

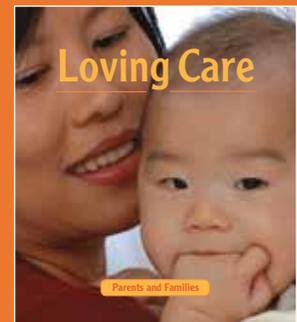
Loving Care

1 to 3 Years

Loving Care: 1 to 3 Years

Loving Care is a series of four books for parents of children from birth to age 3 developed by Nova Scotia's Department of Health and Wellness. As a Public Health resource, **Loving Care** focuses on information that will help young families to protect, promote, or improve their health, and to prevent illness, injury or disability.

Three of the **Loving Care** books focus on babies and children at specific ages—**Birth to 6 Months**, **6 to 12 Months**, and **1 to 3 Years**. The fourth book—**Loving Care: Parents and Families**—offers information that will be useful to families whatever their child's age. You'll find references to **Parents and Families** in all of the other books.



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The information in this book is up-to-date as of the date of printing. This information is not a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Loving Care

1 to 3 Years

Introduction



Loving Care is the title of this series of books for parents. Each book gives information based on the age of your baby or child. We try to answer the questions you'll have as your tiny newborn grows into a busy toddler. This book gives you information about your toddler from ages 1 to 3 years.

Children are born into many kinds of families. You may be on your own, married, or in a relationship. You may be a parent by birth, adoption, or fostering. You may have lots of family around or be far from home. You may have one baby, or two, or more!

Children are raised by many different kinds of parents. You may be young or an older parent, able-bodied or living with a disability. You may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight. You may be male, female, or transgender. You may be Aboriginal, new to Canada, or from a family who's lived here for generations with Acadian, African, Asian, European, or Middle-Eastern roots.

This book is written for all the parents and families that make Nova Scotia a good place to live.

Added info...

The information in all of the **Loving Care** books applies mainly to healthy, full-term babies.

If your child was premature or has special needs, you'll still find these books helpful. However, you may want to look for more information from your health care provider and other sources.



Double Check

Don't forget about **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. It contains information that will continue to be helpful as your child grows.

Becoming a parent is the start of a relationship that lasts forever. All parents wonder if they'll be a good parent, if they'll know what to do. You grow and learn as a parent by watching and listening to your child. Your child grows and learns with your love and support.

Life is a journey of discovery that you and your child are taking together. No parent starts out having all the answers. Every day brings something new. You and your child will both discover new skills and new strengths as you go along.

We hope these books will help you on your journey and will help you to make your own decisions about what's best for you and your family.



Double Check

In **Loving Care** we use the term “health care provider” to mean professionals who offer primary health care services to parents and families.

As well, Public Health Services and many other professionals and community resources and programs are available to offer advice and support.

You'll find more information in the “Welcome” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

He or she?

In this book, we take turns using “he” and “she.” Please know that whichever word we use, the information applies to both boys and girls.



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Loving care is what every baby needs. It's what every parent wants to give.

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Building Love, Trust, and Confidence



Even though my toddler is becoming more independent every day, he's still my baby! He cries when I leave him and is shy with strangers. Is he too attached?

Attachment



Added info...

You can continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your toddler enjoy it.

Breastfeeding fosters a close and comforting relationship between you and your child. The time you spend breastfeeding is special for you both.

The bond between you and your toddler grows stronger every time you cuddle or care for him, respond to his needs, kiss away his tears, talk to him, sing to him, or play with him.

A strong attachment to you affects how your child's brain develops. It shapes the way your toddler will learn, grow, and respond to people for his whole life.

Healthy attachments will help your child to:

- Trust other people
- Be eager to learn and to try new things
- Feel good about himself
- Care about others and how they feel
- Express how he feels
- Get along with other people
- Come to you with his problems

The relationship you have with your toddler will be the model for the other relationships he will have as he grows up. A strong attachment to you will give him a strong base for building healthy relationships throughout his life.

Your toddler can't be too attached!

Added info...

“Attachment” means the bond between a child and his most important caregivers—usually his mother, father, and other family members.

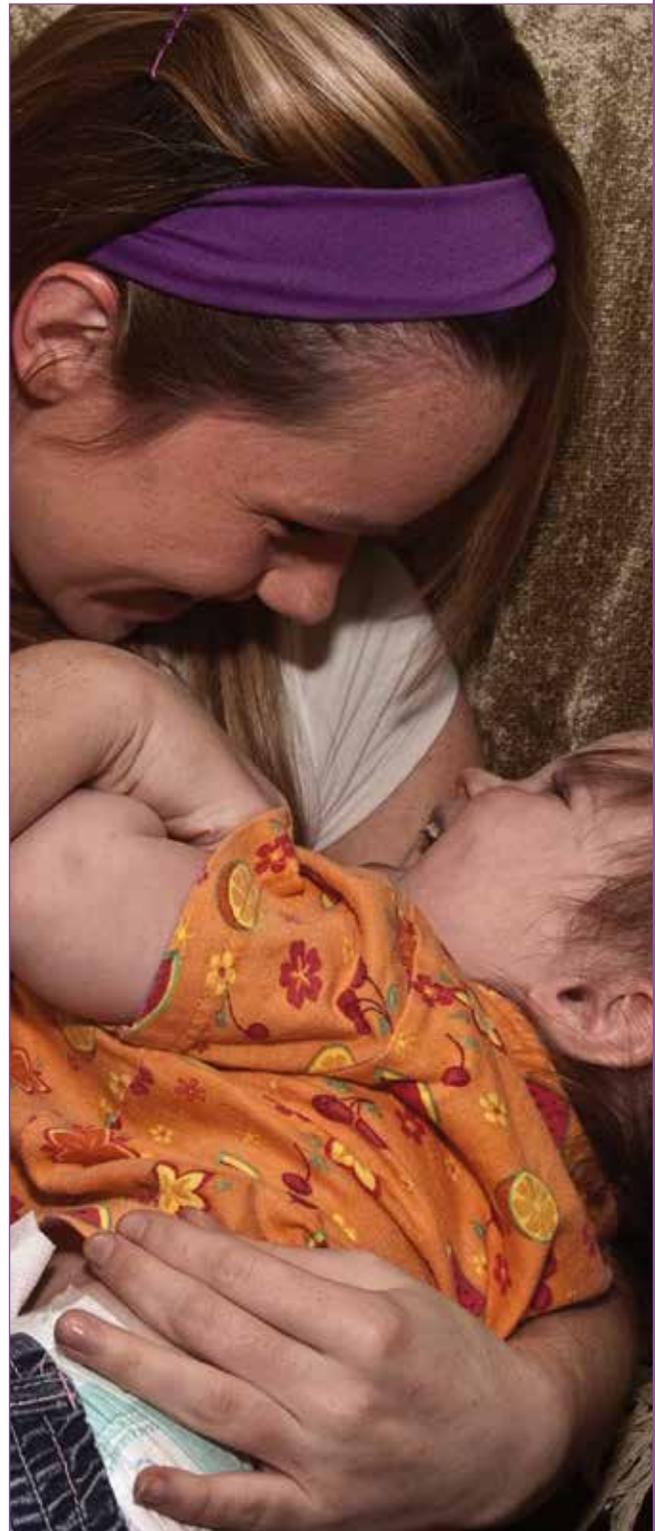
Toddlers can be very fond of a special toy or blanket, but this is not the same as attachment to a parent. These things can offer comfort, but when a child is hurt, sick, or upset, he needs more than a toy. He needs your love and care.

Added info...

Sometimes things happen that make you wonder if you’ve missed your chance for attachment.

- You may be adopting or fostering a toddler, or forming a blended family. Use the information in this book. Responding to your child’s needs will build love and trust at any age.
- You may be separated from your toddler. (See page 7, “*Building attachment when you are away from your child.*”)
- You may have been suffering from depression and unable to respond to your baby. (See **Loving Care: Parents and Families** for more information on depression.)

It’s never too late to build or strengthen the bonds between you and your child.



Attachment and your toddler's brain



When a baby is born, her brain is still developing. It continues to grow and develop along with her body. This means that the things that happen during the early years of life will affect the way your toddler's brain develops.

Your toddler learns to see the world as a good place when you respond to her needs with love and care—especially when she is sick, hurt, or upset. She becomes strongly attached to you. She learns that she matters. She learns what it feels like to be loved.

When you ignore your child's needs or don't respond to her cues, she learns to see the world as a place that she can't depend on. She learns that she doesn't matter and that she can't get what she needs.

The way your toddler sees herself and the world becomes built into her brain as it develops. As she grows, she carries this with her and it affects how she responds to people and experiences.

Stages of attachment

During the first year of your baby's life, you and your baby built your attachment to each other. During this time, your baby needed to be held close and touched gently to feel secure.

By the end of the first year, your toddler begins to explore the world. But he still comes back to you for comfort when he's afraid or lonely.

Many toddlers are shy with strangers. This is because they now know the difference between the people they are attached to and everyone else. They may also be upset when you go away. They know they need you, but don't yet understand that you will return.

After your toddler is about 2 years old, his way of showing his attachment slowly begins to change. He still needs the comfort of hugs and kisses, but he'll begin to get better at talking about what he wants and feels. He'll also—very slowly!—get better at waiting for what he wants. This makes it easier for him to understand that when people he loves go away, they come back.

When a toddler is strongly attached, he usually shows it in these ways:

- **He depends on you for love and comfort.** You are the safe centre of his life. The bond between you gives him the confidence to reach out and explore because he knows he can depend on you to be there when he needs you.
- **He is upset when you go away.** Your toddler knows how much he needs you and doesn't like it when you go away. Over time, your child begins to learn that when you leave, you come back.

- **He is happy when you return.** Even when your child has gotten to the point where he isn't too upset when you leave, he's still glad to see you come back!

Remember that every child is different. Your child may show his attachment in other ways. You know your child best.



Added info...

Even the most securely attached toddler has times when he feels worried or insecure. He'll show this by:

- Hiding behind you
- Climbing onto your lap
- Wanting to be held
- Hiding his face in your neck
- Wanting to breastfeed more often

Follow your toddler's cues and give him the closeness and cuddling he needs to feel safe again.

Helping your toddler develop new relationships

As your toddler grows, her world grows too. There will be more and more people in it—aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, caregivers, teachers, and others.

To help your toddler learn to love and trust the new people in her life:

- **Be with her when she meets anyone new.** Give your toddler time to get used to new people. Don't leave her alone with someone she doesn't know. Help her get to know and have fun with new people while you're there with her.
- **Show her how much YOU like the new people.** Let her know that you're glad to see them. Tell your toddler what you like about them.
- **Help your child remember people she doesn't see often.** Put a photo on the fridge—a photo of the person with your toddler is especially good. Show it to your toddler often.
- **Make a picture book with photos of your toddler with all of the people who know and love her.** This can include you, brothers and sisters, grandparents, other relatives, caregivers, and friends. Look at it often and talk about everyone in it and how much they love your toddler.



Building attachment when you are away from your child

Some parents find that they must be away from their toddler for long periods of time – for example, when working away from home.

No matter what your child's age or what's happening in your life, there are still ways you can help him feel safe and secure.

When you're away:

- **Show your child that he is always important to you.** Show him that you think about him when you aren't together. Call him while you're away. When you return, tell him that you missed him.

You can also:

- Record a bedtime story so he can hear your voice while you're away.
- Make a scrapbook of photos of you and your toddler together.
- Send letters while you're away.
- Leave a piece of your clothing for him to hug when he misses you.

Your partner—or whoever cares for your child while you are away—can help by talking about you while you're away.

"This is Daddy's favourite food." "Mommy loves soccer. You can play with her when she comes home."



Added info...

Signs that your toddler may **not** be strongly attached include:

- He doesn't seem to care when you leave. He ignores you when you return.
- He's very clingy and afraid when you leave, but angry and upset when you return. Nothing you do comforts him.

Talk to a health care provider if you are concerned about your toddler's attachment to you.

When you come home:

- **Be patient when you return after a long absence.** Give your child time to remember you.
- **Respond consistently with love and comfort.** Help him learn he can depend on you when he needs you.
- **Spend lots of time with your toddler.** Play together. Have fun. Be silly. Read and sing together. Go for walks. Follow his lead. Do things that your toddler is interested in.
- **Have a regular daily routine.** Continue to have meals, snacks, bedtime, naps, and other activities at about the same time every day. This kind of routine helps your toddler to feel safe.
- **Support your child's other relationships.** Relationships with grandparents and child care providers are important to your child. They are a part of his life. He'll feel safe if you welcome people who are important to him as part of your life too.

Remember: All children are different. Your child's temperament will have a big impact on how he reacts to being separated from someone he loves. Some children react strongly, while others seem to take it more calmly.



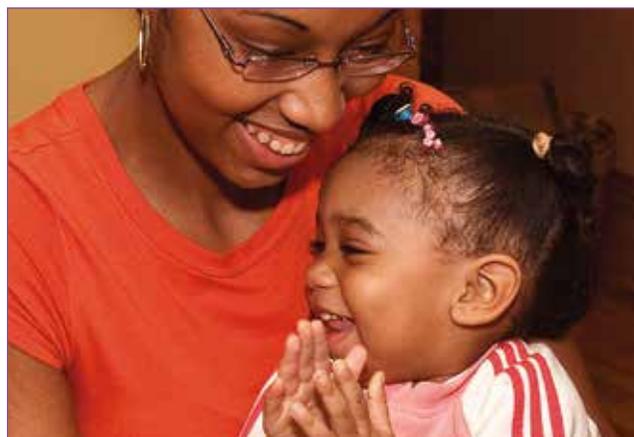
Self-esteem

Self-esteem means feeling good about yourself. It means believing that you matter, that you deserve to be loved, and that you have a place in the world.

A strong, healthy attachment to you is where your toddler's self-esteem begins.

To help your toddler build self-esteem:

- **Give her chances to learn, explore, and try new things.** Toddlers build self-esteem by trying new things over and over until they finally succeed in doing them. When they learn a new skill, they learn more about what they can do. They begin to believe that they are able to do many things. Their self-esteem grows.
- **Let your child do things for herself.** Toddlers naturally want to do things on their own. Give your child a chance to succeed and learn. When she succeeds at something, she feels good. This gives her the confidence to try something else. Don't be too quick to help when your child is trying to do something for herself. Give her time to figure it out. Show her you believe in her. Tell her, "You can do it!" or "Keep trying." Facing a challenge and succeeding builds confidence and self-esteem. When she needs help, offer just enough to keep her going. Don't worry about doing everything perfectly. Praise her for trying.
- **Be a good example.** Let your toddler see you try to figure things out. Show her that even when something is difficult, you keep trying.



Double Check

Your self-esteem is important too! Taking care of yourself is not selfish.

You'll find information on self-esteem, taking care of yourself and handling problems in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Double Check

Temperament and self-esteem

How you respond to your toddler's temperament will affect how she sees herself. If you see your child as special and lovable just as she is, she'll develop a strong sense of self-esteem.

Remember: You can't change your toddler's temperament. For more information on temperament and how it can affect behaviour, see [page 55](#).



- **Treat your child respectfully.** Listen when she talks. Pay attention to her cues. Don't tease her or make fun of her when she tries new things. Avoid nicknames that could embarrass your child when she gets older. It's also not helpful to give your child a label—like telling others that she's "shy," "difficult," "a picky eater," or "bad." These kinds of labels may make your toddler feel bad about herself as she gets older.
- **Accept your child for who she is.** Every toddler is different. Each will follow her own path as she grows and develops. Love and accept her for who she is. Don't compare your toddler's size, shape, or abilities with anyone else. Teach her that people come in different shapes and sizes. Help her understand that people have different abilities. Help her to see and value her own talents and abilities.

Remember that your toddler sees herself through your eyes. If you tell and show your child that she is special and lovable, and that she is important to you, she will develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.

Added info...

Advertising and self-esteem

Advertising and marketing messages can affect your child's self-esteem. The messages your child hears on TV and in other places can affect how she feels about her body and what she wants to eat, wear, and play with. These messages can also lead your child to judge others based on things like the clothes they wear and the toys they play with.

Advertising can affect even a very young child. Be aware of these messages. Talk to your child about what she sees and hears.

Let your child enjoy childhood. Try to limit the amount of advertising she sees.

For more information on marketing to children, see the "*Families*" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Healthy sexual development

Every person is a sexual being from birth until death. Sexuality is a natural part of all of our lives. No matter our country, culture, or religion, we all develop as sexual beings.

For very young children, sexuality includes:

- Being male or female
- How we feel about ourselves
- How we feel about our bodies
- How we relate to others

As children get older, they begin to think about other issues, such as gender identity and sexual orientation.

Between ages 1 and 3 years, it's normal for children to:

- Begin to learn what it means to be a boy or a girl
- Be curious about their own bodies and about other people's bodies
- Begin to notice differences between boys' bodies and girls' bodies, and between children's bodies and adult bodies
- Enjoy being naked
- Explore their own bodies, including their genitals
- Masturbate—touch their genitals because it feels good
- Talk about their bodies
- Be able to understand the correct words for body parts



What parents can do

Learning about sexuality starts at birth and continues for as long as we live.

As a parent, you are your children's first and most important teacher. Many parents find talking about sexuality uncomfortable. But it's an important part of your child's development and worth the effort. It may help you to know that you teach your children a lot about sexuality and about your family's values by how you relate to them and to other family members.

- Your gentle care teaches children about love and affection.
- Treating your children with love and respect teaches them about healthy relationships.
- They learn from you and other family members what it means to be a boy or a girl.
- Your everyday actions teach them your values and what you think is right and wrong.
- The way you react to normal behaviour like masturbation and to your children's genitals—for example during diaper changes or while learning to use the toilet—affects how they feel about their body.





To help your child develop healthy feelings about sexuality:

- **Know what to expect.** It's normal and healthy for toddlers to be curious about all parts of their body. It's normal for them to touch their genitals—it feels good and is comforting. It's normal for them to have erections or vaginal wetness—it's a physical reflex.
- **Be aware of how you react.** It's important for children to feel good about all of their body parts, including their genitals. Be aware of how you react to poop and pee when changing diapers and while toddlers are learning to use the toilet. Treat it as normal and natural. Try not to make faces or seem disgusted.

Toddlers touch their genitals the way they touch any part of their body. It's normal and natural for them to do this. When children touch themselves in private, ignore it or give them something else to do.

- **Teach your child that everyone is different.** People can look different from one another. People can live in different kinds of families. This is okay.
- **Teach the correct names for all body parts.** Children need to learn the words "penis," "vulva," and "anus" just as much as they need to learn "ear," "knee," and "hand." Bath time and diaper changes can be good times to teach these words for body parts. Help your child understand that boys and girls have different parts, but both are equally special.

Knowing the names of all their body parts helps children develop self-esteem and a healthy body image. It also makes it possible for them to talk about their body.

- **Teach your child what's okay and what's not.** There are things that are okay to do in private, but not in public. Teach your children that the sexual parts of their body are private. Tell children clearly what is okay and what isn't without making them feel guilty or ashamed. You could say, *"I know it feels good when you touch your body like that but it's something that you do when you're by yourself at home."*

- **Teach children that their body belongs to them.** They have the right to decide who can and can't touch their body. They have a right to say "No" when they don't want someone to touch them. Help your children understand this by not forcing them to sit on laps or kiss people when they don't want to. Teach your children that other people's bodies are private, too.

- **Answer questions clearly and simply.** Questions about where babies come from or why boys have penises are a chance to start talking about sexuality.

All children are different. Some ask lots of questions. Others don't. There are good books about sexuality for children of all ages. Many parents find these helpful in answering questions. Books can also be a good way to start talking about sexuality when children don't ask questions.

- **Take advantage of "teachable moments."** Teachable moments happen often. For example, you can look at family photos and talk about relationships. "Pat and Jamie are married." Or if a pet is pregnant, you can talk about where puppies and babies come from. "Babies grow inside their mommy." Be sure to talk at a level your children are able to understand. If they want more information, they'll ask.

Whether you know it or not, you are teaching your children about sexuality every day. You can help them develop healthy feelings about sexuality by continuing to learn about it yourself. Read about sexuality. Talk about sexuality with people whose ideas you respect.

The more you know, the more comfortable you'll be in talking about sexuality with your children.

If you start talking with your children about sexuality when they're young, it will likely be

easier to talk with them as they grow older. When you are open and honest about sexuality, you are teaching them that they can trust you and talk to you. They'll know that when they come to you with questions you'll listen respectfully and answer honestly.



Added info...

Many parents want more information about sexuality.

Some good sources of information are:

- Health care providers
- Public health staff (contact information, page 166)
- Libraries (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**)
- Sexual health centres (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**)



Your toddler wants you to know...

Hug me. Pay attention to me. I need to know that you'll love me forever. This will help me to feel good about who I am and what I can do.

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Development



My baby isn't such a baby anymore! She's growing fast and it seems like she can do something new every day. What can I expect?

Developing skills

Between the ages of 12 and 36 months, your baby will grow into a toddler. He's no longer a baby, but he's not quite a "big kid" yet either.

Your toddler's stage of development has a big effect on when he's ready for things like learning to use the toilet and moving to a bed.

Remember that your toddler will grow and develop in his own way, at his own speed. Every child is different—for example, some develop muscle skills sooner than they develop speaking skills. Some develop speaking skills sooner than muscle skills.

Give your toddler the time and love he needs to grow and develop in his own way.



Added info...

Languages and development

The ability to speak more than one language is a gift many families are able to give to their children. It may seem that your child learns to speak more slowly when learning two or more languages. This is common. As children develop, most do fine in more than one language.

Added info...

Breastfeeding and development

Breastfeeding continues to give your child the nourishment he needs to grow and develop. As your toddler develops, your breastmilk changes to meet his changing needs.

Breastfeeding to 2 years and beyond has many benefits for your toddler.

New skills to watch for

Between 12 and 18 months, your toddler will learn to...

Walk by herself.

Push and pull things while walking.

Crawl upstairs or walk upstairs holding your hand. Crawl backwards downstairs.

Bend over or squat to pick things up.

Stack 2 blocks, then 3 blocks, then 4 blocks.

Hold and drink from a cup. Drink from a straw.

Pick up and eat finger food.

Take off some clothes—like shoes, socks, mittens and hats.

Turn pages in a book—probably more than one at a time!

Roll and throw a ball.

Put small things through holes into a container.

Say about 10 words, but understand more words than she can say.

Respond to her own name.

Use some familiar words, like, “No,” “Mine,” “Bye-bye,” and “Uh-oh.”

Understand simple questions and directions. “Roll the ball.” “Say goodnight to Granny.”

Use words and actions to communicate—like pointing and saying, “Milk,” to get a drink, or waving and saying “Bye-bye.”

Use two-word sentences—“What’s that?” “All gone.”

Copy what adults and other kids do. Try to copy what they say.

Know she’s a separate person. Know herself when she sees her face in a mirror. Call herself by name.

Show love for parents and family.



Between 18 and 24 months, your toddler will learn to...

Stand on tiptoes.

Walk backwards and sideways.

Walk downstairs holding your hand.

Run, jump, and hop.

Dance to music.

Push himself along on a riding toy.

Climb on and off furniture.

Kick a ball.

Stack as many as 6 blocks.

Put things into a small container.

Sort toys and other things by shape or colour.

Open cabinets and drawers. Turn knobs.

Scribble with a large crayon.

Eat with a spoon without too much mess.

Eat most foods without gagging.

Say about 50 words.

Point to people or things when you say their name. Point to a picture of a ball when you ask, *"Where's the ball?"*

Say the names of familiar people, animals or parts of his body. Point to parts of his body if you ask. For example, *"Where's your knee?"*

Use sentences with 3 or more words — *"Mommy go bye-bye."* *"Me do it!"*

Follow simple directions. *"Hold Mommy's hand."* *"Close the door."*

Make-believe and pretend when playing — like pretending to talk on the phone, feed a teddy with a spoon, or breastfeed a doll.

Play near other children. Like to watch other children.

Become very upset and angry when he can't do what he wants. He may have tantrums.



Between 24 and 36 months, your toddler will learn to...

Walk up and down the stairs alone, putting one foot on each step.

Run. Climb. Jump. Throw and kick a ball.

Seat herself on a chair. Open doors.

Put on her coat. Dress and undress herself—with a little help!

Build a tower of 6 or more blocks.

Eat with a spoon and fork—and not too much mess!

Scribble. Copy lines and circles.

Turn pages one at a time.

Screw and unscrew lids.

Use 200 or more words. Speak in sentences 3 to 5 words long.

Ask questions—*“Why?”* is a favourite!
Answer simple questions. *“Where’s the ball?”*

Repeat simple rhymes and songs.
Understand simple stories.

Use pronouns. *“I want some milk.” “We go to the store.”*

Know her first and last name.

Understand two-part directions.
“Please get your hat and bring it to me.”
“Pick up your ball and put it in the basket.”
(She can’t always *follow* your directions, but can understand them better now.)

Understand opposites, like hot and cold, stop and go, in and out.

Tell you about what she’s doing.
Tell little stories.

Use her imagination and make things up while playing. For example, having imaginary friends. Or playing house with dolls or stuffed animals.

Laugh at silly ideas, words or stories.

Enjoy guessing games.

Name pictures in books.

Do simple puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces.

Count “1-2-3.”

Pay attention for about 3 minutes at a time.

Understand more about time. She can remember what happened yesterday. She understands “now,” “soon,” and “later.”

Want to do everything for herself.

Be more interested in other children and like being with other kids. She’s learning to play with other kids in a group.

Know what “mine” means. She’s still learning to share and take turns.

Like to help you. She wants to do what you do—for example, help with housework.

Begin to understand simple rules.

Be able to express her love for other people.

