct her mistakes. Instead, use the word correctly in a sentence: "Yes, that is a big, red *wagon*."
- When she uses her body to communicate, give her the words. If she holds her hands up, say "Are you asking me to pick you up?"

Communicating without Words

You may not know it, but you don't have to say words to communicate with your toddler. Your toddler notices a lot of what you do. Communicating without words is just as important as talking. How you act teaches your toddler about himself, his world, and how to get along with others.

Tips

- Show him how to behave by doing it yourself.
- Respond to his needs with affection and warmth to show him love and safety.
- The way you resolve your own conflicts teaches him how to resolve his.
- Communicate that he is important to you. Respond to his words, cries, and body language.



Communicating about Feelings

Understanding feelings is important for communication. Toddlers are just starting to understand their own feelings. By the time toddlers enter preschool, they understand their own and others' feelings. These are important skills to have for school. Knowing about feelings helps children make friends and get along with others. Right now you can help your toddler learn about her own feelings.



Tips

- Use words for emotions, like happy, sad, mad, and excited. "You look happy! Playing with that ball really makes you smile."
- Show your love and praise often. Your toddler will learn from you how to express her love.
- When your toddler is upset, help her use words to express her feelings. "You're really sad right now. Will a hug help you feel happy?"
- Talk about the feelings of other kids or characters in books. "She looks sad. She's crying because she lost her favorite toy."

Nutrition

Parents may worry about how much their toddler is eating. But toddlers know when they are hungry, and they usually eat enough to grow and be healthy. Sometimes they are hungrier than at other times. This is normal and okay because children grow slower after 1 year of age. Did you know that between 1 and 2 years of age most children only gain between 3 and 6 pounds? Parents can help toddlers listen to their bodies and eat well.

Tips

- Serve three healthy meals and two or three healthy snacks at about the same times each day.
- Serve small amounts of food. Let your toddler ask for more.
- Encourage your toddler to serve himself.
- Let your toddler decide how much he will eat.
- Don't bribe with food or punish for not eating enough. This can cause children to become overweight.
- When giving your toddler a snack, give him two healthy foods to choose from (e.g., "Would you like an orange or a banana?")

Can You Hear Me?

Good hearing is important for toddlers in learning how to communicate. Problems with hearing can cause delays in language and communication. Notice how well your toddler hears you when you talk with her.



No More Talk. I Need to Run Too.

Did you know that the toddler years are the most active in a child's life? They don't like to sit still. When you try to talk with your toddler or read a book, he might get up and run around. This is normal. Toddlers have to move in order to practice all the new physical skills they are learning. They are excited about their ability to run, hop, jump, and climb. By doing these activities, they gain skills and coordination. You can help by creating safe places for your toddler to be active.

Tips

- ✦ Allow lots of active play.
- ✦ Understand that your toddler may not sit still for a whole book or story.
- ✦ Encourage lots of supervised outdoor time.
- ✦ Provide safe places to play and explore.
- ✦ Praise your toddler for all the things he can now do. "You walk so well!"
- ✦ Be active yourself and play with your toddler.

Tips

- ✦ Take your toddler to all well-baby checkups. Her doctor will check her hearing.
- ✦ Ear infections can cause hearing problems. Treat them quickly.
- ✦ Don't allow smoking around your toddler. Second-hand smoke can cause ear infections.
- ✦ Avoid noisy situations and loud toys.
- ✦ Teach your toddler to cover her ears when there is loud noise, like from lawn mowers or radios with the volume turned up high.
- ✦ Don't let your toddler sleep with a bottle. It can cause ear infections.



Activities, Games, and Toys

Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play.

1. **Fun on the Phone.** Toddlers love to talk on the phone, whether it is a real or pretend one. Try this fun activity:
 - ✦ Start with two telephones (real or pretend), one for you and one for your toddler.
 - ✦ Make up pretend conversations. Ask your toddler questions that are easy for her to answer. "Is this Mary?" "Are you having fun?"
 - ✦ Pretend to call other people your toddler knows. Let your toddler pretend to be the people you called, such as Daddy, Grandma, or the next-door neighbor.
 - ✦ Always start your phone conversations with "hello" and end with "goodbye."
2. **"What Is It?"** This game helps develop communication and thinking skills.
 - ✦ Look around a familiar room and pick out something you can describe in two ways: what it looks like and what it does.
 - ✦ Describe the object to your toddler without telling her what it is. Ask her to guess what you have picked. "I can see something that is red and rolls."
 - ✦ Let your toddler have a turn asking you to guess too.



Take Care of Yourself

Communicating with a toddler can be stressful at times. Stress is an unavoidable part of parenthood. But it doesn't need to be unbearable if you learn to manage it. Deep breathing can help you handle stress.

How to do deep breathing:

- ✦ Close your eyes and sit up straight.
- ✦ Breathe in, slowly and deeply.
- ✦ Count silently to two, hold the air in for another count, and then let the air out slowly.
- ✦ Repeat this slow, deep breathing for 5 or 10 minutes if you can.

You can even do deep breathing right in the middle of a stressful time. Even just a couple of deep breaths can help!

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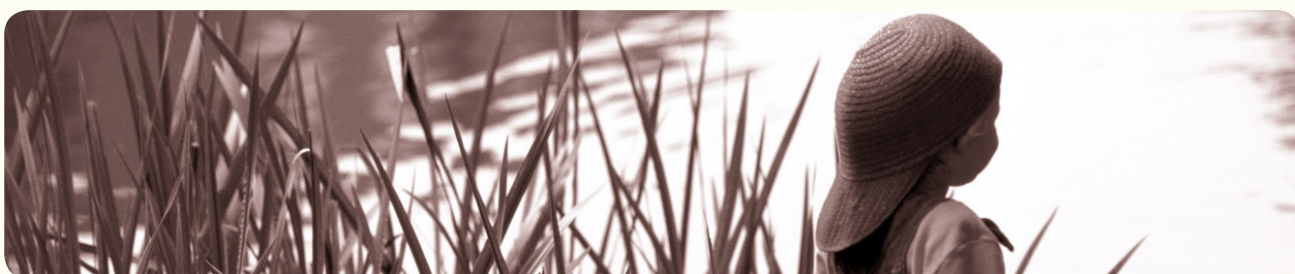
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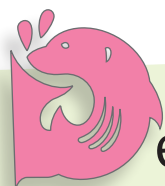


TODDLER EXPRESS

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Newsletter #3 of 11

Independence



Dear Parents,

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Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Toddlers love to show you how independent they are. This is because of new development in their brain. Around 1 year of age toddlers' brains have a growth spurt. This new growth works with toddlers' growing bodies to help them

- ✦ control their actions
- ✦ work toward their own goals (which may be different from yours!)
- ✦ calm themselves down when upset or excited
- ✦ start to understand themselves (feelings, thoughts, and wants)

Your toddler's growing independence may be hard for you. There can be a lot of conflict as she tries to do new things that you don't want her to do. This is a normal part of your toddler's development and should happen less by preschool age.

Questions Parents Ask

Q. I have heard about "the terrible twos." What are they, and how do I cope with them?

A. Terrible twos may not be terrible, but the period between 18 months and 3 years can be difficult. At this time, toddlers are learning independence. They have new physical abilities and have learned to say "no" and "I want." Sometimes they demand things they should not have. This is a natural part of growing up, as toddlers learn about the world and how they can affect it.

Remember that your toddler isn't being difficult on purpose but simply showing that he is growing up. Be patient. Try using some of the ideas in the *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* to make time with your toddler more enjoyable. In a few months, your toddler should be moving out of this difficult period.



Pretend Play

Toddlers learn to do new things on their own by playing and exploring. Most toddlers love to play pretend. Pretending to do new things helps your toddler practice doing things on her own in a fun and safe way. It also builds self-esteem because there is no right or wrong way to do something when you are just pretending.

Tips

- Provide toys to play pretend games: hats, adult clothes, and pots and pans.
- Build a store or cave out of large boxes or chairs and a blanket.
- With younger toddlers, pretend to be different animals or to talk on the phone.
- With older toddlers, suggest situations to act out together.



Guiding Your Toddler's Independence

Your toddler loves to show you all the new things he can do. It can be hard for parents to let toddlers do things on their own. It can feel like he doesn't need you anymore. It may seem that way, but he still needs your help. As toddlers learn new skills, they need help and guidance from their parents. You can help him practice doing new things on his own.

Tips

Encourage independence

- For older toddlers, make rules into choices. "It's cold outside. Do you want to wear your sweater or your jacket?"
- Choose your battles. Let your toddler make his own decisions sometimes, and he will follow your rules more often.

Prevent conflicts

- Plan ahead. Avoid long shopping trips and other difficult activities.
- Make simple rules that are easy to enforce. Explain why they are necessary.
- Stick to your rules every time, so your toddler knows what to expect.
- Make tasks, like cleaning up, into games.
- Avoid punishing. Instead, show him how to do it better next time.

Controlling Tempers



This is an exciting time for your toddler as she learns that she is her own person. As your toddler tries to do more things on her own, she may get upset if you try to help her. She may even throw a temper tantrum to tell you how much she wants to do it on her own. Or she may get frustrated when she can't get something to work right. This is part of learning how to be independent. You can help her learn how to do things on her own and control her emotions.



Tips

- Your toddler may say “no” a lot. This is a way for her to show you she has her own ideas.
- Always ask before you reach in to help your toddler do something.
- If your toddler does not want you to help, try talking her through the problem instead. “Try pulling the door instead of pushing it.”
- Temper tantrums are one way your toddler expresses her new independence. Help her calm down by cuddling her and telling her you understand she is upset.
- When helping your toddler, try not to do the whole thing for her. For example, turn the door knob and let her pull the door open.

Independent Feeding

By now, your toddler has become an expert at putting things in her mouth. The bad news is that lots of things go in her mouth that don't belong there. The good news is that this means your toddler can feed herself with your help. Younger toddlers can use their hands. Older toddlers can use child-sized spoons. It may be messy, but your toddler needs practice to learn.



Tips

- Give your toddler soft foods she can easily pick up, chew, and swallow.
- Cut large foods into small pieces that fit into her mouth and can be chewed easily.
- Cut round foods, like hot dogs, in half circles. Circles can easily get stuck in your toddler's throat.
- Older toddlers can start using child-sized spoons—they may have to use their hands to put the food on the spoon as they practice.
- Give drinks in cups with handles.
- Let her make a mess. With practice she will get better.
- Praise your toddler as she practices these new skills.

