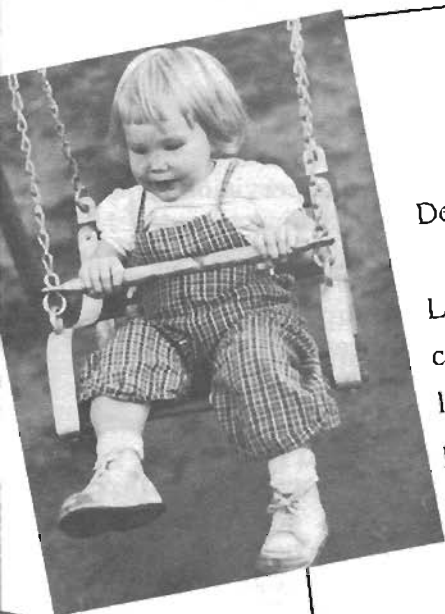


Toddler Topics

For parents of children 12–24 months

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This issue is about children
15-18 months old



Dear Parents:

Life with a toddler is quite an experience, isn't it? At times children this age can be sweet and charming—and two seconds later they can seem like small monsters. It takes a lot of patience and love to understand that toddlers are trying hard to grow up and be "big." They require lots of reassurance from you that it's OK for them to act like babies who need to be cared for and cuddled. Perhaps they're a little bit like human yo-yos. First they need to swing out and away, to see what life's like on their own. Then they need to return to the security and comfort of home base. You're not only home base—you're the central, most important part of their world.



What Are Toddlers Like at 15-18 Months?



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- Children at this age are practicing and improving skills they began to develop earlier.

- Most children walk by this age—although it requires all their concentration to walk without falling.

- Most children can stop and start from a standing position—earlier they may have pulled themselves up from crawling or stopped by falling down.

- Some children develop a stiff run—and a few really take off and move like greased lightning!

If your child is not walking yet, there is probably no need to worry, but you should have him checked by a pediatrician or at a well baby clinic.

- During these months most babies use 5 to 10 words. A few children speak fluently—and a few are not yet ready to talk at all, although you know they understand almost everything you say.

If your child is not making sounds, or does not seem to understand anything you say,

you should check with a pediatrician or well baby clinic.

- At this age many children let you know their diapers need to be changed. Very few are toilet trained. Some aren't toilet trained until they are three or older. Unless your child is showing a lot of interest in the process don't try to toilet train her yet. (Why don't you clip this out and carry it in your purse in case someone suggests that your toddler should be trained by now?)

- Toddlers enjoy painting on large sheets of paper with big

brushes and thick poster paint. They need close supervision, however, if the "art" work is to stay on the papers! The shower stall may be a perfect place for painting (cleanup's easier, too) although children will still need careful supervision.

- Simple books, nursery rhymes, songs, and simple chanting games may be favorite activities. They are wonderful ways to help your toddler develop language.

- Toddlers need open spaces in which to practice walking. They also need time. If it seems to you that your child is "doing nothing" watch carefully. Children of this age learn something from almost everything they do.



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For safety tips, request *For Kids' Sake* and other publications on household safety from

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, D.C. 20207

or call toll-free
800-638-8326

An Important Reminder

Your toddler may need shots at this age. Check with your doctor or county health department. Ask especially about DTP/TOPV boosters and measles, rubella, and mumps vaccines. Ask also for information and advice about new vaccines that may be available. If your child is in frequent contact with other children your doctor may suggest the Hibs vaccine at 18 months.

Toddlers Can Make You Feel Terrific—or Terrible

Toddlers may look like small, innocent people, but they have the power to produce very strong feelings in adults. On the positive side, the love you feel for your child is miraculous. On the negative side, you may sometimes feel so angry with your toddler that you may be in danger of hurting her.

When you feel this anger do one or more of the following:

- Take some deep breaths
- Count to ten—slowly
- Get some space between you and the child, even if you have to go into the bathroom and hold the door shut for a minute or two or put him in his crib until you feel calmer.

Feeding Your Toddler

Some Mealtime Do's

- Do remember that spills and imperfect table manners are normal at this age; the child is not trying to be naughty. Plan ahead for clean-up by using bibs and plastic table cloths and having sponges close by.
- Do compliment children on their accomplishments and be understanding and helpful when things go wrong.
- Serve meals before children are tired and fussy. Perhaps a quiet time before eating would be helpful. Toddlers may have to be fed before the rest of the family.
- Do maintain a relaxed atmosphere and try not to rush the toddler. Learning about new foods takes time. Remove uneaten food without a fuss and without threatening or bribing. An empty plate should not be a big deal. Don't use desserts to bribe children to eat other food.