When to wonder about your toddler's development

Trust your instincts. If you are concerned about your child's development at any time, you can contact Early Intervention Nova Scotia ([contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**](#)), your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 166](#)) or your health care provider. You can also get information about your child's development through Family Resource Centres and early childhood educators.



Double Check

Remember: You know your child best! You'll find information on looking for help from health services in your community in the "Welcome" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

There are no stupid questions! You have a right to information about your toddler's health and development. Ask questions until you get the information you need.



Look for help if you notice one or more of these things about your toddler.

By 18 months, your toddler:

- Can't walk by himself
- Can't say at least 8 to 10 words that you can understand
- Doesn't seem to know common things around the home—like a brush, phone, fork, or spoon

By age 2, your toddler:

- Doesn't use sentences with at least 2 words.
- Can't copy other people's actions or words—for example, can't wave or clap when he sees others doing it
- Can't follow simple instructions
- Can't run without falling

By age 3, your toddler:

- Has trouble going up and down stairs
- Doesn't speak clearly enough for others to understand him most of the time
- Has trouble picking up and handling small things
- Can't understand simple instructions
- Isn't interested in other children
- Can't build a tower of more than 4 blocks
- Can't copy a circle

Screen time and development

In the first 2 years of life, your baby's brain triples in size. As it grows, your baby's brain is making connections that will enable her to learn to speak, to think, and to pay attention.

How well your baby's brain develops depends on what she sees, hears, and does.

There is a lot of research showing that sitting your toddler in front of a TV or computer screen won't help her brain develop. This is true even for shows that are made for toddlers.

Added info...

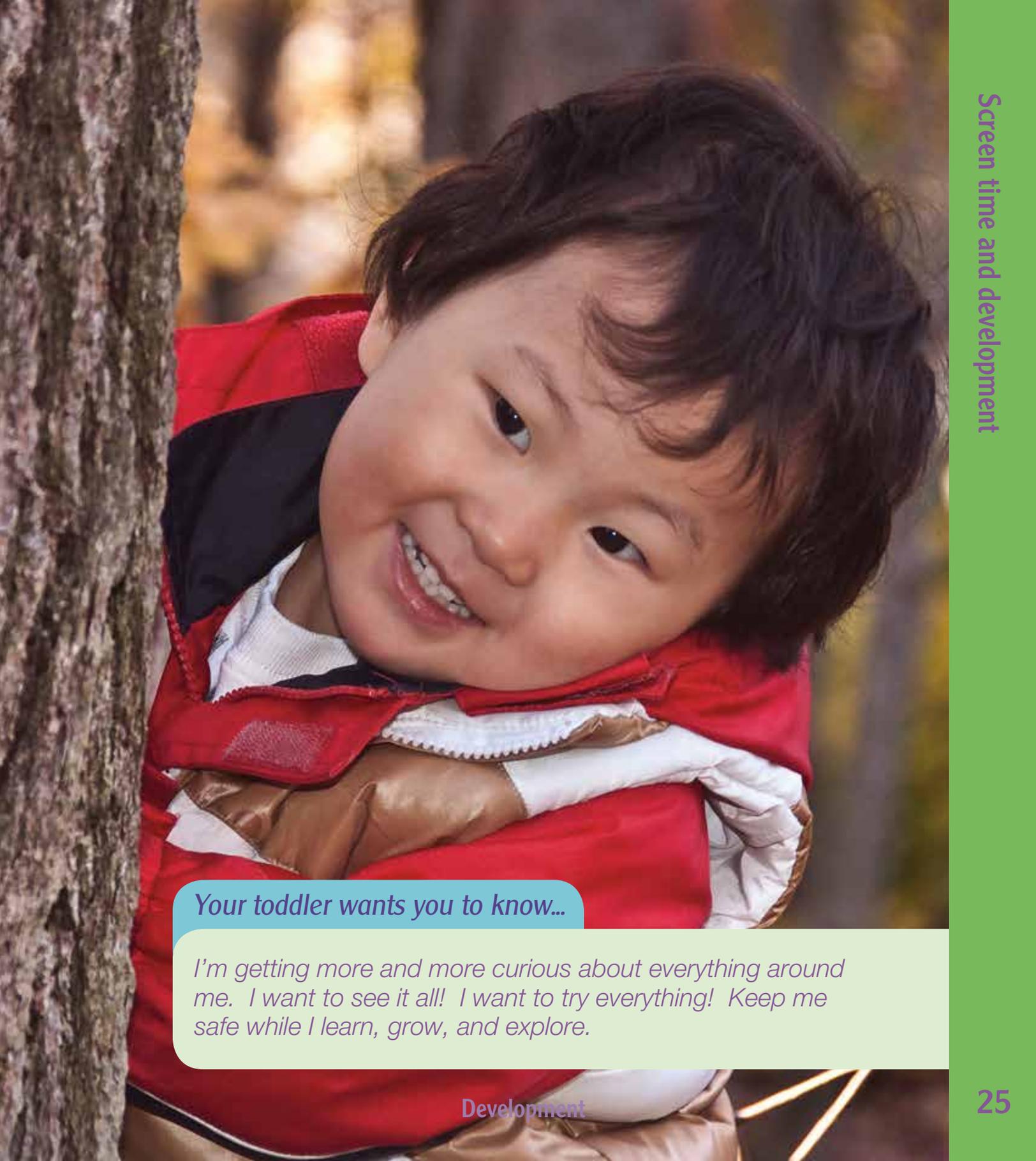
Many parents are tempted to use TV as a way to keep children busy while they are cooking or doing other chores. There are lots of other activities that toddlers will enjoy instead. Your toddler could be:

- Playing near you
- Singing silly songs with you
- Putting on some music
- Colouring or doing puzzles at the table or in a high chair near you
- Helping you to stir, mix, tear lettuce or do other safe parts of cooking
- Using empty plastic containers to make towers or to dump and pour
- Using empty pots and pans to copy you while you cook

In fact, the more time a toddler spends watching TV or videos, or playing video games, the more likely screen time is to have a bad effect. Children who spend time with TV, videos, and video games learn fewer words and have more difficulty focusing.

Playing alone, playing with you, doing things for herself, and being active are more important for your child's development—in mind and body—than any video, TV show, or computer game. You'll find information on limiting screen time in the "*Families*" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.





Your toddler wants you to know...

I'm getting more and more curious about everything around me. I want to see it all! I want to try everything! Keep me safe while I learn, grow, and explore.

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Play



My little guy plays all the time! Everything's a game to him. Is he actually learning anything or is it just a big waste of time?

Play is important

Children love to play! They do it naturally, easily, and joyfully. And they love to play with you.

Play teaches children the joy of doing and learning new things. Play is children's work. It is never a waste of time. Play is how children learn about themselves, their world, and the people in it. Play helps the brain develop.

Toddlers are curious about everything. They want to try everything and do everything. Play helps them satisfy their need to know. It helps them learn to think and to solve problems. They explore, ask questions, find answers, and try new things.

- **Active play** helps keep toddlers' growing bodies strong and healthy. It helps them learn what their body can do—like run, jump, spin around, throw, and catch.
- **Playing with others** helps toddlers learn social skills—like making friends and getting along in a group.
- **Messy play** teaches them to enjoy the world around them. Things like splashing in puddles, digging in sand, and squishing playdough between their fingers teach them how things feel and what they do. Toddler play can be messy! Getting dirty is part of the fun and learning.
- **Stories, rhymes, and musical play** help develop language skills.

- **Make-believe play** helps children understand their feelings and use their imagination. It gives them a chance to try out skills they'll use in daily life.

There are many ways to play. All of them help children to learn, grow, and have fun!

Added info...

Spending time outdoors with your child will help him develop in many ways—physically, mentally, and socially.

Give your child lots of chances to play outside and to experience the outdoors.

Added info...

Playing and learning are both natural for children.

Toddlers learn by:

- Seeing something they want to do
- Trying to do it
- Doing it over and over

They play the same way.

Make time for play

Make time for children to play in their own way and explore their world.

- **Give your child lots of chances to play in different ways**—active play, creative play, imaginary play, quiet play. Give him time to play alone and time to play with you.
- **Arrange play dates.** Playing with other children and adults will help your child to learn the give and take that comes with being in a group. A play date doesn't have to be at someone's home. Group activities like storytime at the library or playtime at a Family Resource Centre also give your child a chance to play with others.

Keep in mind that when toddlers play in a group, they don't always play **with** each other.

For example, a child may play by himself, even though there are other children around him. Or he may play side by side with another child. And sooner or later, children do learn to play together!

No matter how your toddler chooses to play in a group, being with other children is important and helps your child learn and develop.

Added info...

Play is fun and exciting for toddlers. Sometimes it's so much fun that they don't want to stop.

It can be difficult for a toddler to stop doing something he's enjoying. It often helps to give him some time to get used to the idea and be ready to move on. For example, start with something like:

"I know you're having fun, but we have to go home."

Then, after a minute or two:

"One more minute. Then we have to stop and go home."

Then, when the minute is up:

"Okay, time to go."

When it's time to go, leave. Your toddler may not like this at first but if you're consistent, he'll get used to it.

You'll find more information about this in the *"Behaviour"* section on [page 51](#).



Play with your child



You are your child's most important playmate and first teacher.

There are many reasons to spend lots of time playing with your child.

- Playing with your toddler is a natural way to teach important skills—like taking turns, seeing other points of view, and being kind to others. Playing with you can help your child learn to communicate—both with words and actions.
- Playing together makes your attachment to each other stronger. It makes your child feel special and loved. It builds her self-esteem. (For more information on self-esteem, see page 9.)

- Playing together can give you and your child a chance to relax and enjoy one another.

When you play with your child:

- Keep it simple and safe.
- Follow your child's lead—children know how to play.
- Give your child your full attention. Get down on the floor with her. Play **together**.
- Show your child how to get along by being a good example—say *“Please”* and *“Thank you.”* Take turns.
- Do lots of different things together—sing, dance, roll on the floor, blow bubbles, splash in water, finger paint, read.

Playing games and doing things together are fun ways to help your toddler to learn and grow.

Follow your toddler's cues. She'll let you know what she likes best and what she doesn't like.

Added info...

You don't need a special “play time” to have fun with your toddler. Anytime you spend together can be playtime. For example:

- On the bus
- At the market
- In the car
- Walking outdoors
- Bath time
- Getting dressed

Anytime you talk, sing, tell stories, or laugh together, your toddler is learning.

She'll also let you know when she's tired of one thing and ready to move to another. You may get tired of a game, song, or story long before your toddler does.

Play with your toddler when she's alert and interested. Let her set the pace. If you try an activity and your toddler isn't interested, wait a few days or weeks and try it again.

Keep in mind that your toddler will continue to enjoy many of the same activities over time—for example, playing dress-up or playing house. As she develops more skills, she'll be able to play the same games in new ways.

It's also helpful to remember that many games and activities develop several skills at the same time. For example, dancing helps develop both social skills and physical skills.

Try lots of different activities with your toddler. Throughout this section, you'll find games and activities to get you both started.

Enjoy every minute! Discover the fun of playing and learning together.

Added info...

Your praise is important to your toddler. You can encourage your toddler by being very clear about what you're praising. Say things like:

- "You did it!"
- "You pushed the box all the way to the kitchen!"
- "You found the puppy in the picture!"

When you praise your toddler, smile and clap. Let her see and hear how proud you are.



Play and development



Play helps children develop language, social, thinking, and physical skills.

While playing, children develop their ability to use words to say what they want and how they feel.

While playing, children learn to solve problems. They develop their ability to figure things out for themselves.

While playing, children learn through their senses. They find out that playdough is squishy, that sand runs through their fingers, and that bubbles float away.

While playing, children learn how to use their body. They learn how it feels to jump up and down, run through the grass, and push their stroller. They learn the joy of moving through their world.

Play helps children develop a sense of who they are and what they can do.

Play develops language skills

Between ages 1 and 3 years, your toddler's ability to use words develops by leaps and bounds.

Talk, read, and play with your child whenever you can. All of these activities will help him learn to listen, pay attention, and remember. Play is a natural way for children to develop language skills. Follow your child's lead. Encourage and support him as he plays.

How you can help develop language skills through play

- **Play with words.** Sing songs, play rhyming games, and tell stories with your child. Listen to the stories your child tells you. Read, sing, and tell stories in a playful way. Use different voices. Be silly. Show your child how much fun she can have with words.
- **Have fun with books.** Choose books that encourage your child to participate and play—to repeat words, to count, to turn pages, to lift flaps, to feel textures. Help her to name the colours, objects, and letters she sees on the pages. Read books that repeat the same words and sounds. Choose books that have funny-sounding or rhyming words. Look for books that connect with your child's life or that are about things she's interested in. Make up stories about the pictures in books. Keep books in different places around your home so they're always easy to find. Read to your toddler several times each day. You'll find lots of good books to choose from at your local library (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Double Check

You'll find more information on when toddlers develop language skills in the "Development" section (page 17).

- **Talk to your toddler.** Name her body parts while dressing and bathing. When she points to something, tell her what it is. Tell her the names of the food she eats. Tell her the words for her clothes while she's getting dressed. Describe what she's doing as she plays. Help her learn words that describe her feelings. *"You look like a happy girl!" "Are you feeling sad?" "Did that make you mad?"* Help her count toys as she drops them into a bag. Show her what words like first and last, up and down, big and little, fast and slow mean.
- **Pay attention when your toddler talks to you.** Try to understand what she's telling you. Help her find the words she needs.
- **Point out familiar sounds**—like birds singing, dogs barking, cars passing, children playing. Tell her what these sounds are. Make the sounds yourself—bark like a dog, meow like a cat. Encourage her to copy you.
- **Play music.** Give your little one all kinds of music to listen to and sing along with. Hold her hands and dance. Clap, hop, and march to the music.
- **Give your toddler time with other adults and family members.** Having more people to talk to will help develop her speaking skills.

Added info...

Toddlers learn new words by hearing other people say them. They repeat the words they hear. The more words they hear, the more words they learn.

If your toddler says a word that sounds funny, don't laugh at her or correct her.

Just say the word the right way so she can hear it again.

- **Give your toddler time with other children.** Children learn language skills from adults, but they practice while they play with other children.

Added info...

If you are uncomfortable about reading aloud to your toddler, literacy programs offer classes that can help improve your skills (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Play develops social skills



Between ages 1 and 3 years, your toddler is starting to relate to other people and move into a wider world.

Your toddler will be able to show a wider range of feelings. He'll respond more to others and show his love for his family. While he's playing, he'll copy what he sees adults and other children doing.

At this age, children start to know that some things belong to them—"Mine!" is a favourite word. They don't yet understand how to share. They also start wanting to be more independent and do things for themselves—"Me do it!" is another favourite saying.

Play develops a child's social skills—the ability to feel emotions, to form bonds with his family, and to make friends. Play allows children to develop these skills while they are safe and secure in their family, community, and culture.

How you can help develop social skills through play

- **Spend lots of time playing with your child.** Follow your child's lead. Let her decide what to play.
- **Play "pretend" together.** Toddlers watch what grown-ups and older kids do and try to do the same things. Join in the games—for example, pretend to talk to her on the phone. Use toys and household items to let your child pretend to do things like visit the doctor, go grocery shopping, cook dinner, and breastfeed the baby. When she plays with dolls or stuffed animals, show her how to give them the same loving care that you give her. This kind of play helps children make sense of real life. It helps them understand how others feel and helps them feel good about themselves.

- **Arrange play dates.** Spending time with other children is important to toddlers. Be patient and keep a close eye on your toddler when she plays with others. It will take a while for her to learn how to get along and share. When your child is ready to play with others, teach her how to be a friend.
- **Support your toddler's growing independence.** Give her the time she needs to solve problems. Offer help when she needs it, but give her a chance to do things for herself.
- **Have daily routines and set limits.** Help your toddler learn what you expect of her. Children feel safe when they know what to expect and this makes it easier for them to learn.



Play develops thinking and creative skills

Toddlers' brains are always busy. They want to know how things work. They want to know why things happen. They want to know how things fit together—and how they come apart.

They want to see how high they can build a tower of blocks. And they want to hear the noise it makes when it comes crashing down!

They want to see, feel, hear, smell, and taste new things. They're using all of their senses to understand their world.

Play is how children answer their questions and begin to understand how things work.

How you can help develop thinking and creative skills through play

- **Play games that help your child figure things out.** Hide things under pillows for your toddler to find. Help him sort things by shape, size, or colour. For example, put all the red toys together or sort the big trucks from the small ones. Help him match lids to pots of different sizes. Give him toys that he can take apart and put together. Sorting shapes and putting puzzles together teaches about matching, counting, and how things fit together.

- **Give him quiet time to think.** He'll be able to pay attention to one thing for a little while. Slowly, he'll be able to spend more time looking at or playing with one thing.
- **Give him good experiences using all his senses.** Playing with different shapes, smells, and textures helps him explore his senses. He learns what things smell good and what things don't. He learns how some things squish when they're squeezed. He learns that things feel different when they're wet and when they're dry. Give him:
 - Interesting things to look at—indoors and out
 - Lots of different smells and tastes
 - Different kinds of music to listen to
 - Textures to feel—water to splash in, playdough to squish, sand to run through his fingers
- **Enjoy lots of books with your child.** Let him turn the pages. Ask him to tell you what's in familiar pictures.
- **Give your toddler time to draw and paint** with chubby markers, crayons, and non-toxic paints.
- **Let him play in the water** with sponges, plastic cups, toys that sink, and toys that float. Go for walks on rainy days. Splash in the puddles!
- **Give him chances to dig and play in sand or dirt**—at the beach or playground.
- **Encourage his imagination.** Join in when he plays “pretend.” Listen when he tells stories. Ask him to make up stories about pictures in books.



Double Check

Spending a lot of time in front of a screen—watching TV or videos or playing with video games—can affect your child's development. For more information, see the “Families” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Play develops physical skills



Toddlers love to move! They're on the go from morning to night exploring their world. It's amazing how much energy a little body holds!

And toddlers need every bit of that energy. By the time she's 3, your toddler will learn a lot about using her body. She's learning to use big muscles to run, jump, climb, throw, and kick a ball, and pedal a tricycle. She's learning to use small muscles to open doors, build a block tower, get dressed, hold crayons, and draw.

Being active is not just fun for toddlers—it's necessary. They need active play to develop the physical skills they'll be using every day for the rest of their life.



Double Check

Physical activity and healthy eating are both important for healthy growth and development. You'll find information about healthy eating in the section on "Food," page 99.

Physical activity is necessary for your toddler now.

- It helps her understand what her body can do. It helps her develop the skills she needs every day.
- It helps with brain development and learning.
- It builds strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination.
- It helps her to eat and sleep better.
- It helps her to burn off energy and feel calmer and happier.

Physical activity is necessary for your child as she grows.

- Supporting your child's love of being active now will make it more likely that she'll stay active as she grows. This means that she'll be healthier and feel better throughout her life.
- Having basic physical skills will allow your child to enjoy many sports and activities as she gets older.

Children play naturally and are naturally active. But they do need your help and support to learn physical skills like jumping, kicking, throwing, catching, and running.

Physical activity needs to be a natural part of your child's day—like sleeping, eating, and learning.

Help your child to learn to love active play and the joy of using her body. Make time for your child to be active every day. Rain, shine, fog, and snow are all fun for children.

How you can help develop physical skills through play

- **Be active with your child.** Play active games together—hide and seek, tag, follow the leader. Let your toddler see you walking, running, climbing, and jumping while you play together. Children learn by copying what you do. Let your child see you living a healthy, active life every day.
- **Encourage walking and moving.** Give him the chance to push and pull chairs, big boxes, laundry baskets, and toys—like a wagon or toy lawnmower. Toddlers love to push their own strollers. Swing at the playground. Run in the park. Climb—in and out of a big box, up and down stairs, on and off the sofa. Jump off of a step. Kick and throw balls. Slide in the snow. Splash in the water. Wiggle, dance, and spin to different kinds of music—fast and slow. Roll like a log, balance on one leg, practice stopping and starting, and walking forward and backward. Help your toddler learn how to use his body. Encourage him as he tries new skills.
- **Give your little explorer space for moving and being active**—indoors and outdoors. Set up a play space in your home. Visit parks, playgrounds, and beaches. Walk around your neighbourhood.
- **Give your toddler lots to do with his hands.** Blocks to stack and knock down. Toys to pull apart and put back together. Big crayons to scribble with. Containers to open and close. Toys and other things to sort by shape, size, or colour. Play finger games—like “Itsy Bitsy Spider.”



Added info...

You're not the only one who can give your child chances to play actively.

Be sure your child's other caregivers—like babysitters and grandparents—know how important active play is.

When you choose a childcare centre or family home daycare, look for one that plans for active indoor and outdoor play every day.

Added info...

Both boys and girls need to be physically active. They both need the same chances to use their bodies and develop physical skills.

Girls need chances to run, throw, climb, jump, and get dirty. Boys need chances to dance and move to music.

Encourage both boys and girls to play actively. What is okay for boys is okay for girls. What's okay for girls is okay for boys.

Added info...

Toddlers need **a lot** of physical activity every day. Try to avoid long periods of time in cribs, strollers, seats, and jumpers. A toddler shouldn't be still for longer than 60 minutes at a time—unless he's sleeping!

Your child needs active play every day—at least 2 hours. More activity is even better. Try to take your child outdoors for some of his daily active play.

You don't have to do all the active playing at once. It can build up over the day. In fact, lots of short periods of active play are better than one long one.



Double Check

If you are interested in active play programs in your area, check the Recreation Nova Scotia website for the recreation centre closest to you. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

Your local Family Resource Centre may also offer programs. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

Games and activities

12 to 18 months

Games with words, songs, and actions

Your toddler will continue to enjoy many of the games you are already playing—like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” You can also add new songs, like “The Wheels on the Bus,” “I’m a Little Teapot,” or any singing or rhyming games you enjoyed as a child. Grandparents and elders can be a good source for songs and rhymes from your culture. You’ll find many books of rhymes and songs in your local library, Family Resource Centre ([contact information is in Loving Care: Parents and Families](#)) or bookstore.

Name game

Everything has a name! Help your toddler learn by saying the names of people, parts of the body, and everyday items—like plates, chairs, trucks, fruits, and vegetables. Play this game when you go for walks, when you’re in a car, at the market, on the beach, in the park—anywhere there’s something to see.

Animal noises

Show your toddler how to make the sounds animals make. Cats say “Meow.” Dogs go “Woof woof!” Cows say “Moo.” Pigs go “Oink.” Read books about animals and make the sounds with your child. Pretend to be a Daddy or Mommy dog and let your toddler be the puppy. Talk to each other in barks and woofs!



Dance with me!

Put on some music and show your toddler how to dance. Pick her up and dance around. Put her down and dance together. If other family members are around, ask them to join in.

More lids

Your toddler can now start to do a lot more with the lids she’s been playing with (see the “Play” section of [Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months](#)). For example, you can cut a slit about 1 cm wide and 10 cm long (½ in. wide, 4 in. long) in the lid of a plastic container. Show your toddler how to put the lids through the slot. Or put stickers of different kinds of animals on the lids and ask her to find the lid with the dog, etc.

The collector

Let your child pick up things that catch her eye when you're out for walks. Shells from the beach, stones from the park, and sticks or leaves on the ground all interest toddlers. Talk about what she finds. Carry them around in a bucket. Remember to remind her, *"Put this in the bucket, not in your mouth."*

This game is also fun indoors. Give your child a paper or cloth bag so she can carry things she collects—like lids, stuffed toys, blocks.

Tossing and dumping

Put a large box or basket on the floor. Show your toddler how to toss (not drop) soft balls and small toys into the basket. Join in and toss too. After you've finished tossing, let her dump everything back onto the floor and start again.

Obstacle course

Set up a course that lets your child do many kinds of movement. You can include boxes and tunnels to crawl through, pillows to climb over, boxes or blocks to run around, small things to jump over, balls to throw into a box—anything you can think of.

Water play

Toddlers enjoy splashing and playing in water. Fill a bucket or large bowl and let your child scoop out water to fill a smaller container. Add some dish soap so your toddler can play with the bubbles.

Blowing bubbles is also fun for toddlers. Young toddlers like to chase them. Older toddlers like to blow the bubbles themselves.



Playdough

Playing with playdough is fun now and your child will continue to enjoy it as she gets older. Playdough is easy to make at home.

Playdough

What you need

- 1 cup (250 mL) of flour
- ¼ cup (60 mL) of salt
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) cream of tartar
- 1 cup of water
- a few drops of food colouring
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) cooking oil

What you do

1. Mix everything together in a pot.
2. Stir over medium heat until the mixture is warm and makes a lump in the pot.
3. Scrape onto a flour-covered counter and knead until smooth.
4. Store in a plastic bag or container. Keep in the fridge.

Where does this go?

When you are getting dressed or folding laundry, ask your toddler to tell you what part of the body things go on. For example, hold up a pair of socks and ask, “Where do socks go?”

Feelings

When looking at books, name the feelings of the people in the pictures. For example, “That person looks angry.” “The little boy is smiling. He looks happy.”

Let’s pretend

Play pretend with a stuffed animal. Help and encourage your child to feed and dress the ‘baby.’ For example, “It’s cold today. Do you think teddy needs a blanket?” “Teddy hurt his head. Can you kiss it to make it better?”



Double Check

The *Read to Me* bag you received when your baby was a newborn contains a CD of rhymes and songs you can enjoy with your toddler.

18 to 24 months

Puppet play

Use a puppet (or just put your hand in a clean sock) to talk to your toddler. *"Hi! I'm Joe Sock. What's your name?"* Give your child a puppet, too. Encourage his puppet to talk to your puppet.

