

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development

0 to 3 months

Congratulations on your new baby! What an exciting journey is ahead, as you and your baby get to know each other. The birth of a baby is a happy time, but many new parents find the first 3 months more challenging than they expected. The good news is that there is a lot of great information that can make caring for your newborn a little easier. You might not feel confident in parenting your baby. You might feel tired or have the “baby blues.” These feelings are normal and will get better with time. Remember to ask for help when you need it.

“Born to Connect”

From the moment your baby enters this world, they want to connect with you. In the first week, your baby responds to your face, voice, touch, and smell. Your baby will try to get your attention. Respond to their vocalizations and body movements. These back-and-forth interactions are the building blocks of relationships. By around 2 months, your baby will smile and coo to “talk” back to you. Amazing!

Touch and Holding

Your open arms and gentle touch teach your baby to feel safe, secure, and loved. Think of your arms as one of the primary places where loving relationships develop. Touch is calming for both you and your baby.

Learning Your Baby's “Language”

In the first 3 months, your baby's body is immature. Your baby is learning how to do basic things like fall asleep, wake up, and eat. Watch closely. How does your baby let you know how they are feeling before they can talk? You will see your baby asleep, awake but sleepy, awake and alert, fussy, and crying. Learning your baby's body language is the first step in developing a positive relationship.

Crying

In the week after birth, many babies cry close to half of the time they are awake. Your baby's cries tell you they are unhappy, hungry, tired, sick, uncomfortable, or bored. Learning how to soothe a crying baby is a skill most parents must learn. The most important thing is just to respond to cries and fussy behaviors. When you respond, your baby learns to trust that you are there for them. In time, you will learn what different cries mean. Sometimes, babies are just fussy. When you get frustrated, put your baby in a safe place and take a break or ask for help.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your baby's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your baby's success in school and in life

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Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development, 0–3 months

Sleeping

Sleep is important for both you and your baby. When rested, you can enjoy positive interactions with each other. At first, you will be on your baby's schedule. They may have their days and nights mixed up. It's okay—and even important—to sleep when your baby sleeps. If you can, ask a family member or a friend to come help so you can take a nap.

Feeding

Your baby will eat well when feeling relaxed, safe, and secure. Holding your baby lovingly while feeding will help them relax. Feeding them whenever they are hungry helps them to trust that you are there to meet their needs. Ask for help from a breastfeeding/lactation specialist if you have any trouble breastfeeding. Feeding is something your baby is learning how to do, and it can be tricky at first.

Routines and Your Newborn

Routines are daily activities that happen around the same time and about the same way every day. Some examples are feeding, sleeping, and diapering. As your baby grows, routines will give them a sense of safety and security. Most babies don't get on a real routine until they are 4 to 6 months old. As much as possible, follow your newborn's rhythms and let them sleep and eat on their own schedule. As your baby grows, they will learn about routines from you.

Creating Rituals

One way to help your baby learn a routine is to use "rituals" before each routine activity. Rituals are something you do over and over, the same way each time. For example, when your baby looks sleepy, sing a bedtime song, gently rock them, and then lay them down to sleep. Your baby will learn that the song means it's almost time to sleep. Rituals help your baby get ready for that change.

Making Small Changes

As your baby grows, you can start to slowly change the routine. For example, you may want them to take fewer naps and sleep for longer times. You could try keeping your baby awake a few minutes longer before each nap. By making small changes and moving slowly, you cause less stress for your baby.



Sights and Sounds

Your newborn baby is aware of many things. Scary sights and loud sounds are stressful. Monitor what your baby sees or hears at home—including the screens of electronic devices. Screens get in the way of your relationship with your baby. They want to interact and play with you!

Helping Your Baby Grow

Activities for 0 to 3 months



From birth, babies are interested in exploring your face, voice, and body. Your baby tells you a lot through body movements and sounds. Watch and listen to them during playtime and other daily activities. Who is this little person? Respond to sounds your baby makes, and let them know you are trying to understand. Through back-and-forth interactions with your baby, you become connected, or attached, to each other. Encourage family members to show love for the new baby (and each other). Your positive back and forth interactions with your baby are key to their social-emotional development.

Talk Time

Your baby can see your face, smell you, feel your skin, and hear your voice. They can even sense how you are feeling. Talk, sing, look at, and smile at your baby. Say their name. Watch and wait to see what your baby does. Do they look at your face and eyes? Is your baby listening to you? When you move, do they try to follow your voice with head movements? Your baby doesn't like to be far from you.

