

Changes

Somewhere in those months between 3-3½ there is a magic transition from toddler into child. This stage can be dramatic and some parents eagerly await the development of this small person.

Your 3 year old is full of humour and original ideas. He is self-confident, charming and a wonderful talker. All of the skills and information he has been learning over the past two years are coming together. He loves praise for his accomplishments and is content to be away from mom and dad with people he knows.

This is a stage of energy and motion. Children learn so much through their active play. They are very aware of the world around them, and are curious about the “how’s” and “why’s”. This is also a time of developing friendships; taking turns, and learning the niceties of sharing and play. Making friends shows a child’s readiness to move beyond himself and his family. It is important to remember that not all children will reach this stage at the same time.

You may think toddlerhood is over...but he is still a child and thinks differently than an adult.

The occasional tantrum will occur, he may still grab, push or bite other children.

There will be times of whining and being uncooperative and cranky.

Offers of help should not go unheeded, even if it will slow you down. He can set the table, pour his own cereal, help bake muffins. By giving your child small jobs to do with you, helps him to feel successful. Taking time to encourage participation and responsibility will pay off in later years.

Take time to enjoy your 3 year old.



To My Grown-Up Son

Author: Debra Barone-Atkinson

My hands were busy through the day
I didn't have much time to play
The little games you asked me to.
I didn't have much time for you.

I'd wash your clothes, I'd sew and cook,
But when you'd bring your picture book
And ask me please to share your fun,
I'd say: "A little later, son."

I'd tuck you in all safe at night.
And hear your prayers, turn out the light,
Then tiptoe softly to the door...
I wish I'd stayed a moment more.

For life is short, the years rush past...
A little boy grows up so fast
No longer is he at your side,
His precious secrets to confide.

The picture books are put away,
There are no longer games to play.
No good-night kiss, no prayers to hear
That all belongs to yesteryear.

My hands, once busy, now are still
The days are long and hard to fill.
I wish I could go back and do
The little things you asked me to.

Growing Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds

Generations

Guardian angel, confidante and role model, a grandparent is a source of love and encouragement. A grandparent also remembers family history, traditions and values.

Having a loving and supportive relationship between your child and their grandparents is a tremendous gift to a child. This type of relationship teaches your child many things, such as patience and kindness. He becomes aware of the process of aging and even the concept of death. Many grandparents feel the sun rises and sets on their grandchild. Your child will love those special times with Grandma and Grandpa. But this, in turn may lead to some disagreements between you and your own parents or in-laws on parenting techniques. What is important is the need to prevent these minor disagreements from growing into bigger issues.

Here are a few suggestions which might help:

1. Be prepared for lots of advice, good and bad. Most grandparents want to share their wisdom. Rather than reacting to advice you disagree with, simply listen when it is offered and then quietly ignore.
2. Don't expect your child's grandparents to step in and help whenever you feel you need it. They've already done their turn. In times of need, they may be able to help, but not all the time.
3. Remember, grandparents are a generation older. Noise, chaos, rough and tumble play will be harder to cope with. Plan your visits and be considerate of their needs too.



Feeding & Nutrition

Veggies are good for me!

A – is for asparagus; B – for broccoli, C is for cauliflower! I like playing this game with Mom and Dad but I really don't like eating all different kinds of vegetables. I know I'm picky when it comes to fruits and vegetables. What I liked yesterday may not be my favourite today.

I like when Mom and Dad:

- offer me small servings of vegetables.
- give me raw or cooked vegetables and a little bowl of dip or yogurt.
- make vegetable soup for me.
- make a cheese sauce for my veggies.
- make mini-pizzas using mixed vegetables as a topping on English muffins or mini pita-pockets.
- show me how to grow vegetables in our own garden
- set a good example and eat veggies too!



Healthy habits at a young age build lifelong patterns for healthy growth and development. Nutri-eSTEP helps you to find out what is going well for you and your child. The survey takes less than 10 minutes and you will get immediate personalized feedback, tips on how to improve eating and activity habits, as well as links to trusted nutrition resources.

To complete the screen, visit www.nutritionscreen.ca

Clean and Healthy: Basic Maintenance

Hair Washing

- An active child needs a shampoo at least every other day.
- Combine it with his regular bath. Make it fun and use a wash cloth or a cup to wet his hair.
- Use child friendly shampoo. This limits the amount of eye irritation.
- Rinse hair by having child lean back resting on your hand and arm.
- Keep your child amused, sing or tell a story.



Dental Care

- Encourage your child to find all the “sugar bugs” that are hiding in his mouth.
- Try and get your toddler to spend about 2 minutes brushing. A clock timer or a song gives them a sense of time.
- Take turns. Joey brushes his own teeth and then mom or dad brushes Joey's teeth.
- Flossing is important too! It might be easier to use a floss pick in my little mouth.
- Your child should visit the dentist regularly. If you do not have dental coverage, call your local health unit to find out more about dental services that may be available.