Baby pictures

Make a little book of baby pictures of your toddler. Talk about what was happening in the pictures. Talk about the other people in the pictures. *"This is you with your Uncle Ted. You were just born! See how little you were! Your Granny made that blue blanket for you when you were born."* Ask questions about the people in the pictures. *"Who's that holding you?"*

Helping game

Ask your toddler to help you. Give easy directions, like: *"Mommy needs help. Would you bring me my shoe?"* or *"Time for a clean diaper! Please bring Daddy a diaper."* You may need to help at first by pointing to what you want. And don't forget to say *"Thank you"* and tell him what a big help he is when he brings what you asked for!

Playing house

Set up a little kitchen where your toddler can play house. A few cooking utensils, some spoons, and plastic dishes are all you need. You can make a stove by drawing on an empty box. A plastic dishpan can become a sink. Help your toddler pretend to cook and to feed his dolls and stuffed animals. You can also make a little bed for a doll or stuffed animal so your toddler can tuck it in and play bedtime.



CAUTION!

Laundry baskets and cardboard boxes make safe dress-up boxes.

Be sure everything in your child's dress-up box is clean and safe—for example, no strings, beads, or buttons to choke on.

For more information on safe toys, see [page 49](#).

For more information on childproofing, see the section on *"Safety,"* [page 143](#).

I can help!

Toddlers love to help. Let your child do things with you to help around the house. He can help sweep the floor with a little broom or shovel snow with his own shovel.

Play

Dress-up box

Make a dress-up box with colourful hats, shoes, handbags, and costumes. Your child will enjoy dressing up and admiring himself. Clothes from a dress-up box also help with playing pretend—pretending to be a grown-up, an animal, or a character from a favourite story. Your closet is a great place to find things for a dress-up box. So is a thrift shop. As your child gets older, you can add new things to the dress-up box.

Find the real thing

Cut out pictures of everyday items—like pots, dishes, clothes, toys, etc. Show your child the picture and ask him to find the real thing. For example, *“This is a picture of a chair. Can you find a real chair for me?”*

Sorting

Let your toddler help when you fold the laundry. For example, ask him to find all the socks, then all the underwear. Another sorting game is to match different-sized plastic containers with their lids.

Animal action

Pretend to be different kinds of animals. (This can include dressing up with whiskers and tails, too!) Make animal noises and move like the animals do—wiggle like a snake, flap your wings and fly like a bird, arch your back like a kitten, run like a horse, waddle like a duck.

Lids again

Your toddler will still enjoy the lids he’s been playing with for a while. Put colours and shapes on the lids and play games where you find the colours or shapes that match.

The helper

Give your child small tools so he can play at doing jobs around the home. For example, with a paintbrush and a small bucket of water, he can paint the porch. With a flashlight, he can look for things in dark closets and under the bed.

Little artist

Give your child large crayons or markers and a large piece of paper. Let him hold his own crayon and make his own scribbles. Let him paint with a large paintbrush or his hands. Tape the paper to the floor or table to keep it still. You can use this activity to talk about colours, lines, and shapes, too. Look for non-toxic paints and markers.

Copy cat

Ask your toddler to copy what you do when you say, *“Copy cat!”* You can try many actions, like: *“Copy cat! Run in a circle!”* *“Copy cat! Roll on the ground!”* *“Copy cat! Jump!”* *“Copy cat! Clap your hands!”* Turn this around and let your toddler be *“Copy cat”* and tell you what to do!



Play

24 to 36 months

What did you do today?

In the evening—maybe at the dinner table—ask everyone what they did that day. Give your toddler a turn, too. Let her take her time. Help her remember if she forgets things, but let her tell the story her own way. Soon she'll be able to tell the family about her day.

My special book

Make a small book of photos of your toddler, family members, pets, neighbours, and friends. You can include photos of your own home and other family members' homes, too—anything that might interest your toddler. Talk about the people and places in the photos. Encourage your child to talk about them. *"Who's that?" "Show me Granny's house." "What's the puppy's name?"*

Silly game

Pretend you don't know what things are. Point to a dog and ask, *"Is that a cow?"* Let your child tell you what it really is. Be surprised. Say, *"Are you sure? Isn't it an elephant?"* It's fun for toddlers to be the one answering the questions for a change!

Tell me a story

When looking at books or magazines, ask your child to tell you what's going on in a picture. *"What's the kitty doing?"* Ask questions to help keep the story going. For example, *"Do you think the kitty has friends?" "Could another kitty be hiding in the tree?"* Listen to the story your child tells.



Walk the line

Help your child learn balance by laying a board or long strips cut from cardboard boxes on the floor or ground. Show her how to walk heel to toe along it. Show her how to spread her arms for balance, to look at something straight ahead, and to take slow steps.

How do you feel

Help your toddler name what she's feeling. *"You're smiling. Do you feel happy?" "Are you frustrated? I know it's hard to wait for your turn." "You look like you feel sad. How about a hug?"* Knowing that feelings have names will help your child understand what she's feeling and help her to talk about it. It's also the beginning of understanding that other people have feelings too.

Cutting with scissors

Help your child learn how to hold child-sized scissors and cut things herself. She can cut different kinds of paper or even playdough.

Big and small

Show your toddler 2 different sizes of the same thing—for example, 2 spoons, 2 shoes, 2 apples. Talk about, *“Which is the big one? Which is the small one?”* You can play this game anywhere, with anything—for example, dogs in the park, children on the playground, cans, boxes, and vegetables at the market. This game is fun to turn around. Have your toddler ask you, *“Which is big?”*

Touchy-feely

Put together sets of 2 each of several items with different shapes, sizes, and textures—2 spoons, 2 small balls, 2 soft mittens, 2 blocks. Put 1 of each into 2 paper bags. Take 1 out of a bag and show it to your toddler. Ask her to find the same item in the other bag without looking—just by feeling it. Hold the bag closed over her hand so she can’t peek!

Freeze

Begin by singing and dancing around the room. Then you (or your child) yells, *“Freeze!”* and everyone has to stop in whatever position they’re in. Count to 3, then start singing and dancing again.

Bowling alley

Line up several plastic bottles, milk cartons, or tissue boxes set on their ends. Show your child how to roll a ball to knock them down.

Where is it?

Hide a toy under a pillow or blanket. Ask your toddler to find it. Help and encourage her. *“Where’s the little car? Where do you think it is?”* Give clues. *“It’s hiding under something green.”*



Little chef

Let your child help prepare meals. She can help pick out food at the market. She can stir and pour ingredients. She can tear up lettuce for a salad. She can help set the table. She’ll enjoy helping and enjoy telling the family about it while they eat.

Catch the ball

Use a fairly big, soft ball. Start by rolling and tossing it to your child to help her get used to its size and feel. Ask your child to hold out her arms. Then stand close to her and gently throw the ball so it lands in her arms. Watch the ball leave your hands and keep watching until it is safely in her hands. Tell her to hold tight. Have her throw the ball back to you. Learning to catch takes longer than learning to throw, so be patient.

Toys



Toys don't need to be expensive, or even store-bought. Lots of things in your home make great toys for toddlers.

Your toddler will enjoy:

- **Toys for active play:** Toys to push and pull; ride-on toys to push along with their feet; a wagon or wheelbarrow to fill and pull around; balls and bean bags to throw; tunnels or boxes to crawl through; outdoor toys like swings, climbing gyms, tricycles, and sleds; music to move and dance to.
- **Toys for pretend play:** Old clothes, hats, costumes, and handbags for dress-up; dolls and stuffed animals; play tools, brooms and shovels; play phone; pots, pans, dishes, and spoons; cars and trucks; puppets; a small table and chairs.
- **Toys to sort, stack, put together, and take apart:** Nesting cups; stacking rings; puzzles; little cars and small animal and human figures; boxes, buckets, and containers to

sort things into and to carry things in; lids with stickers; toys with dials to turn, switches to flip, and knobs to pull.

- **Toys for creative play:** Crayons, markers, finger paints, safe child-sized scissors, glue, playdough; old greeting cards, wrapping paper, and magazines to cut up; blocks to build with; big boxes to turn into tunnels or cars.
- **Toys for messy play:** Bubbles to blow; sand—with pails and shovels, spoons and containers; water in a dishpan or old baby bath tub with toys that float or sink, and containers to pour from; bath toys; garden toys for digging and planting.
- **Toys for noisy play:** Toys that make music—drums, tambourines, bells, rattles. You can make music with pots or large plastic containers to drum on and pans to bang together.

Added info...

Children love to play with their toys. They can learn to love putting them away when they're done playing, too. Start slowly and teach them that cleaning up is part of the game.

Make cleaning up fun. Do it together.

- Play special music at cleanup time or make up a cleanup song.
- Make a game of cleanup. For example:
 - Pick up all the red toys.
 - Pick up all the trucks.
 - Put small toys in a dump truck and drive them to the toy box.

Added info...

Don't forget books!

Your child will enjoy all kinds of books—picture books, books of rhymes, storybooks, books about animals.

And most of all, your child will enjoy reading books with **you**.

CAUTION!

Everything your toddler plays with should be safe, clean, and right for her age.

Safe toddler toys:

- Have no sharp points or edges.
- Have no small parts that could break or pull off.
- Are too big to swallow or choke on. Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small.
- Have no strings or cords that are long enough to wrap around your toddler's neck.
- Are not too noisy. If a toy is so loud that you have to raise your voice above the noise, it could damage your toddler's hearing.

Check your toddler's toys often. Keep them clean. Carefully wash any household items you use as toys. Throw away broken or damaged toys.

Check with Consumer Product Safety (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**) to see if any of your child's toys have been recalled. This includes second-hand toys and toys you receive as gifts.

Remember: Your child is always safest when an adult is watching her while she plays.



Added info...

It can be a good idea to put some toys away for a few days once in a while. Then, when you bring them back, they'll seem new to your toddler.

Your toddler wants you to know...

Play with me! The games we play together help me to learn and grow. The time you give me when we play tells me that you love me.

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Behaviour



My toddler is changing so fast! I never know what she'll do or say next. Some days I wonder where my sweet baby has gone! What can I expect from her? And what can I do to help her?

What to expect



The years from 1 to 3 can be a fun, exciting, and frustrating time for you and your toddler.

Fun—because your toddler is growing into a little person who's interested in the world around him.

Exciting—because he's learning new things and developing new skills every day.

Frustrating—because your toddler wants to do things for himself and have some control over his life. When he can't do what he wants to do, he can get frustrated and angry. And this can be very frustrating for parents!

Added info...

The toddler years can be challenging for parents.

This can be a good time to reach out to other parents and to resources and programs in your community for support.

Your local Public Health Services office can be a good source of information ([contact information, page 166](#)). So can the Helpline and the other resources in the “*Support and Information Contacts*” section in the back of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

You can expect your toddler:

- **To be curious.** He wants to know everything. He wants to try everything. Every day is filled with “firsts.” He is learning to walk, run, and talk. He’s learning every minute.
- **To want to be independent.** He wants to do things for himself—feed himself, dress himself. Expect to hear the words “*Me do it!*” often.
- **To develop a mind of his own.** He is also starting to want some control over what happens to him. He gets upset when he doesn’t get what he wants. You can expect to hear the word “*No!*” a lot.
- **To be more interested in other people.** He is starting to show how much he loves the people close to him. He is **very slowly** learning how to get along with others and to play with other children. But you’ll still hear “*Mine!*” when other children are around.

Your toddler needs your patience, understanding, and love. He needs to know that he’s important to you. Set aside some time every day to talk and have fun doing something your child enjoys. This could be during bath time or right before bedtime—anytime when you can give him your complete attention. Be sure your child knows how much you like spending time with him. Be sure he knows how special he is to you. This time you spend together will help your child feel good about himself and strengthen the bond between you.

Added info...

Your toddler is learning to get along with his brothers and sisters, too. You’ll find information on this in the “*Families*” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Why do toddlers act the way they do?



A toddler's development, temperament, and changes in her life or routine can all affect her behaviour.

Development

The way a toddler behaves is very closely tied to her development. This is because there are some things she is still learning to do. For example, she's still developing the ability to understand reason, to be patient, and to control herself. Until she develops these abilities, she won't be able to understand the reasons why she should or shouldn't do things. She won't know how to share or take turns.

When you understand your child's development, you'll have a better idea about why she acts the way she does and what you can do to help her. For example:

- A toddler who "gets into everything" is just doing what she needs to do to learn about her world. She's being curious. It's your job to make your home safe and watch her closely so it's safe for her to explore. (You'll find more information on childproofing in the "Safety" section, page 143.)
- A toddler who grabs toys away from another child is trying to figure out how to get what she wants. She needs your help to learn how to ask for a turn.

- A child having a tantrum is letting off steam because she's frustrated or angry and doesn't know what to do about it. She needs you to help her understand her feelings and to find better ways to show them. (For more information on tantrums, see page 72.)
- A toddler who hits, bites, or behaves aggressively is trying out different ways to get what she wants. She may hit one day and be hit by another child the next day. She needs you to stay close and not label her as either a bully or a victim. She needs you to help her find better ways to get what she wants and to get along with others.

Development doesn't happen quickly. Your toddler develops skills and self-control bit by bit. Over time, she'll very slowly begin to understand reason and to cooperate with others.



Double Check

You'll find information about your child's development in the "Development" section of this book (page 16).

Added info...

Make sure that what you expect from your toddler is in line with her development.

A 1-year-old can't act like a 3-year-old. A 3-year-old can't act like a 5-year-old.

It's not fair to expect too much, too soon.

Temperament

Your toddler's temperament also affects his behaviour. By now, you have a pretty good idea of what your toddler's temperament is like.

- You'll know how he reacts to new people, places, and things.
- You'll know if he's outgoing or shy, calm, or active.
- You'll know if he moves quickly from one thing to another or if he can focus on one activity for a little while.

Your child's temperament will have a big impact on his behaviour.

Your own temperament will affect how you respond to him. For example:

- You may need to be patient while a shy, quiet child slowly gets used to playing with other children.
- You may have to control your frustration while you help an active child learn to wait for his turn and not push other children out of his way.
- You may have to give a child who has trouble focusing lots of support while he's learning new skills.

You can't change your toddler's temperament. But how you respond to his temperament will affect how he sees himself. If you see your child as special and lovable, he'll develop a strong sense of self-esteem.

As a parent, it's your job to understand your toddler's temperament and find ways to help him feel good about himself.



Change

When something in a toddler's life changes, her behaviour might change, too.

Some of the changes that can affect a toddler's behaviour are:

- A new baby
- Moving
- Being away from parents—for example, when you return to work or school
- Parents separating
- Parents fighting
- Being sick
- New childcare
- Family and friends who stay for a while and then go away

A toddler will often react to these changes by acting more like a baby. She may be clingy. She may want to breastfeed more often or drink from a bottle again. She may start to wet the bed again. Your toddler may also react by becoming more frustrated and angry than usual.

Stick to daily routines that your toddler is used to. When your child reacts to change, be patient. Give your toddler the extra time and attention she needs. Help her to feel loved and special. As your toddler gets used to the change in her life, this behaviour will stop.

Added info...

Even small changes in daily routines can affect a toddler's behaviour.

Holidays, visitors, and birthday parties are exciting! Your toddler will feel this and show it in her behaviour.



Double Check

You'll find information on helping your child deal with several kinds of change in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

These include:

- Dealing with loss and grief
- Getting along with siblings
- Adjusting to childcare

You'll find information on helping your toddler adjust when a parent is away for long periods of time on [page 7](#) of this book.

Loving guidance

You give your toddler loving guidance by being patient, understanding, gentle, and consistent.

Loving guidance is teaching your child to:

- Care about and respect others
- Learn the difference between right and wrong
- Develop the skills he needs to solve problems and get along with others

It can be difficult for a parent not to label what their toddler does as “good” or “bad.” Toddlers act the way they do because their brains are still developing. For example, your toddler wants to get along with others but he doesn’t know how. He isn’t being “bad” when he grabs toys or pushes another child away. He doesn’t need to be punished. He needs you to help him find a better way to get what he wants.

The goal of your loving guidance is to help your child learn to control his own behaviour. The best way to do this is to help your child learn that doing the right thing feels good. Praising and encouraging your child’s efforts to listen to you, to share, and to get along with others will help him learn this. Giving him toys or treats teaches him to expect a reward. Feeling good should be reward enough!

And remember: Nobody’s perfect, especially toddlers! It will take time for your child to learn and remember everything he needs to know. Your toddler will do exactly as you ask one day and exactly the opposite the next. This doesn’t mean that your child is trying to drive you crazy. It’s a normal part of his development.



Added info...

Some things that may seem cute when a toddler does them—for example, using bad words or spitting—won’t be cute when he’s older.

Now is the time to help your child learn the kind of behaviour he’ll need to get along with others.

Added info...

Just as your toddler is learning new skills, you are learning new parenting skills every day.

It will take time to learn everything you need to know. It can take a few tries to find what works best for you and your child.

Keep trying. It's not too late to change the way you respond to your child's behaviour. It's not too late to find the best way to help your child learn to behave and to get along with others.



Double Check

Punishment will not help a toddler learn to behave.

Punishments like sending a child to bed without his dinner or putting him in a room by himself are dangerous. They can affect a toddler's development. They can lead to abuse. For more information about the kinds of discipline that DON'T work, see [page 61](#).



Time-in and time-out

You may have heard that **“time-out”** is a good way to help a child calm down when she is upset or misbehaves. Time-out means having the child sit quietly, alone, for a few minutes. **Time-out does not work.**

Many parents find that **“time-in”** works better as a way to help a child learn to behave the way you want her to. Time-in means sitting quietly with your child on your lap or close beside you until she’s calmed down.

Your goal is to help your toddler to:

- Begin to understand her feelings and control her actions
- Learn better ways to get what she wants
- Get along with others

Punishment won’t help with this. Time, patience, and loving guidance will.

Time-out does NOT WORK because...

- **Your toddler is alone.** Being left alone can be very frightening for your toddler. And being frightened makes her even more upset.
- **Time-out is punishment.** It makes a child feel bad about what she’s done. It doesn’t help her learn what she **should** do. It doesn’t help her learn to calm herself down. It doesn’t teach her a better way to do something.
- **Time-out cuts off communication between you and your child.** Your child is alone, with no one to talk to.

Time-in WORKS because...

- **Your toddler is not alone.** She’s with you and will feel safe and loved while she settles down.
- **Time-in offers support.** Your toddler is still learning how to control herself and how to get along with others. She needs lots of love and support to do this. Time-in teaches her that you will help and support her when she needs it most. It gives her a chance to calm herself down in a place where she feels safe.
- **Time-in opens up communication between you and your child.** It gives you a chance to talk about what happened. Toddlers communicate through touch. Being close and holding your toddler tells her that she matters to you. It helps her feel safe and secure. When she feels this way, she’s much better able to learn to control herself.

Understanding and empathy



Understanding and caring about how another person feels is called “empathy.” Empathy is an important part of loving guidance.

Treating your child with understanding and empathy will show him that his feelings are important and that they matter to you. It will help him learn to understand his own feelings. It will also help him to begin to understand that other people have feelings too.

To show your understanding and empathy:

- 1. Put yourself in your child’s shoes.** What is he thinking or feeling?
- 2. Help him to give his feelings a name.** Put what he’s feeling into words. *“You seem excited!” “Do you feel sad?” “You’re looking happy today!”*
- 3. Offer support.** You know your child best. Offer whatever help or support he needs. This could be almost anything: a hug, a kiss, a smile, some help with what he’s doing, a change of activity, praise, encouragement, or saying you’re sorry.

Once you’ve helped your toddler understand his own feelings, he can begin to understand other people’s feelings. You can help by pointing out how his actions can affect others. For example:

“It makes Ali sad when you take his toy.”

“It hurts Mommy when you pull my hair.”

“Tanisha is crying. It hurts her feelings when you won’t let her play with you.”

“Look how happy Noah is to see you!”

Treat your child the way you’d like to be treated. Toddlers are people too. The more understanding and empathy you show to your toddler now, the more he will be able to show to you and to others as he gets older.

What **WON'T** help your child behave

There is now a lot of research showing that hitting and yelling at children hurts their body and mind. It can actually make their behaviour worse.

Helping your child learn all the things she needs to know to be safe and to get along with others can take a long time.

You need to be patient, gentle, and consistent.

Every parent has days when patience is hard to find. When you feel this way, it's important to remember the things that **WON'T** help your child to learn and behave the way you'd like her to.

Spanking

Hurting your child doesn't work. Spanking, smacking, hitting, and shaking won't teach your child right from wrong. Spanking teaches your child that it's okay to hit other people, especially if you're bigger. It teaches her to be afraid of you. It teaches her that hitting is a way to handle angry feelings. It teaches her that the important thing is not to get caught.

In fact, the more a child is spanked, the more likely it is she will do all the things you **DON'T** want her to do.

Spanking teaches your child to be afraid—afraid of you and afraid of being

hurt. It makes it hard for your child to trust you, hard for your child to respect you, and hard for your child to learn.

Spanking doesn't affect only your child. It can also have a serious impact on your entire family. If you spank your child, it's easy to cross the line into abuse. Any kind of punishment that injures a child is considered to be physical abuse. This includes scratches and bruises. Both the police and child protection services investigate child abuse. This can lead to assault charges. Your child could be removed from your care.

Yelling

Yelling and screaming frightens small children. When your toddler is afraid, she can't hear or understand what you want.

Yelling will teach your child to yell at you and others. It will teach her to be afraid of you. It will make it hard for her to trust you.

Added info...

The way you were treated as a child can affect how you treat your children.

Talk to a health care provider if you are concerned that things that happened to you as a child might affect how you respond to your children.

What **WON'T** help your child behave

Threatening, embarrassing or making fun of your toddler

You will not help your child learn by doing things like:

- Telling your child you won't love her if she doesn't do what you want
- Telling her she's stupid, bad, dumb, or a liar
- Letting her hear you tell others that she's stupid or bad
- Making fun of her

These are different kinds of emotional abuse— they hurt your child's spirit. Over time, they make her feel worthless, worried, and angry. They make it hard for your child to trust you. They make it hard for her to love and trust other people.

As a parent, your job is to help your child learn to control her own behaviour. Spanking, yelling, and threatening won't help your child. All they do is hurt her and teach her to fear and mistrust you.



Double Check

No matter how much time, patience, and loving guidance you give to your toddler, there will be times when she does things that upset or embarrass you.

This doesn't mean that you are a bad parent. At some point, nearly every parent has to deal with things like their toddler having a tantrum in the supermarket or grabbing other children's toys in a playgroup.

Parents often feel that others are judging them. Maybe they are. But there's nothing you can do about what other people think, so don't worry about it. All you can do is be patient and consistent and be the best parent you can be.

Toddlers can act in ways that are very frustrating. However, losing your temper won't help either of you. If you find yourself getting very angry, walk away. Give yourself a few minutes to calm down.

You'll find information on how to handle anger and stress in the "*Parents*" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Common concerns



Sooner or later, most toddlers do things that parents find hard to deal with.

All children are different. How you handle these common concerns will depend on what you know about your child—for example, his age, his temperament, and how he’s feeling on a particular day.

You may have to try several different things before you find something that works for you and your child. You know your child best. It’s up to you to decide what works best for you, your child, and your family.

The behaviours in this section are a normal part of a child’s development—most toddlers will do one or more of these things at some point. However, they should ease off over time. Talk to your health care provider, Family Resource

Centre, or an early childhood educator if the behaviour seems to be getting worse or if it gets harder for you or your child to handle it. You’ll find contact information for many programs and sources of support in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Double Check

Everything you do with your toddler works better if everyone who cares for your child handles things the same way.

You’ll find information on sharing parenting in the “*Parents*” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Aggressive behaviour

Biting, hitting, pushing, kicking, hurting others, throwing things



Why is my toddler doing this?

Children can act aggressively when they are angry, frustrated, frightened, jealous, or upset. Toddlers have strong feelings. They don't yet know how to control these feelings. Hitting, biting, or throwing things may be the only way they have to show how they feel. Your job is to help them learn better ways to show their feelings.

Toddlers copy what they see others do. If they see adults or other children yelling, hitting, or being aggressive, they may copy this behaviour.

Toddlers are still learning that other people have feelings, too. They haven't learned that when they hit someone, it hurts.

Sometimes, toddlers hurt without meaning to. They think they are playing. They are still learning what their body can do. They don't know how strong they are. A toddler might hit when she means to touch gently. Or push when she means to pat.

What can I do?

When your toddler hurts someone...

Be clear about what you want. Don't just say, "No!" If your child hears the word "no" over and over, she'll stop paying attention. Gently move your child away from whoever she's hurt. Remain calm. Say, *"I know you want a turn, but you need to ask Nick with words. Hitting hurts him."*

Try time-in. If your child is hurting others, move her away from the other children. Sit with her until she calms down. She may want you to hold her on your lap or help her find something else to do.

Use logical results. Your toddler needs to learn to connect what she does with what happens because of it. But the result must make sense and be connected to what she did. For example, it won't make sense to your toddler if you cancel a trip to the park because she pushed her friend. But taking her away from her friend for a while will help her understand.

"I know it's hard to share, but pushing hurts people. Come with me and we'll find another toy for you. You can play with Eli again later."

Be consistent. Respond in the same way every time your child hurts someone. It's also helpful when all of your toddler's caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond in the same way that you do.

To make aggressive behaviour less likely...

Be a good example. Your toddler will copy anything she sees you doing. If you yell, so will she. If you hit, so will she. Let your child see you handle anger and frustration in positive ways. You'll find information on handling anger in the "Parents" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Respect your child. Listen when she talks to you. Pay attention to her while she plays. Notice what makes her angry or frustrated. Step in to help when you see her getting upset. Help her handle her frustration before she hurts someone.