Safe Independence

As toddlers start doing more on their own, they can get into things that can be dangerous. They are curious, but they have not learned what can harm them. Make sure everything dangerous is locked up or way out of reach. Remember, toddlers can reach things by climbing.

Many things can poison toddlers, including

- garden and house plants (oleander and castor bean can be fatal)
- colognes, perfumes, hair products, and cosmetics
- tobacco, food flavorings, and spices
- gasoline, insecticides, and roach sprays and powders
- medicines and cleaning products

Be aware of signs that your toddler ate something poisonous: vomiting, diarrhea, too much sweating, clammy skin, trouble breathing, or skin rashes. If you see any of these signs or if you know your toddler ate something poisonous, immediately call your doctor, the nearest hospital emergency room, or the California Poison Control System (1-800-876-4766). Keep these numbers by your phone.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are toddlers' first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you.

1. **"Look at Me."** Let your toddler see and talk about herself. Spread out a large sheet of paper, or tape smaller pieces of paper together, on a smooth floor. Ask your toddler to lie down on the paper. Then you draw all around her, getting as much detail as you can.

Let your toddler fill in the inside of the body. Use a mirror so she can draw her eyes, nose, and mouth. Hang it up where she can see it. You can repeat this activity every few months or at each birthday. Talk about the changes: "See how much bigger you are getting" or "Your hair is getting longer."

2. **Copy Cat.** This game helps toddlers express their growing independence.

Stand or sit facing your toddler. Tell her to move and that you will copy her. Maybe she will jump, bend, turn, hop, or roll around. Take turns copying each other. Try playing both inside and outside.



Take Care of Yourself

Parents often think they are not doing a "good job" if their toddlers do not act the way they "should." Every toddler will misbehave sometimes. Thinking it is your fault can cause you to feel stress. This will make things worse for both of you. Instead of criticizing yourself, try to remember what you have done right.

Toddlers need parents who try their best, but that does not mean we can succeed all of the time. Try your best, but do not worry that you are not a perfect parent. Give yourself and your toddler credit for the good times, and understand that nobody is perfect.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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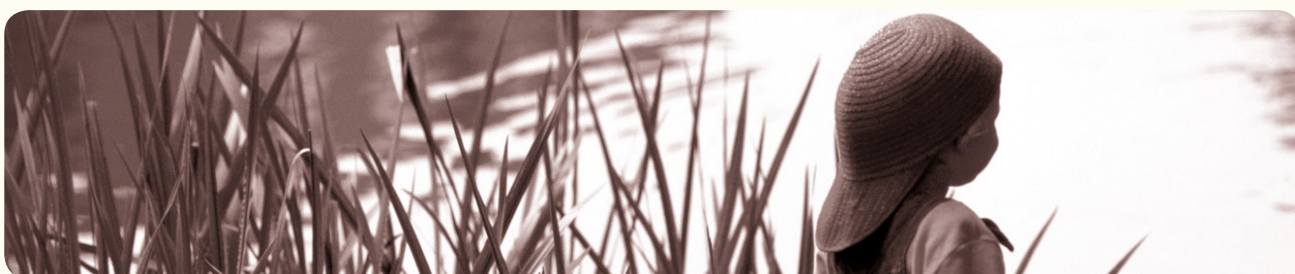
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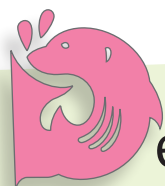


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #4 of 11

Every Child Is Special



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child’s first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

LENNA ONTAI, UC Cooperative Extension Family and Early Childhood Specialist, Department of Human and Community Development, University of California, Davis; and members of the UC ANR **FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WORKGROUP**: Joanne Deocampo, Sharon Junge, Cathi Lamp, Shannon Lipscomb, Sue Manglallan, Diane Metz, Dorothy Smith, and Jane Chin Young.

of toddler development (thinking, social skills, physical growth, eating, and nutrition). The goal is to help you learn about and enjoy the wonders of your child’s development during this most exciting time.

Toddlers can’t do it on their own! They need you to interact with them and teach them the skills they need. In order to take care of your toddler, you need to take care of yourself. To help you learn how to relax and cope with the stress of parenting, each publication also includes a section called “Take Care of Yourself.” With a healthy environment, your toddler will learn and grow into a happy young child. Remember that every toddler is unique. Even though most toddlers develop skills at similar ages, they each develop at their own pace.



This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. When we write “him” or “her,” we are talking about all toddlers.

Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Isn't it nice that your toddler is like no other in the whole world? From very early in life, children show different

- ✦ reactions to new experiences
- ✦ activity levels
- ✦ responses to stress
- ✦ ways of making friends
- ✦ feelings



Every toddler is different, and that makes each of them special.

Questions Parents Ask

- Q. My daughter is very shy, and she's scared of new people and places. I'm concerned she'll never make friends or try new things. What can I do?
- A. Some toddlers are unsure in new situations and around new people. Try not to force her before she is ready. It might make her even more shy. Instead, talk to her about new situations ahead of time and about how she might feel in them. Let her ask questions and stay near you until she is ready. Be a good model. Show her that the new person or activity is okay by interacting or participating yourself. She may follow your lead eventually.



Learning in My Own Way

Toddlers think and learn in different ways. Some learn best by exploring their world on their own, but some like it when adults or friends stay close by. Some toddlers learn best by looking at pictures, or by drawing, painting, and molding play dough. Some learn best by listening to what people say, to stories, and to music. Parents can provide toddlers with many ways to learn.



Tips

- ✦ Let your toddler play in different places: inside, outside, playgrounds, and parks.
- ✦ Let your toddler play in mud, sand, puddles, shaving cream, gravel, and corn starch mixed with water.
- ✦ Give your toddler chalk to draw on sidewalks, crayons to draw on paper, and play dough to make things.
- ✦ Tell your toddler stories and read books to him. Visit your local library together.
- ✦ Listen to music or play musical instruments with your toddler; encourage him to dance.
- ✦ Let your toddler build with blocks or things he finds around the house.
- ✦ Listen to your toddler's stories and pretend with him.

I Am Different from You

Not only are toddlers different from each other, toddlers can be different from their parents. Shy toddlers can have outgoing parents. Active toddlers can have relaxed parents. Sometimes parents and toddlers seem very much the same. In any case, they still have their own needs and wants. Any of these differences can make it harder for toddlers and their parents to understand each other. The important thing is to find a balance between the needs of toddlers and their parents.

Tips

- ✦ Spend some time just watching your toddler. Get to know her way of exploring the world.
- ✦ Make compromises. If your toddler does not like to cuddle with you, show your love by singing or playing together instead.
- ✦ Avoid pushing a shy toddler to be outgoing. Or an active toddler to sit still. This just makes it harder for them.
- ✦ Accept the differences in your toddler and find things you can both enjoy doing together.
- ✦ Praise your toddler for those things that make her special.

Controlling Emotions

All toddlers have different ways of controlling their feelings. Some can keep themselves calm. Others may need more help from adults. Learning how to keep calm helps children pay attention and make friends when they go to school. Young toddlers especially need help in learning how to calm themselves down. As your toddler gets older, he will become better at calming himself down. But even older toddlers will need your help to calm down from time to time.



Tips

When your toddler gets upset:

- Hold him and tell him calmly that you understand he is upset. This helps him see that you understand his feelings.
- Help him understand emotions by giving each one a name. "Playing with that makes you happy!" "Maria is mad right now because she wanted that toy."
- Talk to older toddlers about other things they can do instead of getting angry. "I know you are upset that the toy won't work. Maybe we can try another one instead?"

My Way of Eating

It's normal for toddlers to have funny eating patterns. One day they may hate everything, even foods they loved yesterday. Other times they want to eat the same food over and over again at every meal and not eat anything new. These patterns vary for each toddler and are part of what makes each one so special. Toddlers are usually good at eating the right amount of food for their growing bodies. You can make sure that whatever they eat is good for them.



Tips

- Do not force your toddler to eat or make her eat all the food on her plate. This can cause your toddler to eat too much.
- Have regular family mealtimes. Eat together around the same time every day.
- Avoid struggling with your toddler over food. Offer a variety of healthy foods. Let your toddler decide what to eat and how much.
- Keep family meals relaxed and positive.

Avoiding Burns

Part of what makes every toddler special is how they can get into new things—even if they shouldn't. Their curiosity can get them into trouble, especially around hot liquids, foods, and burners. Most burns are caused by toddlers pulling hot food off of a table or stove, standing too close to a fire, being scalded by hot water, or touching a hot stove. Burns are one of the most serious and painful injuries to toddlers. You can help your toddler avoid burns.

Tips

- ✦ Never eat, drink, or carry anything warm or hot when you carry your toddler.
- ✦ Never leave anything hot on the edge of a table, counter, or stove.
- ✦ Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- ✦ Never let your toddler play in the kitchen when you are not there.
- ✦ Never leave an iron unattended.
- ✦ Check your toddler's bath water temperature. Don't let him touch the hot faucet.

Growing at My Own Pace



All toddlers grow and develop on their own schedule. They grow and learn at their own pace. It is normal for some children to learn some skills before others. Learning skills later than other children does not mean your toddler is lazy or stupid. There is nothing you can do to speed up how fast your toddler grows and develops, but you can support their normal growth.

Tips

- ✦ Play with your toddler in the ways suggested by *Toddler Express*.
- ✦ Provide him with healthy foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- ✦ Take him for regular health checkups from a doctor or nurse. They will tell you whether your toddler is developing normally and what you can do if he is not.

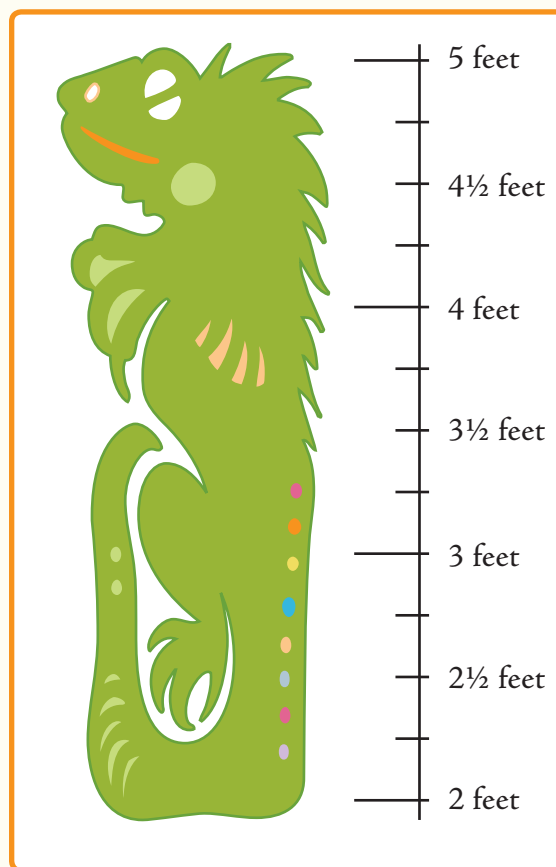
Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are toddlers' first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you.

