

The Incredible Growing Machine

By two and a half years of age, your child's distinct personality is emerging. Your toddler loves to please others and is thrilled when you praise her. Children learn behaviour with encouraging comments such as "I really liked the way you let Emma play with your new ball". Be specific with your praise. Take advantage of teachable moments and offer positive reinforcement.

"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning; between the things he or she does "just for fun" and things that are "educational". The child learns while living and any part of living that is enjoyable is also play." Penelope Leach

Play allows toddlers to get to know other people, to develop motor skills, to learn language and expand their imagination. Play helps to improve problem-solving skills, encourage concentration and develop their natural

curiosity about their environment. Toddlers learn best through hands-on exploration. Taking things apart, pushing in, pulling out, filling and emptying containers are all fascinating to a toddler.

Your 2-½-3 year old can become totally absorbed in her play. Give your toddler some warning before you announce that play-time is over. Use concrete measurements she will understand—remember 'five more minutes' means nothing to a toddler. "Sara, you can fill three more containers, and then we must tidy up and go". This gives her time to change her focus, prepare for the end of an activity and reinforce the concept of time. Ending activities will become much easier.

If I Had My Child to Raise All Over Again

If I had my child to raise over again,
I'd build self-esteem first and the house later
I'd finger paint more and point the finger less.
I'd do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less, and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I'd run through more fields, and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often
I would be firm less often and affirm much more
I'd model less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.

Diane Loomans



Listening Skills

Listening to your 2-½ year old chat to himself while playing can be revealing if not comical. At this stage, you should understand a lot of what he says. There will also be words and sentences which make sense only to him. He can carry out simple instructions; “Bring me the paper, please”, and “Where is the book?” By 3 years, these skills have greatly expanded. Your toddler will ask “Why”, a lot. Answer their questions in a simple way. If you get tired of all the “Whys”, try asking them, “What do you think?”

Give your child your full attention when he is speaking to you. Stop what you are doing, make eye contact and listen actively. All of these behaviours reinforce that what he has to say is important to you.



Sweet Dreams

Sleep patterns vary from family to family and with each child. Sleep issues are resolved easily and early for some; however, there are other children, who at 2-½ years are still waking up in the night. The most important thing to remember is both you and your child need enough sleep in order to function well. By age 2-½ to 3 years your toddler will most likely be sleeping 10 to 13 hours in a 24 hour period and this may or may not include a short nap in the day.

Sleep problems in toddlers are common. There are many books and magazine articles written about sleep. We can help change our toddler's sleep pattern with a few simple, consistent routines:

1. Start with a peaceful bedtime routine, a bath, possibly a nutritious snack, brushing teeth and a book or two. Television is stimulating and will wake children up, not relax them.
2. Have other children lower their noise level.
3. Allow your toddler a little time to talk about their day. Make sure the discussion ends with positive feelings.
4. If they have a favourite stuffed animal, make sure it is in the bed.
5. Read a book or tell a story.
6. Have a cuddle time.
7. If the child is afraid of the dark, have a nightlight or leave the door slightly open.
8. Say goodnight and leave the room.

Useful Links for sleep

http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/healthy_sleep_for_your_baby_and_child



Keep Food Fun!

The world around me is so busy that I sometimes forget when I am hungry. Please give me, water and milk to drink. Avoid juice, sweet fruit “drinks” and pop, as these may cause cavities. It is better for me to have pieces of fruit. Also avoid foods and drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea, chocolate, and energy drinks.

I like to eat food I can hold in my hands. Cheese and whole grain crackers, raw fruit and vegetables and dry, unsweetened cereal are some healthy snack ideas. Give me different coloured foods (without food colouring), in fun shapes – like red pepper rings, cucumber slices, frozen peas and melon cubes. Be careful with things I can choke on and supervise me when I am eating.

My tummy is small and I am not growing as quickly now. Watch what I eat over a few days before you worry about how little or how much I am eating. Let me decide when I am full. It is your job to make sure I have healthy food choices. It is my job to decide what on my plate I will eat and how much of it I will have.

Many foods are marketed to parents to be healthy and good for me, but they can be very high in sugar, sodium and fat.

