
YOUR CHILD AT 2 YEARS

I. DIET/SLEEP

- A. Most 2-year-olds may have fluctuating appetites that may go from very good to bad. Within reason, allow for these swings. As children become surer of their own likes and dislikes and are able to feed themselves more adequately, the swings will lessen. Adequate nutrients and calories can be supplied by simple, easily eaten, finger foods (breads, potatoes, peanut butter, cheese, chicken). Avoid sweetened drinks and encourage water instead. Toddlers need 800 mg of calcium daily (about 20 ounces of 2% or whole milk or equivalent). Don't put too much attention on food. Avoid using food as a reward since that can create future eating issues (i.e., overeating). Establishing good eating habits now will certainly carry on throughout their lives. Remember, do not force eating. Try to eat meals as a family.
- B. **SLEEP:** Sleep time is usually 10-12 hours/night with one nap period. By this age your child should have a well-established bedtime routine. They are approaching the stage of rituals, therefore keep your bedtime regimen short and consistent to prevent building up a long complicated bedtime routine in the future.

II. ELIMINATION

- A. You can expect the average child to be toilet trained (bowel movement and daytime wetting) by 2 ½ -3 years. If you haven't succeeded, don't panic and force the issue. Your child just may not be ready yet.
- B. Signs of toilet readiness include: understanding the words that apply to training (e.g. potty, wet, dry); having bowel movements that are fairly predictable; able to pull their clothes on and off; able to follow directions; and having a dislike for being wet or soiled.
- C. Begin training at a calm period in both the child's life and yours. Tips for success include having your child initially sit on the toilet with a diaper on for increased security. Hold regular "potty sitting" times since your child initially may not always tell you when they have to go.
- D. If your child is resistant to these toileting techniques, don't push the process because you will not succeed. Over time (more so for some than others), your child will become toilet trained. If it becomes a battle of wills, he will win that war.

III. DEVELOPMENT

- A. Around this age they will cut their last baby teeth. Remember to continue to help your child brush his/her teeth twice daily. Either plain water or a pea sized amount of children's (non-fluoridated) toothpaste is recommended. The first dental visit is usually at 3 years of age.
- B. Your 2-year-old is becoming much better at handling a spoon and fork. Language development explodes as they replace baby language with sentences. Vocabulary may be anywhere from 15 to 1000 words.
- C. Socially, they are still full of "no's"! Learning so much at once is hard for them and, as a result, a tantrum may occur from the frustration and strain. Consistency and understanding is very important. Temper tantrums should be ignored. Reinforce limits. For you to remain in control of overall decisions, offer choices vs. yes or no questions.
- D. Remember to keep discipline brief. A firm "no" or removal from the situation is usually effective. Spanking, however, is never effective in the long term. Use positive reinforcement to encourage "good" behavior.
- E. A 2 year old usually engages in parallel play. That is, they will play alongside, but rarely cooperatively with, other children.
- F. Stimulation: Play equipment is helpful for large muscle development (climbing gym, swings). Scribbling, simple puzzles, toys with various shapes and sizes will help with fine motor coordination. Language is aided by simple stories and simple instructions (children are "turned off" if expectations are beyond their capacity).
- G. Limit television/screen time to at most one hour per day.

IV. SAFETY

- A. When outdoors, supervise them closely in playgrounds and continue to use an SPF 30 sunscreen.
- B. Remember to always keep your child in the car seat and never use the front seat.
- C. Keep a smoke free home and routinely check your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
- D. Keep weapons unloaded in a locked cabinet. Keep all poisons and medications out of reach of children. **The Poison Control phone number is 1-800-222-1222.**
- E. This is a good time to introduce bike helmets.
- F. Be alert for choking hazards (peanuts, grapes, hot dogs, hard candy, small toys). Food should still be cut into small pieces.

V. OTHER

- A. Your child's next visit will be at age 3 years.
- B. Other than the annual flu shot, there are no vaccines to be given until age 4.