1. **Make a Growth Chart.** This activity will help you and your toddler keep track of how quickly he is growing.

Have your toddler stand against a wall or a door, and mark his height with pencil or tape. Write your toddler's name and date next to the mark. Talk about how your toddler has grown. Do this every 3 months.

Show your toddler pictures of himself at different ages, and compare them with how he looks in the mirror now. Talk about how he might be different next time you measure him.



Take Care of Yourself



Give yourself a pat on the back. You are doing so many good things for your toddler! When you do so much for your toddler, it is easy to forget about your own needs. But parents are special people too, who have their own needs. Caring for yourself helps you be a better parent.

Tips

- ✦ Praise yourself often.
- ✦ Prepare yourself when you know a tough situation is coming.
- ✦ Look at the good side.
- ✦ Look at pictures that show how far you and your toddler have grown together already.
- ✦ Spend time with your family and friends, doing activities you enjoy.

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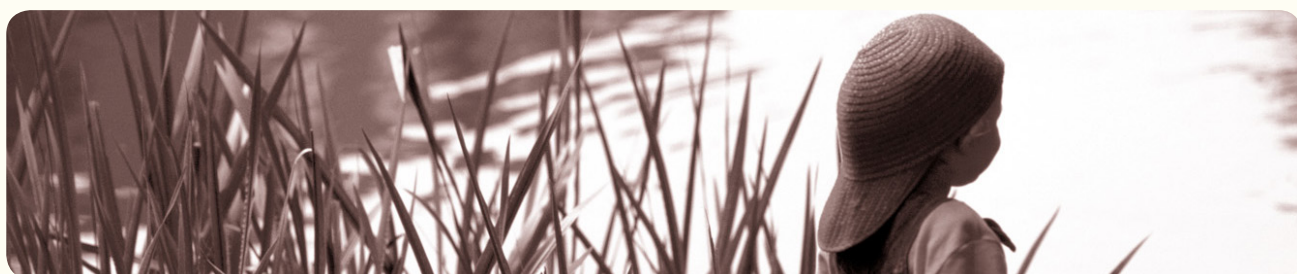
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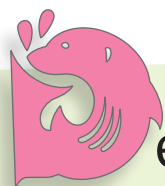


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #5 of 11

Relationships



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child’s first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

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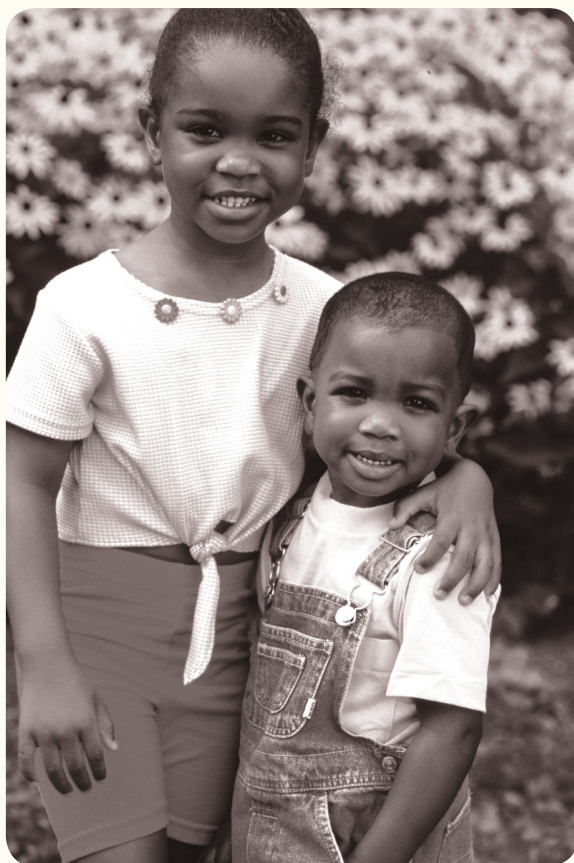
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Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

The relationships toddlers have with their parents are the first and most important ones. These relationships teach toddlers how to act and behave with others when they get older. When children have positive relationships with their parents, they make friends easier and do better in school. These relationships can change as children grow older. You may have noticed that the relationship you had with your infant is changing now that he is a toddler. Toddlers' new independence and activity can cause battles. Don't worry. There should be fewer battles by the preschool years. Until then, keep showing your toddler that you love him.

Positive relationships help toddlers to

- ✦ learn healthy ways to solve conflicts
- ✦ feel safe and secure
- ✦ develop self-control and learn to follow rules
- ✦ explore their environment and learn good thinking skills



Questions Parents Ask

- Q. My 16-month-old daughter and my 4-year-old son fight constantly. It's driving me out of my mind. Why are they fighting and what can I do about it?
- A. Sibling rivalry is common among young children. Rivalry often starts when another child arrives. Siblings may take each others' toys. They may also feel less loved because your attention is divided between them.

Tips

- ✦ Try to give each of your children some of your full attention every day.
- ✦ Let your children know that hurting each other is not allowed.
- ✦ Encourage the older child to do age-appropriate activities that the younger child cannot do.
- ✦ Do not lavish praise on the newest child in front of the older child.
- ✦ Let your children keep a few things of their own that they do not have to share.

Parents Are the First and Most Important Teachers

Parents are toddler's first and most important teachers. The nurturing and caring relationship that you build helps your toddler feel safe to explore and learn. When you have a good relationship with your toddler, you can teach him so many things.



Tips

- ✦ Do activities with your toddler, like reading, talking, art, music, and puzzles.
- ✦ Set a good example: Educate yourself too!
- ✦ Play learning games with your toddler, like counting, sorting, and labeling.
- ✦ Be positive about learning. Your attitude means a lot to your toddler.

Building a Positive Relationship

The way you interact with your toddler shapes your relationship. When you are warm and kind to your toddler, you will build a caring relationship. Caring relationships with adults help your toddler develop social skills, curiosity for learning, and self-esteem. There are a lot of things you can do to build a caring relationship with your toddler.

Tips

- ✦ Play and talk with your toddler every day.
- ✦ Notice and respond to your toddler's feelings.
- ✦ Be warm and loving when you respond to your toddler.
- ✦ Try to respond to behaviors the same way every time. Do not correct a behavior one day and allow it the next.
- ✦ Avoid harsh discipline, like spanking or yelling. This can teach your toddler to be aggressive.
- ✦ Remember that even toddlers cry for a reason. They don't understand how their behavior affects others—they are not crying to make you mad.

Learning How to Be Social

The relationships toddlers have with their parents are their first and most important ones. These relationships give toddlers models of how to act with others. When toddlers have good relationships with their parents, they learn important social skills. This helps them get along better with others as they get older.

Tips

- ✦ Develop a positive and trusting relationship with your toddler.
- ✦ Treat your toddler how you want her to treat others.
- ✦ Provide places to play with other toddlers her age.
- ✦ Provide supervision. Toddlers need help learning how to play with others.
- ✦ Help them with conflicts. For example, offer another toy and explain: "That is Matt's toy, not yours. It's not nice to take toys away from other people. Instead, try asking Matt if you can play with it."
- ✦ Be a good example. Do not fight or be disrespectful with others in front of your toddler.



Reward with Love

Giving praise and correcting misbehavior are part of having a positive relationship with your toddler. Parents often use special foods to get their toddlers to behave well. As tempting as this may be, it can backfire. When you give treats for rewards, toddlers learn that healthy food tastes "bad" and sweets taste "good." Children who are given lots of treats can end up having diets high in sugar and fat when they are older. This can lead to poor health. Help your toddler grow up healthy.

Tips

- ✦ Reward your toddler with hugs, kisses, and praise. Saying "You didn't fuss in the store. That made mommy very happy" is a better reward than candy. This helps your toddler feel good about himself.
- ✦ Encourage your toddler to eat a wide variety of foods for good nutrition and health.
- ✦ Let your toddler eat what he wants and still have dessert. Just make the dessert something good for him, like yogurt, pudding, frozen yogurt, or fruit.
- ✦ Don't cut out treats entirely. Keep them for special occasions. Your toddler will appreciate them more.

Keeping Your Toddler Safe

If you are like many families, your toddler spends time with other adults—uncles, aunts, grandparents, and in child care. It is important for parents to be aware of the signs of possible abuse. Parents need to protect their children from child abuse. Children may be abused physically, sexually, and emotionally.

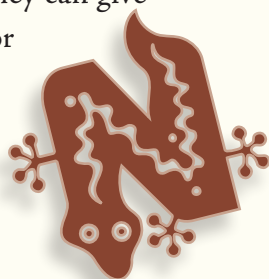
Tips:

- ✦ Be aware. Talk to your toddler about her day. Ask questions about the adults she spends time with.
- ✦ Teach your toddler what and who is a stranger, and how to respond to strangers.
- ✦ Teach your toddler to never talk to strangers who you do not say are safe.
- ✦ Be aware of warning signs, like nightmares, aggression, depression, or violence. Talk to your toddler's doctor if you have concerns.



Building a Relationship with Your Toddler's Doctor

Toddlers need regular health checkups. Building a good relationship with your toddler's doctor is important for your child's development. When you trust your toddler's doctor, it can be easier to ask questions and get any help you need as a parent. If you do not have a doctor for your toddler, ask your local health department about free or reduced services. They can give you the name of a doctor or clinic where you can take your toddler.



Tips:

- ✦ Take your toddler to all her regular checkups.
- ✦ Don't be afraid to ask your toddler's doctor questions.
- ✦ Look for a doctor you feel comfortable with.
- ✦ Tell the doctor about any behaviors that you are concerned about.
- ✦ Be an advocate for your toddler. Don't be afraid to speak up.
- ✦ Be sure to immunize your toddler.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are children's first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help him learn.

1. **"Pretend You Are."** This game is fun to play together and helps your toddler use his body and imagination.

Ask your toddler to pretend he is something else, like a flower or a tree. Try galloping like a horse or flapping like a duck, or pretend to be another family member at work or driving the car. Then you try it. Take turns deciding what to be, and imitate each other.



2. **A Simple Puzzle.** This activity helps toddlers learn about shapes and sizes and how to solve problems. It is a good one to play together.

Materials: stiff paper, a large colorful picture from a magazine, rounded scissors (for parents), and nontoxic glue.