Try to limit the number of times you say "No." It's frustrating to always be told, "No" or "Stop that!" Make your home safe so you have less reason to say "No." When you need to ask your child to stop doing something, explain why. "Please stop throwing your toys. You could hurt someone." Notice and praise behaviour that you like.

Set up and stick to routines. To feel safe and calm, your toddler needs to have things she can depend on. A daily routine will help her know what to expect. Children become angry and frustrated more easily when they are tired, hungry, or haven't had enough physically active play. A daily routine will make it easier for you to predict how your child will feel at different times of the day.

Make a few simple rules. Having limits helps your toddler feel safe. On the other hand, your toddler is too young to remember too many rules, so keep rules clear and simple. "We don't hurt people. Pushing hurts." You will have to remind your toddler of the rules many times. Your toddler wants to please you, but she is still too young to be able to remember rules all the time.



Plan ahead. Plan errands and activities for times when your child is rested and alert. Think about your toddler's temperament. Think about how she feels at different times of the day. For example, is she likely to be tired and easily upset in the afternoon? Try to avoid things that you know will frustrate your child when she's likely to be tired or hungry.

Help your child learn what to do. Toddlers often hit, bite, grab, push, or throw things because they don't know another way to get what they want. Show your toddler a better way. For example, you can show her how to say, "No, it's my toy," instead of pushing another child away.

Describe her feelings to help her learn the words she needs to tell you how she feels.

"I think you're feeling angry at Max."

Help your child work out ways to solve problems before they lead to hitting. For example, if your toddler is getting frustrated because the baby has grabbed one of her toys, you can show her how to offer the baby a different toy. You can use pretend games to help your child practice these kinds of problem-solving skills. For example, you can have teddy bears take turns sharing a toy.

It can also help reduce your toddler's frustration if you spend time helping her learn new skills—like eating and dressing. Build on her strengths. As she masters more skills, she'll have fewer sources of frustration in her life.



Clinging

Not wanting to be separated from you



Why is my toddler doing this?

Toddlers can be afraid of many things, but one of their greatest fears is that you will go away and not come back.

Clinging—or separation anxiety—is a normal part of your toddler’s development. At some point between age 8 months and 3 years, most children go through a period where they are worried, frightened, and upset when they are separated from a parent or caregiver. They have learned that they love you and need you. When you go away they are afraid that you won’t come back. They cling, cry, and scream because they want you to stay. These fears can become worse when there are changes or stress in your toddler’s life—for example, a new baby or a parent returning to work.

How long this lasts and how strongly your child reacts when you leave, depends on:

- Your child’s temperament
- How well you can help him get used to the idea that sometimes you must leave for a while, but that you will come back

What can I do?

To make it easier for your child to be away from you...

- **Set up and stick to routines.** When your toddler knows what to expect every day, he feels safe and secure. This means he will be calmer and less worried overall. Make sure that all of your child’s caregivers know and follow your routines.
- **Help your child to develop warm relationships with other adults**—friends, relatives, babysitters, and neighbours. Give him lots of chances to spend time with other people while you’re around. This will help him learn that there are other people he can trust and depend on when you aren’t there.
- **Respect your child.** The fear that you won’t come back is very real to your child. Don’t get angry or make fun of his fear.
- **Plan ahead.** Spend some time helping your child understand the idea of going away and coming back. For example, you can read stories about it or play pretend games with dolls or teddies.



Double Check

For more information on attachment, see “Building Love, Trust, and Confidence,” page 1.

When you have to leave...

- **Plan ahead.** Plan to leave at a time when your child is relaxed and calm, not tired, hungry, or feeling stressed.

Be sure your child has had a chance to get to know the caregiver before you leave. For example, if you are leaving your child with a babysitter, have the sitter spend some time with your child a day or so before you have to go away. If you will be taking your child to a babysitter's home or to a childcare centre, spend some time there with him before you leave him.

When you are taking your child to a sitter or childcare, it may help him feel better if he can take a favourite blanket or stuffed toy with him. Some children like to have a photo of their family.

- **Don't sneak out.** When your child is screaming and the sitter is struggling to hold him, it can seem easier to just sneak away when he's not looking and avoid the fuss. Don't do it. This will only teach your toddler that he can't trust you. It will make him more worried. He'll cling to you more.

When you leave, say goodbye. Tell him you love him. Tell him when you'll be back. *"Bye-bye! I have to leave now. I love you. I'll be back after lunch."* Then give him a hug and leave right away.

- **Be consistent.** Act the same way every time you leave. Don't give in and play for a few more minutes one time and rush out the next.

If you are taking your toddler to childcare or to a sitter every day, allow enough time so you aren't rushed and tense as you leave him. Follow a consistent routine. Your child will be calmer when he knows what to expect.

- **Stay calm and positive.** It can be very difficult to leave when your child is so upset. You can feel very guilty. You can feel angry with your child for making you feel that way. Don't let your child see how you feel. It will only make him more upset. Act relaxed and calm. Be patient, but firm. Yes, you're leaving for a while but you'll be back. If it helps you to feel better, call a little while after you've left to be sure everything is all right.

On the way to childcare or the sitter's, talk with your child about all the things he'll be doing with the caregiver. Be positive. If you are worried, your child will feel it. And he'll worry too.



Fears



Why is my toddler doing this?

Fears are a normal part of toddler development. Fears happen because:

- *Your toddler's world is getting bigger* and it's full of new things—for example, loud noises, big animals, and people in costumes (including clowns and Santa). New experiences can be scary. A toddler can feel very small and helpless.
- *Your toddler's imagination is getting bigger*—she can imagine a monster under the bed.
- *Your toddler's memory is getting better*—she can remember things that frightened her or that it hurt when she got stung by a bee.

What can I do?

To help your toddler...

- **Respect your child.** At this stage of their development, toddlers think differently than adults. This is why a child's fears don't always make sense to you. For example, you know that she really won't go down the drain with the bathwater. But her fears are very real to her. Take them seriously, even when she can't explain what she's afraid of. Don't make fun of your child or her fears. Don't tease her. Listen when she talks about what she's afraid of. Tell her that you know she's afraid. Help her feel safe. Don't talk about your child's fears with others when she might hear you.
- **Be patient.** You cannot talk your child out of her fears. And just when she seems to be getting over one fear, she may become frightened of something new. Be patient. With time and support, she will eventually get over her fears.
- **Be gentle.** Don't force your toddler to face her fears. Help her get over her fear slowly. For example, if your child is afraid of dogs, you can look at pictures of dogs in books. You can read stories about dogs. Your child can dress up and pretend to be a dog. You can talk about what dogs do—for example, bark loudly and run after balls. Very slowly work up to actually being near a dog.
- **Help your child learn what to do.** Fear makes toddlers feel helpless. Giving them a sense of control can help them get over fears.

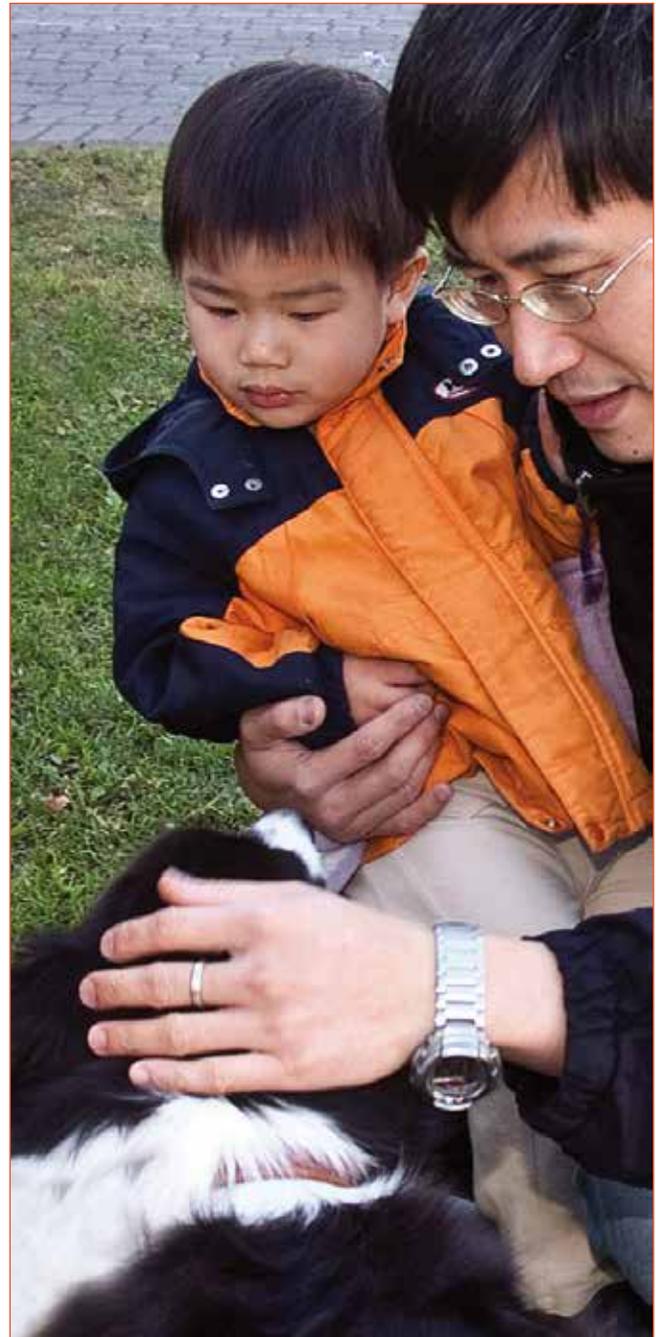
For example, if your toddler is afraid of the dark, you can help him feel more in control by having a small lamp in his room or by giving him a small flashlight to turn on when he's scared.

If your child is afraid of the loud noise the vacuum cleaner makes, you can teach her to turn it on and off.

If your child is afraid of monsters, you can make up stories to help him feel braver. For example, if he sleeps with a teddy bear, you can tell a story about how monsters are afraid of teddy bears.

- **Plan ahead.** Children often develop fears when they are surprised or upset by a new experience. It may help to talk to your child about what she will see and what will happen before you take her somewhere new. For example, if you're going to a circus, to see Santa, or to a parade or cultural festival, read books about it and look at pictures. However, remember that the real world is different. Seeing the real thing can still be scary.
- **Praise her for trying.** Praise your toddler for every small step she takes toward getting over her fears.
- **Be a good example.** Parents often have fears of their own. Are you afraid of spiders or snakes? Don't let your toddler see your fears. If she sees that you're afraid, your toddler will be afraid of the things that frighten you. If you have trouble coping with your own fears, it may help to talk with a health care provider.

Every culture and religion has beliefs and stories that can be scary for toddlers. Be thoughtful about how you introduce these ideas and stories to your child.



Shopping with a toddler

Why is my toddler doing this?

Parents often find shopping with a toddler to be frustrating—for them and for their toddler. This is because shopping involves two things that a toddler is not yet able to do—sit still and be patient.

What can I do?

To help avoid problems...

- **Plan ahead.** Try to avoid shopping when your toddler is hungry or tired. Try to plan errands for times when the shop is less busy. If you can, keep your errands short. Try not to do too much at one time.
- **Be prepared.** Shop with a list. Bring along a small snack to eat or a book or toy to play with.
- **Set rules.** These should be few, simple, and consistent. For example, *“Stay close to me.”* *“Leave things on the shelves.”* Remind your child about the rules every time you go shopping.
- **Make it interesting.** Play games like “I Spy.” Talk to him about what you’re looking at and what you put in the cart. Talk about the shapes and colours you see. Count things as they go into the cart. Talk about why you’re buying things. For example, *“Granny is coming tomorrow so we’re buying her favourite food.”*
- **Let him help.** Let him put unbreakable things into the cart. Give him some simple choices—*“Shall we get apples or oranges?”*

- **Praise what you like.** *“You’re being very helpful!”* *“What a good choice!”*

If your toddler loses control follow the advice for tantrums: Be gentle, consistent, and pay as little attention as possible. Take him to a quiet place. Wait for him to calm down. Then ask if he is ready to try again.



Tantrums

Why is my toddler doing this?

Life can be very frustrating for a toddler. She has to learn to do everything—feed herself with a spoon, walk, run, get along with others. She doesn't have the skills to do the things she wants to do. She doesn't have the words to tell you what she needs or how she feels. She can't always have or do what she wants to. Sometimes it all gets to be too much! She loses control and has a tantrum.

What can I do?

During a tantrum...

When your toddler is having a tantrum, she is out of control. Talking won't help. What she needs most is to know that when she is out of control, you are in control. Yelling, getting angry, or letting your own frustration show will only frighten your child and make things worse.

- **Be gentle.** Stay calm. Don't argue. Don't try to reason. Don't grab or handle her roughly. Don't try to rush her. Give her time to calm down. If you're in a public place, move to somewhere quiet and out of the way.
- **Pay as little attention as you can.** Your toddler will repeat behaviour that gets her what she wants. Don't try to bribe her or offer treats if she'll stop. This will only teach her that tantrums work. When the tantrum is in a public place, take the child to a quiet place until she calms down.

Whenever it's possible, ignore the tantrum. Be sure your child is safe and can't hurt herself. Stay nearby, but don't look at your child or give her any attention. After the tantrum is over, give her a hug and act as if it never happened.

- **Be consistent.** Try to respond to every tantrum in the same way—stay calm, and pay as little attention as possible. It's helpful when all of your toddler's caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond in the same way that you do. If you and your child's other caregivers disagree, talk about your differences. Find a way to work together. This isn't always easy, but it's important for your child.
- **Use logical results.** For example, if you are out when a tantrum happens a logical result could be that you would leave where you are and go home. But if you tell your child that you will go home if she doesn't stop, be prepared to follow through.

To make tantrums less likely...

You can make a tantrum less likely by making your toddler's life less frustrating.

- **Set up and stick to routines.** When your toddler knows what to expect during the day, she'll be more relaxed and less likely to get frustrated.
- **Make your home a safe and interesting place for your toddler.** The more often you have to say, "No," the more frustrated your toddler will be.
- **Help your child learn what to do.** Toddlers become frustrated when they can't figure how to get or do what they want. Pay attention. When you see your toddler starting to get frustrated, help her figure out what to do.
- **Praise behaviour you like.** It's frustrating to always be told, "No" or "Stop that!" Notice and praise behaviour that you like.

- **Plan ahead.** Tantrums are much more likely to happen when your toddler is tired or hungry. Plan outings for times when your child is rested and full. Bring along a healthy snack.
- **Help your child move from one activity to another.** When your toddler is having fun doing something, it can be very frustrating to be told she has to stop and do something else. Make it easier by giving her time to get used to the idea of changing the activity. Tell her you understand how she feels and give her a countdown. For example, *“I know you’re having fun with Evan, but we have to go home soon.”* Then, *“We have to leave in 3 minutes.”* *“We have to leave in one minute.”* *“Okay, time to go!”*
- **Be a good example.** Let your child see you handle your own anger and frustration in a positive way. You’ll find information on handling anger in the *“Parents”* section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**
- **Offer simple choices.** Your toddler can feel frustrated and angry when she feels like she has no control over what happens to her. Giving simple choices can help her feel less frustrated.

Added info...

Most parents feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when their toddler has a tantrum in public. They wonder what to do. They worry about what others might think.

Stay calm and try not to worry. Do the best that you can. You’re not the first parent this has happened to.



Whining

Why is my toddler doing this?

Whining can happen when a toddler is tired, hungry, worried, bored, or feeling insecure. It continues when he learns that whining is a good way to get what he wants.

What can I do?

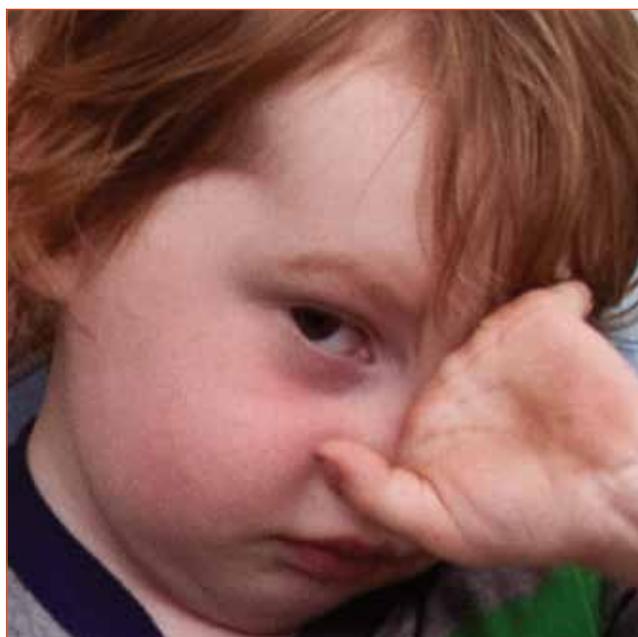
If your toddler whines...

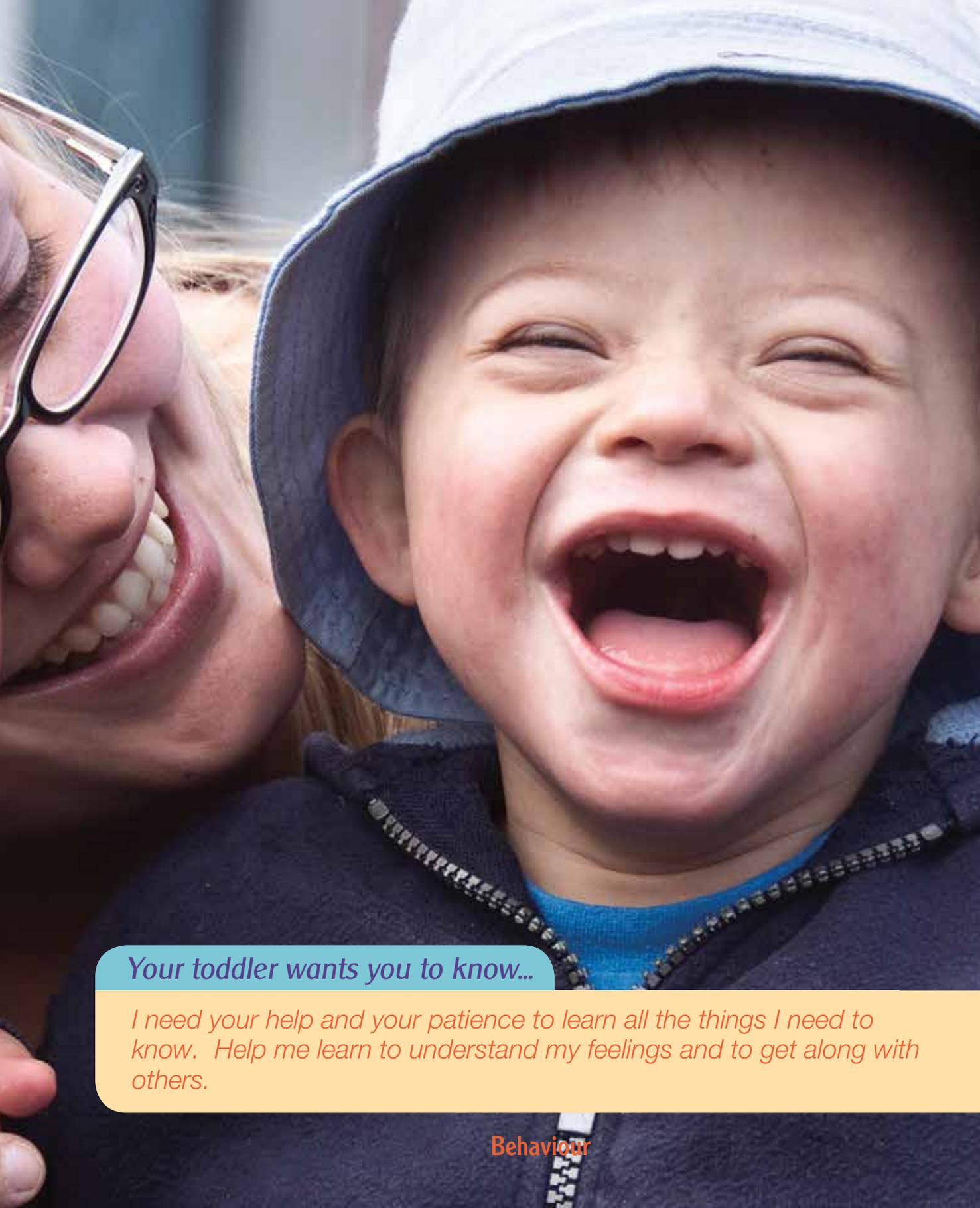
- **Be clear about what you want.** Tell your child that you listen better when he uses his “regular” voice. When he whines, say, *“Please use your regular voice.”* *“When you use your regular voice, then I can hear what you’re saying.”*
- **Ignore behaviour you don’t like.** If your child continues to whine, ignore it. Don’t whine back at him. Pay attention when he **stops** whining. Ignoring behaviour can be very difficult because when you begin ignoring something, it often gets worse before it gets better. Keep telling yourself that if you give in to the whining, your child will learn that whining works.
- **Be consistent.** Respond to whining in the same way, every time. Be sure all of your toddler’s other caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond to whining in the same way that you do.

To make whining less likely...

- **Help your child learn what to do.** Teach your child how to ask for things in a regular voice. The next time he whines, you can say, *“Remember how to use your regular voice.”*
- **Be a good example.** Keep your tone of voice positive. If you whine and complain, your child will be more likely to whine too.

- **Plan ahead.** When you go out, be sure you have books or toys to avoid boredom and healthy snacks to avoid hunger. Plan activities and errands for times when your child is well-rested.
- **Respect your child.** Children often whine when they feel that you are not paying attention to them. Give your child more attention, encouragement, and support. Listen when he talks. It might help to bend or kneel down so you can look into his eyes. Don’t copy him or whine back at him.
- **Praise behaviour you like.** When your child asks for something in a normal voice, praise him for it. *“Thank you for using your regular voice.”* This doesn’t mean that you have to give him what he asks for just because he didn’t whine, but you should praise the effort. Help your child develop hearing and speaking skills (page 33) so that he can talk about what he wants and needs without whining.





Your toddler wants you to know...

I need your help and your patience to learn all the things I need to know. Help me learn to understand my feelings and to get along with others.

Learning to Use the Toilet



I'm getting tired of changing diapers! When will my toddler be ready to use the toilet?

Using the toilet



In this section, you'll find information to help you teach your child how to use the toilet.

Our advice is to teach your child to use the same toilet the rest of the family uses, rather than starting with a potty. There are several reasons for this:

- Potties are very difficult to keep clean.
- Potties aren't very portable. When you go to the mall or visit other families, there probably won't be a potty there.
- Daycares don't use potties. The children use a toilet.
- If you start with a potty, you'll likely have to teach your toddler all over again to use a regular toilet. So why not just save a step and start out with the toilet?

Development and learning to use the toilet

In order to learn to use the toilet, your child needs to have developed several skills:

- She needs physical skills so she can control the muscles that stop and start pee and poop. She also needs to be able to pull her own pants up and down.
- She needs language skills so she can tell you when she has to pee or poop.
- She needs social skills to want to do what she sees parents and older children doing.

Most children are ready to start learning to use the toilet sometime between ages 2 and 4. Some start a little earlier, some a little later. Every child is different.

There is no point in trying to teach your child to use the toilet before she's developed the skills she needs. It will just make you both upset and frustrated. And in the end, your child will not learn to use the toilet any sooner.

Let your child take the lead in learning to use the toilet. For example, if your child is afraid of the toilet, wait until this fear has passed before starting to teach her to use the toilet.



How will I know when my child is ready?

Your child has developed the skills he needs to **start** learning to use the toilet when he:

- Can stay dry in his diapers for a few hours.
- Notices when he's peeing or pooping. For example, he may get a certain look on his face, pull at his pants, or squat. Or he may go off somewhere to be alone while he poops.
- Notices when his diapers are dirty. He likes clean, dry diapers and likes being changed when his diaper is wet or dirty.
- Poops at regular times during the day.
- Can get on and off the toilet using a sturdy stool.
- Can pull down his pants.
- Knows words like pee, poop, dry, wet, and toilet—or whatever words your family uses. He can tell you—in words or actions—that he needs to use the toilet.
- Is interested in the toilet. He watches you or older children use the toilet. He's interested in books about using the toilet.
- Wants to be independent—a big kid.

When your child has most of these skills, you'll know that he is able to use the toilet and able to let you know when he needs to use the toilet. But the most important sign that your toddler is ready to begin learning to use the toilet is that he **wants** to.



Added info...

Even when your child has the skills he needs to be ready to learn to use the toilet, it's best to begin during a calm time when there is little stress in his life.

When your child is facing changes in his life, it's difficult for him to learn something new.

Wait until things have settled down if:

- Your family is moving
- Your toddler is starting or changing childcare
- He's moving to a bed
- You have a new baby
- There has been a major family crisis—for example, a death, separation, or serious illness

It's also best to wait until your toddler has passed the stage where he says "No" to everything.

Even after your toddler has been using the toilet for a while, he may start wetting himself again if he's feeling stressed.

What do I do?

Be sure that YOU are ready

Your attitude is key. You need to understand that it's up to your toddler to decide when she's ready. You need to be very patient and let her take the lead. Treat learning to use the toilet calmly and casually. It's just one more of the many things your toddler is learning. Praise her when she succeeds. Reassure her when she doesn't. Don't get too excited when she uses the toilet. Don't get upset when she has accidents. Be prepared to do lots of laundry!

Your toddler needs to feel that she is in control. If you make learning to use the toilet into a big deal, your toddler will figure out that **not** cooperating is a way for her to be in control.