Silly Faces

At 2 weeks, your baby can see clearly 8 to 10 inches away. Hold them close to your face and watch what they do. If your baby opens their mouth, open your mouth. Stick out your tongue. Watch and wait a bit. Does your baby try to copy you? They may not be able to copy you at first, but keep trying!

Tummy Playtime

Place your baby on their tummy on a clean blanket on the floor. Lie down next to them, talk, and watch what your baby does. When they start to pick up their head, let them know you noticed. "You picked up your head!" Celebrating new skills with your baby as they grow builds confidence. Now they can look at the world in a whole new way. *Never leave your baby alone on their tummy.*

Storytime

Your baby is never too young to listen to a story or look at pictures in a book. They will feel warm, safe, and calm in your arms. Reading books is an activity you and your baby can do every day as a routine, to help you get close and connect. Your baby listens to the tone of your voice and hears the words you are saying. At this age, they focus best on simple black-and-white pictures or big, brightly colored pictures.

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Great Big World

Take your baby out for short walks. Let them see the sky and trees, listen to the birds, and feel the wind. If you can carry your baby, they can feel the warmth of your body and hear your heartbeat, and they will feel safe and secure. They may cry less and calm more easily when they are physically close to you. Talk to your baby about what you can see, hear, or feel. This is how they learn the meaning of words.

Rock-a-Bye Baby

Gentle movement is usually calming for babies. Dancing or rocking in a chair is relaxing for both of you. Listen to soft, soothing music, or sing quietly. Gently sway back and forth, holding your baby close. Whisper in their ear and let them know how much you love them.

Sibling Social

Help older siblings get to know the new baby by making time for them to be together. Show big sister (or brother) how to be gentle with the baby. Tell big sister what a good job she is doing. "Wow, she really likes your smile. Look at how she's watching!" Encourage siblings to talk to the baby. Have an older brother come close and say, "Hi, I'm James. Can you see me?" Gently position your baby's body so everyone can look at each other.

Soothing Voices

Your baby recognizes your voice. Hearing familiar voices is comforting to them. Talk to your baby about everything. For example, while grocery shopping, talk about what you are buying. "Bananas. Let's get some bananas." Your baby also loves to hear your singing voice. You may remember some simple songs or lullabies from your childhood.

Dinnertime

Find a quiet, comfortable place to feed your baby. Hold them close and look into their eyes. While feeding, watch your baby closely and see what helps them calm and focus. Do they relax and suck better when you talk or sing to them or when you are quiet? See what works best for your baby. Pay attention to how you are feeling, too. Your baby is connected to you and can sense how you feel. When you relax, they relax.

How Are You Feeling?

Watch your baby carefully and guess how they are feeling. Are they hungry? Full? Uncomfortable? Is your baby happy, mad, or sad? Are they ready to play or getting sleepy? Talk to your baby about what you think they are feeling. "I saw that yawn. You look sleepy." One day soon your baby will be able to tell you! For now, they tell you with behaviors, body movements, cries, sounds, and facial expressions.



Feeding Your Baby, 0-3 months

Feeding is an important time to get close to and connect with your baby. The feeding routine is about more than eating. Your newborn baby is helpless and completely dependent on you. Your baby's hunger cries are a signal to respond to one of your baby's basic needs. Your loving and positive interactions during feeding support your baby's attachment to you. Over time, your baby learns to trust that you will always meet their needs. This time sets the stage for a healthy relationship with your baby as they grow.

Keep in Mind

- Your new baby is learning how to coordinate sucking, swallowing, and breathing. That's a hard routine to learn. Take your time feeding your baby. Encourage your baby in a soothing voice.
- Holding your baby during feeding time helps your baby relax and feel connected to you. Touch is calming for both you and your baby. Holding your baby will help them focus on feeding.
- It takes some time to figure out feeding routines. Many babies begin to have a regular feeding schedule sometime in the first 2 months.
- Your baby learns to trust you if you feed them whenever they are hungry. Your new baby may want to eat about every 2 hours, day and night.
- Your baby is eating well if they seem content, gain weight, and have at least six wet diapers a day.
- Lactation specialists are good resources for breastfeeding.

Suggestions

- Help your baby focus on feeding:
 - Find a quiet and comfortable place that has few distractions to feed your baby.
 - Always hold your baby so you can see each other's faces during feedings.
 - Decrease any distractions. Turn off electronics. Mute phones. You can also place a light blanket over your baby so they can focus while feeding.