Glue the picture onto stiff paper and cut it into two or three pieces.

Help your toddler learn to fit the pieces together to make the picture. Let him do as much as he can on his own, and give just enough help for him to be successful. To make this more challenging, cut the picture into more pieces.

Take Care of Yourself

Relationships are important for children and for adults. The relationships you have with other adults help you feel supported. They can also help teach your toddler how to interact with others. Stress in relationships can prevent you from being the best parent you can be. Try to keep the relationships you have with other people and with your child positive.

Tips

- Good relationships help parents feel better about themselves and help them be better parents.
- Toddlers who see their parents fight with other adults tend to have more behavior problems.
- Adults who are in relationships without fighting tend to be happier and healthier.
- If you feel so angry or stressed that you want to shake or hurt your toddler, put him in a safe spot and call someone for help, such as a friend, relative, spouse, neighbor, or abuse hotline. **DO NOT** hesitate; you are helping yourself as well as your toddler.

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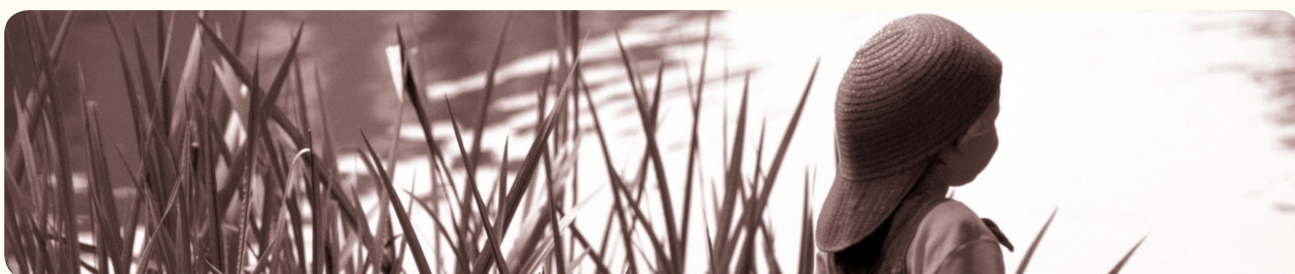
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TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #6 of 11

Guiding Your Toddler's Development



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a "toddler" instead of a "baby" or an "infant." *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child's first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

of toddler development (thinking, social skills, physical growth, eating, and nutrition). The goal is to help you learn about and enjoy the wonders of your child's development during this most exciting time.

Toddlers can't do it on their own! They need you to interact with them and teach them the skills they need. In order to take care of your toddler, you need to take care of yourself. To help you learn how to relax and cope with the stress of parenting, each publication also includes a section called "Take Care of Yourself." With a healthy environment, your toddler will learn and grow into a happy young child. Remember that every toddler is unique. Even though most toddlers develop skills at similar ages, they each develop at their own pace.



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This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. When we write "him" or "her," we are talking about all toddlers.

Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler's development, talk to your child's doctor.

The growth that happens during the toddler years can be very exciting. It also brings up lots of challenges. Parents often wonder how to handle

- ✦ sleeping routines
- ✦ setting limits
- ✦ toilet learning
- ✦ TV time

These can be hard for toddlers—and for parents. Parents can help by being patient, praising positive behavior, and talking about these issues with their toddlers.



Questions Parents Ask

Q. My 2½-year-old won't go to sleep when I put her to bed. What can I do?



A. Bedtime is not always sleep time. Young children need regular bedtimes and special bedtime routines, like teeth cleaning, stories, and hugs. Parents need regular bedtimes for their children, so that they can have some relaxation time.

You can expect your toddler to go to bed and be quiet at set times. Don't worry if she does not always go to sleep as soon as she goes to bed. When she isn't sleepy, let her have some quiet playtime in bed until sleep comes. Remember to do something relaxing before bedtime with your toddler, like reading a book or rocking. Roughhousing and watching TV before bed can make it hard for children to go to sleep. Try to do the same things (routines or rituals) before putting your toddler to bed every night.

Using Rules for Guidance

Toddlers need rules and limits to help guide their behavior. When toddlers have rules that are clear and easy to follow, they have fewer behavior problems. As your toddler's brain grows each day, he gets better at learning and following rules. This helps him feel safe and helps prepare him for school. Rules also help parents handle the challenges of parenting, like setting up daily routines.



Tips

- ✦ Make simple rules and stick to them.
- ✦ Explain the rules to your toddler.
- ✦ Praise your toddler when he follows the rules. Praise is more effective than punishment.
- ✦ Remind your toddler of the rules often. This will help him remember.
- ✦ Avoid harsh punishment, like spanking or slapping. This can teach him to be aggressive.

Learning to Use the Toilet

Learning to use the toilet is a big step for both parents and toddlers. Between 2 and 3 years of age, most toddlers learn to use the toilet during the day but still need diapers at night. Parents can help toddlers through this new phase of development by giving love and guidance.

Tips

- ✦ Be patient. Don't start until your toddler is ready. Look for signs that she is ready, like being uncomfortable in a wet or dirty diaper.
- ✦ Avoid forcing your toddler to use the toilet or criticizing accidents. This can make the learning process longer.
- ✦ Show your toddler where the toilet is.
- ✦ Encourage your toddler to tell you when she is wet or dirty.
- ✦ Dress your toddler in loose-fitting clothes to pull off easily.
- ✦ Praise your toddler for each step: telling you it is time to go, sitting on the potty, etc.



Emotions and Social Skills

Toddlers love interacting with other people more than watching TV. In fact, it's best to avoid TV time for toddlers. They do not always understand what they see on TV. Things they see on TV can be scary or confusing, such as the news, stories with death or harm, and even many cartoons. In fact, children who watch more TV have more problems in school. If you must let your toddler watch TV, make sure you guide his viewing.



Tips

- Talk to your doctor about recommendations from the American Pediatric Association.
- Do not let your toddler watch TV alone.
- Help your toddler learn from TV. Talk about what you see on TV and how it is different from or the same as real life.
- Turn it off if your toddler is scared or confused by what he sees.
- Choose what your toddler watches and when he watches TV.
- Follow these tips for videos and DVDs, in addition to regular TV.

Guiding Your Toddler's Healthy Eating

Toddlers learn a lot from their parents—even how and what to eat. They learn early eating habits from you that they will continue as they get older. Help them develop healthy habits now that last for life!

Tips

- Eat a variety of healthy foods yourself, especially vegetables and fruit.
- Eat meals together with your toddler. Turn off the TV and radio.
- Make breakfast a habit for yourself and your family. This is a great way to get nutritious whole grains and fruit every day.
- Set regular meal and snack times.
- Let toddlers help pick out foods at the store and help plan the meals.
- Avoid forcing toddlers to finish all their food. This can make them eat too much.



Keeping Your Toddler Healthy and Safe

Be aware that using alcohol and tobacco products can be harmful to your toddler. Toddlers get into everything and can be poisoned by alcohol and tobacco. Toddlers exposed to tobacco smoke are more likely to develop asthma, bronchitis, and other illnesses. Remember, your toddler learns by watching you. Set a good example for your toddler to grow up healthy.

Tips

- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco around your toddler.
- If you must smoke, do it outside—away from your toddler.
- Keep alcohol and tobacco locked up and out of reach.
- Never give your toddler alcohol to drink or taste.



Be an Active Family

Your toddler wants to be just like you. He is more likely to do the things he sees you doing. Help your toddler learn to be physically active and healthy by being active yourself. Running and playing are things toddlers should do every day, but these are good for all family members. Being active for 60 minutes throughout the day is recommended. This activity can be play, exercise, and many other things.

Tips

- Do housework together, walk to the mailbox, sweep, garden, etc.
- Play together.
- Take a walk and look for flowers, animals, and other wild life.
 - Find the nearest playground and visit it often.
 - Be active with your toddler many times during the day.
 - Don't watch TV with your toddler nearby—it is a bad example. Watching TV can decrease toddlers' time for learning and being active.



Activities, Games, and Toys

1. **Bedtime routines.** These fun routines help toddlers know when it is time for bed and they help you avoid struggles over bedtime. These routines should include things you can do together:
 - ✦ Bath time - spend a few minutes just having fun.
 - ✦ Toileting - sing a bedtime song or lullaby.
 - ✦ Pajamas - let your toddler pick which ones to wear.
 - ✦ Read or tell a story.
2. **"Simon Says."** This game helps your toddler be active and learn to follow directions. First you say "Simon says," and

then tell your toddler to do something fun, like touch her toes or spin in a circle. Smile or clap with her when she tries to do what you asked.

With older toddlers you can make it harder. Tell them to do what you ask only if you say "Simon says" before you give the direction. Then sometimes you say "Simon says touch your toes." Other times you just say "Touch your toes." If your toddler touches her toes when you didn't say "Simon says," you can say "Oops," or laugh together with your toddler, and try it again.

Make sure to let your toddler have a turn to give you the directions too!

Take Care of Yourself

It is easier to handle the challenges of parenting when you are organized, plan ahead, and know where to find good information.

This will help you feel more in control, and it will help you guide your toddler. If there is more than one adult in the house, make sure you are both keeping the same routine with your toddler.



Tips

- ✦ Make a list of everything you want to get done for one day or one week. Decide which things are most important and which ones can wait.
- ✦ Make a schedule for your day or week, so you know when you should try to finish each task.
- ✦ Group similar tasks together. Do all the chores that require going out of the house together, or do all the ones that require someone else to care for your toddler together.
- ✦ Build in time for the most important people in your life: your toddler and yourself!
- ✦ Visit your library and other family resource centers.



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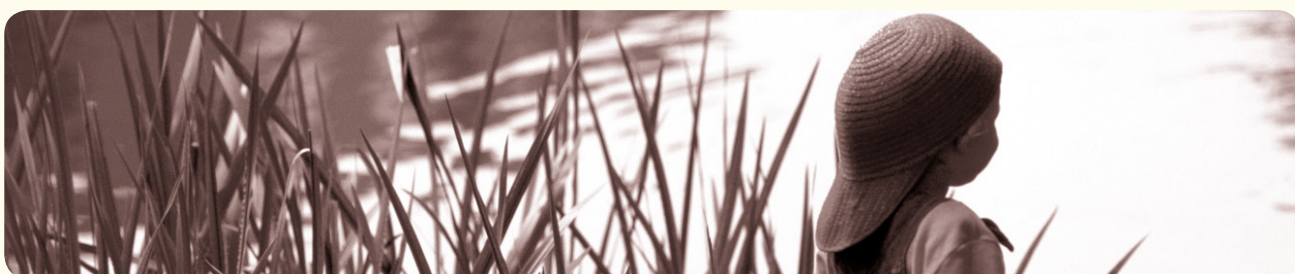
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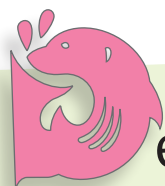


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #7 of 11

Change



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

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Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Changes can be hard for everyone, especially for toddlers. They feel safer when things stay the same. This helps them know what to expect. When changes happen, toddlers don't always understand why, and they worry that familiar things won't return. This means that during changes your toddler needs you to help him feel safe and secure.