If you want to learn more about how food is marketed, watch this video message from Dr. Yoni Freedoff: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BdFkK-HufU>

The following foods should be limited because they are high in calories, fat, sugar and salt (sodium):

- Cakes and pastries
- Chocolate
- Candies
- Cookies and granola bars
- Doughnuts
- Store bought Muffins
- Ice cream and other frozen desserts
- French fries
- Potato chips
- Nachos and other salty snacks
- Fruit “roll ups” or fruit gummies
- Fruit flavoured drinks
- Soft drinks (pop)
- Sports and energy drinks
- Sweetened hot or cold drinks (iced coffees, hot chocolate, iced tea)

Let’s plan healthier meals and snacks!
Here are some healthy snacks:

- hard cheese
- melba toast
- bread sticks
- cottage cheese
- hummus
- vegetables
- fruit
- milk
- whole grain pita bread
- yogurt
- hard boiled eggs

REMEMBER: I watch what you eat – If you like healthy snacks, I will like them too! The healthy eating habits I learn now will last a lifetime!



Parents Need Time Too

As much as you feel good about being a parent, it is not easy spending all your time with a toddler. It is important that you regularly make time to look after yourself. This may take planning. Even setting up time alone with your partner is often a challenge. Organizing a sitter and exchanging childcare with a friend are two ways of doing this. Although arranging time away from your child is a lot of work, you are more effective as a parent if you also look after yourself and your adult relationships.

We all experience stress at some point in our lives. The important thing is what we do with it. It is important to recognize and deal with the stress of balancing parenting, relationships, job and money. Early signs of stress can be physical; headaches, chronic colds, nausea, or, emotional; increased frustration over little issues, and feeling trapped. Remember to eat right, exercise and have regular breaks from your toddler. It's okay to say NO when someone asks you to do "one more thing". Talk to your partner and friends about how you are feeling. Stress can be managed!



Medical Care

Early eye examinations are important for children! As many as 1 in 6 children have a vision problem serious enough to impact their learning and development. Eye exams are covered by OHIP annually until children are 19. Children in Junior Kindergarten are also eligible for free glasses through the Eye See... Eye Learn program. Now is a good time to have them checked!

For more information

<http://www.optom.on.ca/OAO/ESEL/AboutESEL.aspx>

The Canadian Dental Association, Health Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society recommend that your child be seen by a dentist within 6 months of the eruption of their first tooth or by one year of age. Be sure to contact Public Health if you do not have dental coverage.

Safety First!

No Helmet, No Riding!



Keeping Me Safe

I like my bicycle helmet. I really like it when you wear yours too! I think it's important that we all ride safely, even if it's only in the driveway. The safest place for me to learn to ride my bicycle or practice is a safe place, away from traffic. I'm not ready to be on roads and I shouldn't ride on sidewalks. As I get more comfortable on my trike or bike, I'll need clear and consistent rules as to where I can go; like the end of the driveway, or to the stop sign.





My Behaviour

Positives or Negatives

At this age I still like to try out different behaviour. It is still normal for me to have outbursts and temper tantrums. Be caring, consistent and patient with me. Please do not label me a “bad boy” if I do something wrong. Talk about the behaviour or activity. Say, “biting hurts” instead of “You are a bad boy for biting”.

Remember, the job of disciplining children is shared between both parents. Here are some strategies that you may find helpful:

Redirection: If I won't stop the behaviour, redirect me to another activity.

Time out is best done in a calm-down chair in the same room as you are. If I am given time out in another room, I may become extremely upset at the separation. I may be afraid you won't come back. This approach works better when I am a little older. Time out should only be for the same number of minutes as my age.

Consequences: If I do something that I should not do, there will be consequences. The consequence should be timely, logical, clear, and time-limited. Your consistency is the most important thing.

Rewards and Incentives: These are different than bribery. Rewards are given after the behaviour. Bribes usually occur before the behaviour. For example, “I see you tidied up your toys, thank you. Would you like a story?” instead of “Stop yelling and I'll give you a candy”. Food rewards are not a good idea as it develops poor food habits.

Positive Reinforcement: Try to catch me being “good”. Hearing things like “great job”, “way to go” and “I noticed that you...” encourages me to want to do it again.

Spanking

There is no clear evidence of any benefit from the use of physical punishment and physical punishment places children at risk for injury, mental illness, antisocial behavior, and increased risk for violence



Family Pet

My family has a pet and I want to hug it to bits. My energy and activity may put a pet on guard, as they do not understand the reason for the noise and action. A crate or a corner which is off limits to me is a good idea.

Help me to understand that this is a living creature and not a toy. As much as we trust our pet, I should never be left alone in a room with him. I may accidentally hurt him and then he may hurt me.