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0-3 months



Feeding Your Baby, 0-3 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Watch your baby carefully while feeding. Your baby is trying to tell you things:
 - **I'm Hungry.** Crying, opening and closing mouth, searching with mouth for breast or bottle, making sucking movements with mouth, clenching fingers over tummy. (It's time to feed your baby.)
 - **This Is Great.** Looking at you while sucking, relaxed body. (Smile at your baby.)
 - **I Need a Break.** Spitting up, looking away, gagging, hiccupping. (Pause the feeding for a moment.)
 - **I'm All Done.** Pulling away from breast or bottle, arching body away, falling asleep. (Stop feeding.)
 - **I Want to Interact.** Pausing, looking at you, smiling. (Talk softly and smile at your baby.)

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider or a lactation specialist.



Helping Your Baby Sleep, 0-3 months

When your baby and you are well rested, you are ready to interact with each other in a positive way. Positive, loving interactions are the building blocks of a secure attachment with your baby. During the first few months, your baby will be sleeping a lot. It takes a while for newborn babies to have a regular sleep schedule. You will basically be on your baby's schedule. This might be challenging for you, but take naps with your baby when you can. Try not to worry about what isn't getting done. This is an important time to ask for help from family or friends.

Keep in Mind

- Getting enough sleep is important to your baby's development. On average, newborn babies sleep between 15 and 20 hours in a 24-hour period. Without enough sleep, your baby may be fussy and less able to engage in positive interactions with you.
- Being close to you during sleep time lets your baby hear you and feel safe. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in the same room as you but not in your bed. Talk to your baby's health care provider about safe sleeping spaces for your baby. Always put your baby to sleep on their back (not on their tummy).
- Babies are sensitive and can become easily stressed. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. Create a calm, consistent environment for your baby so they feel safe and secure and can rest well.

Suggestions

- Create routines around sleep times. Consistent sleep routines will help your baby learn what to expect, feel safe and secure, and calm more easily. For example, first feed your baby, then rock your baby while singing the same lullaby. Now it's time for sleep.
- Keep your baby in a dark room at night and in the light (inside or out) during the day. It's easy for your newborn to get their days and nights mixed up. Over time your baby will learn that nights are for sleeping.

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Helping Your Baby Sleep, 0-3 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- You can help your baby calm down and fall asleep. Keep interactions calm, positive, and loving while helping your baby fall asleep.
 - Keep your baby close to your body. Walk with your baby in your arms or rock them in a rocking chair. Gently pat or stroke your baby.
 - Gently hold both of your baby's arms close to their body to help them calm. Some babies sleep well when "swaddled" (wrapped in a blanket). Ask your health care provider for advice if you want to try to swaddle your baby.
 - Talk quietly, hum, or sing to your baby.
 - Give your baby their fingers (or a pacifier) to suck on. This is a way for your baby to learn to self-soothe.
 - Some noises may help your baby relax. Some babies like white noise, such as the sound of a clothes dryer or a vacuum cleaner. Other babies like soft music. Try different noises to see which ones help your baby relax.
 - Go outdoors. Go for a stroller ride or a ride in the car.
 - When you feed your baby at night, stay quiet and keep the lights down.
- Babies don't like being woken up. If you need to wake up your baby, use a soft and kind voice. Move slowly and gently.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Calming Your Baby, 0-3 months

Newborn babies need help calming when they are upset or uncomfortable. Your loving, positive response to your baby is important for their social-emotional development. It helps your baby come to trust that their needs are important and you will respond to them. This helps build your baby's secure attachment to you. Learning what calms your baby is not always easy. You may need to try several different things. Keep trying until you find out what works best for your baby. If you get frustrated, put your baby in a safe place and take a break. Call another parent, a friend, or a family member for help when you need a break.

Keep in Mind

- Many babies cry close to half of the time they are awake during the first week after birth. As the weeks pass, your baby will cry less often.
- You can't spoil your baby at this age. Comfort your baby whenever they cry. Your consistent response helps your baby feel safe and learn to trust you. Over time, this actually helps your baby cry less.
- Your baby's cries are how they talk to you. Each cry means something.
 - **"I'm Hungry."** (Please feed me.)
 - **"I'm Uncomfortable."** (Please change me.)
 - **"I'm Tired."** (Please put me down for a nap.)
 - **"I'm Sick."** (Check with your health care provider for guidance.)
 - **"I'm Lonely or Scared."** (Keep me close.)
 - **"I'm Bored."** (Let's do or see something new.)