- Do respect a child's decision when he or she wants to eat less or more than usual. Try to eat meals and snacks at regular times. Have your child sit at the table or in a high chair when she eats.
- Do recognize your own needs. Family members other than the toddler may be tired and hungry at mealtime. It may help to have a relaxing routine before eating. "First a story,

then we'll wash up, then your bib—and now lunch!" Sometimes toddlers go on a "food jag," wanting to eat the same foods at every meal. It's OK to go along by serving these foods for a few days, but try to provide other foods for your toddler at the same time. If you don't make a fuss, your toddler will probably taste a few of the good foods you put (in very small amounts) on his plate.

Games for Toddlers

Walks are fun if you realize that toddlers walk to practice a new skill—not necessarily to get anywhere! If you have a destination in mind, better take the stroller.

"Space games help the child learn the beginning rules of physics. These rules are needed in everyday life. They tell how different things work. You will see a toddler doing physics experiments as your child explores:

dropping

pouring

emptying

bumping

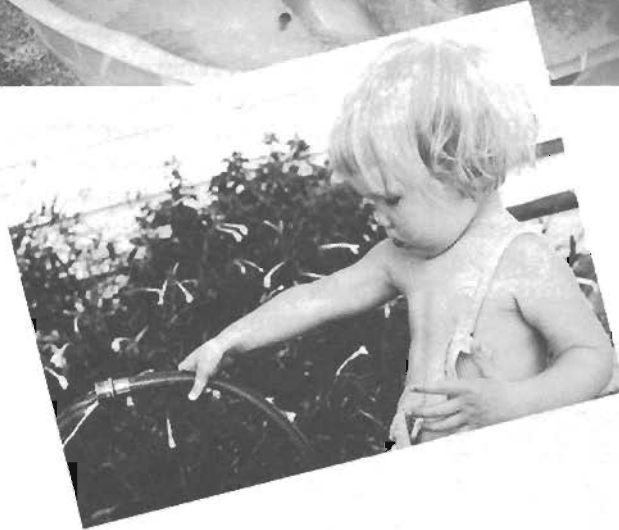
designing

filling"*

A wading pool or a dishpan of water and a plastic cup will allow your toddler to do many physics experiments! Children never stop exploring, but sometimes it's hard for adults to realize how much they're learning. Next time your toddler repeatedly pushes something off the high chair tray just remind yourself how much she must be learning about gravity!

*J. Ronald Lally and Ira J. Gordon, *Learning Games for Infants and Toddlers* (Syracuse: New Readers Press, 1972), p. 61. You may want to buy this book or check it out of your local library. Order from New Readers Press, Department 61, 1320 Jamesville Avenue, Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210. Toll-free number for New York State residents: 1-800-624-6703.

Toll-free number for out-of-state residents: 1-800-448-8878.



Especially for You

- Talking with other parents
- Taking a bubble bath without your child
- Spending time with an adult you really care about
- Listening to your parents and in-laws describe their lives as parents of toddlers
- Rearranging your schedule to allow time for a nap or a walk

- Visiting the public library
- Attending a parent education class or a parent support group
- Joining a church or social group

These are all ways to take breaks from the absorbing, exhausting job of parenting. Too much togetherness with your child can create stress.

Questions

"Our baby has slept through the night since she was two months old. Now, at 17 months, nights have become awful. She wakes up screaming, climbs out of her crib, and comes into our room. When we take her back to her crib she cries and seems really frightened. We're both losing so much sleep we feel terrible. What can we do?"

Few of the "normal" child-rearing problems are harder to deal with than loss of sleep—and few problems become the target of so much advice and so many strong opinions. Among this advice you are likely to hear the following:

- Try a night light in your toddler's room. Keep it on all night.
- Establish a long, relaxed ritual before bed. It might include a bath, story, and song.



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- When you put the child back in her bed, say firmly, "Now it's time to go to sleep in your bed." Sit by her crib, pat her back, or sing until she goes to sleep.

- Any child will go to sleep if you leave her alone for 20 minutes by the clock.
- Put a mattress on the floor in the child's room and sleep on it so she sees you whenever she wakes up.
- Put a sleeping bag on the floor by your bed and let the child sleep in it.
- Take the child into bed with you.

Unfortunately, there is no "right" way to deal with this problem. As you will see from these answers by parents, there are many different approaches. You will have to determine which approach is right for you and your toddler. Perhaps you will find a pleasant solution that is not on the list at all. Please tell us about it if you do. Write to

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A book for somewhat older children about this bedtime problem is Russell Hoban, *Bedtime for Frances* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960). You might enjoy it, and at least it will let you know you are not alone.



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