

Child Care from 2 to 3 Years

What fun your child is! His motor and verbal skills are improving each day, as you can see. He still asserts his independence in the areas of mealtime, bedtime, or toilet training, which can be frustrating for you. Be patient. It's tough being a parent but it's hard being a child as well. Your child's contrariness is normal and important for developing independence.

Eating

Your child may continue to be a finicky eater at this stage. His eating pattern may vary from day to day. For example, he may eat an adequate breakfast, very little for lunch and just meat and bread for dinner. The following day he may eat little for breakfast and heartily for lunch and dinner. Hang in there. As long as you serve a variety of appropriate food selections, he will select an adequate diet.

Of the major food groups, a child needs: around 16-24 ounces of milk and milk products; 2 ounces of meat, poultry or fish group; 2-4 fruit servings; 2-4 vegetable servings; and 4 bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group servings per day. At least one serving of fruit per day should be a citrus fruit or juice. A yellow or dark green vegetable should be served 3 to 4 times a week. A bread serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ slice or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cereal. Remember: a tablespoon of each food group per year of life at a meal is adequate. Discuss a vitamin/mineral supplement with the doctor.

Continue good dental care. Brush your child's teeth twice a day using a small, soft toothbrush and plain water. Floss between teeth afterward. It is important that this become part of your child's routine to instill habits and to continue the fluoride supplement if your drinking water is not fluoridated. The dose increases after 24 months. Some dentists recommend fluoride through at least age 8.

Sleeping

An afternoon nap is still generally required for your child. Sleep at night may be continuous or you may notice problems such as refusing to go to bed, getting out of bed, or awakening during the night. If so, talk to your health care provider about ways to eliminate the problem.

Elimination

Toilet training usually begins around 24 months based on signs of readiness and interest from your child. Ask for a handout or additional resources on toilet training your child. Remember, training doesn't happen overnight and your child will have accidents. Some children may not be ready (ready includes a dry diaper upon awakening from naps, a regular time for bowel movements, ability to say appropriate words for functions, recognition of urges to eliminate, ability to pull clothing up and down, a desire to please parent) until their third birthday, so try to remain patient and not let this developmental milestone become a battleground.

Development/Play

Playmates are important now. If he is not in a day care situation where there are other children, consider a play group or trading time with another mother to allow your child the experience of playtime with a peer. You will need to supervise this playtime as safety remains a factor and attention span is short.

Your child may be going up and down stairs by himself putting both feet on the step. He may be able to run more easily and may pick up an object without falling. He will throw a ball overhand, build a tower of 6 or more blocks, and can draw a circle or straight lines.

His vocabulary is growing considerably. He may be saying 2 to 3 word sentences, using his name. His speech is becoming much clearer and easier to understand. Your child may be able to tell you when he wants something to eat, or needs to go to the bathroom, or has a soiled diaper.

Imitative play remains an important part of your child's development. So do gross motor and fine motor play. Appropriate toys for improving these functions include; playground equipment, household items such as toy appliances, telephones, and dishes. Finger paints and play dough are great play items, but are best done with supervision. Simple household tasks such as dusting a table or sweeping an area with a broom are enjoyable for your child and make him feel a part of the family. Now that your child may be able to turn pages in a book one at a time, allow him to hold the book while you read. This makes him feel special! Take him to the library to select his books.

Safety

Safety precautions are ongoing in the house and outside. Now that your child is mobile and can reach almost everything at counter level, be aware of kitchen utensils left out and potentially within his reach such as scissors and knives. Also, be careful about things that might be left at counter level elsewhere; detergents and cleaning agents (particularly liquid and granulated drain cleaners, dye, toilet bowl cleaners, dishwasher detergents, powdered bleach, and spot removers), nail polish remover, household repair items (particularly paints, shellac, varnish, pain thinner, turpentine, mineral spirits), weed killers, insecticides, gasoline, machine oil, kerosene, lighter fluid, and all medicines. Review your child-proofing and safety plans the first Sunday of every month. Always keep all poisonous things in their original containers.

Never, ever put poisons in food containers or bottles. Keep your supply of potentially poisonous things at a minimum. When you are finished using a potential poison, dispose of the remainder and thoroughly rinse the container and dispose of it (or transport it to your local hazardous waste disposal site).

Remember that your child might get into the trash. Keep your childhood emergency reference where it can be found easily. Keep emergency numbers including the poison control center by each phone.

When about, teach your child his full name and your full names, address and phone number. As he becomes able to understand, teach him who the appropriate people are to ask for help if he is injured, lost or afraid. Teach him never to get into a strange car. You must balance opportunity for healthy interaction with the need for protection especially with other preschoolers. In over 85% of child sexual abuse cases the victim knows the offender, who is most often male. Now is the time to teach your child about "safe touch" and resisting uncomfortable touch (read Its MY body*3 or Touch Talk*2 with him). Begin teaching the names of all body parts including genitals ("penis" and "vagina") and bottom. Children need a vocabulary to say "no" to an unwanted touch. Remember that these young children may legitimately need a caretaker's touch to wipe after a messy bowl movement. This is difficult to teach so become involved in a school education program.

Still, the greatest risk to your child's health is a motor vehicle accident. It is impossible for you to protect your child during an accident by just holding him. Always use an approved safety seat in your care in the recommended manner, anchored properly positioned and secured. Ask about additional safety references.

Communication and Discipline

The methods of discipline you use depend on several factors. You are greatly influenced by the way in which your parents raised you. You may already have or wish to should pursue additional education about parenting. These classes can be helpful. Consult the references below. To some extent your parenting also depends on the kind of child you have (yes, each is different). By its nature, parenthood requires that you make choices for your child and that you are responsible for these choices. When possible, allow your child to participate in these choices. Your being respectful of your child's opinion will promote his/her respect for you.

Suggested Handouts, Readings and Videos

Discipline, Toilet Training, Safety, Nutrition, Dental Health, Sibling Rivalry (if needed). "Talking with Your Child About Sex"³ and Safe Touch References

Additional Resources for Parents

General Child Care

Babyhood by P. Leach; Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care by B. Spock and M. Rothenberg; Caring for Your Baby and Young Child by American Academy of Pediatrics; Taking Care of Your Child by R. Pantell, J. Fries, and D. Vickery

Growth and Development

Toddlers and Parents or Touch Points by T. Brazelton; Parents Book for the Toddler years by A. Popper; The Second Twelve months of Life by F. Caplan; Your Two-Year Old by L. Ames and F. Ilg

Communication and Discipline

Your Child's Self Esteem by D. Briggs; Positive Discipline by J. Nelsen, Without Spanking or Spoiling by E. Crary; Parent Power by J. Rosemond; Parent Effectiveness Training or P.E.T. in Action by T. Gordon; How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by A. Faber & E. Mazlish; The Strong Willed Child by J. Dobson; Magic Years by S. Fraiberg; raising Your Spirited Child by M. Kurcinka.

Other

Child of Mine, Feeding with Love and Good Sense by E. Satter; Feed Me! I'm Yours by V. Lansky; Mother's Almanac by M. Kelly and E. Parsons; Toilet Training in Less Than a Day by N. Azrin and R. Foxx, Raising a Son by D. and J. Elium; Raising a Daughter by J. Elium and D. Elium.

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