Suggestions

- Rule out the basics. Feed, burp, change the diaper, or put your baby down for a nap.
- Hold your baby close to your body. When your baby is next to your body, they can feel your heartbeat, smell your scent, and feel warm and safe. Touching, or being skin-to-skin with your baby, is calming for both of you. A wearable baby carrier is helpful.

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0-3 months



Calming Your Baby, 0-3 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Swaddle your baby. Swaddling involves wrapping your baby in a light blanket to help them feel safe and secure. Talk to your health care provider about how to swaddle your baby.
- Talk quietly, hum, make shushing sounds, or sing to your baby.
- Try changing your baby's position. Try new ones to see which ones your baby prefers.
- Soothe your baby with noise. It was very loud in the uterus for your baby. Your baby might like the sound of the dryer, a vacuum, a fan, or other "white noises."
- Encourage sucking. Give your baby a finger (or a pacifier). This may help your baby calm down and encourages self-soothing.
- Try movement. Rock your baby, or put your baby in a baby swing. Go outside for a walk with your baby in a baby carrier, or go for a ride in the car.
- Try soft massage. Gently pat or stroke your baby. Rub your baby's back.
- Bath time. Give your baby a warm bath.
- Mix it up. Try one calming approach for a minute or two. If that doesn't work, then try something else.
- Try more than one thing at a time. For example, swaddle your baby, hold them close to your body, and sing while walking with your baby in your arms.
- Be gentle. Your baby's body is very delicate. Never shake your baby.
- Take a break. If you feel overwhelmed, give yourself and your baby a break. Place your baby on their back in a safe place and step away for a little while.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

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Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Calming a Colicky Baby

Some babies develop colic at some point between 2 weeks and 4 months of age. *Colic* involves inconsolable crying in a baby who is healthy and well-fed. Talk to your baby's doctor if you think your baby might have colic. If your baby does have colic, it will be a stressful time. You may find yourself not having fun with your baby. Get help from others when you are tired and need a break. Remember that even if you cannot make your baby feel better, you are helping by holding and trying to soothe them. Be as positive with your baby as you can. Your everyday back and forth interactions are important to your baby. Your baby knows you are trying to help, even if it is still hard for them.

Keep in Mind

- Colicky crying is crying that lasts for more than 3 hours a day for more than 3 days a week for 3 weeks.
- Colicky crying begins and ends for no clear reason.
- Neither you nor any other adult in your baby's life caused your baby to have colic.
- Colicky crying frequently occurs in the late afternoon or evening.
- No one knows the cause of colic, and there is no single treatment.
- Most babies grow out of colic by 4 months of age.
- If your baby has colic, it does not mean they will be a difficult toddler.

Things to Try

- Remember to burp your baby. Gas does not cause colic, but it is good to rule out gas as a problem for your baby.
- If you breast feed, consider avoiding foods that cause gas for you, as well as caffeine and milk products.
- If you bottle feed, talk to your baby's health care provider about trying a different formula.

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Calming a Colicky Baby *(continued)*

General Tips for Calming

These tips may be helpful whether your baby has colic or not.

- Learn how to swaddle your baby. (Ask your health care provider.)
- Hold your baby close next to your body. A baby carrier is helpful.
- Change your baby's position. Try new positions to see which your baby prefers.
- Give your baby a pacifier, or help them find their fingers to suck.
- Try gentle massage. Softly pat or stroke your baby. Rub your baby's back while they are on your lap.
- Turn the lights down or off to make the room darker.
- Give your baby a warm bath, or put a warm compress on your baby's tummy.
- Get noisy. It was very loud in the uterus. Your baby might like the "white noise" sound of a dryer, vacuum, or fan. Or, your baby might like music. Try making shushing sounds or singing quietly in your baby's ear.
- Try movement. Take a ride in a car, go for a walk, rock your baby, dance with your baby in your arms, or put your baby in a baby swing.
- Try one tip for a minute or two. Then, if that does not help, try something else.
- Try more than one tip at a time. For example, swaddle, hold, and sing to your baby.
- Your baby's body is delicate. Never shake your baby.
- If you feel overwhelmed, give yourself and your baby a break. Place your baby on their back for 5 to 10 minutes while you both take a break. You will feel calmer when you return to your baby.
- Take turns caring for your baby with your partner, a friend, or a relative so you get enough rest and sleep. You need rest and sleep to help you respond to your baby in a positive way.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your baby's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Babies

