

The Toddler (1-2 years)

Nutrition

Toddlers learn about food by looking, touching and tasting. Let your child feed himself; meals may be messy but this is how your child will learn. If your child has not yet been weaned from the bottle, now is the time to switch to the cup. As children get older, they learn about new foods by talking about them, shopping, and sharing mealtime with their family. Children should have three nutritious meals per day and one to two snacks per day. To be healthy, your child's diet should include five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. In addition, your child should have three servings of dairy to ensure adequate calcium for healthy bone and teeth growth. Give your child whole milk until two years of age; the additional fat content is good for healthy brain development. Toddlers are picky eaters and you cannot force a child to eat. To avoid struggles, offer a variety of *healthy* foods and let your child choose what to eat. Minimize juices, soft drinks, chips, candy, and 'fast foods'. These are all "empty calories" which do little for your child's nutrition and promote excessive weight gain.

Oral Health

A child's first dentist visit should be scheduled by 12 months of age. Thereafter, visits should be every six months. Ideally children should brush their teeth after every meal. A good schedule for toddlers would be to brush teeth before naptime and bedtime.

Sleep

Children require 8 to 12 hours of sleep per day. Between 1 and 2 years of age most children decrease napping from 2 to 1 times per day. To avoid injury, children should be transitioned out of the crib once they have attempted to climb out. Either a toddler bed or child's twin bed is fine as long as safety rails are installed. A consistent bedtime routine (bath, books, bed, for example) helps children transition from evening to sleep more smoothly. If your toddler is having difficulty with bedtime, we recommend a book entitled "Healthy sleep habits, happy child", by Mark Weissbluth.

Development

The toddler years are a time of tremendous growth and development. There is a wide range of "normal" and each child progresses at their own rate. In general, a one-year-old says 'mama' or 'dada', may begin to take a few steps, waves 'goodbye' and plays pat-a-cake or peek-a-boo. By fifteen months, children speak three to six words, understand simple commands ('bring me the book'), point to body parts, walk well, drink from a cup, feed themselves with their fingers, and will listen to a storybook. The average 18 month old speaks 5-20 words, uses a spoon, fork and a cup, throws a ball, stoops well, walks up stairs with hand held, scribbles with a pencil and kisses and shows affection. By two years most children say more than 20 words, combine words, follow two step commands, run, walk up and down stairs, kick and throw a ball, scribble with a pencil and imitate adults. Most children develop separation anxiety between 10 and 18 months of age. This is a normal stage of development wherein your child becomes aware of your absence if you leave but does not yet have a concept of future to understand that you will return. As a result, your child becomes fearful, fussy, and tearful whenever you leave. To minimize separation anxiety, don't make a big fuss when you leave and use distractions.

Discuss any concerns regarding your child's development with your doctor. Your doctor may recommend that your child be evaluated by "Birth-to-Three", a statewide program that offers **free** developmental assessments and provides speech, physical, or occupational therapy for a nominal cost. You may also call Birth-to-Three without a doctor's referral if you choose. The number for Birth-to-Three is 1-800-505-7000.

Potty Training

Toilet training is part of developmentally appropriate learning. Each child progresses through toilet training differently and it is important for parents to understand signs of readiness and how to support and encourage their child during this process. Many children do not achieve even partial toilet training before the age of 3 years or complete daytime dryness until the age of 4 years.

Encourage toilet training when your child is dry for about 2 hours at a time, knows the difference between wet and dry, can pull her pants up and down, wants to learn, and can tell you when she is about to have a bowel movement. Do not pressure or punish, and avoid friction. Be supportive, give your child an active role, and keep the learning process fun. Praise or reward your child for cooperation and success.

Here are some ways to help your child be successful. Make sure she has access to a potty chair, dress her in easy-to-remove pants, and establish a daily routine to place her on the potty every few hours, give underwear as a special present for reinforcement, and provide a relaxed environment by reading or singing songs while she is on the potty.

Children use the toilet more frequently than adults, often up to 10 times a day. Plan for frequent toilet breaks when traveling with your child, even if you are out for a short time.

Discipline

Children learn to behave well when parents establish consistent rules with consistent consequences. Set limits and be firm. In addition, it is very important to praise your child's good behavior. The following books are good resources:

1,2,3 Magic – Effective Discipline for Children 2-12. By Thomas Phelan, PhD
Positive Discipline. By Jane Nelson

Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development: Birth to Three: The Essential Reference for the Early Years. By T. Berry Brazelton

Safety

All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat until they are 2 years of age OR until they are 30 lbs. A toddler should never be placed in a front seat of a car with a passenger air bag. Toddlers should always be supervised at bath time and near water. Always test the water temperature of the bath with your wrist prior to placing your child into the bath. Empty the tub, buckets of water, and kiddie pools when not in use. To prevent burns turn the thermostat on your water heater down to 120 degrees fahrenheit. . Keep hot liquids (coffee, soup) away from your child. Cook on the back burners and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Install in your home and check on a regular basis both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. For your child's sake, keep your home and car free of tobacco smoke. All windows should have guards or safety locks installed to prevent children from falling out or through screens. All poisonous materials (including medicines, vitamins, cleaning substances, solvents, cosmetics, some plants) need to be placed out of your child's reach. Install locks on all

cabinets, drawers, and closets that contain these materials. If your child swallows or inhales a substance, which may be poisonous, call the **Connecticut Poison Control Center** immediately at **(800) 222-1222**. Do not wait for symptoms to be present - call for help as soon as you can

Children should not be left alone at home until they are 13 years old. A babysitter should be at least 13 years old and be able to respond to emergencies. When outside, sunscreen and insect repellent should be used. Avoid lotions which combine sunscreen and insect repellent as insect repellent should be applied only once per day and sunscreen should be reapplied periodically especially after swimming. The most effective insect repellents contain DEET – 10-30% DEET is safe to use on children. Use a brimmed hat and an umbrella to provide shade from the sun.

For more information about child health, safety and parenting visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' web site at WWW.AAP.ORG