These are some common changes that toddlers might need help with:

- daily life (waking up, diapering, separations, meals, bedtime)
- family (divorce, marriage, birth of sibling, moving)
- child care (any time away from parents, changes in caregivers)

Questions Parents Ask

Q. My daughter is 2½ and still sucks her thumb. Is this okay?

A. Yes, thumb sucking is common for children under 6 years old. It is one way for toddlers to comfort themselves. Thumb sucking usually disappears on its own, especially if the toddler is not pressured to give it up. Once thumb sucking disappears, it can come back during stressful times, like during big changes to a toddler's regular routines. Comfort her and help her deal with her stress. Thumb sucking will eventually stop.

Your toddler is not likely to have dental problems from sucking her thumb unless she continues through 5 or 6 years of age. If you are worried, keep track over several days of how often she sucks and for how long, and take this information to your doctor or dentist.



Reading to Relax

Getting enough sleep is important for toddlers' health. But during times of change, toddlers may have trouble sleeping. Reading a book together at bedtime is a good way to help your toddler relax. Parents are usually exhausted by bedtime and ready to collapse. But spending a few minutes reading to your toddler can help him fall asleep easier. Here are a few tips for helping busy parents make the most of a few minutes of bedtime reading.

Tips

- ✦ Create bedtime routines (tooth brushing, toileting, and pajamas).
- ✦ Read or tell stories each night.
- ✦ Let your toddler choose what to read.
- ✦ Tell stories—ones you know or ones you make up.

Building a Good Relationship

The relationship your toddler has with you is the first and most important one. Your toddler looks to you to feel safe when she is scared or stressed. When toddlers have good relationships with their parents, they can handle stressful situations better. You can help your toddler handle the stress of change by making her feel safe and loved.



Tips

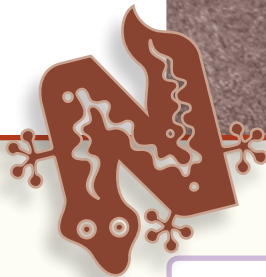
- ✦ Pay attention to how your toddler looks and feels.
- ✦ Respond to your toddler's needs as soon as possible.
- ✦ Spend special time together during changes, even more than usual.
- ✦ Cuddle with your toddler often.
- ✦ Make and keep daily routines (family mealtime, bedtime reading, and playtime).
- ✦ Tell your toddler every day that you love her.

Teaching Toddlers about Feelings

Change can cause strong feelings, especially in toddlers. They may feel angry, scared, or frustrated. Toddlers are just starting to understand their feelings. This makes it harder for them to express or control their feelings well. As your toddler gets older, he will be able to calm himself down. Until then, he needs you to help him learn about his feelings and to help him calm down.

Tips

- ✦ If your toddler is scared, let him know you understand.
- ✦ Talk to your toddler about his feelings.
- ✦ Give him labels for his feelings. "You're sad right now."
- ✦ Stay calm yourself.
- ✦ Comfort your toddler when he is scared or stressed.
- ✦ Help your toddler know he is safe. Talk about the change—before, during, and afterwards.



Picky Eaters

Now is the time that parents start giving their toddlers a lot of new foods. But like with any other change, toddlers can take time to adjust. Toddlers can be picky eaters! It's not easy for a toddler to switch from baby food to adult food. Be patient. Most toddlers take a while before trying new foods. They need time to get used to seeing it.

Tips

- ✦ Be a good example. Eat new foods in front of your toddler, and suggest they taste it.
- ✦ Let your toddler help you prepare new foods.
- ✦ Offer the new food along with familiar foods.
- ✦ Offer new foods often and be patient. Sometimes toddlers need to see a new food 20 times before they'll try it.
- ✦ Don't force him to eat. This can make him eat too much food.

Safe Changes

There's a lot going on in your family—especially if you are going through a change. A lot of times change requires traveling with your toddler. Be careful. Times of change can create safety hazards. When parents are busy or stressed, it is harder to pay attention to dangers.



Tips

- ✦ Hold your toddler's hand when taking her to and from the car or bus.
- ✦ Put your toddler in a car seat and buckle her in.
- ✦ Check that the car seat is secured with the car's seatbelt.
- ✦ Follow the directions for all safety belts.
- ✦ Do not leave your toddler in anyone's lap (even your own) while in a car.
- ✦ Stay calm while driving. Stop if the situation is too stressful.

Bed-Wetting

Even though toddlers may have learned to do something, like use the toilet, they may not be very good at it during times of stress. Bed-wetting is common for children who are experiencing stress, even if they haven't done it for a long time. This can be a sign that they are upset and need comfort.



Tips

- ✦ Be understanding. Tell your toddler it is okay.
- ✦ Stay calm, even if she wakes you up at night.
- ✦ Let your toddler wear waterproof training pants or nighttime pull-ups.
- ✦ Use a waterproof pad on the bed.
- ✦ Leave the light on so she feels safe and can find the bathroom.
- ✦ Praise her successes. Don't punish her for bed-wetting. This can make her more upset.

Activities, Games, and Toys

1. **Special Toy or Blanket.** These special things can help some young children calm themselves when they are upset or in a new place. In time, your toddler will realize that she doesn't need the special blanket or toy anymore, but don't rush your toddler to give it up. For now, try making the special "friend" part of the family. Play with it together with your toddler, and talk about how it helps her.
2. **"It's Always in the Same Place."** This game shows toddlers that even when things change, some things stay the same. It also helps them learn to use clues like sizes, shapes, and colors to solve problems.

Sit together with your toddler. Ask her to turn around and not to peek. Put a toy under one of three different-sized tin cans. Ask your toddler to guess which can it is under. Keep playing until she gets it right. Then do it again, changing the position of the cans, but always put the toy under the same can.



Take Care of Yourself

Times of change are difficult for parents too. Help yourself and your toddler by asking others to pitch in.

- Ask a friend or relative to watch your children for a short time.
- Look in the front of your telephone book and see if there is a parenting hotline. Call the number. Keep it posted near your telephone with other emergency numbers.
- Tell those around you that you have reached your limit. Ask them to help you find a way to cope.

When you take time out to handle your stress, you will be setting a good example for your toddler.



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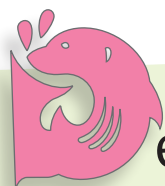


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #8 of 11

Culture and Family



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child’s first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

LENNA ONTAI, UC Cooperative Extension Family and Early Childhood Specialist, Department of Human and Community Development, University of California, Davis; and members of the UC ANR **FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WORKGROUP**: Joanne Deocampo, Sharon Junge, Cathi Lamp, Shannon Lipscomb, Sue Manglallan, Diane Metz, Dorothy Smith, and Jane Chin Young.

of toddler development (thinking, social skills, physical growth, eating, and nutrition). The goal is to help you learn about and enjoy the wonders of your child’s development during this most exciting time.

Toddlers can’t do it on their own! They need you to interact with them and teach them the skills they need. In order to take care of your toddler, you need to take care of yourself. To help you learn how to relax and cope with the stress of parenting, each publication also includes a section called “Take Care of Yourself.” With a healthy environment, your toddler will learn and grow into a happy young child. Remember that every toddler is unique. Even though most toddlers develop skills at similar ages, they each develop at their own pace.



This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. When we write “him” or “her,” we are talking about all toddlers.

Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

The family is an important part of a toddler's life. It is the first social group that a toddler is a part of. When the family is involved in a toddler's life, the toddler is happier and healthier.

All family members are important for toddlers' development: mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings and cousins, and other family members. They all teach toddlers about the special things their culture does and how these things may be different from other cultures. This applies to areas such as

- beliefs and values
- languages and communication
- traditions and customs
- emotions and interactions



Questions Parents Ask

Q: I am a single mother and my 2-year-old has been asking why he doesn't have a daddy like his friends. I am afraid he is feeling different from his friends. What should I tell him?

A: Your toddler is at the age when he is starting to be more aware of himself and the world around him. As he tries to understand his world, it is normal for him to start comparing himself to other children. His questions show you how he is starting to understand his world. This is a good chance for you to help your toddler understand that there are many kinds of families and each is special. The important thing for

your toddler to know is that he is loved. Remind him of all the family he has that love him: grandparents, aunts, uncles, even close family friends. This will help him understand the world around him a little more. Helping him have pride in his family will help him feel safe and secure.



Which Language Is Best?

Many parents speak to their toddlers in languages other than English. If you do, you may have wondered what effect it will have on your toddler. It is best to use the language you are most comfortable with. We know that when children go to child care and school, they still learn English—even when another language is used in the home. It doesn't matter what language you use. Spending time interacting with your toddler is what is most important for his development.

Tips

- Speaking the same language as their parents helps toddlers feel close to their family.
- Speaking the same language as your toddler lets you give him verbal support, comfort, and guidance.
- Toddlers need to hear and see a lot of language for their brain to develop. Reading, talking, and singing with your toddler every day in any language will help get him ready to start school.

Feeling Supported as a Parent Is Important

Different families have different beliefs about parenting. These can come from family traditions, the culture, or experience. When parents feel supported in their parenting beliefs, they have less stress and they parent better. Sometimes family and friends give you advice that is different from what you learn in books, classes, on TV, the Internet, or from your toddler's doctor. This can be confusing and stressful!



Tips

Here are some ways to get good information on parenting:

- Read *Toddler Express*.
- Ask professionals who you trust: a counselor, doctor, or other "expert."
- Look for parent and family resource centers in your community.
- When family and friends give you parenting advice that you don't agree with, try to do the following:
 - » Show you care. Say "Thank you for your ideas" or "It's nice to know I can count on you."
 - » Briefly explain why you disagree.
- Choose one way and try to stick to it—even if you get advice to do something different. Toddlers do best when parents make simple rules and keep them the same.

Celebrating Your Culture

Cultural celebrations like Cinco de Mayo, Christmas, Kwanza, Passover, and Chinese New Year are an important part of being a family. They can also help toddlers learn about their culture. The more they know about their culture, the better they will feel about themselves. For toddlers, these celebrations may be happy or they may be scary and upsetting. Preparing your toddler for big events will help them have a pleasant time.