Like many parents, you may have to work outside the home. You may find this difficult because it is hard to leave your baby. Choosing the best child care possible makes it easier to return to work. You know your baby and your family's needs, and this knowledge will help you choose the option that is best for your family. Most importantly, you want a safe, caring, loving place for your baby. The interactions between your baby and other caregivers is important to your child's social-emotional development. Remember that your baby will be okay. You will enjoy seeing each other at the end of the day.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important things to consider as you start the process of choosing a caregiver:

- Choose a caregiver who fits your family's needs. Do you want an in-home caregiver? A licensed provider? Do you have a relative who can provide care?
- Choose a caregiver you like and who shows an interest in your baby. Your baby learns how to build positive relationships by interacting with and watching caregivers in their life.
- Choose a setting that fits your baby's personality. Do they like a setting that is calm and quiet, or loud and active? Does your baby need time to warm up with new people, or do they warm up quickly? Does the style of the caregiver or program meet your baby's needs?
- Choose a caregiver who will be positive and loving with your baby. Observe the caregiver with other children in their care. Loving interactions between your baby and caregiver are important to your baby's social-emotional development.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you carefully. Open communication with your caregiver is important for building the trust you need to leave your baby in someone else's care.

Asking Questions

Once you have a few possible providers in mind, visit their programs, observe, and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Can you visit anytime?
- Are they licensed?
- Does the place feel good? Do the children seem happy? Do the caregivers seem happy?
- Is the setting safe, clean, and cheerful? Do you see books and toys?
- Are there enough adults? Ideally, there should be a minimum of 1 adult for every 4 infants.
- Is there a consistent routine?

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Child Care for Babies *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Do caregivers hold the babies? Are they loving with the babies?
- Do you trust the caregivers? Do they listen and ask questions about your baby?
- What are the expectations for drop-off and pick-up? Is there time for you and your baby to say goodbye and greet each other?
- Do other parents like the caregivers?

Preparing for Your Baby's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your baby's routine. Work together to establish a routine that works well and helps your baby feel safe and secure, both at home and in the care setting.
- Share what you know about your baby with the caregiver. Tell the caregiver how you help your baby go to sleep, how you feed them, and any diapering tips.
- Share any special ways your baby communicates and how you calm or soothe them. This will help the caregiver support your baby's needs and help your baby learn to trust them.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition for your baby.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your baby. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

Supporting Your Baby's Transition

- Take your baby's comfort items, such as a special blanket or stuffed toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend a little time with your baby before you leave. When it's time for you to go, don't sneak away! Tell your baby you love them, and let them know you will be back. Knowing that you will return helps your baby learn to trust.
- Your baby may cry when you leave but should recover quickly. This is normal.
- Spend time with your baby at pick-up time. Give them your full attention. Your baby missed you. Tell them how much you love and missed them.
- Keep in mind that, over time, your baby should seem happy and relaxed with the caregiver.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider or contact your local child care resource and referral organization.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

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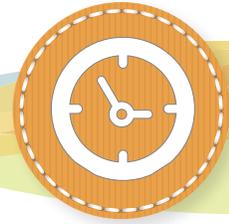


Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

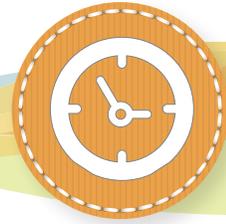
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child (continued)

FOR BABIES (continued)

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: "Go get your shoes from your room." This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, "You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you." You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



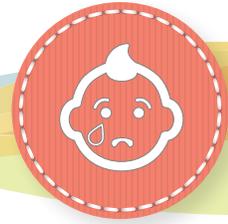
Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!

NEWSLETTER

Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development

3 to 9 months



These next few months are special for you and your baby. Your baby is becoming a little person and is so much more interactive! They love being with and playing with you and other family members. The smiles, laughter, and squeals make it even more fun. As your baby begins to move around, your job gets a little harder. They rely on you to keep them safe. There may be times when taking care of your baby feels exhausting. Remember to take time for yourself and ask for help when you need it. When you are rested and happy, you can better meet your baby's needs and enjoy your time together.

“Back and Forth”

You look at your baby and smile—and your baby smiles back. Your baby squeals to get your attention—and you look at them, smile, and say, “Hi there.” Your baby cries—and you say, “Ooo . . . are you hungry?” Your responses send messages to your baby: *Your needs are important. You are safe. You are loved. You are special.* These back-and-forth interactions are how you build a positive relationship with your baby. They learn to relax and trust that you are there.

