

Toddler Topics

For parents of children 12-24 months

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This issue is about children
21-24 months old

Dear Parents:

Do you find that life with your toddler is busy, sometimes exasperating, sometimes fun—and very tiring? Many parents feel that the months just before the two-year-old's birthday are among the most difficult times in being a parent. All of a sudden toddlers seem to pick up speed, to become busier and more defiant, and to have even stronger opinions about what they will and will not do. Sometimes you may feel like forcing them to behave by yelling or punishing. At other times they are so adorable you wonder how you could ever be angry with them. You are not alone—many parents have the same feelings! Abusive parents take out their feelings of frustration and anger by hurting their children. Other parents understand that young children behave as they do because they are young, not because they are trying to be annoying. These parents try to deal with their stress without hurting their children. You have to plan ahead to be able to do this. Make a plan for yourself now: "The next time I get mad with my toddler I'm going to —."



What's It Like to Be 21 to 24 Months Old?

How I Grow



- During these three months I learn to run pretty fast—a lot faster than my trot of a few months ago.
- I can walk up and down stairs if I go slowly and can hold your hand.
- I can learn to brush my teeth (with a little grown-up help).
- I can take all my clothes off!
- I can put some of my clothes on if I want to.
- I can learn to pedal a small tricycle.
- I know what a toilet's for although I don't want to use it yet. Some friends my age have been toilet trained for several months, but most of us want to wait until we're a little older.
- I like to put together simple wooden puzzles with three to six pieces.

How I Talk

- I can ask for food or drink.
- I can put at least two words together—sometimes more.
- I have a vocabulary of between 20 and 50 words.
- I get very frustrated when I try to tell people what I mean and they don't understand me.

- I sometimes forget to use words when I should. I may bite or hurt the person who is not giving me what I want.
- I ask questions just to keep the conversation going.

How I Respond

- I often say "no" even when I mean "yes."
- I like to help around the house. Sometimes my help is a nuisance to you, but doing important household jobs with you is one of the best ways for me to learn.
- I want to do everything for myself—feeding, dressing, opening doors.
- I like to be with other children for short periods of time, but I don't understand sharing.

Don't force me to share yet—I'll get around to it when I'm older.

- I play next to other children and I like to watch them play, but I'm not very good at cooperating.

Children's Friendships by Suzanne West is a Cornell bulletin available at your local Cooperative Extension office. It has more good information about the social behavior of children.



William Lupardo

Feeding Your Toddler



toothbrush can be as exciting as a new toy, and tooth brushing can be as much fun as many activities usually thought of as play.

For more information contact your county Cooperative Extension office and ask for *Nourishing and Nurturing Two-Year-Olds*, five fact sheets with tips on feeding two-year-olds a balanced diet, avoiding common nutritional problems, promoting self-feeding, coping with mealtime hassles, and creating an environment that makes eating manageable and fun for both child and adult.

Check with your doctor to be sure your child is adequately protected against disease. Be sure to keep up-to-date on shots. If your child is regularly exposed to other children (as in a day care center) ask your doctor about the Hibs vaccine.



How I Understand

- I still need to touch, smell, and taste objects (sometimes including people!) that are interesting to me.
- I like to have a predictable routine in my life. I may get upset if I am put to bed in a different way, am given a strange food, or something important to me is not what I expected.
- Sometimes things that don't seem frightening to other people scare me a lot. Dogs, bathtub drains, flushing toilets, thunder, and strange adults are among the things that may scare me.
- I like to have Mom and Dad explain things to me but not if they use too many words or start yelling at me.
- When I'm tired or hungry I whine, cry, or have temper tantrums.

How I Feel

- Sometimes I feel pretty grown up, but at other times I really feel like a tiny baby.
- I like to be with the grown-ups I love, and I feel very scared and angry if they leave me.
- I want to stay close to grown-ups I love at night even though they want me to stay in my bed.
- When I want something, I hate waiting for it.
- I know there are some things I'm not supposed to do—but I feel like doing them anyway. Sometimes when I do them I tell myself, "No, no!"

Suggestion for the day: Turn the television off, go for a walk, read a story, or sing a song with your toddler!

Many parents worry because they think their toddler is not eating enough.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

- A very general rule for determining serving sizes is one tablespoon per year of life. This means that dinner for a two-year-old might contain approximately 2 tablespoons of meat loaf, 2 tablespoons of carrots, 2 tablespoons of mashed potatoes, and half a fresh peach. These amounts are approximate. Some children will want to eat much more and others may want less.
- Try to avoid unhealthy foods by not having them in the house. Soda, potato chips, candy, cookies, and the like take up valuable "tummy space" in small children.
- Too much milk (more than 24 ounces a day) can interfere with the intake of other foods. If your two-year-old still takes a bottle it may be a good idea to serve juice with meals. It may be better to serve only water in bottles after your child is 12 to 15 months old.
- If your child doesn't drink enough milk, offer other dairy foods (cheese, puddings, milk-based soups, for example).
- Remember that all snacks and treats should be part of the recommended amounts of food over the whole day. Some good snack foods are fruits, soft raw vegetables, whole-grain crackers, cheese, milk, and juice. Hi-C and fruit punch are higher in sugar than plain juice.
- Taking care of baby teeth is important. Teach your toddler to brush after every meal. A new

Toilet Training

Some children seem ready to be toilet trained before they are two years old. Most wait until around two and a half or three; and others are not ready until they're almost four. Here are some ways you can help your child:

- Let him see other people using the toilet—brothers, sisters, mother, father.
- Explain to her that when she is able to use the potty she will be able to wear "big girl" pants instead of diapers.
- Allow him to sit on a potty or toilet fully clothed. He may want to do this for several weeks before he's willing to take his pants off.
- When children begin to associate the toilet with elimination they often urinate or defecate right before they get to the toilet

or right after they leave it. Try to see this as a step in the right direction! Perhaps you can say something like "Next time maybe you'll pee in the toilet—you were pretty close this time!"