I need to be taught to seek permission from you or another adult before I go near an animal. I should never thrust my face into a pet's face, as this could startle the pet.

A Note about Rabies: Teach me to avoid contact with stray dogs, cats and wild animals, and to never touch sick or injured animals. If untreated, rabies is fatal in humans.

Look at What I Can Do!

From 2.5-3 years

2.5 years

- I like to balance on one foot for a second
- I can carry on a conversation of two or three sentences
- I can pick up and put away my toys with help
- I can name at least four pictures
- I can sort white and coloured laundry
- I like to help put the groceries away
- I can put on my own T-shirt
- I can ride my tricycle using the pedals
- I can jump with both feet off the floor at once
- I can help tear lettuce and help set the table
- I can copy a circle
- I can describe what some things are for or how I use them such as "What is a raincoat for?"
- I am beginning to share toys and books, but not all the time
- I can dress without help – my shirt/pants might be on backwards and my shoes on the wrong feet but that's O.K.
- I am curious; I like to ask, "why?"

3 years



TOYS TO HELP ME GROW

- I love to discover the world! I like to compare things, examine things and test things to find out if they will work the same the second and third times I try it. I am a scientist. I need you to keep nurturing my curious mind.

THINGS FOR ME TO EXPLORE:

- Empty cardboard containers
- Plant seeds and watch for them to grow
- Plastic watering can
- Unbreakable magnifying glass
- Household paint brushes and buckets of water to paint everything outside
- Many sizes of vehicles, blocks, people, pine cones, sticks to put in order from small to large, short to tall, same colour
- Paint easel and non-toxic paint
- Collect things found in nature to look at closely and to make a picture / collage.

GROSS MOTOR:

- tricycle with helmet
- T-ball set
- balance beam – a 2" x 6" board on the ground
- play catch with bean bags or throw them into a box



Talk With Me

Create Your Own

Make a scrapbook of your child's interests. You could include family members, vehicles, dogs, cats or farm animals. Write a sentence about each page in your child's words. This is a great way to help your child learn language and it makes a fun bedtime story book.

Picnic Fun For Everyone!

Let's have a picnic! We can pack a lunch and go to the park, or we can have a picnic at home. Think of how much fun it would be to spread out a big blanket or make a tent in the living room! Maybe my dolls and stuffed animals could join us. Our play dough creatures could have fun eating pretend "play dough treats".

Talk to me when we play. Please point out the different colours of objects around me. Say, "Let's lay the red blanket on the ground" or "the green frog is in the grass". It might take me a while to learn all of the colours. Keep repeating them for me. There is so much for me to learn. Let's learn together!

I Love to Learn!

By the time I am 3 years old, I should be able to follow 2 to 3 step directions. When we are cleaning up the toys together, you can ask me to find the truck and the ball and then put them in the toy box. While reading books you can ask me questions about the pictures like "Where's the bird?" and "What is the boy doing?" I am starting to learn about the concept of one and more than one. Use a big piece of paper to trace around my body and help me learn about my eyes, ears, hands, arms, and legs. If I say "foots" instead of "feet" you can just repeat the word "feet" with me again.





Physical Activity

Let's Sit Less and Move More!

Healthy habits start early! Active play is important for my healthy growth and development. Children my age should play actively for at least one to two hours a day. Remember, if you are active, I will be active too! I have lots of energy and need space to move around. Here are some ideas of things we can do both indoors and outdoors:

- Put on music and dance
- Create an obstacle course in the living room where I can crawl under, climb over, or move around obstacles
- Go for a walk around the neighborhood
- Take a hike in the park or on a trail
- Go skating or swimming
- Work in the garden
- Run, climb, pull a wagon
- Play with balls- roll, throw, catch and kick!

You + Me + Exercise = Fun



To find your local Public Health Unit:

Visit <http://bit.ly/eMtpaw>

Call the INFOLine at 1-866-532-3161

(Toll-free in Ontario only)

or TTY 1-800-387-5559



For More Information

Best Start Resource Centre

<http://en.beststart.org/resources-and-research>

Ministry of Child & Youth Services- Early Childhood

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/index.aspx>

Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000

24 hours/day

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/telehealth/

Canadian Paediatric Society

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/

Call 211 or visit www.211Ontario.ca

EatRight Ontario - Call 1-877-510-5102 or

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca>



NEXT ISSUE

3to3.5years