Touch and Holding

Your open arms and gentle touch teach your baby that they are safe, secure, and loved. Think of your arms as one of the primary places where loving relationships develop. Touch is important and calming for both of you.

We Are Attached

Your baby's vision is getting better. They know your face and the sound of your voice. You and your baby have become attached. Because your baby now recognizes people they know well—they also recognize people they don't know. Your baby may fear strangers at first. They may get upset if you leave them with people they don't know. Give your baby time to get comfortable in new settings or with new people. Let them know they are safe.

Who Am I?

Your baby is learning about who they are. By 6 months your baby will turn their head when you call their name. You are also getting to know your baby. You may have an active baby or a calm one. An active baby will need many times to move during the day. A calm baby will need many quiet cuddle times during the day. Your baby's personality and yours may be different. Right now you may need to do things differently to meet your baby's needs.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your baby's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your baby's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development, 3–9 months

First Feelings

Your baby is beginning to use sounds and facial expressions to tell you how they feel. They show joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear. Your baby is not crying as much as when they were newborn, but there are still times! Sometimes your baby's cries may frustrate you or make you angry. Take a deep breath and respond calmly. By doing this, you are teaching your baby to trust you.

Nighty-Night

Your baby is sleeping deeply for longer times. You may also be getting a little more sleep. Some babies begin to sleep through the night, but many do not. Your baby's sleep may change over the next few months. Changes in routines, illness, or too much excitement may increase night waking for a few days. Be patient; this won't last forever. If your baby or you are not getting enough sleep, ask for help. Sleep—for both of you—is important to your happiness and wellness.

What's That You're Eating?

Your baby will start to show interest in food, and will look at or reach for food you are eating. Talk to your doctor about when and how to start solid foods. When your baby can sit up without help, they can join you at the table. By sitting and eating with you, your baby learns they are an important part of the family. Talk to them during meals. Your baby is listening carefully to you and understands more and more every day.

Your Little Explorer

Your curious baby will start to move around. Baby-proof areas *before* this happens, to help them know it is safe to explore. First your baby will flip from tummy to back and then to tummy again. Then they will be creeping or crawling. Your baby will want you close by at first for safety. This is an exciting time for them but may be stressful for you. You need to keep a close eye on your baby now. Talk to your baby's doctor about safety checklists. Then you can relax and your baby can explore!

Rituals

Your baby is beginning to have more predictable sleeping, feeding, and play times. There is more of a day-and-night routine. You may have some rituals during daily routines—things you do over and over with your baby, the same way each time. Do you have a special song you sing or book you read before bedtime? Do you play a special game during diaper changes? Your baby loves these rituals and counts on them for comfort and security during the day.

Making Small Changes

Your baby learns to understand the world when things happen the same way every day. Routines help them make sense of the day. If you need to make changes to your baby's routine, make small changes to reduce their stress. Talk to your baby about the changes. Offer comfort if they get upset: "I know. Change is hard. It's going to be okay."



Sights and Sounds

Your baby is aware of many things. Scary sights and loud sounds on phones, tablets, or other screens are stressful for them. Be careful what your baby sees and hears at home. If your baby does get upset, hold them closely and talk to them. Let your baby know they are okay. Let them know you are there to keep them safe.

Helping Your Baby Grow

Activities for 3 to 9 months



Spend special time with your baby, distraction free. Think about how good it feels when someone takes the time to notice and pay attention to you. Your baby feels the same way. Set aside some time every day to turn off your phone and other electronics and just focus on your baby. Watch and listen. Try to guess what your baby is thinking or feeling. Have fun, laugh, and play together. Remember that these loving back-and-forth interactions build healthy relationships between you and your baby.

Tummy Push-Ups

Put your baby on their tummy. Lie in front of them and make silly faces, or talk to them about what you see them doing. Watch your baby try to use their arms to push their body up and lift their head. Your baby is curious and will look at and reach for new objects or toys. One day they will roll over to their back and surprise both of you! *Remember never to leave your baby alone on their tummy.*

First Conversations

Your baby loves to hear your voice. Talk to them about what you are doing, seeing, hearing, or feeling. Respond to sounds your baby makes. When they say “baba,” say “baba” back. Wait. Does your baby respond again? Talk to your baby in a soft, gentle, sing-song voice. Use real words in short sentences. Help older brothers and sisters learn how to talk to their new sibling: “Are you tired?” “You sound sad.” Soon your baby will use words to tell you how they are feeling. This is an important part of social-emotional development.