Tips

- Talk about where you are planning to go. Tell your toddler what she will see and do there.
- Practice ahead of time. For example, show your toddler pictures of Santa before visiting him. Before the family party, show her photographs and tell her about the relatives she may see.
- Before joining the party, look at it with your toddler from a safe distance. Wait until she feels safe to join.
- Don't force her to get close to unfamiliar people or characters—let her take her time.



Use Mealtimes to Teach about Your Culture

Food is an important part of your family's culture. Carrying on your family's food traditions is an important part of your culture. Serving traditional foods helps you teach your toddler about your family's history and culture. The more your toddler learns, the better he will feel about himself. Traditional foods can also be healthier than ones you see on TV.

Tips

- Talk to your toddler about the traditions related to the food you serve. He will be more interested in the food and in your culture.
- Involve your toddler in preparing the food. Talk about traditions and family stories.
- Sing traditional songs or tell stories while you eat.



Keeping Your Toddler Safe at Parties

Family gatherings are important for building and maintaining traditions. These gatherings can be hectic, especially when there are lots of people. Even though you are with friends and family, be sure that your toddler is supervised. Toddlers are curious and will want to explore. When they explore, they can get into things that are dangerous, especially at homes that are not child friendly. Making sure your toddler is safe and supervised will help you have pleasant family gatherings.

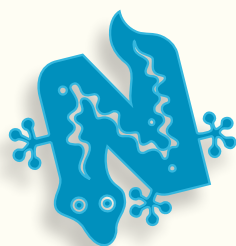


Tips

- ✦ Be sure that dangerous things are not within your toddler's reach.
- ✦ Be especially careful when your toddler is with you in the kitchen. Never let your toddler play in the kitchen when you are not there.
- ✦ Never leave your toddler alone around water. Toddlers can drown in 2 inches of water. Toilets, buckets, and small pools should all be drained or locked.
- ✦ Watch for older children's toys that may be nearby. They can have small parts that toddlers can choke on.
- ✦ Watch your toddler around strange or new pets. Even a friendly dog may bite.

When I Was Little . . .

Toddlers love to be active! Teaching your toddler activities and games that you liked when you were young is a good way to pass along family traditions. Making playtime family time will benefit the whole family by building new family traditions. Have FUN!



Tips

- ✦ Teach your favorite games to your toddler. Adjust them as needed for his age. For example, if you like soccer, kick a small ball with your toddler.
- ✦ Talk to your toddler about how you played the game when you were growing up.
- ✦ If you have pictures from when you played, look at them with your toddler. Tell him your stories.
- ✦ Families of each generation make new traditions and rituals. Make up a game that only your family plays.
- ✦ Use these games to give your toddler at least 1 hour of active play every day. This will help him to grow up healthy.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are toddlers' first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help her learn.

1. **Happy Dancing.** Toddlers like to do things with their family. They also like music, rhythm, and body movement. Happy dancing combines all these things. Turn on some music. Teach your toddler to do a happy dance. Hold hands, use large wooden spoons, or beat on something that makes a nice noise.

Choose music that is special for your family or culture. Talk with your toddler about why the music is special, or tell a story about where the music came from.

2. **Family Stories.** Toddlers love to hear stories and they love to help you make them. This is a way your toddler can understand more about her family and culture. Make stories with her about her experiences with you and the family.

Talk to her about special days and family parties. Help her remember who was there and what things happened. Ask her questions, such as "How did you feel when they sang 'Happy Birthday' to you?" and "What did you think they were doing when they starting hitting the piñata?"



Take Care of Yourself

Sometimes other adults may criticize you or your parenting. It's hard to be calm when someone is putting you down, but if you don't argue back, you'll give yourself a little breathing room.

Tips

- Try to let others know that you are listening and you understand their feelings.
 - » "So you think I . . ."
 - » "I can see how you might feel that way . . ."
- You don't have to agree with them.
 - » "I'll think about what you said . . ."
 - » "I respect your opinion, but I disagree."

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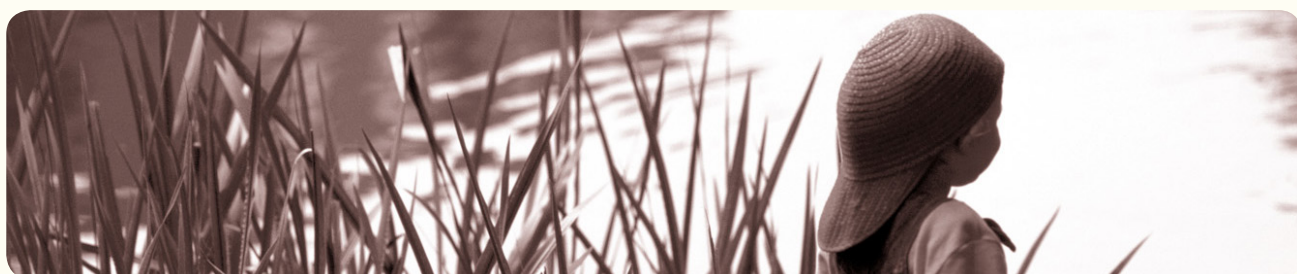
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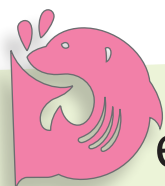


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Newsletter #9 of 11

Child Care for Toddlers



Dear Parents,

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Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

Most families use some kind of child care for their toddlers. Child care can be formal—like a child care center or a day care provider’s house. But it can also be informal—like leaving your toddler with a grandparent, aunt, or neighbor. No matter what kind you use, it is important to make good decisions about your toddler’s child care. We know that the quality of child care is important for toddlers’ development.

Children do best in a child care situation that has

- sensitive and warm caregivers
- adults that talk and read to children often
- a safe and healthy environment
- a variety of toys and activities
- parent involvement
- options for part-time care



Questions Parents Ask

- Q. What do I do about my almost 2-year-old who bites and hits other children at day care?
- A. Toddlers are just learning how to play with other children and how to control their feelings. During this time they may bite and hit. They do this because they do not know how else to communicate their frustrations, wants, or anger. It is never okay to hurt others, so the first thing to do is calmly separate children. You can sit on the floor between them and hug one child with each arm. If the behavior happens when you are not there, talk to your toddler about it.



Tips

- Help her understand what happened. “Judy, it looks like you felt angry when Malik took the block you wanted. That made you bite Malik. Biting hurts Malik. It made him sad. He’s crying.”
- Next, tell her what she can do instead. “We need to be gentle with each other. Judy, you can tell Malik ‘No’ when he takes a toy. Malik, you can tell Judy ‘Stop’ when she hurts you. Let’s find another block so you can both play.”
- Toddlers may also bite or hit when exploring their own and others’ bodies. Offer a substitute. “I know you feel like biting, but I can’t let you bite Maria. You can bite this teether instead.”
- Never punish by biting or hitting. Your toddler learns by watching you.

If you do this every time, your toddler will learn how to communicate her feelings without hurting.

Choosing Quality Child Care

Many parents feel guilty about putting their toddler in child care. But the right child care can help toddlers learn and develop. Toddlers who are in high-quality child care do better when they start school than children in low-quality child care. When choosing a child care provider, look for a situation that is safe, nurturing, and has lots of learning opportunities.

Tips

Look for child care with these features:

- ✦ Classes that have the same teachers with the children every day.
- ✦ Teachers who talk a lot with the children. This helps teach your toddler language skills.
- ✦ Teachers who play with the children. Supervision makes a safe place for your toddler to learn social skills.
- ✦ Many different kinds of play. Building, reading, sorting, pretending, and drawing all help your toddler's development.
- ✦ No TV for toddlers. If there is TV, make sure there are limits on time and that the shows are right for your toddler's age.
- ✦ Rules and routines that are easy for your toddler to follow. Learning to follow rules and routines will help your toddler be ready for school.

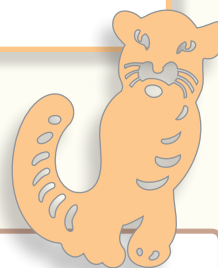
Visit the program before you sign up. Look around and talk to the caregiver to see if they offer these things. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Making a Drop-Off Routine

Whether you use child care every day or once in a while, saying good-bye can be hard for both you and your toddler. Separating is usually the hardest part. Most toddlers are fine once their parents are gone. Many toddlers become so comfortable in child care that they look forward to going. Until then, take the time to make a special routine for the drop-off to child care.

Tips

- ✦ Talk to your toddler about the routine. Tell her what will happen.
- ✦ Arrive early. Stay and play with your toddler for at least 10 minutes.
- ✦ Warn your toddler when you are getting ready to leave.
- ✦ Leave your toddler with something that reminds her of home, like a favorite blanket or soft toy.
- ✦ Help your toddler interact with the teachers and other children.
- ✦ Tell your toddler who will pick her up at the end of the day.
- ✦ Spend some quality time with your toddler when you pick her up.



Bonding with Your Toddler's Caregiver

It is good for toddlers to have a caring relationship with their caregiver. But it can be hard for parents when toddlers seem to “love” their caregiver. Some toddlers may even call the caregiver “mommy” or “daddy.” This doesn’t mean your toddler doesn’t love you or that his caregiver has replaced you. It shows that your toddler is learning about his world. He is starting to understand relationships and the idea that there are names for different things and people.

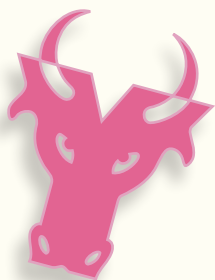
Tips

- Toddlers who bond with their caregivers do better in child care.
- Talking to your toddler about his teacher will help your toddler form a strong bond with that person.
- It is important for parents to have a bond with their toddler’s caregivers. Talk and share information about your toddler with them each day.



Making Sure Child Care Meals Are Healthy

If you are like most families, your toddler probably eats one or more meals a day away from home. Just like the ones you serve at home, these meals need to be as nutritious as possible. Make sure that the meals your toddler eats are healthy when others are caring for her.



Tips

- Ask your toddler’s caregiver what food is being served. Talk to her about other options if you have any concerns.
- When you pick up your toddler, ask your caregiver what she ate during the day.
- Balance what she ate at day care with what you serve at home. If she didn’t eat vegetables at day care, be sure to serve vegetables at home.
- Many child care providers serve juice with meals. Make sure your toddler also drinks enough low-fat milk and water.

Choosing a Child Care Situation That Is Safe

There are a lot of different choices for child care. When choosing a child care provider, it is important to check that the environment is safe for toddlers. Having a safe place to play and learn is important for your toddler's development.