- Encourage children's efforts—even when they're too late or too early.
- Don't force children to sit on the potty for long periods of time or punish them for wet or soiled pants. Most children really want to do what is expected of them. Some need a little more time and patience than others.
- If your neighbor or another person tries to pressure you into toilet training before you think your child is ready, don't pass their pressure on to him.
- Toilet training should not be a battle between parent and child. If it is making you or



your child feel angry or if your child doesn't seem at all interested, wait a few more months and try again.

Games Toddlers Play



Some parents can't stand the thought of having toddlers "help" in the house, but others find that sometimes very young children can manage some tasks very well—under loving,

close supervision from you, of course! Here are some activities your toddler may enjoy (although you may have to do them over again when he is no longer interested):

- Mix or stir eggs, pancake batter, puddings, or applesauce briefly.
- Shape meatballs, cookie dough, and other mixtures into balls or patties.
- Wash vegetables and fruits.
- Make salad. Two-year-olds can tear lettuce or strips of green pepper into pieces and break broccoli and cauliflower into "flowers."

- Vacuuming.
- Dusting.
- Washing unbreakable dishes.

If your toddler goes to a day care home or center you are probably surprised at the variety of activities she enjoys there. If you are looking for good child care or want to evaluate the child care situation you are using, call your local Cooperative Extension office and ask for the following: *What to Look for in a Family Day Care Home* (HDFS 2) and *What to Look for in a Day Care Center* (HDFS 50).

Especially for You

Sometimes it seems endless. You clean up one mess after the other, change hundreds of pants, wipe noses, answer questions, hug and kiss bumps, sing lullabies, and rescue your toddler from the many predicaments she gets into.

Occasionally, however, there are moments so precious you want to remember them forever. It may be a small hand tucked trustingly in yours, the feel of a soft little face against your cheek, or a sticky kiss when you didn't think your toddler was old enough to know you felt depressed. And we all know how angelic not-quite-two-



year-olds can look when, bathed and wearing clean pajamas, they nestle down in their beds and SLEEP! These special moments will be memories to enjoy for years to come. Treat yourself to a small notebook and write them down! Otherwise you may become so caught

up in the busy life your toddler creates for you that the special moments will slip away and be lost.

Snapshots of your children will become increasingly precious to you as the years go by. Write names and ages on the backs of all family pictures.

Art for Toddlers?



Two-year-olds love to scribble with pencils and crayons, use play dough, paint, and experiment with paste and glue.

Right now, while your toddler is as likely to eat an art material as to express himself with

it, you may want to begin with a substance that can't hurt him. Have you thought about all the ways your child could safely enjoy using water?

- The traditional uses involve bath tubs and wading pools. Don't leave a toddler alone in either. Children can drown in very shallow water—or scald themselves badly if they turn on the hot water.
- Strip your toddler if the house is warm and let her wash unbreakable dishes in a dishpan of water. Put the pan down at her level and cover the floor with towels or rags. It will be sloppy, but she'll love it.
- Offer your toddler a small amount of water to use in his unbreakable play dishes. He can practice pouring and begin to explore the wonderful world of "pretend."

• On a hot day give her an inexpensive two-inch paint brush (unused) and a coffee can full of water. Ask her to paint the outside of the house for you.

• Washing rubber dolls may be something you remember enjoying as a child. Children like to wash almost anything—small trucks and cars, blocks, doll clothes. A grown-up's real job is to keep the objects you don't want washed out of reach and out of the dish pan.



Questions

"When my toddler wants a toy some other child is holding she tries to grab it away. If the other child doesn't let her have it, she bites him. Mom said I stopped biting after she bit me only once. Mom says I should bite her back when she does this. What do you think?"

This is a very common problem for parents of almost-two-year-olds. It seems that children begin to realize that communicating has something to do with their mouths—but, under stress, they forget to use words and resort to biting! Your child will need extra close supervision while she learns to use language in her play with other children. Stay close by her. If she leans forward as if to bite another child, hold her gently and say, "Talk to your friend. Tell her you would like to touch her truck." Say to the other child, "My little girl would like to touch your truck. May she do that?" The other child may refuse! Then say to your child, "Your friend is not ready for you to touch her truck—let's look for something to play with while we wait for a turn." Try to interest your child in another toy or activity. After a while, approach the friend again, perhaps offering another toy she might like to look at. Say, "Is it time now for my little girl to touch your truck?" It sounds like a lot of effort, and success will take time. But sometimes children have to be taught how to play together just as children are taught later how to read or write.

Biting or punishing children who bite does not let a child



know what behavior is expected of him—it just lets him know what not to do. It may also teach him that big, strong people can get away with hurting people who are smaller or weaker than they are.

This question raises another important issue. What do you do with all the advice, criticisms, and suggestions other people dump on you as soon as you become a parent? Sometimes it's hard to stand up for what you believe when your mother or best friend is criticizing you. And the truth is that sometimes they are right and life for you and your child would be easier and more comfortable if you followed their advice. But sometimes even your mother and your best friend can be wrong and you may have to rehearse a polite little speech—"I appreciate your trying to help, but this is something I feel strongly about and, as a parent, I must do what I think is best."

Good Luck and Happy Parenting!

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