Start slowly

- **Get an adapter seat for your toilet and a sturdy footstool.** Your child's feet should rest on the stool while she's sitting on the toilet.
- **Let her follow you into the bathroom when you use the toilet.** Help her get used to bathroom noises by letting her flush the toilet. Let her help by getting toilet paper for you. You can tell her, *"When you're a big kid, you'll use the toilet to poop and pee like I do."*
- **Help her get used to the toilet.** If she's interested, have her sit on the adapter seat on the toilet—wearing her clothes. Let her play pretend and help a doll or stuffed animal use the toilet.



Practice

- **Dress your toddler in clothes that are easy to pull up and down.**
- **Follow your child's cues.** Have your child pull down his pants and sit on the toilet at the times of day when he usually poops. For example, this could be when he gets up in the morning, about 20 minutes after meals, when he gets up from a nap, or before bed time. Praise your child when he cooperates, even if he doesn't poop or pee. *"You're sitting there like a big kid!"*
- **Pay attention.** When you notice your toddler looking like he's about to poop or pee, say something like, *"You need to poop (or pee) now. Let's use the toilet."* Encourage your toddler to tell you when he needs to go to the toilet.

Added info...

If at any point in this process your toddler loses interest or resists using the toilet, just stop.

Wait a while and then start again.

CAUTION!

Talk to a health care provider if your child:

- Is older than 4 and still hasn't learned to use the toilet
- Is holding back poop or is in pain when she uses the toilet
- Has blood in her poop or pee
- Suddenly seems to need to go to the toilet much more often than usual

At the toilet

- **Lead your child to the toilet.** Help her pull down her pants and sit on the toilet. Encourage her to poop or pee. Reading her a story might help her relax. If your child isn't interested in sitting, don't force her. Even if she likes sitting on the toilet, have her get up after 5 minutes, unless she's pooping or peeing.
- **Praise your child when she gets to the toilet in time.** *"Good job! You waited until we got to the toilet!"*
- **Don't flush while your toddler is still on the toilet!** This can be very scary. Encourage her to flush for herself.
- **Teach your child how to wipe herself.** You'll have to do this for a while, but show her how so when she's ready she'll know what to do. Girls should learn to wipe from front to back.
- **Show your child how to wash her hands after using the toilet.** A sturdy stool will help her reach the sink. See [page 126](#) for information on hand washing.



Make it a habit

- **When your toddler has successfully used the toilet for a week or so, see if she'd like to try training pants or regular underpants.** She may still need a diaper for naps and at night. Pull-on diapers aren't necessary.
- **Expect accidents.** Don't get angry or punish your child. Reassure her that accidents happen and she'll get better at using the toilet in time. *"Don't worry. I know you wanted to pee in the toilet. You'll make it next time."* Change your child as soon as possible after an accident. Bring extra clothes when you go out.



Using the toilet at night

- **Be patient.** It can take much longer for your child to learn to stay dry overnight. Even when your child stays dry all day, she will still need diapers for naps and at night for a while.
- **Tell her to call you for help if she needs to use the toilet at night.** Go to her promptly. She'll be sleepy, so hold her on the toilet to prevent accidents.
- **Try training pants or underpants when she's stayed dry at night for a week or so.** Protect the mattress with a plastic sheet under the regular sheet so neither of you will need to worry about accidents.

Added info...

Toddlers are often very interested in their poop and pee. They want to look at it in the toilet. Some even want to play with it.

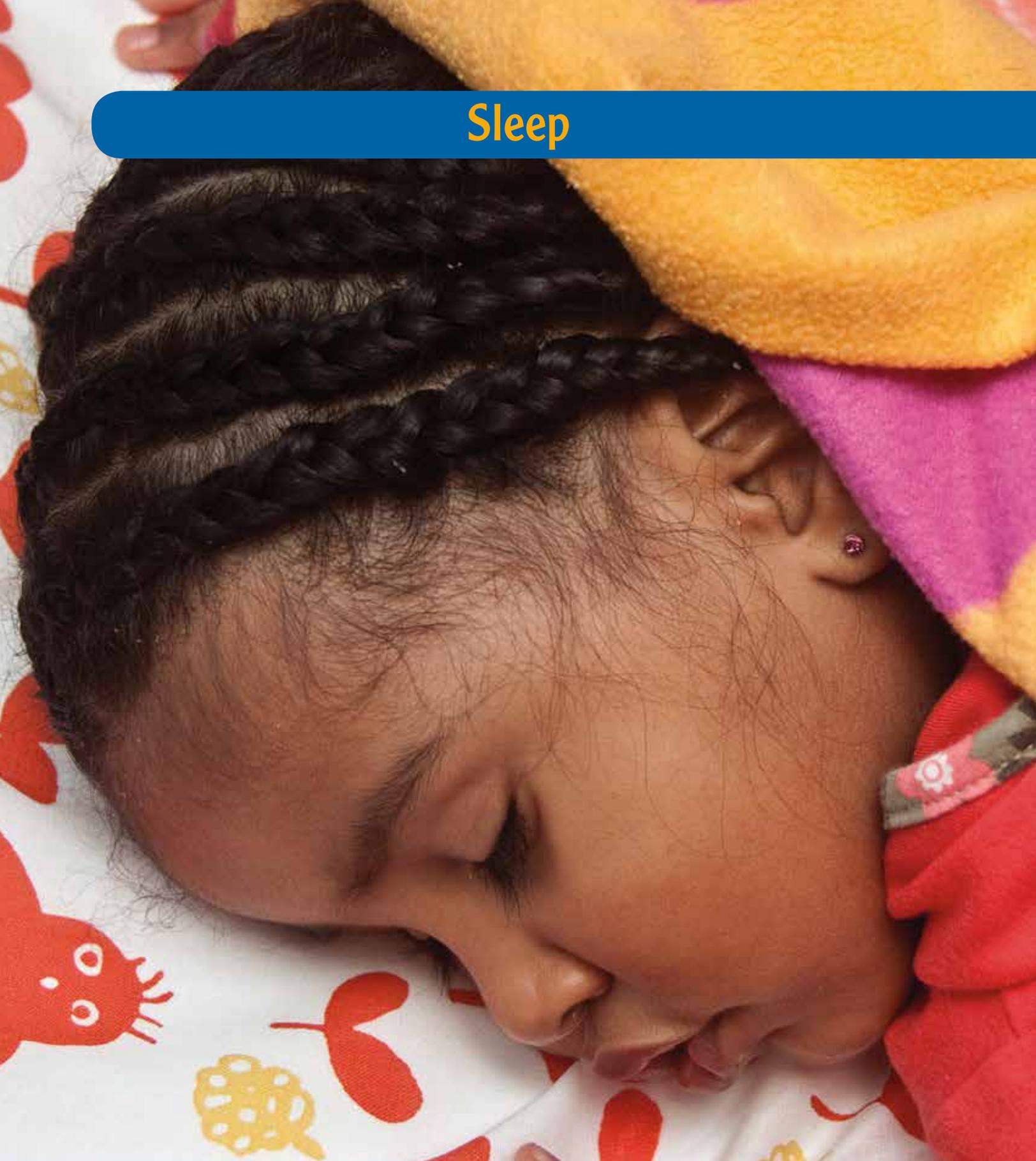
Let your child look if she wants to, but not touch. Don't make faces or show that you think the poop is yucky. Your toddler used the toilet to please you. Let her see that you appreciate her effort!

Your toddler wants you to know...

Don't expect too much from me, too soon. Follow my lead. Wait until I'm ready to learn to use the toilet.

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Sleep



My toddler seems less like a baby every day. How much sleep does he really need? Does he still need a nap every day?

Toddlers need lots of sleep



Your toddler needs less sleep than he did as a baby, but he still needs lots of sleep!

Most toddlers need between 10 and 13 hours of sleep each day. But every child is different. Your toddler may need more or less sleep than this.

At about 18 months, toddlers usually need only 1 nap a day, rather than 2. Some days they won't

need a nap at all. Naps can last from 1 to 3 hours.

Being sleepy or very fussy during the day can be a cue that your toddler isn't getting enough sleep.

Sleepiness cues

Toddlers sleep best when their bed and nap times are part of a daily routine. Your toddler has ways of letting you know when she's sleepy. These are called cues. It's important to follow your toddler's cues when deciding on bed and nap times. Your toddler will be more willing to cooperate and go to bed peacefully if she's sleepy.

Your toddler will let you know she's sleepy by:

- Losing interest in what she's doing
- Talking less
- Rubbing her eyes
- Pulling at her ear
- Yawning
- Having droopy or watery eyes
- Sucking her thumb
- Lying down to play
- Wanting to breastfeed

It's important to pay attention to these sleepiness cues, because if your child gets **too** tired, she will have a hard time falling asleep.

Your toddler will show you that she's **TOO** tired by:

- Whining
- Clinging
- Wanting attention
- Becoming very angry, frustrated, or impatient
- Having a tantrum
- Crying
- Running around and being very active



Bedtime routines



Setting and sticking to a bedtime routine is one of the best ways to help your toddler get a good night's sleep. Each step in the nightly routine is a sign to the child that it's time to sleep.

As your child moves from being a baby to a toddler, you may find that your old bedtime routines don't work as well as they used to. You may need to set new routines.

You and your toddler will figure out what routine works best for you both. The important thing is that the routine be:

- **Consistent**—It should be the same every night and happen at the same time every night.
- **Calming**—It should help your toddler settle down. Some parents find it helpful to get a head start on this by playing quietly with their child for the last half-hour before the bedtime routine begins.
- **Pleasant**—it should give your child something to look forward to. For example, quiet time with you, breastfeeding, lots of cuddles, a gentle massage, or special toys, books, or music.

A bedtime routine could include: a bath and brushing teeth, putting on pajamas, a bedtime story or song, getting tucked in, a goodnight kiss, and lights out.

A bedtime routine works best when everyone who cares for your toddler knows and follows it.



Added info...

Bedtime routines work best when they are part of a regular daily routine.

A regular daily routine means:

- Getting up at about the same time every day
- Having meals, naps, and playtimes at about the same time every day
- Going to bed at about the same time every night

Toddlers like to know what to expect every day and this kind of routine helps them get used to sleeping and being awake at regular times. Make an effort to stick to your routine even when you have visitors or are away from home.

A daily routine is good for parents, too. Knowing that your child will be in bed at a certain time means you can depend on having some time to yourself.

Added info...

Illnesses can cause changes in your child's sleeping patterns.

When he's healthy again, you may need to start at the beginning to get him used to his bedtime routine again.



Double Check

It's not a good idea to let your child fall asleep while watching TV. This will not help him learn to put himself to sleep on his own.

For more information about TV, see *"Screen time and development,"* page 24.

Morning routines



It may sound strange, but a morning routine is part of helping your child get a good night's sleep.

Getting up at about the same time every day is an important part of a daily routine, just like going to bed at the same time every night. Knowing what to expect helps your toddler to develop healthy sleep habits.

Like a bedtime routine, a morning routine should be consistent—the same things, in the same order, at about the same time every day. For example, get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and brush teeth. And like a bedtime routine, a morning routine works best if it is pleasant and peaceful for you both.

If you need to get your child ready to leave the house every morning, you may want to plan ahead to make morning routines as easy as possible.

- **Do as much as you can the night before.** You could pack lunches and plan breakfast. Set the table. Put your bags near the door. Pick out clothes your toddler will wear. Older toddlers may want to help pick out their clothes.
- **Get up, dressed, and organized before your toddler wakes up.**
- **Leave lots of time to get ready in the morning.** Toddlers can take quite a while to get up and get dressed, especially when they want to do everything for themselves. The more you try to rush your toddler, the slower she'll get. Set the alarm early enough to allow plenty of time so no one starts the day feeling rushed or stressed. Leave lots of time for breakfast. Eating in a car can cause choking.

TV can slow things down, especially if you have to take a child away from a show or video before it's over. It's best to avoid TV in the morning.



Double Check

For more information on screen time and on things children can do instead of watching TV, see page 24.

Naps



By about 18 months, many toddlers need only 1 nap each day, but that nap is important to them. It gives them the energy they need to grow and learn all day long. Remember that each child is different. Some may continue to need 2 naps each day.

Naps can last from 1 to 3 hours, depending on your child's age, how much sleep he gets during the night, and how active he is that day.

Follow your child's cues when deciding when naptime should be. Make naptime part of your daily routine so he'll know what to expect.

Having a naptime routine can help your child settle down. It can be very simple—for example, breastfeeding and a cuddle, tucking in with a special toy and a kiss. What matters to your toddler is that it is more or less the same every day.

To help your child sleep during the day:

- Offer lunch or a snack about half an hour before naptime
- Keep the room dark

Some toddlers like soft music during naptime. This can be helpful in blocking everyday noises while your toddler is napping.



Double Check

You'll find information on sleepiness cues on page 87.

Moving your toddler to a bed



Moving into her own bed is a big change for a toddler. The best time to make this move will depend on your toddler—some children are ready sooner than others. You may need to be patient and give her time to get used to the idea.

When your toddler does ANY ONE of these things, think about moving her to a bed:

- **Your toddler asks for a bed.** The move will be easier if it is something she wants to do.
- **Your toddler has learned to climb**, or is trying to climb out of the crib.
- **Your toddler is 90 cm (35 in.) tall or the crib rail is level with her nipples.** At this point, it's more likely she could climb—or fall—out.

- **Your toddler can use the toilet.** Even if your toddler uses the toilet during the day, it will be a long time before she can stay dry all night. But if she is starting to ask to go to the toilet during the night, a bed can make this easier.

To prevent injuries, your toddler's first bed can be a mattress on the floor, a toddler bed, or a regular bed with guardrails so she can't fall out. Bunk beds are not safe for toddlers.

Use a firm, toddler-sized pillow and a small blanket on the bed. Adult-sized pillows and heavy blankets or comforters are too much for a toddler to manage.

To help your toddler get used to her new bed:

- If you are getting new sheets, let her help pick them out.
- If there's room, set up the bed before you take the crib down. Let your toddler decide where she wants to sleep. Some toddlers like to play or nap on the bed for a while before they're ready to sleep in it all night.

Added info...

Parents often think about moving a toddler into a bed when they need the crib for a new baby.

If you need to do this, plan ahead to be sure that your toddler doesn't feel pushed out by the new baby.

Consider your toddler's feelings. Give her lots of time to get used to the idea. Make the move to a bed gradually. This way, your child will be happy in her new bed long before the baby takes over her old crib.

- Help your toddler practice climbing in and out of bed during the daytime.

This makes a fall in the night less likely.

When your toddler makes the move to a bed, you may find that she's outgrown her old bedtime routine too. This may be a good time to work out a new, "big kid" routine.



Double Check

Because your toddler will now be able to get out of bed, be sure her bedroom is a safe place.

- Put diaper products out of reach.
- Be sure there is no furniture she can climb.
- Bolt heavy furniture—like bookshelves and dressers—to the wall.

For more information on safety in your home, see [page 145](#).



Common sleep concerns

Not wanting to go to bed

Toddlers often don't want to go to bed. Having a daily routine and a bedtime routine that is soothing and pleasant for your toddler can help. (See page 88 for information about bedtime routines.)

There are several reasons your toddler may not want to go to bed.

- **He isn't tired.**
 - Follow your toddler's sleepiness cues. This will help you pick a bedtime when he's tired. (See page 87 for information about sleepiness cues.)
 - Make sure that your child has some active play every day. (See page 38 for information about active play.)
- **He's too tired to relax and settle down to sleep.** You can avoid overtiredness by:
 - Scheduling regular naptimes during the day.
 - Following sleepiness cues.
- **He's afraid to be alone and worries when he can't see you.** Some extra time and attention at bedtime can help with this. So can a special toy to cuddle for comfort. Some toddlers feel less alone when their door is left open or if there is a night light in their room. Some like soft soothing music to keep them company.



Added info...

To help your child go to bed peacefully, make his crib, bed, and bedroom happy and comfortable places. Don't punish your child by putting him in his crib or bed.



Getting out of bed

Often, toddlers will get out of bed soon after being tucked in. When this happens:

- Take her back to bed, calmly but firmly. Do this every time she gets up. Don't let her stay up even one time.
- Tell her that you're here and you love her, but it's time to sleep now.
- Help her back into bed, and leave.

Don't do anything that rewards your child for getting out of bed. Don't smile, talk or laugh. Just take her back to bed calmly, gently, and firmly.

Do this every time your child gets out of bed. It may take a while for your child to learn that getting up isn't going to be fun.

Waking during the night

All of us wake up during the night, but we've learned to settle ourselves back to sleep. Some toddlers learn the skill of "self settling" sooner than others.

Some toddlers may wake during the night because they are light sleepers or because it's become a habit. If this is the case, when your toddler calls to you or cries during the night:

- Respond quickly so your child doesn't have time to get upset.
- Call back to him so he knows that you're there.
- If he continues to call, go to him. Be calm and quiet.
- Soothe him by speaking softly. *"It's night now. Time to sleep."* You can stroke his forehead or pat his shoulder.

Be consistent. Respond in this way whenever your child calls in the night. You may have to do it often for a while.

You may find that your toddler wakes more often when he is upset about a change in his life—like a new baby or moving to a new home. Giving him lots of affection during the day and sticking to a familiar schedule

CAUTION!

Keep your child safe if he gets up during the night. Be sure there are gates at the top of the stairs. Use gates that attach to the wall with screws.

See "Safety," page 145, for more information on childproofing.

will help him feel safe and loved. It will also help him sleep better.

If your child wakes up because he has to pee, or because he's wet the bed, you may need to help him go to the bathroom or change the bed. If he's uncomfortable, he won't be able to go back to sleep. You can also try to give your child less to drink before bed.



Double Check

You'll find more information on protecting your child's teeth in *"Dental Health"* on page 135.

If your child wakes up and is thirsty, offer a drink of water from a cup. Don't offer milk or juice, especially in a sippy cup or bottle. The sugar in milk and juice will stay on your child's teeth and cause tooth decay.

Remember that your child needs loving and patient parenting during the night as well as during the day.



Double Check

See *"Learning to Use the Toilet"* (page 77) for more information about staying dry at night.

Nightmares

Many toddlers have nightmares. They are most likely to happen when your child is upset about something—for example, a change in her life, or a scary story. Nightmares can also happen when your toddler has a fever.

Nightmares are very scary for toddlers because they still have trouble understanding what's real and what isn't.

When your child has a nightmare, go to her right away and comfort her. Tell her it was only a dream and that she's safe.

Your child may or may not remember the dream in the morning. If she talks about the dream she may feel better if you help her change the ending of the dream so it's less frightening. For example, if she dreamed about a monster, you can help her make up a story about how she scared it away by shining a light on it.

Added info...

Night terrors

Night terrors are different from nightmares.

During a night terror, your child screams or cries. Her eyes may be open and her heart might be beating fast. She may be tossing and turning in her bed. She may look awake, but she's still asleep.

If your child has a night terror, hold her gently so she won't hurt herself if she's moving around. Talk to her quietly, even if she can't hear you. You don't need to wake her up.

Night terrors are frightening for parents, but children don't usually remember them in the morning.

Talk to your health care provider if you'd like more information about night terrors.

Sleep and the breastfeeding toddler

If you are breastfeeding your toddler, you have most likely worked out a sleeping arrangement that works for your family.

Many breastfeeding mothers continue to share their bed with their toddler. Because breastfeeding is an important source of comfort as well as nourishment, this can be a very effective way to meet a breastfeeding toddler's needs. It's fine to continue with this for as long as you and your toddler are happy with the arrangement.

When your toddler is ready to move to his own bed, follow the ideas in this section. Set up a new bedtime routine to help ease him into this new sleeping arrangement.

Even after your toddler has moved to his own bed, he may still feel the need to return to your bed when he wakes up at night, especially if he's still breastfeeding. This is normal. It doesn't mean your child is clingy or too attached to you. In fact, there is research showing that bedsharing actually helps toddlers develop independence. Because they feel secure and know that their mother is always there—day and night—they have a strong base that allows them to feel safe as they move out into the world.

Every child is different, but in the end, they all sleep in their own bed.



Your toddler wants you to know...

Follow my cues. Be patient and consistent. Help me get the sleep I need!

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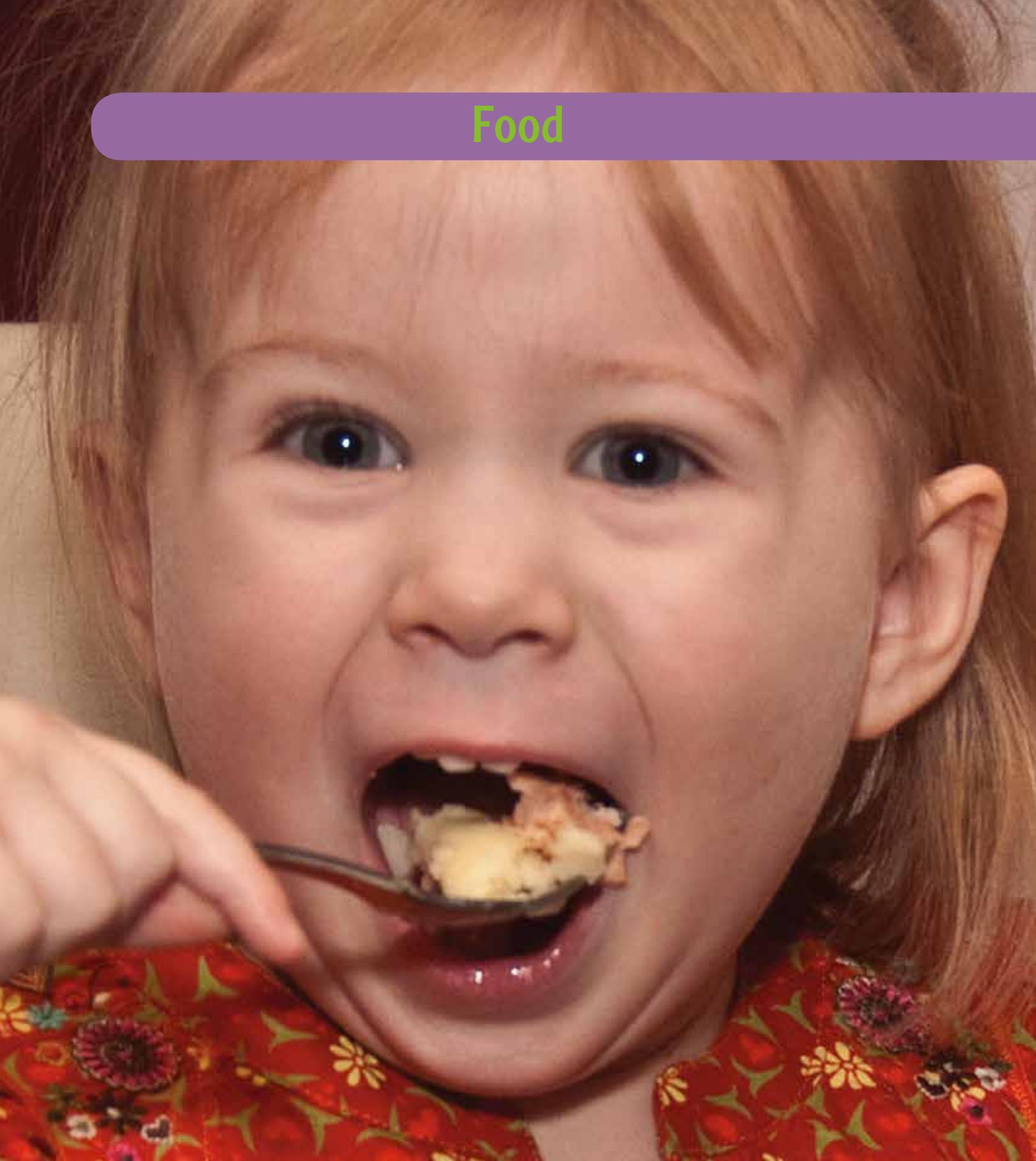
Added info...

Breastmilk is still a healthy food for your toddler. Breastfeeding is still a source of comfort for your child.

Continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your toddler enjoy it. The Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the World Health Organization all recommend breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond.

For more information about breastfeeding your toddler, and for information on weaning, returning to work, and breastfeeding while pregnant, see **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 166](#)).

Food



Some days my little one eats everything in sight. Some days she won't eat anything at all. And last week all she wanted was peanut butter on toast! Is this normal? Is it healthy?

A good start to healthy eating



To give your toddler a good start toward a lifetime of healthy eating, you need to know one thing:

You can trust your toddler to know how much she needs to eat.

You and your toddler both have a job to do.

It's your job to decide:

- **What foods you will offer to your child.** It's your job to offer a choice of healthy foods at meal and snack times.
- **Where to eat.** Sit down together for meals and snacks. Don't rush. Turn off the TV and enjoy each other's company.
- **When to eat.** Toddlers do best when they know what to expect. They need 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks at about the same times every day.

Added info...

Along with healthy eating, being active is important for your child's growth and health. For more information on active play, see "Play develops physical skills," page 38.