Look for child care that has these features:

- ✦ An adult who is always present with the children.
- ✦ No more than six toddlers over 18 months for each adult caregiver.
- ✦ If it is a formal child care (center or in home), make sure it is licensed.
- ✦ Toys or play equipment for your toddler's age and abilities.
- ✦ Toys that are safe. Watch out for small things toddlers can choke on.
- ✦ Regular hand-washing. Hands should be washed before meals, after play, and after using the bathroom.



Being Active in Child Care

Your toddler is probably becoming very active. Activities like running, climbing, jumping, and bouncing help her large muscles develop. Stacking blocks, doing puzzles, and stringing beads help her small muscles develop. Make sure your toddler's child care has many of these activities to choose from during her day.



Tips

- ✦ Look for small toys that toddlers can grab and control like blocks and large beads.
- ✦ Make sure they get time each day to play outside.
- ✦ Outside equipment should be safe for toddlers to climb, crawl, slide, and swing on.
- ✦ Look for a variety of outdoor play activities and equipment, like tricycles, balls, hula hoops, and chalk.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are children's first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help her learn.

1. **Play dough.** Your toddler probably plays with play dough in child care. Try playing with it at home too, so she has some things the same at home and school. Play dough is great for learning shapes, using imagination, and developing muscles.

Combine in saucepan: 2 cups flour, ½ cup salt, 2 teaspoons cream of tartar. Add and whisk until smooth: 2 cups water, 2 tablespoons oil, a few drops of food coloring (cake decorator's paste or liquid makes great colors). Add: 1 teaspoon vanilla or other flavoring extracts, if desired. Cook over medium-low heat and stir constantly with a wooden spoon until

the dough gets really thick and forms into a ball. Remove from the saucepan and knead on a flat, smooth surface, such as a plate, until smooth. Store in ziplock bag or airtight container.

This dough should be used on a washable surface like a kitchen counter or a plastic board because it is very greasy.

Play together with your toddler. Talk with her about what she likes to make with the play dough in child care.



Take Care of Yourself

Raising a toddler can be fun and also stressful. Having safe and appropriate child care for your toddler allows you to take a break for yourself—even for a short time. Ask an adult friend or family member to watch your toddler while you run errands or get out by yourself. Having time to yourself while your toddler is in a safe environment can help you reduce your stress.

What are the benefits of reducing stress? It helps you do the following:

- Enjoy yourself and your children.
- Prevent disease and depression.
- Have patience with your children and other family members.
- Appreciate your special, creative toddler.
- Keep your children safe.

When you reduce your stress in healthy ways, you are also teaching your toddler how to deal with his own stress and express his emotions. You are a powerful role model.

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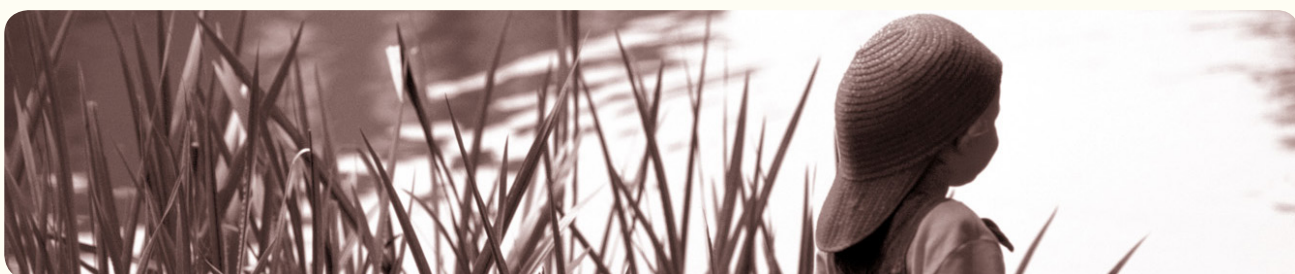
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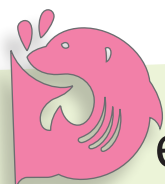


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Play is called the work of toddlers. This is because toddlers learn to get along with others and develop thinking skills when they play. Play gives toddlers time to explore and test their new skills—like hopping, sorting, and stacking. The best kinds of play for toddlers are things that are fun and that parents can play too!

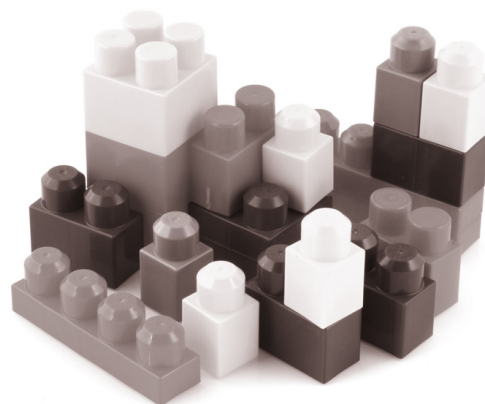
Younger toddlers like

- ✦ playing with things that fit inside each other
- ✦ switching from one toy to another
- ✦ using things that move, like balls and push toys

Older toddlers also enjoy

- ✦ playing with other toddlers
- ✦ using imagination and pretend play
- ✦ experiencing more detailed stories, songs, and dances

But more than anything, your toddler likes playing with you!



Questions Parents Ask

Q. There are so many exciting toys in the toy store. Which ones help my toddler learn the best?

A. The selection of toys in stores is overwhelming, especially with all the buttons, lights, and sounds some have. But the best toys for your toddler may be the simplest. They may even be things you can make at home. The most important thing is that you play with your toddler.



Tips

- ✦ Toddlers learn coordination by playing with building blocks and stacking toys. Try using empty boxes as building blocks.
- ✦ Toddlers like putting things in containers and dumping them out. Try using pots, laundry baskets, purses, buckets, etc.
- ✦ Toddlers like to sort objects by color, shape, and size. Help your toddler do this with things like crayons, blocks, or even utensils.
- ✦ Keep crayons and drawing paper handy for scribbling and drawing. Use this to help your toddler learn colors, shapes, and numbers.

Learning through Play

Toddlers learn many important things about their world through play. They learn concepts like hot and cold, wet and dry, and heavy and light. The more opportunities you give your toddler to play, the more she will learn.

Tips

- Provide materials that can be explored by feeling: sand, play dough, soft pillows, smooth rocks, etc.
- Listen to different sounds: airplanes, buzzing bees, etc. Talk to your toddler about what you hear.
- Help your toddler explore different smells: flowers in the garden, for example.
- Talk to your toddler about her play. "You're stacking the blocks." "You can bounce the ball!"
- Let your toddler play with food. Put food coloring in applesauce or yogurt, and let her mix it. Give her cereals with different shapes to sort.



Play with Your Toddler

Parents can help toddlers learn by playing with them. It is best if you let your toddler lead the play time. But don't just sit back and watch. Offer help when he needs it and give encouragement to try new and harder activities.



Tips

- Sit with your toddler when he is playing.
- Let your toddler start playing while you watch.
- When your toddler is having trouble, give him a suggestion by pointing or explaining. Then let him try again.
- After your toddler is successful, encourage him to make it a little bit harder. If he stacks three blocks on top of each other, ask if he can put on another one, or if he can make two different stacks of blocks next to each other.
- Talk to your toddler about his play. Tell him what you are watching him do, and ask him questions about it.

It is also important for toddlers to have some time to play alone. Find a balance between playing together and playing alone. Always stay close by for safety.



Learning How to Be Social through Play

Playing is an important part of your toddler's social world. We know that toddlers who learn to play well with other children do better when they go to school. But toddlers are just learning how to get along with other children. A lot of their learning happens through their play time. You can teach your toddler important social skills when you play with her.

Tips

- ✦ Teach your toddler how to calm herself. Take a break from playing when things get too exciting or upsetting. Return to playing again when things are better.
- ✦ Teach your toddler to be responsible. Help young toddlers to clean up after playing. Ask older toddlers to put toys and games away when they are finished playing.
- ✦ Create safe chances for your toddler to play with other toddlers her age. Keep the group small—one or two other toddlers.
- ✦ Remember that toddlers cannot understand “sharing” until they are around 3 years old.

Playing with Food Is Fun

Toddlers love to play so much that sometimes they don't know when to stop. Toddlers will even play with their food. This is their way of exploring it. You can bet that a lot of food will end up on the floor! This is normal, and it helps them learn. As your toddler gets older, he will play with his food less and eat more. Until then, you can help make mealtimes pleasant for your toddler by letting him play.



Tips

- ✦ Put an old sheet or shower curtain under your toddler's seat. You can shake the sheet out after mealtime and wash it when needed.
- ✦ Use unbreakable items, such as
 - » a small spoon with a short, thick handle
 - » a bowl or plate with sides that your toddler can push food up against
 - » a small cup that your toddler can wrap his hands around and pick up
- ✦ Serve your toddler at the same time everyone else is eating. Your toddler may be messy, but he will learn good table manners by watching you and other family members eat.
- ✦ Include your toddler in mealtime conversation. This will help avoid spills done for attention.

Playing It Safe

Safe play is the best kind of play for toddlers. It is up to you to make sure your toddler is safe when she plays. Make sure you check all the toys and playground equipment before your toddler starts playing.

Tips

- Supervise your toddler at all times when playing at a playground or park.
- Talk about the safety rules with your toddler before playing.
- Wear helmets when riding bikes or toys with wheels.
- Put sunscreen on your toddler when playing outside.
- Make sure her toys do not have small parts she can choke on. If they fit through a toilet paper roll, they are too small.



All Tired Out

Toddlers are very active. All that play can make them tired and cranky. It is important for toddlers to get enough sleep so they can have enough energy to play and learn. In fact, most toddlers need 10 to 12 hours of sleep a day.



Tips

- Make sure your toddler takes naps during the day. Some toddlers still need both a morning and afternoon nap. If your toddler gets cranky during the day, an afternoon nap may help.
- Keep a regular schedule for getting up, eating meals, playing, taking naps, and going to bed. This will help make sure toddlers are ready to play during the day and tired at bedtime.
- Make a bedtime routine, like reading a story.
- Even if toddlers don't fall asleep, they need time to rest quietly every day.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are children's first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help her learn.

You don't have to buy toys. Instead, try using items from your house.

1. **Costume Box.** Encourage your toddler's imagination and creativity. Materials: large cardboard box, old clothing, hats, scarves, shawls, and jewelry. Your toddler will know what to do with this box of costume ingredients—she has lots of imagination. When she asks, play with her and let her dress you up.