Silly Faces

Look in the mirror with your baby. When they smile, smile back. Make a different face. Stick your tongue out. Does your baby try to stick out their tongue too? Open your eyes wide. Do they widen their eyes too? Yawn. Does your baby yawn too? Say, “What silly faces we can make!”

Baby Books

It is never too early to cuddle up and read with your baby. Baby books have thick pages and simple pictures. They are easy for little hands to hold. You can start by holding the book and looking at and talking about the pictures. Your baby might reach for the book, touch it, or try to bring the book to their mouth. They might even try to turn the pages. Make this a special time for you and your baby. Before nap or bedtime are good quiet story times. Your child will enjoy this bedtime routine for many years to come.

Who Are You?

Your baby is beginning to be interested in new people. Introduce them to friends and family. Think about joining a parent–baby playgroup. It may take your baby a little while to warm up to a new person. Hold them as they get comfortable. Some babies need a long time to get used to new people. Stay close, smile, and talk to your baby to let them know they are okay. They will learn to trust new people with some help from you.

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So Much to See

Take your baby out and about in the world. A trip to the grocery store or library is amazing! Your baby will like to look at patterns and things that move. They will be interested in lights, shiny things, and things they haven't seen before. Remember to watch your baby closely—new things can also become too much. They may need to rest or go home.

What's That Sound?

Take your baby out for a walk in the neighborhood. Talk to them about the different sounds: "Do you hear that? That's a bird." If there are loud sounds, smile and reassure your baby that there is no need to worry: "That was a truck. You're okay." They will enjoy watching and listening to children play at a park. Learning about sounds helps your baby understand the world. This helps them feel safe.

A Different View

Sometimes when your baby fusses they are simply bored. Your confident baby wants to explore! They may be tired of being in the same position or doing the same thing. Let your baby stand while you hold them and support their body. Everything looks different from up here! Try moving them to a new room, or going for a walk. Sometimes a new view is all it takes for your baby to go from fussy to happy.

Time for a Break

There are times when your baby just needs some quiet time. Watch them and learn their "I need a break" signals. Your baby may look away or turn away from you. They may stop making sounds back to you. Your baby may yawn or begin to fuss. It is okay to put them on their back in a quiet, safe place. A light blanket or a soft toy may help your baby learn to self-calm.

Little Toes, Little Fingers

Babies learn about themselves by exploring their hands, feet, and bodies. Gently hold your baby and explore their fingers and toes: "Here are your hands. Here are your feet. Here are your toes." Touch or kiss each finger or toe separately. Count each one and pretend they are "piggies": "I see one little piggy! I see two little piggies!"



Feeding Your Baby, 3-9 months

Feeding is about more than eating. Feeding your baby when they are hungry helps your baby relax and feel secure. Your baby learns to trust that you will meet their needs. In time, your baby may be able to wait a little without crying before being fed. Hold your baby close, smile, and talk to your baby during feeding times. Watch your baby closely. Respond to the sounds, gestures, or body movements they make. Your loving interactions during feedings support your baby's attachment to you.

Keep in Mind

- Your baby may have developed a feeding schedule by now (but not all babies have).
- Your baby is eating more at each feeding, and feeding may take longer. Your baby does not have to eat as often as when they were a newborn.
- Sometimes when your baby wakes up at night, they may just want to know you are close. Try soothing your baby with words or touch before feeding them. Your baby may go back to sleep without being fed.
- Breast milk or formula is all your baby needs. Your baby may begin to show interest in solid foods during this time. Watch your baby look at or try to grab foods you are eating.
- Once your baby sits up and holds their head up well, they may be ready for solid foods. Talk to your health care provider about good first foods and when/how to begin solid foods.

Suggestions

- Help your baby focus on feeding:
 - Find a quiet, comfortable place to feed your baby.
 - Hold your baby so you can look at each other's faces.
 - Spend a few minutes letting your baby look around before you start feeding. Your baby's vision is getting better, and they are curious about what they are seeing.
 - Turn off electronics and mute your phone. You can cover your baby with a light blanket if needed to help them focus.
 - Talk to your baby in a calm, soothing voice. Talk about what they are looking at and what they are doing.