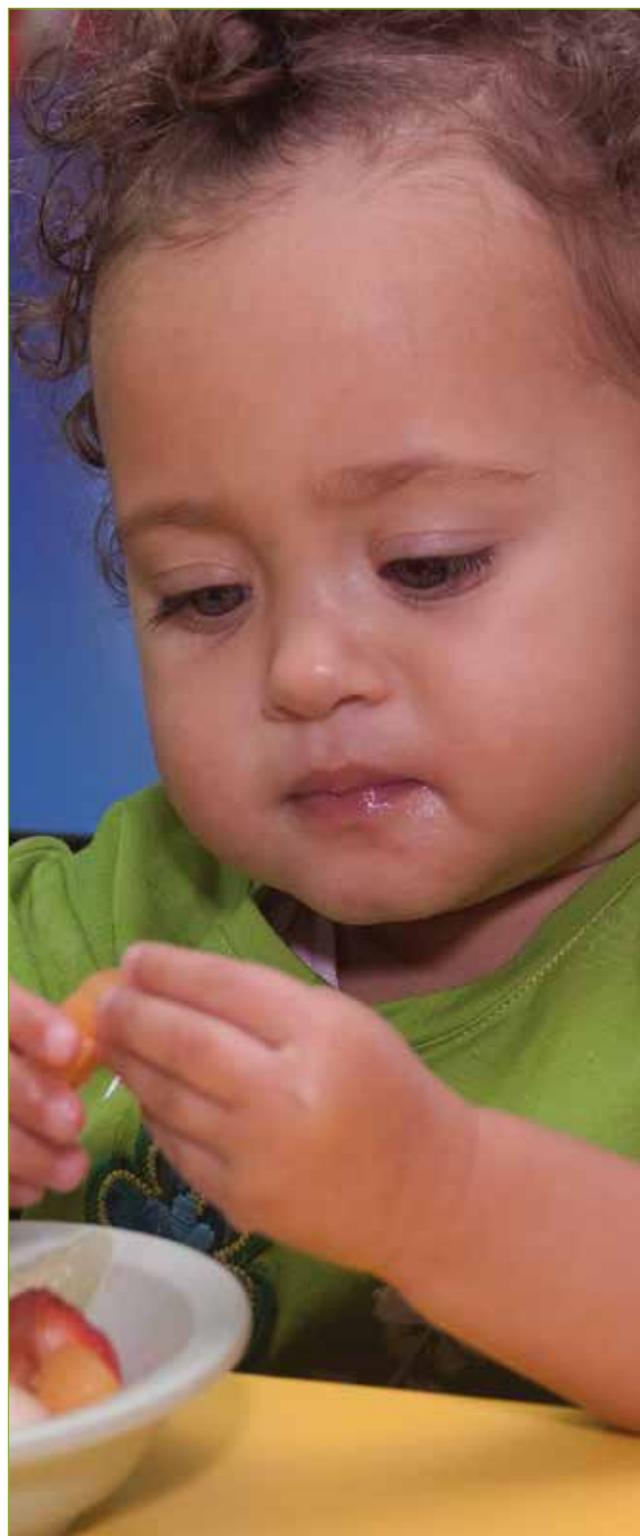
It's your toddler's job to decide:

- **How much to eat.** Your child knows how much she needs to eat. It's up to her to decide if she'll eat a little bit or a lot.
- **What to eat.** Your toddler's job is to choose what she'll eat from the healthy foods you offer.
- **Whether to eat at all.** It's up to your child to decide whether or not she's hungry.

It may be hard to believe that your toddler knows when she's had enough to eat. This approach may be different from the way you were raised. It may be different from what the people around you are telling you to do. But trusting your toddler is the best way to help her develop healthy eating habits.

Children are born knowing when they're hungry and when they're full. It's not important that your toddler eat a certain number of spoonfuls at each meal. What matters is that you trust your toddler to know how much she needs and allow her to listen to her own feelings of hunger and fullness.

As long as your toddler is active and growing, she's getting enough to eat. If you are concerned about her growth or development, talk to your health care provider.

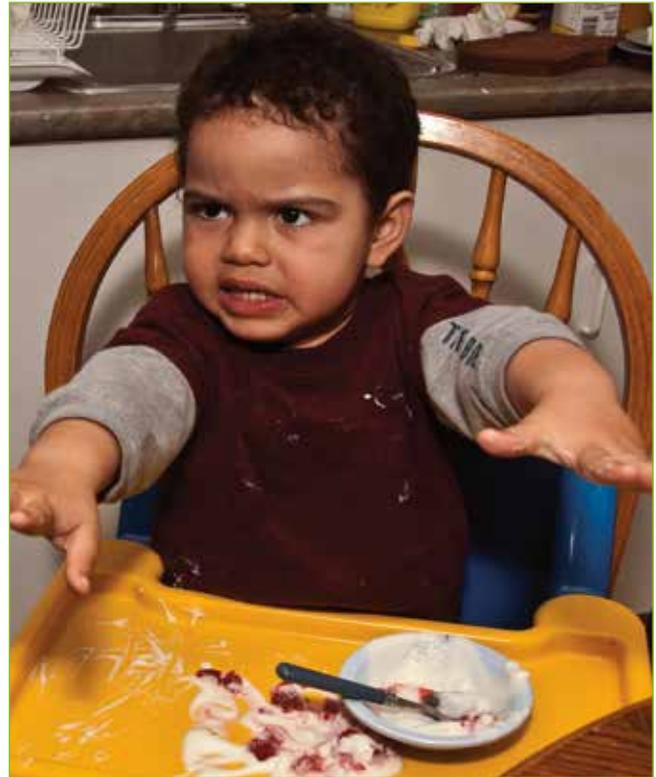


Hunger and fullness cues



Your toddler will show you that he's hungry by:

- Opening his mouth when he sees food coming
- Getting excited when offered food—leaning forward, kicking, reaching for the food
- Pointing at food he wants
- Using a few words—like “*Want that*”
- Leading you to the fridge or cupboard



Your toddler will show you he's full by:

- Closing his mouth or turning his head
- Saying something like, “*All done*” or “*Get down*”
- Pushing food away

Every child is different. Your child may have cues of his own.

Your toddler's appetite will change from day to day and from meal to meal. Sometimes he'll eat a lot, sometimes very little, sometimes nothing at all. This is perfectly normal.

How much your toddler wants to eat could depend on:

- **How much fluid he's getting.** If your toddler gets more breastmilk than usual, or if he fills up on milk or juice between meals, he may be less interested in solid foods at the next meal.
 - **How much he's growing.** Toddlers eat more during growth spurts.
 - **How he's feeling.** Toddlers may eat less when they're tired, sick or teething.
 - **How active he's been.** Running, playing, and being active can work up an appetite!
- **What's going on while he's eating.** Your toddler may be more interested in the noise from other children, the TV, toys, or the phone than in what he's eating.
 - **The time of day.** A toddler's appetite can change from meal to meal. For example, some children like to eat more in the morning and less in the evening.

Watch closely. Follow your toddler's cues. Help him learn to listen to what his body is telling him.



Eating together is important



Eating with her family is just as important to your child's health and development as the food she eats.

Life with small children is busy. But no matter how busy your day is, it's worth the effort to find ways for your family to eat together. Whether it's regular meals sitting around a table at home, a picnic in the park, or a quick meal at the rink, what matters is being together.

Mealtime is a time to share—to talk about the day and to catch up with one another. Making this time together an important part of your life can make mealtime fun for everyone.

Eating together can strengthen family ties and support a toddler's social and speaking skills. Mealtimes are a good time for children to learn their family's values and traditions.

Set limits to help your child learn your family's rules for good mealtime behaviour. For example, *"If you don't want to eat something, you say, no thank you, not yuck!"* Or, *"We sit down to eat. We don't eat while running or playing."* Praise your child when she follows the rules.

Mealtimes are also a chance for your child to see your example of good table manners and healthy eating.

You are still the most important person in your toddler's life. When you have healthy eating habits and healthy attitudes toward food, it's much more likely that your child will have healthy eating habits and attitudes. The kinds of food you eat and enjoy will influence the kinds of food your child likes.



Sharing family meals doesn't just mean eating together. Even small children can share in:

- Deciding what to eat—offer healthy options for your children to choose from. For example, an apple or a pear, broccoli or cauliflower.
- Shopping
- Preparing or cooking the meal
- Setting the table
- Cleaning up

Bring your toddler to the table with everyone else. She'll learn to enjoy eating and will enjoy

this time together. When she's old enough, help your toddler to serve herself at the table. This will help her learn to take only as much food as she can eat.

Try to make mealtimes a happy time for everyone. When the TV is off and the toys are put away, you can focus on eating and spending time together.

Eating together can have a big payoff as your child grows. Research has shown that children who eat regularly with their families do better in school and have stronger self-esteem.

Added info...

Families come in many different shapes and sizes.

When we say "family" we mean people who care about one another. They may or may not live together or be related. They are people who are important in each other's lives.

Your family can be you and your toddler or can include whoever you want it to.



Double Check

You'll find more information about healthy eating in the "Families" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

How toddlers eat

Offer your child a variety of healthy foods in different shapes and textures. This will help him develop the eating skills he needs.

Normal toddler development	How development affects eating	What you can do
Toddlers want to be independent.	Toddlers want to feed themselves even though they aren't very good at it yet. They eat slowly, especially when they are learning to use a spoon or fork.	Be patient! Offer help when needed, but let your toddler take the lead. For example, when your toddler is interested in serving himself, give him help if he needs it. Let him decide for himself how much he wants. Allow time for meals. Don't rush your toddler. Offer family foods in a form that your toddler can handle. For example, cut meat and vegetables into bite-sized pieces. Use a high chair and child-sized spoons and forks to make eating easier.

Added info...

Teach your toddler to eat meals and snacks while sitting at a table. This will help develop healthy eating habits, prevent choking, and cut down on the mess!

Normal toddler development	How development affects eating	What you can do
<p>Toddlers are curious.</p>	<p>Toddlers play with their food! It's fun for them to check out the tastes, colours, smells, and textures of food.</p> <p>They will squash, mix, mash, pull apart, spill, and throw their food.</p> <p>They will put food in their mouth and take it out again.</p> <p>They will rub food into their hair and skin.</p>	<p>Expect a mess!</p> <p>Let your child explore food in his own way. He'll be more likely to learn to enjoy food and mealtimes.</p> <p>Cleaning up the mess may not be much fun, but having fun with food is a step toward healthy eating.</p>
<p>Toddlers are developing a mind of their own.</p>	<p>They may eat a lot one day, and very little the next.</p>	<p>Don't worry. It's normal for your toddler's appetite to be different from day to day. Follow his hunger and fullness cues. Let him decide how much—or how little—he wants. This will help him learn to listen to his body's hunger and fullness cues.</p>
	<p>Toddlers may have strong likes and dislikes that can change without notice. They may like a food one day and then refuse to eat it the next.</p>	<p>Respect your toddler's taste. Remember, it's your job to offer a choice of healthy foods. It's your toddler's job to decide what he wants to eat. Keep offering foods he refuses along with other foods. You never know when—or if—he'll decide he likes the food again.</p>

Normal toddler development	How development affects eating	What you can do
<p>Toddlers are developing a mind of their own. <i>(Continued)</i></p>	<p>They may take a long time to get used to a new food.</p>	<p>Be patient. Offer the new food to your toddler whenever you serve it to the rest of the family. It may need to be on the table 10 or more times before he'll try it. Let your toddler get used to new foods at his own speed.</p>
<p>Toddlers need to know what to expect.</p>	<p>Toddlers like meals and snacks to be at regular times.</p>	<p>Make a schedule and stick to it as much as you can. Plan snacks and family meals for about the same times every day.</p>
	<p>Toddlers may want their food the same way every day. For example, they may want to drink from the same cup every day. They may want their food cut in a certain way or a certain shape.</p>	<p>Be patient. Let your toddler lead. It won't hurt him to drink from the same cup. It won't hurt to cut the food a certain way.</p>
	<p>They may want the same food every day.</p>	<p>Continue to offer a variety of healthy foods. And don't worry. Sooner or later he'll eat other foods again.</p>
<p>Toddlers pay attention to—and copy—the people around them.</p>	<p>Toddlers can learn to like many kinds of food when they see others enjoying it.</p>	<p>Including your toddler in family meals and snacks will help him learn to enjoy healthy family foods. It will also help him develop social and speaking skills.</p>

Normal toddler development	How development affects eating	What you can do
<p>Toddlers pay attention to—and copy—the people around them. <i>(Continued)</i></p>	<p>Toddlers want to eat what their family eats, the way their family eats it. For example, if Mommy drinks from a mug, toddlers will want to have their milk the same way.</p>	<p>Be a good example. Eat healthy foods yourself. Serve them to your family. Let your child see that you enjoy many kinds of food.</p>
<p>Toddlers need to be active.</p>	<p>Some toddlers can sit still for a while. Some can't. This means that your toddler may not be able to sit at the table for long periods of time.</p>	<p>You may have to let your toddler leave the table before other family members have finished eating.</p> <p>Encourage him to stay as long as possible, but let him leave when he needs to.</p> <p>As your child continues to develop, he'll be able to sit at the table for longer periods of time.</p>



Food

Healthy food



Your toddler is a busy little person. She needs healthy foods from all 4 food groups to give her the nourishment and energy she needs every day.

You can help your toddler get the kinds of foods she needs by offering foods from at least 2 different food groups at snack time and at least 3 different food groups at meal time.

Toddlers have small tummies, so they don't eat much at one time. This means that to get the energy they need, they have to eat often. Most toddlers need 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks every day.

As you read through this section, you may wonder why we don't suggest the amount of food a toddler should eat at each meal or during each day. This is because when books like this say that a child should eat a certain amount of food, parents sometimes worry if their toddler eats more or less than this amount. They may try to coax, bribe, or force their toddler to eat more than she wants to.

Added info...

When choosing foods from the 4 food groups, think about buying foods produced here in Nova Scotia or the Maritimes. Locally produced, nutritious foods are good for your toddler, your family, and your community.

Locally produced foods are often fresher. They are better for the environment because they don't travel far to market and they have less packaging.

When you buy locally produced foods, you support local farmers and fishers. More of your money stays in your community.

Consider shopping at your local farmers' market. When you go to the grocery store, ask if locally grown foods are available.

Every child is different. How much your child eats will depend on her age, body size, how quickly she's growing, and how active she is. She may eat less when she's excited, tired, or not feeling well.

By age 1, you'll have been feeding your toddler family foods for about 6 months. You'll have a good idea about how much she usually eats at one time. Over time, this amount will slowly increase.

Each child has a built-in ability to know how much food she needs. Follow her cues. Offer healthy foods when she's hungry. Allow her to stop eating when she's full. It's her job to decide how much she'll eat.

Added info...

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide is the basic resource for healthy eating for your toddler and your whole family. You'll find a copy in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide covers age 2 and up. Between ages 1 and 2, your toddler will eat the same kinds of food as a 2- to 3-year-old but she will likely eat smaller amounts.

The Nutrition Facts label on most packaged foods is another tool to help you choose healthy foods for your family. You'll find information about how to read these labels on the Health Canada website (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Healthy drinks



When you give your baby a drink with meals and snacks, use a regular cup, not a sippy cup. You will need to help your baby drink from the cup for a while, but he'll learn. Giving milk or juice in between meals and snacks can cause cavities. The transition from bottle feeding to fluids being offered in a cup can happen by 12 months. By the time your toddler is 18 months of age, all fluids can be offered in a cup.

Added info...

Soy, almond, rice and coconut milks do not have the same kind of nourishment that whole cow or goat milk does. They cannot be used as a main milk source for your baby.

If your family uses these in place of cow or goat milk, talk with a registered dietitian before you give these to your baby.

Milk

Offer whole cow milk (Homogenized 3.25%) or pasteurized full-fat goat milk with added folic acid and vitamin D until your toddler is at least 24 months old. Toddlers need the fat in milk to help them grow and develop. After 24 months, you can switch to lower fat milk.

Your child doesn't need **more** than 500 mL (2 cups) per day. If your toddler fills up on milk, he'll eat less and he won't get the nourishment he needs from other foods. Offer milk in a cup with meals and snacks. Offer tap water at other times.

Added info...

Breastmilk: Continue to breastfeed. Breastmilk continues to give your baby the nourishment he needs to grow and develop. Your breastfed baby will need 400 IU of vitamin D drops every day until he's getting enough vitamin D from food—for example, 2 cups of milk a day.

Formula: Once your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods, you can replace formula with whole cow milk. After 12 months, most babies no longer need formula.

CAUTION!

After 12 months, your toddler no longer needs a bottle.

Sipping from a bottle throughout the day or taking a bottle to bed can lead to tooth decay.

Water

Offer tap water when your child is thirsty. Water is the best drink for your toddler between meals and snacks.

Added info...

Make sure your water is safe for your toddler to drink.

If you get your water from a well be sure to have it tested before your toddler drinks it.

If you are not sure that your water is safe, give your toddler bottled water.

For more information about safe drinking water and to find out how to contact the Nova Scotia Department of Environment see **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Juice

Your toddler does not need juice. It is not as nourishing as the whole fruit or vegetable it is made from. When children fill up on juice, they eat less of the foods they need. Even 100% juice is high in sugar and can lead to tooth decay.

If you decide to offer your toddler juice:

- Serve juice in a cup, with a sit-down meal or snack.
- Give your toddler 100% pure fruit and/or vegetable juices with no added sugar. Check the label to be sure the juice is pasteurized.
- Give your toddler no more than ½ cup (125 mL) of fruit or vegetable juice per day.



Double Check

Juice and tooth decay

Even though 100% juice is more nourishing than fruit drinks and punch, it still contains sugar and can lead to cavities.

Tooth decay can be painful and affect your child's development.

Allowing your child to sip juice between meals from a bottle or sippy cup can lead to cavities in baby teeth.

For more information on taking care of your toddler's teeth, see [page 135](#).

Snacks are little meals



By her first birthday, your toddler will be eating meals with the family and sharing the healthy foods your family enjoys.

Many parents wonder about the kinds of snacks they should offer their child. It's helpful to think of snacks as little meals, not as treats. Offer foods from at least **2 food groups at snack time**.

In this section you'll find suggestions for healthy snacks that each include foods from 2 or more food groups. **These are only ideas**. Your family may enjoy different kinds of food from your own and other cultures.

Feel free to tailor these snack ideas to suit your family. For example, when we suggest "cheese," you can use whatever kind of cheese your family enjoys. No matter what kind of bread we suggest, you can replace it with any kind of bread you like.



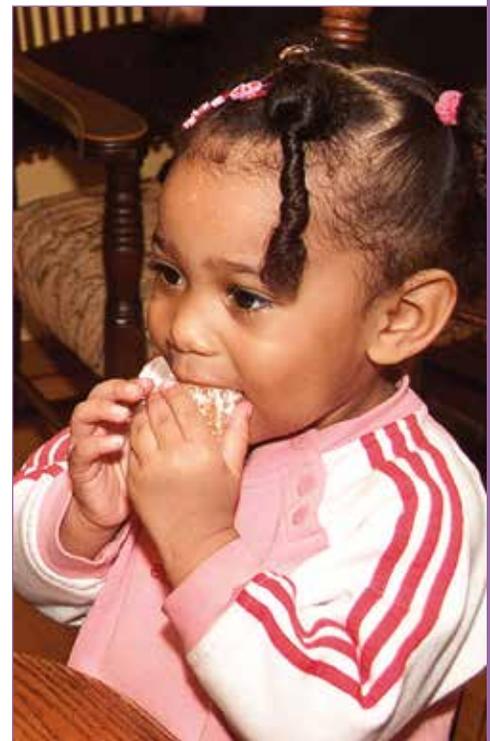
Double Check

You'll find information on cooking and handling food safely in the "Families" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Ideas for healthy snacks

(Include foods from 2 or more food groups in snacks)

- Apple or banana slices spread with peanut butter
- Pita with cheese, cucumber, and tomato
- Fresh fruit and plain yogurt
- Chunks of cheese and pieces of fruit
- Pita with hummus
- Peanut butter and crackers
- Bread and milk
- Hard-boiled egg and pieces of tomato
- Sweet potatoes, apple, milk
- Muffin and milk
- Bread or crackers and cheese
- Hot or cold cereal with fruit and milk
- Raw or cooked vegetables with hummus or yogurt dip
- Steamed spinach with yogurt, onions, and garlic
- Baked beans and toast
- Milk or yogurt shakes blended with fruit
- Toast and applesauce
- Pita with pizza sauce and grated cheese
- Fruit and pita
- Soup and crackers
- Rice crackers, yogurt, fruit



Foods and drinks to limit

Foods that are high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats are not good for young children. Many families enjoy these kinds of foods once in a while or on special occasions, but having these kinds of foods often is not healthy for your toddler.

There are several reasons to limit these kinds of foods and drinks:

- They will take the place of healthier foods. They won't give your toddler the nourishment he needs to grow and develop.
- If your child gets sweet, salty, and fatty foods now, he may learn to like them and to prefer them to healthier foods. These foods can lead to health and dental problems.



Double Check

Check the Canada Food Guide for information on healthy eating. You'll find a copy in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**



Limit the amount of these kinds of foods and drinks that you give to your toddler

Limit foods with lots of sugar and avoid artificial sweeteners — *for example:*

- Candy and chocolate
- Ice cream and frozen desserts
- Sweet desserts
- Cakes, cookies, pastry, granola bars, donuts, store-bought muffins
- Jello-style desserts
- Sugar-coated cereals
- Jams, jellies, and syrup
- Chewy fruit snacks—like gummies, roll-ups, and leathers

Limit drinks with added sugar and avoid artificial sweeteners — *for example:*

- Pop, diet pop
- Fruit drinks, fruit punch, fruit beverages, fruit-flavoured drinks, lemonade, freezie/slushy-type drinks. Avoid fruit drinks not labelled “100% juice.”

CAUTION!

You should **NEVER** give a toddler:

- Alcohol
- Sport or energy drinks
- Caffeine—coffee, tea, pop with caffeine

Limit foods with lots of salt — *for example:*

- Pickles and olives
- Processed meats—like hot dogs, bologna, salami
- Chips, nachos, cheese puffs, pretzels, french fries
- Dry or canned soups (Look for soups labeled “low sodium.”)
- Canned pasta

Limit foods with lots of unhealthy fat — *for example:*

- French fries
- Gravy
- Butter, hard margarine, lard, shortening

Double Check

Toddlers need healthy fats to grow and develop. Healthy fats include:

- Soft, non-hydrogenated margarine
- Nut or seed butters
- Vegetable oil
- Fatty fish, like salmon
- Avocado

You'll find information about healthy fats and oils in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* in *Loving Care: Parents and Families*.

Common concerns

Refusing to eat

Most toddlers go through a period when they just don't want to eat. There can be many reasons for this. Your child could:

- Be sick, tired, or teething
- Be full or just not hungry
- Be filling up on juice or milk
- Need less food than you think he does
- Be more interested in what's going on around him than eating
- Not like the way the food looks, smells, tastes, or feels
- Be upset by changes in his life or routine

When your toddler says “NO” to food:

- **Try not to worry.** Your toddler won't starve. It's your child's job to decide what to eat. He has the right to say, “No, thank you.”
- **Keep offering a choice of healthy foods at each regular meal and snack time.** Don't make a fuss about it. Don't force, beg, bribe, or coax your child to eat. If your child asks for food between meals, offer healthy foods, like whole-grain crackers or cheese. Don't offer him junk food.
- **Keep mealtimes calm.** If your child doesn't want to eat, let him leave the table. Offer food again at the next meal or snack time.

If you become upset when your toddler refuses to eat, he'll see that this is a good way to get your attention and to feel in control. Be patient. This will pass.



Mealtime battles

Your toddler is learning to know when she's hungry and when she's full. Sometimes she'll eat a lot. Sometimes she won't want to eat at all. She's learning to listen to her body.

Parents and caregivers sometimes coax, bribe, pressure, or force children to eat without really knowing that they're doing it.

- Telling your toddler that if she doesn't finish her food, she won't get a treat is pressure.
- Playing games like airplane to get her to eat is coaxing.
- Following her around giving her spoonfuls of food while she's playing is coaxing.
- Offering food as a reward is bribing.
- Making her eat until her plate is clean is forcing.

None of these things will help your child become a healthy eater. All of these can cause mealtime battles and teach her to ignore her own hunger and fullness cues.

CAUTION!

Even though you may have been sent to bed without your supper as a child, it's not safe or healthy to punish your child by depriving her of food.

You'll find more information on helping your child learn in the "Behaviour" section, [page 51](#).



Eating only a certain kind of food

Toddlers sometimes ask for the same food every day, at every meal. They refuse to eat any other food. This is common enough to have a name. It's called a "food jag."

Offer your child the food your family is eating. It's not your job to be a short-order cook. Don't get upset or make a fuss. Left to herself, your child will eat the foods she needs. Sooner or later, she'll eat other foods again.

Giving your toddler time to get used to new foods may help to avoid food jags. Serve familiar foods that you know your child likes along with new foods.

Some parents find that food jags are less likely to happen when their child is involved in choosing and preparing food. Even young toddlers enjoy helping. Let them do whatever is safe for their age. You can:

- **Let your toddler help with grocery shopping.** Talk about the foods you are buying. Talk about where they come from and why they're good to eat.
- **Let your toddler help with preparing meals**—getting food out of the cupboard, stirring, and cutting with a plastic knife are all interesting and fun for toddlers.
- **Let your toddler serve herself at meals and snack times.** Toddlers are more likely to eat food they have chosen for themselves.
- **Let your toddler make simple choices about food.** For example: *"Shall we cook peas or carrots for dinner?"* *"Do you want plain bread or toast for your sandwich?"*

Choking on food

Any food can cause choking. Someone should always be with your toddler while she's eating or drinking.

To prevent choking:

- Don't rush while eating. Allow your toddler to take her time chewing and swallowing.
- Eat while sitting down, not while running and playing.
- Don't eat in a moving car.

These foods are **NOT SAFE** for children under age 4:

- Nuts, seeds, popcorn
- Hard candy, cough drops, gum
- Whole grapes
- Carrots cut into rounds
- Whole hot dogs
- Fish with bones
- Snacks with toothpicks or skewers

Some kinds of foods can be served in a way that makes them safer for toddlers to eat.

Added info...

Learn what to do if your toddler chokes.

You'll find contact information for First Aid classes in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Keep emergency phone numbers posted by the phone and in your cell phone.