2. **"Help Me Play in the World I Live in."** Playing with different wet and dry things helps toddlers learn to use their senses, imagination, and thinking skills.

Let toddlers play in sand, dirt, and mud, even if they get dirty. You can make a sandbox by filling an old tire or large container with clean sand. Keep it covered when it's not in use to keep out cats and dogs.

Fill a container with water. Let your toddler explore by dropping things in, painting the sidewalk, and splashing. Remember, never leave your toddler alone with water. Toddlers can drown in less than 2 inches of water.



Take Care of Yourself

Play is good for adults too! Give yourself some playtime of your own, and you'll be able to enjoy your time with your toddler even more.



Do whatever is fun for you and helps you relax. Here are some ideas:

- Take a long bubble bath, a walk, or a swim.
- See a movie or read a book.
- Play with pets or tend the garden.
- Plan your future. Look at classes, jobs, or activities you might like.
- Spend time with a friend or special relative.

The time you take for yourself will help you feel refreshed and ready to play with your toddler.

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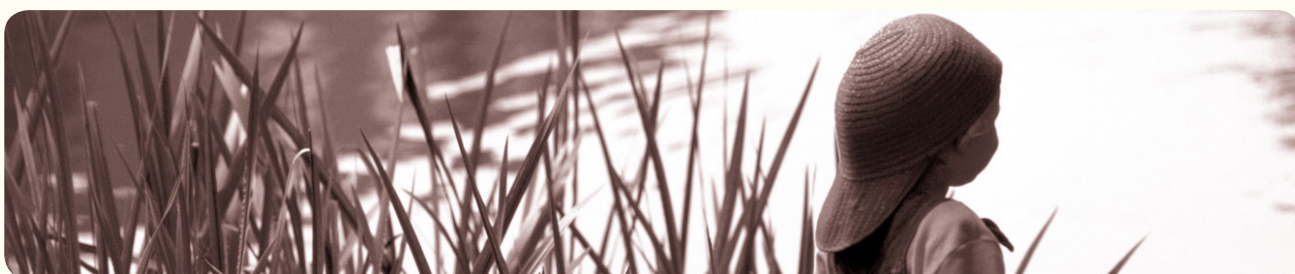
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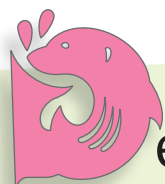


TODDLER EXPRESS

Online Newsletters about Toddler Issues

Newsletter #11 of 11

School Readiness



Dear Parents,

Your child is growing so fast! You should be proud of both yourself and your child, who has grown healthy and strong through the infant years. You may have noticed that others have started to call your child a “toddler” instead of a “baby” or an “infant.” *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* are designed to help you as you enter this new stage of development with your toddler.

Children grow and change rapidly during the toddler years. They are beginning to develop important skills that they will need for being successful later in life. As your child’s first and most important teacher, you will help your toddler learn and think, interact with others, eat healthy, and be safe. Each publication in the series of *Toddler Express Online Newsletters* focuses on a particular topic of development that changes during toddlerhood. In addition, each newsletter in this online series gives parents information about areas

LENNA ONTAI, UC Cooperative Extension Family and Early Childhood Specialist, Department of Human and Community Development, University of California, Davis; and members of the UC ANR **FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WORKGROUP**: Joanne Deocampo, Sharon Junge, Cathi Lamp, Shannon Lipscomb, Sue Manglallan, Diane Metz, Dorothy Smith, and Jane Chin Young.

of toddler development (thinking, social skills, physical growth, eating, and nutrition). The goal is to help you learn about and enjoy the wonders of your child’s development during this most exciting time.

Toddlers can’t do it on their own! They need you to interact with them and teach them the skills they need. In order to take care of your toddler, you need to take care of yourself. To help you learn how to relax and cope with the stress of parenting, each publication also includes a section called “Take Care of Yourself.” With a healthy environment, your toddler will learn and grow into a happy young child. Remember that every toddler is unique. Even though most toddlers develop skills at similar ages, they each develop at their own pace.



This newsletter gives equal space and time to both sexes. When we write “him” or “her,” we are talking about all toddlers.

Every toddler is different. Toddlers who are developing normally may do things earlier or later than described in this newsletter. If you have concerns about your toddler’s development, talk to your child’s doctor.

You are your toddler's first and most important teacher. Much of children's brain development happens before they even enter school. This means the toddler years are an important time to get ready for what lies ahead. You can help your toddler learn to enjoy and feel good about learning by interacting with him. The more time you spend interacting with your toddler, the more he will learn.

Tips

- Sing and talk with your toddler.
- Play with your toddler.
- Encourage exploring and trying new skills.
- Read to your toddler every day.



Questions Parents Ask

Q. Will my daughter be left-handed? My daughter feeds herself and reaches for toys with her left hand. I don't want her to be left-handed, but I've heard that if I try to keep her from using her left hand, it may cause problems. Should I try to make her use her right hand?

A. Most children change handedness several times before choosing their handedness. The key word is choosing. Most children choose to use only a left or right hand. Some children continue to use both hands.

Tips

- Don't try to make her use her right hand.
- Pressure to change hands can make her confused or cause developmental delays.
- Forcing her to change may affect her self-confidence and her learning.
- If your daughter is really left-handed, she won't be alone—15 percent of the U.S. population is left-handed.

No matter which hand she uses, the most important thing is that she gets lots of time to practice drawing and writing before she starts school.

Read with Your Toddler Every Day

Reading to your toddler every day is important for later school success. But toddlers can have a hard time sitting still and paying attention to the whole book. To help your toddler sit with you, make reading a more enjoyable experience.

Tips

- Make reading the time that you cuddle and have fun together.
- Keep your reading time short.
- Choose short books with just a few words on each page.
- Exaggerate rhymes and actions to help keep your toddler interested.
- Give your toddler something to eat or drink while you read together. This will help him relax.
- Make up your own stories using books without words. Or make up your own stories using pictures from magazines or photographs.
- Read to your toddler more than once a day. Try to have at least a total of 15 minutes of reading time each day.

Getting Ready for School

Toddlers learn important things from their parents long before they begin school. The things they learn during these early years makes a big difference in how they do in school later on. Remember your role: you are your toddler's first and most important teacher. There are lots of things you can do to get her ready for school.

Tips

- Listen and respond to your toddler's needs.
- Talk to your toddler about her own feelings and about those of others.
- Have fun learning together: read, explore nature, talk, and be curious about the world.
- Smile, laugh, and praise your toddler.
- Be a good example. Toddlers learn by watching what their parents do and trying to do the same.



Learning to Be Social

Getting along with others is important for your toddler's school success when he gets older. Playing well with others builds confidence and helps him learn. Toddlers are just beginning to develop these skills. Parents can help them learn the social skills they will need to be ready for school.

Tips

- Give your toddler chances to play with other children. Keep the groups small.
- Spend time with your toddler in groups of children and adults, such as a "Mommy and Me" class.
- When your toddler has conflicts with other children, help him think about how the other person is feeling. This will help him learn to be caring.
- Teach your toddler about taking turns.
- Build your toddler's confidence. Praise him often. "You worked very hard on that, and you did it! You must be proud of yourself!"



Preventing Anemia

Getting the right nutrition will help your toddler's brain develop. Anemia, or low iron in the blood, is a common problem in young children. Their blood cells become weak and cannot carry enough oxygen to the brain. Toddlers who have anemia can be cranky, tired, or sick more often. To prevent anemia, toddlers need to eat a variety of foods, including foods rich in iron.

Tips

- Serve nutritious foods with iron: meat, beans, eggs, fish, and cereals with 45 percent or more iron (check the "Nutrition Facts" label on the package).
- Have your toddler eat foods high in vitamin C when eating foods with iron. This will help your toddler's body take in the iron. Oranges, strawberries, cantaloupes, mangoes, tomatoes, cabbage, and broccoli all have lots of vitamin C.
- Serve water instead of soda, juice, or other sweet drinks. Sweet drinks will spoil your toddler's appetite for more nutritious foods.

Make Sure Your Toddler Is Healthy

Healthy toddlers learn best. Since all toddlers are different, it can be hard to know if your toddler is healthy. Interacting often with your toddler will help you know what is normal. You also need to get regular health checkups for your toddler. These will help find any problems early.

Tips

- ✦ Watch for
 - » poor eyesight
 - » lack of language or sounds
 - » absence of interest in verbal and nonverbal communication
 - » problems crawling or walking
- ✦ Get regular doctor checkups for your toddler's vision, hearing, blood, and growth.



Practice Makes Perfect

Toddlers need to be able to use their hand muscles to do well in school. Writing, drawing, and turning pages all require good hand control. Toddlers' hand muscles are still developing, so they need lots of practice with these activities. Your toddler will learn best by practicing with you.

Tips

- ✦ Paint, draw, and mold clay with your toddler.
- ✦ Your toddler's art may not look like the object she aimed for, but the practice is important and fun.
- ✦ Play finger games like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "Little Bunny Foo Foo."
- ✦ Help your toddler do puzzles and build with small blocks.
- ✦ Have your toddler practice buttoning her clothes and putting on her shoes.
- ✦ Stickers are good for exercising small muscles. Have your toddler practice peeling them off and putting them on paper. Give your toddler targets—draw shapes on the paper to put the stickers in.

Activities, Games, and Toys

Parents are children's first teachers. Playing helps toddlers learn about their world. Give your toddler lots of chances to play with you to help him learn.

1. **First Numbers.** This game helps your toddler learn the difference between the numbers one, two, and many.

Show your toddler groups of small, safe objects that have one of something, two of something else, and many of another thing. For example, you can use one small toy, two books, and many flowers. Encourage her to pick out the group that is one. Then ask her to pick out the group with two objects, and then the one with many.

Let her have a turn asking you how many. Remember, play the game only as long as it is fun for both of you.

2. **Word Games.** These games help toddlers learn to use language in a fun way. Help your toddler sing songs and play hand games, like "Ring around the Rosie," "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," "Follow the Leader," "London Bridge," etc.



Take Care of Yourself

We all feel like the world is closing in sometimes. If you learn to recognize signs of stress in your own body, it will be easier to deal with it.

These are some signs of stress:

- ✦ headaches or trouble sleeping
- ✦ tight muscles
- ✦ anger or irritability
- ✦ sweaty hands
- ✦ heavy or fast breathing

Stress can do real harm to your health and your relationships with your family, children, and friends. Ulcers, migraine headaches, asthma, and high blood pressure can come from stress.

If you notice any of these signs, your body is telling you to slow down and take some time out. All parents feel stress at some point. Taking care of yourself will help you be the best parent you can be for your toddler.



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