Hand Washing

Hands should always be washed

- Before and after meals
- After blowing his nose or coughing
- When they are dirty
- After using the toilet

By 3 years of age, your child is probably going to the bathroom by herself, at least some of the time. Teach girls to wipe correctly, from front to back. It is natural for your 3 year old to want to talk about and explore his body. Give the correct name for body parts, this includes the genital area. Teach her to care for and respect her body.



Let's Sit Less and Move More!



Physical Activity

Screens - A Blessing and a Curse!

We often wonder how much screen time is OK for a preschooler. The Canadian Pediatric Society says no more than 1 hour a day. These suggestions are based on what we have learned about children and screen time. Young children have a great need to interact with parents and other adults. This encourages healthy brain development. They do not get this in front of a TV or on a tablet. High amounts of screen time is also linked to weight problems, a lowered ability to interact with others, a lack of interest in learning and less creativity. We live in a technological time - screen time refers to computer games, play stations and hand held devices as well as television.

You will be doing your child the biggest favour if you carefully limit his time at these activities.

What do we do instead? Here are some suggestions:

- Play with lego, blocks, and building sets.
- Create an arts and crafts box, with a special space for your child's craft work.
- Get books on tape from the library.
- Do puzzles.
- Spend time each day reading to your child.

Taking the time to help your preschooler develop other interests will make it a lot easier to suggest alternatives as he gets older.



Play With Me

Let's hop, jump, gallop and somersault. I love when you laugh with me. Pouring is lots of fun for me. Let me practise in the kitchen or the bath before pouring a drink. Towers of small blocks are fun to build up and knock down. I like the face you make when the blocks fall and the song you sing as we build. ("This is the way we build the tower, build the tower, build the tower..."). Beads of different shapes and colours are fun to string together - I can match colours and shapes. When you wear what I make I feel proud.

Let's play ball. I can catch and throw a ball. I love to ride my tricycle, wearing my helmet. When we go for a walk - let me ride! I have become quite the artist. We can draw and cut and paste paper together. I have fun when two or three of my friends come to play. I don't mind taking my turn and sharing with my friends. I can use my words, "stop it" instead of striking out when things aren't going the way I want. I like to hear my favourite bedtime stories. Please read them to me again and again. I like it when we tell stories to each other. Let's share lots of them!



Getting Ready for School

Making Choices

Many children will attend a formal daycare or preschool program before they enter school at age 3½ or 4 years. The choice of preschool education versus learning at home depends on the child, the home environment, the needs of the family and the type of learning situation available away from your home.

Preschool education seems to have the greatest impact on children who may not have experienced consistent and reliable opportunities for learning before the start of formal school. Preschool group play is a positive learning experience for all children. Learning at home can also be a positive option prior to entry into school.

The Options

- 1. Learning at home:** Using neighbours, play groups, libraries, recreation centres, and community programs provides opportunities for your child to develop social skills needed for group activities. Activities at home can follow much of what is done in preschool programs and play group experiences, but has the added benefit of flexibility, familiarity, and individual attention you can give your child.
- 2. Preschool/Nursery School and Child Care Programs/Opportunities:** Parents who want the structure of an early educational experience for their child will generally look at an approved Nursery School/Preschool or Daycare.

A well run Nursery School, Daycare or Preschool program can be a very positive experience for your child. It can get her used to other adults and group routines. There are language and educational experiences that expand her thinking. There are lots of opportunities to develop social skills and make friends. Unstructured and structured play provide opportunities to develop a variety of skills.

Some things to consider when choosing;

- a) Proximity to your house; how much travelling do you want to do?
- b) Philosophy and Program; does it match your expectations?

- c) Hours of Operation; nursery schools may have the expectation that children are toilet trained and may only take children after they are toilet trained. Hours often vary (some are just half days).
- d) Age range will vary in group experiences. Will you and your child be comfortable with the mix?
- e) Ratios: Approved early childhood education settings must staff according to provincial standards.
- f) Parent involvement: Is it allowed and encouraged?
- g) What is the cost of the program? Are there subsidies available?

The best learning environment for your preschooler is one that is supportive, safe, nurturing, stimulating, fun, calm and consistent.

Children With Special Needs:

Whether your family is choosing Nursery School, Preschool, Daycare, or your child is staying at home as a preschooler, children with special needs benefit from early intervention. A parent knows their child best and as a result becomes his/her child's lifelong advocate. Planning ahead for any type of program is very important. Information about early intervention and supportive programs that assist with planning for entry to formal school can be found by calling 211 or accessing 211 on line.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Notify your local school well in advance of the start of school about your child's special needs. This assists with planning to have programs in place when your child starts school. Call your local school up to a year in advance is okay.
2. Arrange a meeting with your local school principal and ask that support staff and the child's teacher attend as well. If your child is participating with an early intervention program or child care activity, you can invite those people, if you wish to support you and share information that will help plan for supports at school.
3. If you are new to an area, you can contact your local Public Health Unit for information or you can call 211 for information about services and supports for children with special needs.
4. Check your school boards' website for additional information about the school and their special needs programs.