Foods that can cause choking	How to make these foods safer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Smooth, sticky foods—like peanut butter, tahini, and almond butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spread them thinly on whole-grain breads or crackers. ● Don't give blobs or spoonfuls of these foods.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hard foods—like some raw vegetables and fruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cook hard foods to soften them. ● Grate them into small pieces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small, round, smooth foods—like grapes and cherries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cut each one into 4 small pieces. ● Remove seeds or pits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tube-shaped foods—like baby carrots and hot dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cut them lengthwise into strips. ● Cut the strips into small pieces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stringy or chewy foods—like meat, long thin pasta, melted cheese and fresh pineapple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cut these foods into small pieces.

Vitamin supplements

If you think that your toddler isn't getting the nourishment he needs, talk with your health care provider before you give him a multivitamin. Vitamin and mineral supplements can't replace a healthy diet.



You'll find more information on preparing and storing food safely in the *"Families"* section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

To find out more about food safety, check the websites listed under *"Food Safety"* (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Food allergies

Food allergies are not as common as you might think. Very few children are allergic to any kind of food.

The information in this section is based on the most up-to-date allergy research. Some of it may sound strange to you or be different from what you've heard before.

For example, you may have heard that you should wait 2 to 3 days after giving your toddler a new food so you can see if he has an allergic reaction. This is not necessary. If your toddler is allergic to a food, he'll likely have a reaction soon after eating it.

You may also have heard that to prevent allergies you should wait until your toddler is a certain age before giving him a particular food—like peanut butter. Research has shown that this is not necessary either. If your toddler is allergic to a food, he'll be allergic no matter when you introduce it.

Continue to introduce your baby to a wide variety of family foods. Talk to your health care provider if you think your child is allergic to a particular food.

Some signs of food allergy are:

- Rash or hives
- Pain in the stomach
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Watery or swollen eyes

Talk to your health care provider if your toddler has any of these symptoms. They may be caused by a food allergy. However, there could be other reasons for the symptoms that have nothing to do with food.



CAUTION!

Call 911 if your toddler has a severe allergic reaction. You need help quickly.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction are:

- Hard time breathing
- Can't swallow
- Mouth, tongue, or throat swell up

Marketing food to children



It is very difficult for a child to make healthy food choices based on the foods advertised on television. Your child will want the foods she sees advertised. And she'll pressure you to buy them. This is how marketing to children works.

Marketing has a strong influence on the kinds of food children want. For example, children see characters from movies and TV on cereal, canned foods, and many other things. Marketing helps to create brand loyalty, which means that children will continue to want these things as they get older.

Sadly, the foods that are most heavily marketed to small children are usually unhealthy.

The most widely advertised foods are unhealthy foods like sweet cereals, candy, gum, pop, and fruit-flavoured drinks.

It is very difficult to protect your child from all marketing. What you can do is to start while she's young to help her resist it. You'll find more information about marketing to children in the "Families" section of [Loving Care: Parents and Families](#).

Teach your child about healthy eating. Explain why healthy foods will help her grow and be strong.

Your toddler wants you to know...

I depend on you to give me the healthy food I need to grow on.

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Added info...

Breastfeeding helps to protect your child from illness and allergies. Your breastmilk will continue to support your child’s health for as long as he breastfeeds.

Health



My baby is healthy and strong. What can I do to help him stay that way?

Hand washing



Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best and easiest things you can do to keep your toddler—and your whole family—healthy.

Everyone should wash their hands:

- Before eating and before feeding children
- Before cooking or preparing food
- Before brushing your toddler's teeth
- After changing a diaper
- After using the toilet
- After handling anything dirty
- After petting an animal
- After wiping their nose—or anyone else's nose—or sneezing or coughing into their hand

Added info...

If you are away from home or there is no soap and water available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your child's hands.

However, you should be the one to put it on his hands and rub it in. Small children can easily swallow the sanitizer or get it in their mouths.

Teach your toddler to wash his hands.

As well as keeping your toddler's hands clean, teach him how to wash his own hands.

When your child washes his hands in a public place, show him how to dry his hands on a paper towel and then use the paper towel to turn off the tap.

Give your toddler a sturdy stool to stand on so he can reach the sink.

Teach your child to wash his hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after petting animals.

Washing toddlers' hands

1. **Wet** hands with warm running water.
2. **Scrub** with soap for 20 seconds. You can teach him to scrub while he sings a short song, like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or the "ABCs."
3. **Rinse** under running water.
4. **Dry** hands with a towel.



Immunization

Immunizations protect your toddler from serious illnesses. Your child's vaccines are an important part of keeping her healthy.

Your toddler should have had vaccines at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. These protect her from diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, haemophilus influenzae type b, pneumonia, and some ear infections.

At 12 months or soon after, your toddler should get vaccines to protect her from measles, mumps, and rubella; chickenpox; meningitis; pneumonia; and some ear infections. It's important that your toddler not get these vaccines too early. If she gets them **before** her first birthday, they might not work.

At 18 months, your toddler should get vaccines to protect her from diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio and haemophilus influenzae type b. The vaccine to protect against mumps, measles, rubella and chickenpox needs a second dose. This can be given any time between 18 months and 6 years.

If you miss any of these vaccines, contact your health care provider to arrange for your baby to catch up. You can also contact a local Public Health Services office to find out where you can take your baby to get caught up on her immunizations.

Added info...

Most vaccines are given with a needle. This can be scary and painful for children.

Putting off or stopping your child's needles because you don't want her to feel pain can mean she will not get protection from some serious diseases.

For more information on ways to reduce your child's pain during vaccinations, please call your local Public Health Services office.

Added info...

Your child may get her vaccines from your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call Public Health Services to find out where you can get your child immunized.

Added info...

It's your responsibility to keep a record of your child's vaccines. As she gets older, your child will need this record for childcare and school.

You can use the yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card to keep this record. This card also has a chart with all the vaccines your child will need up to age 6. This is your only record of your child's immunizations. If you don't have one, you can get one from your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 166](#)).

PERSONAL IMMUNIZATION RECORD	
NAME _____	_____
DATE OF BIRTH _____	_____
HEALTH CARD NO. _____	_____
Do Not Discard Keep this record forever. Update it at each immunization. Proof of immunization may be needed for study, travel, and some professions.	
<small>13001/MAY14 REV13-14</small> Public Health Services  <small>novascotia.ca/dhw</small>	

You'll find the complete childhood immunization schedule on the website of the Department of Health and Wellness ([contact information is in Loving Care: Parents and Families](#)).

Flu vaccine



The flu—also called influenza—is an infection caused by a virus. It affects the nose, throat, and lungs, and can cause fever, tiredness, and aches and pains. Flu can make your toddler very sick, very quickly.

Flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce the risk that your toddler will get this illness. If your child does get the flu, it will be much less serious if he's had the flu vaccine.

When your toddler gets flu vaccine for the first time, he'll need to get 2 doses. These are given at least 4 weeks apart.

In Nova Scotia, flu vaccine is **free of charge**.

Getting the flu vaccine yourself will help protect your toddler. It's also a good idea for anyone who lives with or takes care of your child to get the flu vaccine. This includes adults, older children, and caregivers.

The best time to get the flu vaccine is between mid-October and December. The flu vaccine

protects for only 6 months, so you need to get one every year.

You can get the flu vaccine from your health care provider, Public Health Services or community clinics.

Added info...

You can find out more about flu and the flu vaccine from your health care provider or local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 166](#)).

Added info...

Remember to take your toddler's yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card when you go for flu vaccine.

When to see a health care provider

Trust your instincts. You know your child best. If you are concerned about any change in your toddler—either physical or in the way she behaves—see your health care provider or call 811. Don't worry about taking your child to your health care provider too often.

Talk with a health care provider if your toddler has any of these symptoms:

- Fever over 38.5°C (101°F)
- A hard time breathing
- Keeps rubbing or pulling on her ear
- Fewer wet diapers than usual or dark yellow, smelly pee
- Poop is different from usual—it could be very runny or liquid, or very hard and dry
- A cough that lasts for several days
- Diaper rash that is red and peeling or has sores in it
- Cries a lot more than usual, or sounds different when crying
- Sleepy all the time. You have a hard time waking her up.
- No interest in eating, drinking, or playing
- Not alert



Double Check

You'll find information on some things to do when looking for medical care in the "Welcome" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Added info...

Use a plastic digital thermometer when you take your toddler's temperature.

Put the thermometer in your toddler's armpit. Keep the thermometer in place by gently pressing your child's elbow against her side.

Wait 2 minutes or until you hear the beep. Check the temperature.



Added info...

Eye exams

Soon after birth, a health care provider checked your baby's eyes. If that test showed that your baby had a problem, she would have been sent to an eye doctor for follow-up tests.

Once your child goes to school, you can expect to be asked to give your consent for your child's eyes to be screened for problems which may show up after the age of 3.

If you are concerned about your child's eyes, especially if you have a family history of eye problems, ask your health care provider if he or she thinks that you should take her to an eye doctor.



Double Check

You can also talk to your health care provider if you are concerned about your child's development. See *"When to wonder about your toddler's development"* on [page 22](#).

Added info...

If your language or culture is different from your health care provider's, a cultural health interpreter may be able to help you.

Ask your health care provider if cultural health interpreters are available in your community. If they are, a health care provider can help you contact one.

Questions that your health care provider may ask

When your toddler is sick, your health care provider will ask questions about the illness when you call or visit.

Before you talk to the health care provider, think about what's wrong and why you think your child is sick. This will help you to explain your concerns clearly.

Write down your toddler's symptoms as you notice them. If you can, write down the time you noticed them. Write down anything you think you might forget to tell the health care provider.

When you visit or talk to the health care provider, make sure you understand everything she tells you to do. If you're not sure, ask her to explain.

The health care provider will ask about how your toddler is feeling and what she's been doing:

- Fever? How high? How long has he had it?
- Chills or shaking?
- Throwing up? How often? What does it look like?
- Diarrhea? How often? How much? What does it look like?
- Cough or runny nose? Is he having trouble breathing?
- Not eating? Has he lost weight?
- Hard, dry poop? When was his last poop?
- Does he have a rash?
- Is your toddler acting differently than usual? Is he very sleepy or fussy?
- Have you given your child any medicine?
- Has your toddler been around someone who's recently been sick?



Added info...

All of us are entitled to health care that responds to our individual needs and allows us to feel safe and respected.

Talk to your health care provider about what you want and need for yourself and your child. Help your health care provider to offer care that respects your race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and ability.

Added info...

Nova Scotia has a Family Pharmacare Program to help with the cost of prescription drugs (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Some families are also eligible for a pharmacare program for low-income children (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Added info...

If you are looking for a doctor who is taking new patients, check the Department of Health and Wellness website for “Doctors Accepting New Patients” (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Common concerns

Dehydration

Dehydration means the loss of body fluids. It can happen very quickly when a toddler has diarrhea or is vomiting.

Some signs of dehydration are:

- Not peeing—less than 4 wet diapers in a day or more than 8 hours without peeing
- Drowsiness
- Weakness
- Dry mouth and lips
- Thirstiness
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes

Dehydration is serious. See a health care provider right away if you think your toddler is dehydrated.



Giving medicine

Check with your health care provider or pharmacist **before** you give your child any kind of medicine. This includes over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen.

When giving your toddler medicine, be careful to keep track of the amount you give. It's easy to give too much. To be safe:

- Have only one person give the medicine.
- Write down *when* you give the medicine.
- Write down *how much* you give.

If you are worried that your child has had too much medicine, contact your health care provider or the IWK Regional Poison Centre ([contact information is in Loving Care: Parents and Families](#)).

CAUTION!

It's **NEVER** safe to give your toddler cough syrup.

Added info...

Some racial or ethnic groups have health issues that are of particular concern to their community. Talk with your health care provider if you are concerned about a health issue of this kind.

Dental health

Healthy baby teeth are important for your toddler's overall health. Pain and infection from tooth decay can make it hard for your toddler to sleep, chew, and grow normally. They make it difficult for him to concentrate and to learn. Baby teeth also help shape your child's face and guide

adult teeth into place. Make cleaning your toddler's mouth and teeth fun! Sing a song. Make up stories about cleaning away the germs. Baby teeth are worth taking care of! Start early to keep your toddler cavity-free for life.

Three steps to help prevent cavities

1

Keep your child's mouth and teeth clean.

For children under age 3, the Canadian Dental Association says that unless there is a risk for tooth decay, you should use plain water to brush your child's teeth.

Until age 3:

- **If your child IS NOT at risk for tooth decay**, brush your child's teeth and gums with a child-sized toothbrush and water.

If your child IS at risk for tooth decay, brush your child's teeth and gums with a child-sized toothbrush and a small smear of toothpaste—about the size of a grain of rice. You use this tiny amount because small children tend to swallow toothpaste while brushing.



- **Brush every morning and every evening before bed.** When you brush, you need to support your toddler's head so you can see his teeth clearly. Sit or lay your young toddler in a safe position. An older toddler

will be able to stand while you brush his teeth. Your hands should be clean and free to open his mouth and do the brushing.

- **Lift the lip to check your toddler's teeth for cavities.** Look at the front and back teeth. If you notice brown or white spots on your toddler's teeth, call a dentist right away. This may be the first sign of decay.



Added info...

Risk factors for tooth decay

Your child could be at risk for tooth decay if:

- Your water supply is not fluoridated.
- Your child has white or brown spots on his front teeth.
- Your child regularly eats or drinks anything high in sugar.
- Your child regularly drinks anything other than water in a sippy cup.
- Your child's teeth are brushed less than once a day.
- Your child has visible plaque on his teeth. Plaque looks like white or yellow deposits on the teeth.
- Your child was premature.
- Your child has health or behaviour issues that make it difficult for you to brush his teeth.
- You or other caregivers have tooth decay.

If your child has one of these risk factors, talk with a health care provider.



Added info...

A child can usually brush his teeth on his own when he can tie his shoes or colour between the lines.

Until you're sure that he's doing it right every time, you'll need to help him while he brushes. Check afterward to be sure he's done a good job.

CAUTION!

Keep toothpaste out of children's reach.

Three steps to help prevent cavities

2 Don't let food or drink stay on your toddler's teeth.

- Never put your toddler to bed with a bottle or a sippy cup. Juice (even 100% juice), milk, and formula all contain sugar. They can cause tooth decay when left on the teeth too long.
- Never allow your toddler to sip all day on drinks other than water. If he sips all day on any drink that contains sugar—even milk and 100% juice—it increases the risk of tooth decay. Offer your toddler milk or 100% juice at mealtime. Offer tap water to drink between meals. Have your toddler sit in a high chair or at a small table for snacks and drinks.



Double Check

Healthy snacks are important for healthy teeth. Avoid sweet, sticky snacks.

Dried fruits and fruit leathers are healthy foods but they stick to the teeth and can cause cavities. If your child eats these foods, brush his teeth right away.

For more information about healthy eating, see the “Food” section of this book.

Three steps to help prevent cavities

3 See a dentist regularly.

- Take your toddler for his first dental check-up sometime around his first birthday. Your dentist or dental hygienist will check your child's risk for cavities and answer your questions. If you don't have a dentist, ask your friends and family for suggestions or check the yellow pages.
- Take your toddler to a dentist if you see any white or brown spots on his teeth, or if he injures a tooth.

If you are concerned about the cost of dental care...

MSI covers basic dental care for children, starting from birth. Check with your dental office to find out which services are covered for your child.

For children covered by a co-pay dental plan, MSI will pay the portion that you would normally pay for these basic dental services and treatments.

You'll find contact information for the MSI Children's Oral Health Program in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**, or you can talk to your dentist.

Added info...

What causes cavities?

Sugar in food and drinks plus plaque in the mouth can lead to tooth decay.

Plaque is a thin, hard-to-see layer of germs that covers the teeth and gums. These germs use the sugars in food and drink to make acid. This acid eats away the hard outer layer of the teeth—called enamel—and causes tooth decay.

The longer food and sugary drinks stay on the teeth, the greater the risk of tooth decay.

Germs that cause cavities can pass from your mouth to your toddler. To protect your baby, take care of your own dental health.

Keep your own teeth and mouth clean. You will set a good example for your toddler and there will be fewer cavity-causing germs in your mouth to pass along.



Teething

Most children have a full set of baby teeth by the time they are about 2½ or 3 years old. But every child is different. Yours may get her teeth sooner or later than other children.

Teething can make your child restless and fussy. To help her feel better:

- **Give your toddler a clean, cold facecloth to suck or chew.**
- **Give your child a teething ring.** Teething rings should be cold but not frozen. Wash them often. Use warm, soapy water and rinse well before giving them to your toddler.
- **Massage your child's gums using a clean finger.**
- **Don't use teething biscuits.** Teething biscuits are high in sugar and may cause cavities.
- **Don't use teething gels.** They can affect your toddler's health or cause choking by making the throat numb.

Fever or diarrhea is **not** a normal part of teething. If your toddler has a fever or diarrhea for more than 24 hours, call your health care provider.

If your toddler continues to be restless or fussy, check with your dentist or health care provider.

CAUTION!

Check with your dentist, health care provider, or pharmacist if you think your toddler might need medicine for teething pain. Ask which kind to use and how much is best for your toddler.

Thumb sucking and soothers

Thumb sucking and using soothers are not likely to cause problems as long as your child stops by the time his permanent teeth start to come in at about age 5.

If you give your child a soother:

- Don't dip a soother in **anything** before giving it to your toddler.
- Make sure it can't come apart.
- Keep it clean. Use warm, soapy water, and rinse it well before giving it to your toddler.
- Get a new one when the soother becomes sticky or has cracks or tears.
- Don't put a soother on a string around the child's neck. Strings can choke.
- Don't pin soothers to clothes. Pins can hurt or be swallowed.

If you are concerned about thumb sucking or soothers, talk to your dentist or health care provider, or contact your local Public Health Services office ([contact information, page 166](#)).



A smoke-free home and car

One of the best things you can do for your toddler's health is to give her a smoke-free home and car.

There is no level of tobacco smoke that is safe for your child. Tobacco smoke hurts children in several ways.

- **Second-hand smoke** is smoke that children breathe in. It's smoke that you can see in the air. Second-hand smoke is even more dangerous for small children than for adults. Toddlers have smaller lungs and they breathe more quickly. This means they breathe in more smoke.
- **Third-hand smoke** is smoke that children pick up through their skin and mouths. The poisons in tobacco smoke stick to everything they touch—for example, toys, clothes, sheets, towels, carpets, furniture, and dishes. Children are exposed to third-hand smoke just by living in a house where people smoke. They crawl on floors, climb on furniture, play with—or chew on—toys, and touch clothes, sheets, and towels that are all covered with third-hand smoke. These poisons stay around for a long time. When someone smokes in a house or car, the third-hand smoke they leave behind can affect children months later.

There is a link between children who live with tobacco smoke and several serious illnesses. These include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Childhood cancer
- Leukemia
- Brain cancer
- Ear and lung infections
- Asthma

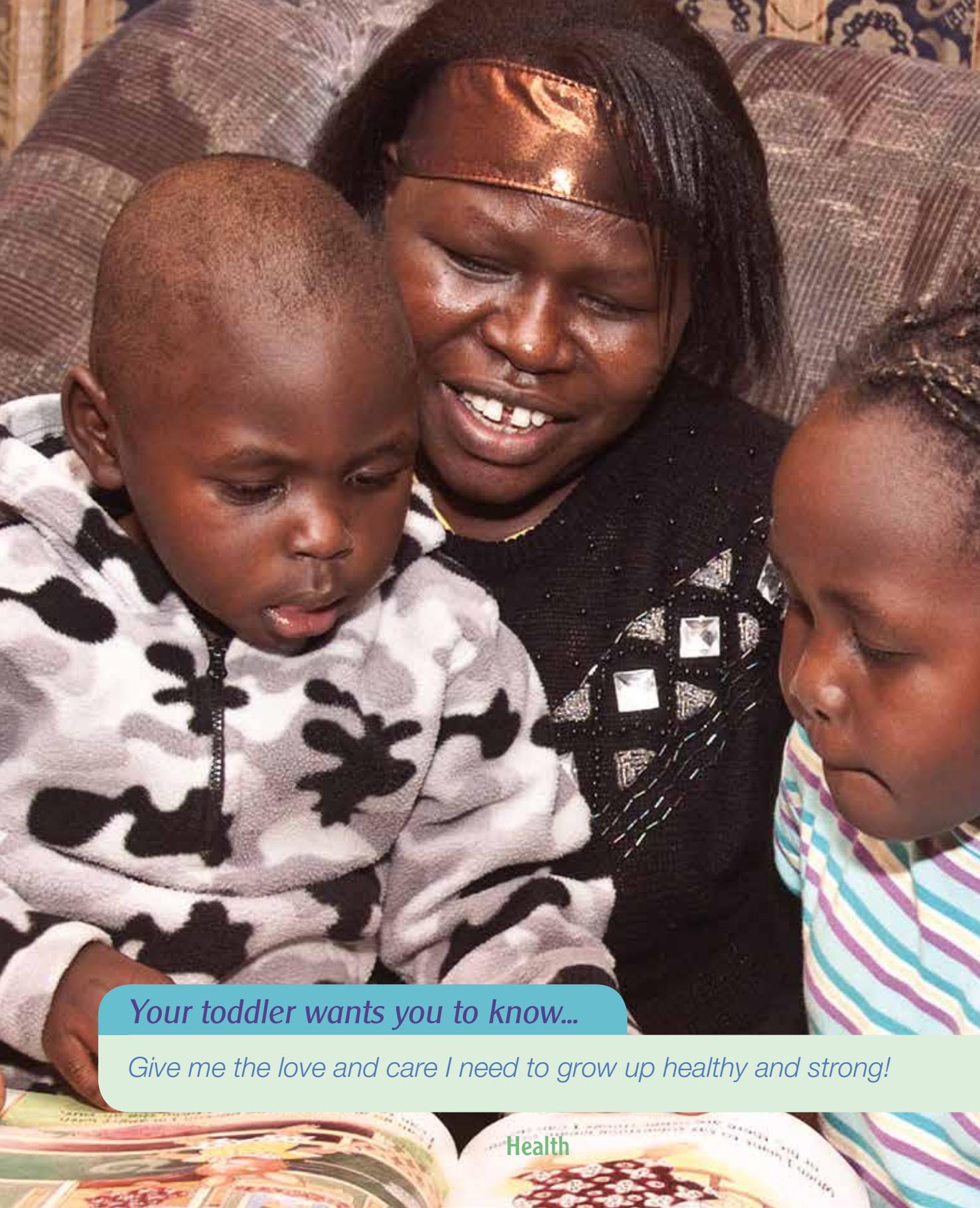
In Nova Scotia, it is illegal to smoke in a car with children present. Second- and third-hand smoke in cars is even more dangerous than smoke indoors. The smoke in a car builds up quickly, even with the window down. Smoking in the small space inside a car is 23 times more toxic than smoking in a home. Even if you only smoke in your car when your child isn't present, he will be exposed to the third-hand smoke on the car seats and upholstery.

Your child can't control the amount of second- and third-hand smoke she's exposed to. Only you can do that. Air exchangers and open windows will not protect your toddler. The only way to protect your child is to make sure no one smokes in your home or your car.

Ask others who care about your toddler not to smoke in their home when your child is there. Remind them that it's illegal to smoke in their car when a child is present.

Added info...

For information about stopping smoking, see the "Parents" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. You can also contact the Smokers' Helpline (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Your toddler wants you to know...

Give me the love and care I need to grow up healthy and strong!

Safety



My little one never stops. She's on the go from morning to night. She's into everything! What can I do to keep her safe?



As your baby grows into a busy and active toddler, he's developing new skills almost every day. He can move faster and reach higher than you might think. And tomorrow he'll be able to do even more! Be alert for these new skills.

Your toddler depends on you to keep him safe—indoors and out. He also depends on you to show him how to be safe in the world.

You won't always be with your toddler. Help him learn how to keep himself safe.

- Give your toddler a good example to follow. Follow safety rules yourself.
- Teach him safety rules.
- Show him how to do things safely.

It will be a long time before your toddler will be able to remember and follow safety rules, but it's important to start early to help him learn to be safe.

CAUTION!

Your toddler is always safest when someone is watching him. It takes only a second for a child to get hurt.

Safety at home

Continue to toddler-proof your home to prevent injuries as your child develops new skills. Check your home for safety risks on a regular basis. As your toddler starts spending more time with other children, you may need to childproof your home for children of different ages and abilities.

Your toddler depends on you to make her world safe.

Toddler-proofing checklist

Check every room in your home and every place where your toddler plays or visits.

Pulling down

LOOK FOR: Things your toddler could pull down on herself

- 

Make sure TVs, TV stands, bookcases, and other heavy furniture are attached to something so your toddler can't pull them over onto herself. For example, some can be bolted to the wall. Don't store toys on the top of high heavy furniture—like dressers. Toddlers will try to climb up to get to them.
- 

Check for dangling cords on lamps and appliances. If your toddler can reach the cord, she can pull down a lamp, teakettle, hair dryer, or toaster. Tape cords to the wall or use a twist tie to keep them out of reach.
- 

Remove tablecloths and placemats. Your toddler could pull these down and spill hot food or drinks.

Suffocating

LOOK FOR: Things that could suffocate your toddler

- 

Use a toy box without a lid. If your toy box has a lid that you can't remove, make sure it has large air holes so that if your toddler gets trapped inside, she can still breathe.
- 

Keep plastic bags out of reach. Tie a knot in the middle of the bag so a toddler couldn't put it over her head.