Keeping Me Safe

I am easily distracted, which is one of my charms. At the same time, I am not aware of potential dangers. In my world, I focus on myself and can't really see the bigger picture. If Mom says, "Stay with me!" I might interpret this to mean Mom will stick to me. So I wander off to look at something neat, expecting her to follow. I need you to help me to understand why I have to stay close. Sometimes having a special job to do while grocery shopping keeps me close to the cart. Talking to me about what we are doing and seeking my suggestions keeps me interested. This may sound like a lot of work, but making sure I'm safe does take time and energy. Going over the rules once is not enough for me, I'll need to be reminded often when we go on our outings.



The other safety tip we should practise before it happens is what I do if we do get separated. The best advice to give me is to stay put. If I stay in one place, you are more likely to find me. If we are both running around it will be harder.

Some other suggestions:

- Teach me who I can approach if I get lost. As a parent, you will need to decide, who you feel comfortable with your child approaching, for example, a store clerk, someone in a uniform, or another mom with children.
- Do not leave me alone in a car, even for a moment.
- Do not let me go to a public washroom alone until I am much older.

Outings with me may not always be relaxing for you, but I learn lots and have fun. It's all part of growing up.

Safety First!



My Behaviour

Interesting Little Me!

I experience emotions like anger, jealousy and love. Please try to be patient with me and allow me to express these feelings in a safe way. I am really becoming an interesting person! I am learning new social skills and becoming more interested in playing with others. I still want your attention and I like to know that I'm behaving well. You can understand me more easily now and I'm using lots of new words. I still like things to go my own way and I can get really upset when they don't. Here are some suggestions which will make the days go more smoothly while still having fun.

Stick to our routine. I need to have some structure to my day. It is also important to have day to day consistency. Things like regular meal and bed times help us avoid difficult behaviour.

Offer choices. Encouraging independence in some activities is a good way for mom and dad to show me respect. Simple choices such as, "Milk or water Ryan?" gives me some control. But you have to think about the choices you give me. Make sure they are ones you can live with. Choices such as, "We are going to pick up your sister from school, OK?" is not such a good idea. You might not like my answer.

Tell me what I can do. Suggestions such as, "You can't run around in here, but when we go outside you can run in the yard."

Setting an Example. Watching you can give me lots of ideas. If you lower your voice, so can I. Daily exercise and playing outside makes me want to copy you. We can do lots of fun things together.

I'm now interested in being with other children, not just to watch but to play. This is a good time to introduce me to fun activities where I can make new friends. Some places we could visit include: our local Ontario Early Years Centre, the library, or a playgroup with friends. I still like being with Mom and Dad, but it's also becoming lots of fun to be with friends. Give me some warning before it is time to leave my friends. This allows me to prepare myself so I am ready to say goodbye nicely.

Look at What I Can Do!

From 3-3 ½ years

3 years

- I may add 10 to 20 new words to my vocabulary each week.
- I like to draw with crayons and markers.
- I can tell you how old I am or show you 3 fingers.
- I draw stick people usually with no body.
- I like to “read” my favourite books to myself.
- I like to play with other children, not just beside them.
- I can get dressed and put on my shoes without help.
- I know my full name.
- I like to count things.
- I can recognize either the first letter of my name or my whole name.
- I walk up and down stairs alternating feet.
- I can match colours and objects.
- I like to play kicking, throwing and catching games.

3½ years



TOYS

By three years of age, I will be more interested in creating a product rather than just enjoying the process. We could make a book of my artwork. I can tell you about my picture and you could write a story to match. Don't forget the date! If you framed one of my creations, I would feel so proud. Here are some things I might enjoy:

- Several different kinds of markers, chalk, paints, pastels, crayons (all non-toxic and washable)
- Non-toxic glue, children's scissors and beautiful junk
- Books, simple interlocking puzzles
- Felt board and felt story pieces
- Chalk and chalk board
- Paint easel
- Beads and threading laces

CREATE YOUR OWN

Have fun making sound shakers together. Use paper cups, toilet paper tubes, film containers, yogurt or margarine tubs. Gather together things like sand, gravel, marbles, dirt, pieces of paper, buttons and anything else you have. Put the same amount of sand into two containers, the same amount of gravel in two more containers, and so on. Put the tops on the containers and tape paper across the ends of the toilet paper tubes. Now try to find the two containers that sound the same. (This game works best using the same containers for all the sounds). These sound shakers can also be used with music.



Talk With Me

Talk With Me!

I am really using my words now! I tend to use 4 to 5 words together in a sentence and I am becoming very chatty. As I am growing, I am developing in my ability to produce sounds in words. Other people should be able to understand what I am saying most of the time. Help me use my words by speaking clearly and slowly. If my sounds are different (e.g. “I dee a tow” for “I see a cow”), I may become frustrated if people do not understand what I am saying. To help me use my words more clearly, we may like to ask about speech and language services in our area. Early help can really make a difference before I go to school. Call 211 for information about services in your community.

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:

www.ontario.ca/children

Telehealth Ontario: 1-800-797-0000

24 hours/day

Canadian Paediatric Society:

www.caringforkids.cps.ca

Call 211 or visit www.211Ontario.ca

EatRight Ontario: Call 1-800-510-5102 or

www.ontario.ca/eatright

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3.5to4years