Falling

LOOK FOR: Things that could cause a fall

- *Use safety straps and harnesses.* Wagons, swings, strollers, bike carriers, and bike trailers must have safety straps.
- *Make sure that there is nothing near windows or balcony rails that your toddler could climb on* — for example, no furniture or flowerpots.
- *Be sure that balcony doors are always locked.*
- *Put window guards on windows above the ground floor.* Or fix the windows so they can't open more than 10 cm (4 in.) Screens in windows are not enough to keep your toddler safe.
- *Keep drawers closed* so your toddler can't climb up or into them.
- *Clean up spills and puddles quickly.* Toddlers can slip and fall on a wet floor.
- *Use a non-slip mat in the bathtub.* Be sure your toddler sits down for his bath. Use a non-slip mat on the bathroom floor.

Added info...

Check for things that could hurt your toddler if he should fall. For example:

- Look for sharp edges on furniture. Tape foam over the edges or remove the furniture from the room.
- Use a padded spout cover over the bathtub spout.

- *Attach bed rails to your toddler's bed.* When your child has started sleeping in a bed, be sure that his bed has securely attached rails to keep him from falling out. The rails should fit close to the bed so that there is no space between the mattress and the rail. If the bed doesn't have rails, it's safer to put the mattress right on the floor. It's not safe for children under age 6 to sleep in the top bunk of bunk beds.
- *Be sure the crib mattress is at its lowest level* so your toddler can't climb or fall out. Your toddler needs to move from his crib to a bed when he tries to climb out of his crib, when he is 90 cm (35 in.) tall, or when the crib rails come up to his nipples.
- *Keep large toys and stuffed animals out of cribs and playpens.* Your toddler could climb up on them and fall out.

CAUTION!

Take extra care in toddler-proofing the bedroom.

When your child has started sleeping in a bed, he'll be able to get out of bed on his own. This means that he'll be alone in his bedroom.

Added info...

Toys that children ride on can cause falls if your child is not old enough for them.

Read the directions and warnings that come with a ride-on toy to be sure it is safe for your child.

Falling*Continued*

○ *Put gates at the top and bottom of stairs.* Make sure that the gates at the top of the stairs are screwed into the wall. Never use a pressure gate at the top of the stairs.

○ *Use high chairs and booster seats safely.* Be sure your high chair or feeding chair has a safety strap. Use it whenever your toddler sits in the chair. Don't let your toddler stand up in the high chair. Don't let him climb the sides of the chair. When using a booster seat, follow the manufacturer's instructions for attaching it to a chair and for using the tray. Never leave your toddler alone in a high chair, feeding chair, or booster seat.

CAUTION!

Watch your child's developing skills!

Once your child is able to climb a gate, it will no longer protect him from falls. In fact, a gate at the top of the stairs can be a hazard if a child climbs over it and falls down the stairs.

To keep your toddler safe:

- Be a good example. Don't let him see you step over a gate.
- Help him learn to walk up and down stairs safely.



Poisoning

LOOK FOR: Things that could poison your toddler



Keep dangerous products out of sight and up high. Toddlers can't tell the difference between things that are safe and things that are poisonous. For example, a bottle of cleaner can look like a bottle of apple juice to a toddler. Put childproof latches or locks on all cupboards your child could reach.

Remember: Locks and latches will only slow your toddler down. Many children figure out how to open them. The best way to protect your child is to keep a close watch, use locks, and store poisons up high.

Things that can poison your toddler include:

- Cleaning products
- Drugs—medicine, vitamins, legal and illegal drugs of any kind
- Alcohol—beer, wine, any kind of alcohol
- Baby oil
- Cigarettes and cigarette butts
- Cosmetics and personal care products—like perfume, shampoo, mouthwash, aftershave, and nail polish remover
- Bug or weed killer
- Paint and paint thinner
- Gasoline and antifreeze



Keep plants out of your toddler's reach. Some are poisonous and your toddler could choke even if the plant isn't poisonous. Label your pots with the name of the plant. That way, if your child eats part of the plant, you'll know what she ate. Teach your child not to put any outdoor plants in her mouth. Contact the IWK Regional Poison Centre and ask about any plant your child eats.

CAUTION!

Be very careful with medicine.

- Never tell your child that medicine is candy or that it tastes good.
- When your child needs to take medicine, be careful that you give the right amount. Have only one person give the medicine. Keep a written record of when you give it.



Keep anything that could poison your child in its original container. This way you will always know what it is and won't confuse it with another product.

Added info...

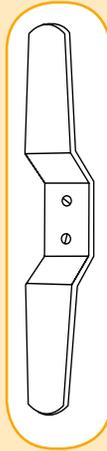
Keep the number of the IWK Regional Poison Centre near all your phones and in your cell phone: 1-800-565-8161 (Toll free).

In an emergency, call 911.

Choking

LOOK FOR: Things that could choke your toddler

- Keep cords from curtains and blinds up high, out of your toddler's reach. Attach a cleat to the wall and wrap the cord around it. Or use a clip, clothespin, or twist tie to wrap them up out of reach. If your cord has a loop at the bottom, cut it open and knot the ends of the two cords. Be sure there are no cords within reach of your toddler's crib or bed.



- Store all small objects out of your toddler's reach. This includes things like coins, buttons, small batteries, keys, and earrings. Store purses and backpacks out of reach. There are lots of things in a purse or backpack that your toddler could choke on.

Remember: Anything your toddler can pick up could go in his mouth.



Double Check

See page 120 for information on choking on food.

- Store older children's toys—especially small toys and toys with small parts—where your toddler can't get at them. Teach your other children to keep these kinds of toys away from your toddler.
- Make sure there are no long strings, belts, or ties on your toddler's clothing. For example, remove strings from hoods. Soothers and mittens should not have long strings or cords. Never hang a soother—or anything else—around your toddler's neck.
- Check all toys for small pieces that might come off. Check for broken toys and remove them.

- Keep balloons out of reach. Balloons and pieces of popped balloons can choke your toddler. Don't let your toddler put balloons or balloon pieces in his mouth. Long strings on balloons are also a choking hazard.

Burning or scalding

LOOK FOR: Things that could burn or scald your toddler

- *Make sure the water from your taps is not hotter than 49°C (120°F).* You can buy faucets that have a built-in scald protector. This slows the water to a trickle if it gets too hot. You can find out how to adjust your water temperature by contacting Child Safety Link or Safe Kids Canada (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

CAUTION!

Your toddler's skin is very sensitive. It burns very quickly and easily.

- *Cooked or heated food should be room temperature or warm—not hot.* Do not heat your toddler's food or drink in a microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and there can be parts hot enough to burn your toddler.

- *Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove when cooking.* Use the back burners whenever you can. Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.

- *Cover all electrical outlets with plastic outlet covers.*

- *Be sure that there is a working smoke detector on every floor of your home.*

- *Keep your toddler away from all heat sources.* This includes: wood stoves, fireplaces, space heaters, and radiators. Put a non-flammable barrier around fireplaces and wood stoves to stop children from getting too close.



Double Check

You'll find information about fire safety in the "Families" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Toys

LOOK FOR: Toys that could hurt your toddler



Check your toddler's toys to be sure:

- They are safe for his age.
- They are clean.
- There are no loose, sharp, or broken parts.
- There are no small parts that could come off.



Throw away broken or damaged toys.



Be sure toys are too big to swallow. Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small.



If a toy has batteries, be sure that the battery covers are screwed in so that your toddler can't get at the batteries.



Be sure that toys are not so loud that they could damage your toddler's hearing. If it sounds loud to you, it's too loud for your toddler.



Check with Consumer Product Safety (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**) to see if any of your child's toys have been recalled.



Be sure that toys have no strings or cords that are long enough to wrap around your toddler's neck.

Added info...

Store your toddler's toys safely. Use a toy box without a lid. If the box does have a lid, be sure it has many holes so that if your toddler gets inside, he'll be able to breathe.



Safety outdoors

As your child gets older, his world will get bigger. He'll be spending more time outdoors in all seasons and all weathers. Mud puddles, sandy

beaches, leaf piles, snowmen, parks, and playgrounds are all part of learning, growing, and having fun!

Summer safety

In the summer, it's important to protect your child from:

- **Sunburn:** Use sunscreen, cover up with hats and sunglasses, and stay in the shade as much as you can.
- **Insect bites:** Use an insect repellent with 10% DEET or less.
- **Overheating:** On hot days, stay out of the sun as much as possible. Take breaks in the shade.
- **Dehydration:** Be sure your child drinks lots of water when playing outdoors in hot weather. Take water with you when you go out in hot weather.

You'll find more details about these issues, as well as information about safety around animals in the "Families" section of [Loving Care: Parents and Families](#).



Winter safety

- Have your child play indoors if temperatures go below -25°C or if the wind chill is below -28°C .
- Dress warmly for outdoor play. This means a hat, mittens, socks, boots, and layers of clothing—like a shirt, sweater, and coat.
- If your child gets wet outdoors, go indoors as soon as you can. Remove the wet clothes and help your child warm up.
- When sledding, children should wear a properly fitted ski or hockey helmet.
- When skating, children should always wear a properly fitted hockey helmet.
- Never let your toddler sled alone. An adult should always go on the sled with a child under age 5. Use a sled made for more than one person that is easy for you to steer and stop.

CAUTION!

Bike helmets are **not** designed for winter activities. They are good for only one hit and then must be replaced.

Hockey helmets are designed to be good for more than one hit. This makes them safe for sledding and skating.

Added info...

Your child needs sunscreen in the winter as well as in the summer—even on cloudy days!



Water safety

In Atlantic Canada, drowning is the third highest cause of injury-related death in children.

To protect your toddler:

- **Stay close when your toddler is around water.** An adult should be within arm's length of a child under 5 years old. This includes small wading pools. A child can drown in just a few inches of water.
- **Be very careful around backyard pools,** both in-ground or above ground. Almost half of all child drownings happen in backyard pools. To keep toddlers away, pools should have fencing on all sides with a self-closing, self-latching gate. Have safety equipment near the pool. This includes a poolside phone, rescue aids, and a first aid kit.

- **Take First Aid or CPR training.** Having someone with these skills present when your child is in the water could save your child's life! (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)
- **Be sure your toddler wears a properly fitted life jacket** when in or near water or when on a boat.

Toddlers are too young to learn to swim on their own. At this age, parent-child swim classes focus more on having fun and being comfortable in the pool.



Playground safety

- Always watch your child carefully at the playground. Stay close by to help prevent injuries.
- Don't allow your child to play on equipment higher than 1.5 m (5 ft). If your child can't get on or reach the equipment by himself, it's probably too big for him to use.
- Check the ground under play equipment and remove sharp or dangerous objects.
- Look for playgrounds with safe, soft surfaces—like soft sand, pea gravel, wood chips, or rubber.
- Never attach things like skipping ropes or pet leashes to playground equipment. Children can get tangled in them and may choke.



CAUTION!

Dress your child for safety on the playground.

- **No** loose clothing, drawstrings, or long scarves. These could get caught on equipment and choke your child.
- **No** helmets. These can cause your child's head to get stuck in a space it would normally fit through.

Added info...

You'll find more information about playground safety in *Keep Kids Safe: A Parent's Guide to Playground Safety*. You can get a copy from Child Safety Link. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.)

Trikes and ride-on toys

Trikes and ride-on toys should be right for your child's age, ability, and development. Read the directions and warnings that come with a trike or ride-on toy to be sure it is safe for your child.

Watch your toddler carefully when she's using a trike or ride-on toy. A toddler on a trike or ride-on toy should **NEVER** be allowed on the street.

It's important that your child wear a properly fitted, toddler-sized helmet whenever she is on a trike. Buy a helmet that fits your child now, not one that she'll grow into later.

Added info...

Check to be sure the helmet fits your child before you buy it. Use the **2V1** rule.

When the helmet is buckled on your child's head:

- The edge of the helmet should be **2 finger widths** above her eyebrows.
- The strap should form a "**V**" **below her ears**.
- **1 finger** should fit between her chin and the chin strap.



Safety on the road

Car seats

Car seats save lives. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can lower the risk that your child will be hurt or killed in a crash by 70%.

In Nova Scotia, it is the law that children must be in car seats whenever they are in a car or truck. Protect your child by using a car seat on every ride including when travelling with grandparents, caregivers or in taxis.

A rear-facing seat provides the best protection for your child's head, neck and spine in a sudden stop or crash. Keep your child rear facing for as long as he still fits his larger rear-facing seat.

Once your child outgrows his larger rear-facing seat, he will need a forward-facing seat with a 5-point harness to keep him safe.

You'll find information on how to choose and install car seats in *Keep Kids Safe: A Parent's Guide to Car Seats*. You'll find a copy in the back of *Loving Care: Parents and Families*.

CAUTION!

Buy your car seat in Canada.

Car seats purchased outside of Canada—or online from non-Canadian sources—do not meet Canada's safety standards.



Look for this safety mark

Added info...

Safety on the road is about more than cars.

It's not too soon to begin helping your toddler learn to be safe while walking and crossing streets. Some basic safety rules to teach your toddler are:

- *"We cross the street in the crosswalks."*
- *"We look both ways before we cross the street."*
- *"We never go into the street from between parked cars."*
- *"You always hold a grown-up's hand when you cross the street."*
- *"Look at the driver to be sure he sees you before you cross the street."*

Even while your toddler is still in a stroller, you can talk about how cars belong in the street and people belong on the sidewalk. At every corner, you can say, *"We look both ways before we cross the street to be sure there are no cars coming."*

It will be a while before your child is old enough to understand and follow these safety rules. But your good example will help her learn.

CAUTION!

Never leave your toddler alone in a car, not even for a few minutes.

Bike carriers and bike trailers

Once a child reaches 1 year old you can use a bike carrier or bike trailer. A specialty bike shop can help you choose a safe carrier or trailer. If you're buying second-hand, check with the manufacturer to make sure the trailer or carrier hasn't been recalled for safety reasons. You can find out more about bike trailers and carriers from Safe Kids Canada. ([Contact information is in Loving Care: Parents and Families.](#))

Bike trailers may be a little safer than bike carriers because they are lower to the ground. Also, a child moving around in a carrier can throw off the adult rider's balance. This can make a fall more likely.

Make sure your child is always strapped into the safety harness and is wearing a properly fitting bike helmet. Only bike helmets are safe for travelling in a bike carrier or trailer. Other kinds of helmets won't protect your child. Make it a family rule that everyone on a bike or in a bike carrier or trailer has to wear a helmet.

Bike carriers should have:

- A sturdy plastic frame
- High back and sides to stop your child from swaying in the seat
- Side protection to keep feet from catching in the wheels
- A three-point or five-point harness system with a crotch strap—the same as in your child's car seat.

Bike trailers should have:

- A harness for each child
- Head space for helmets

- A hitching arm that will stop the trailer from tipping over or coming loose
- A sturdy metal frame and padded seats
- Wheel guards to stop children from getting their fingers caught in the spokes
- A shield or canopy to protect children from rain, wind, and sun. Make sure there is ventilation. On a warm day, a trailer can be as hot as 40°C or greater.

CAUTION!

To be safe, a carrier must be securely attached to the bike. Consider having a professional install it onto your bike.

Added info...

Wondering how a bike carrier would feel? Ride your bike with a sack of potatoes equal to the weight of your child in the carrier.

And remember: Potatoes will not kick and squirm like your toddler!

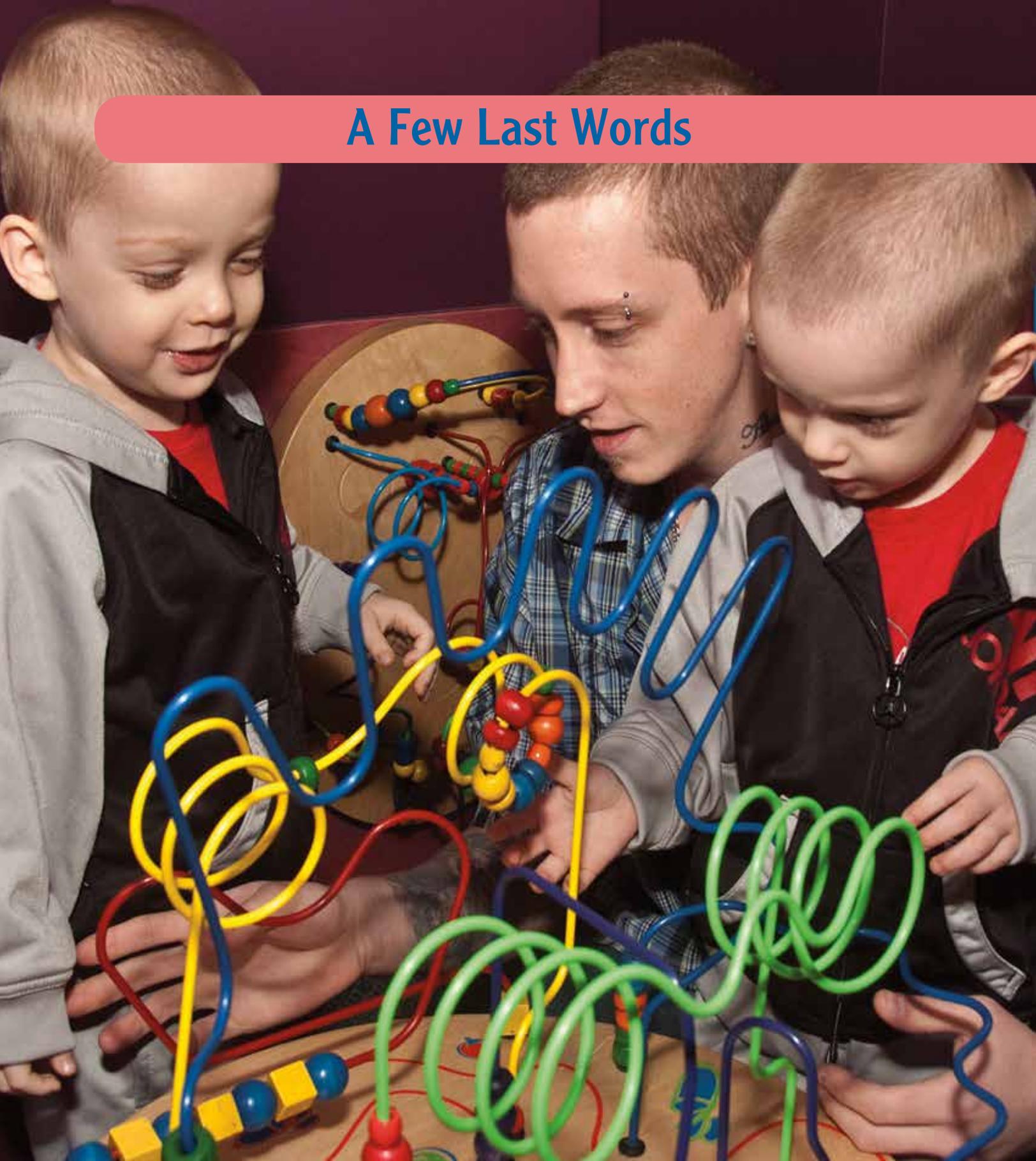


Your toddler wants you to know...

I want to see, feel, and do everything! I want to run, jump, and climb! I need to explore my world. Watch over me to keep me safe.

A few last words..... 162

A Few Last Words



A few last words

People often say that “our children are our future.”

But we often forget that the kind of future our children will make for themselves depends on the love and care they receive right now.

As a parent, your loving care helps your children to:

- Be healthy and active, happy and secure
- Respect and love their family and their friends
- Feel pride in themselves and their culture
- Be part of their community
- Enjoy and succeed at learning

Being a good parent isn't always easy. Parenting can be rewarding, exciting, difficult, and frustrating—sometimes all at once. But it is always important. You are helping your children to build the strengths, self-confidence, and skills they need on their journey through life. Good parenting can lead to a better future for all our children.

The **Loving Care** books stop at age 3, but being a parent lasts a lifetime. We hope that these books have helped you learn and grow with your children. We hope that they have helped you discover your strengths and skills as a parent. We hope that they have helped you and your family through the first years of a long and happy life together.





Support and Information



Support and information

You'll find contact information for all the resources and supports referred to in this book in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

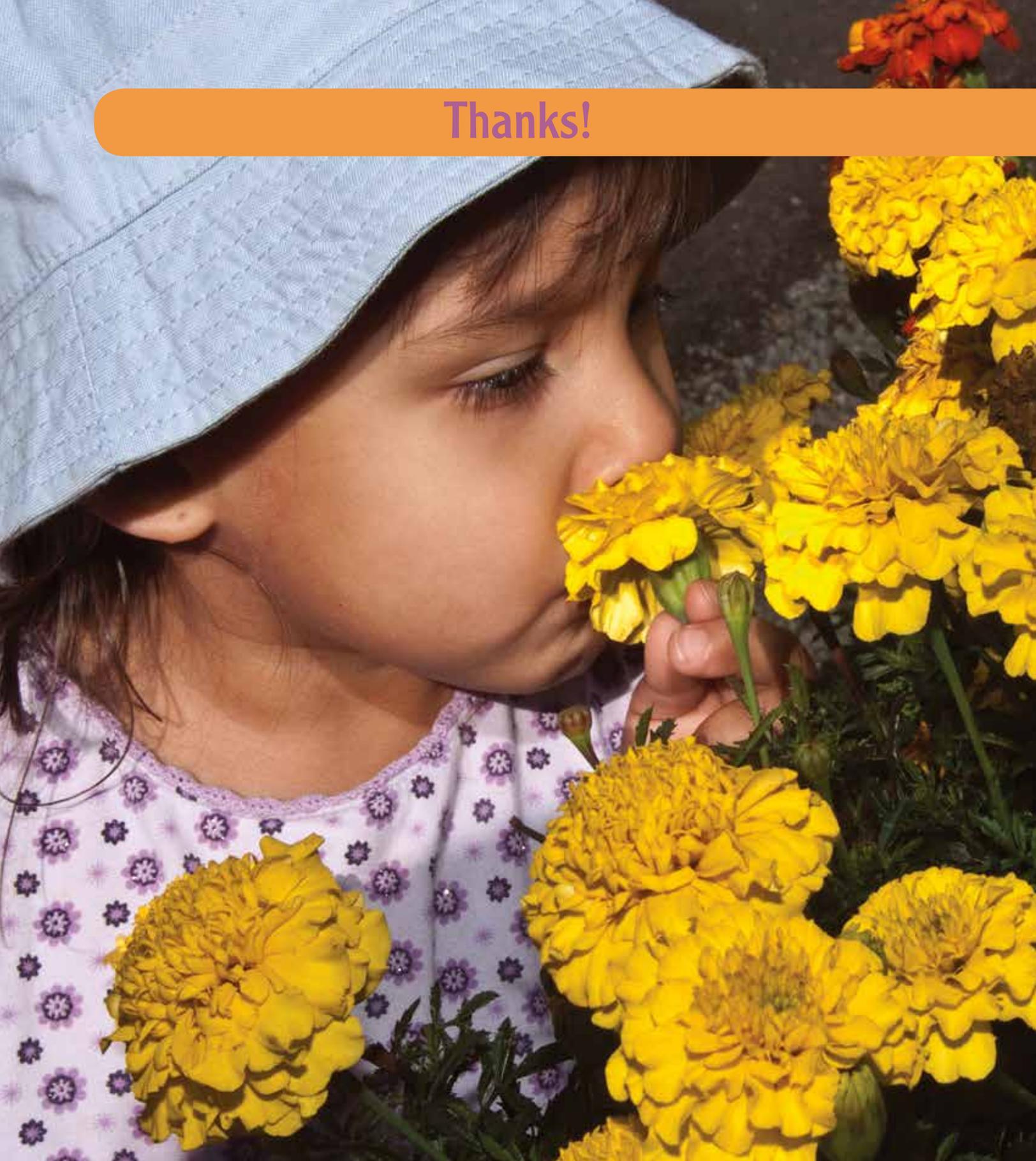
Public Health Services

- Amherst 1-800-767-3319 or (902) 667-3319
- Annapolis Royal..... (902) 532-0490
- Antigonish (902) 867-4500 ext. 4800
- Baddeck (902) 295-2178
- Barrington Passage (902) 637-2430
- Berwick (902) 538-3700
- Bridgewater..... (902) 543-0850
- Canso (902) 366-2925
- Chester (902) 275-3581
- Cheticamp..... (902) 224-2410
- Digby..... (902) 245-2557
- Elmsdale (902) 883-3500
- Glace Bay..... (902) 842-4050
- Guysborough (902) 533-3502
- Halifax Regional Municipality..... (902) 481-5800
- Inverness..... (902) 258-1920
- Liverpool (902) 354-5737
- Lunenburg..... (902) 634-4014
- Meteghan Centre..... (902) 645-2325
- Middle Musquodoboit..... (902) 384-2370
- Middleton (902) 825-3385
- Musquodoboit Harbour (902) 889-2143
- Neil's Harbour (902) 336-2295
- New Germany (902) 644-2710
- New Glasgow..... (902) 752-5151
- New Waterford (902) 862-2204
- Port Hawkesbury..... (902) 625-1693
- Sheet Harbour..... (902) 885-2470
- Shelburne..... (902) 875-2623
- Sydney (902) 563-2400
- Sydney Mines..... (902) 736-6245
- Truro (902) 893-5820
- Windsor..... (902) 798-2264
- Wolfville (902) 542-6310
- Yarmouth (902) 742-7141





Thanks!



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- **Kim Arcon**, Community Home Visitor, South West Nova, Annapolis Valley, and South Shore District Health Authorities
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- **Shelley Thompson**, Coordinator, Child Care Centres Policy & Program Development, Nova Scotia Community Services

- **Amy MacAulay**, Early Childhood Coordinator, Public Health Services, Capital Health

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- Joanne Llewellyn, Public Health Nutritionist, Annapolis Valley District Health Authority
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Loving Care



Loving Care is given **free of charge** to all new parents in Nova Scotia. If you would like additional copies to share with friends or family outside of Nova Scotia, you can order them for a small fee from Nova Scotia Government Publications.

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novascotia.ca/snsmr/access/store

Phone:

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