(continued)

3-9 months



Feeding Your Baby, 3-9 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Feed your baby when you eat meals. Use mealtimes as a way to get close to and connect with your baby. In between meals, feed your baby when they act hungry.
- Feed your baby just before bedtime. Try not to let your baby fall asleep while feeding. Put your baby to bed drowsy. Your baby can begin to learn to fall asleep on their own.
- Let other caregivers feed your baby. Share what works well for your baby during feedings. Consistency helps your baby relax. You can put breast milk in a bottle. Now you can sometimes get a break!
- Watch your baby carefully while feeding. The sounds, movements, and gestures your baby makes all have meaning. Listening and responding to your baby build a healthy relationship.
 - **I'm Hungry.** Crying, opening and closing mouth, searching with mouth for breast or bottle, making sucking movements, clenching fingers over tummy. (Feed your baby.)
 - **This Is Great.** Looking at you while sucking, relaxed body. (Smile at your baby.)
 - **I Need a Break.** Spitting up, looking away, hiccoughs. (Pause the feeding.)
 - **I'm All Done.** Pushing away breast or bottle, arching body away, falling asleep. (Stop the feeding.)
 - **I Want to Interact.** Pausing, looking at you, smiling. (Talk softly and smile.)

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Helping Your Baby Sleep, 3-9 months

Well-rested babies and parents are happy, content babies and parents. Getting enough sleep allows your baby to be alert and ready to interact while awake. Your sleep is just as important as your baby's. When both you and your baby are well rested, your interactions will stay positive. These loving interactions form the foundation of a secure attachment with your baby. If you can, rest or take naps with your baby. Ask for help from friends or family.

Keep in Mind

- On average, younger babies sleep for 14 to 15 hours in a 24-hour period. Without enough sleep, your baby may be fussy and less able to engage in positive interactions with you.
- By 4 months, some babies sleep as long as 6 to 10 hours at night. Others still wake up for night feedings, but this may end around 6 months. Your baby needs to take naps during the day.
- Being close to you while sleeping lets your baby hear you and feel safe. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in the same room as you but not in your bed. Always put your baby to sleep on their back (not on their tummy).
- Some babies wake up at night but just need to know that you are close. If your baby wakes up, try calming them first with gentle touch or quiet talk before feeding.
- Babies are sensitive and can become easily stressed. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. Create a calm, consistent environment for your baby so they feel safe and secure and can rest well.

Suggestions

- Create a consistent routine for naptimes and bedtime. For example, at bedtime, give your baby a warm bath, snuggle up for stories, and then put your baby to bed. Routines help your baby understand and prepare for the next activity. This gives your baby a sense of security.
- Put your baby to bed when they are drowsy (not asleep). Feed your baby just before bedtime, but try not to feed your baby to sleep. Give your baby their fingers (or a pacifier) to suck on. These actions begin to teach your baby to self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Keep the room where your baby sleeps cool, dark, and quiet. This helps your baby realize when it's time to sleep.

(continued)

3-9 months



Helping Your Baby Sleep, 3-9 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Here are some tips for helping your baby fall asleep:
 - Keep interactions calm, positive, and loving while helping your baby fall asleep.
 - Talk quietly, hum, or sing to your baby.
 - Walk or rock your baby in a rocking chair. Gently pat or stroke your baby.
 - Some noises may help your baby relax. Some babies like white noise, such as the sound of a clothes dryer or a vacuum cleaner. Other babies like soft music. Try different sounds to see which ones help your baby relax.
- Here are some suggestions for handling your baby's cries at night:
 - Decide with other adults in your baby's life how you will handle it when your baby cries at night. For example, you might decide to take turns when the baby wakes up. This helps your baby learn to trust that other caregivers can meet their needs, and it also lets you get more sleep.
 - Wait a little before responding. Your baby may be able to self-calm, or regulate, on their own and return to sleep.
 - Speak to your baby in a gentle voice and use a gentle touch.
 - If you need to feed your baby, stay quiet and keep the lights down.
- If you need to wake your baby, go slowly and gently. Talk to your baby lovingly, and let them know why you are waking them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Calming Your Baby, 3-9 months

The ability to self-calm, or regulate, is an important social-emotional skill. Your young baby will still often need your help calming down. When your baby cries, your quick response teaches your baby to trust that you are there for them. Over time, this feeling of security allows your baby to relax and begin to learn some ways to soothe on their own. For example, when your baby cries, you may notice them try to suck on their fingers to calm down. Sometimes, nothing helps calm your baby. They may be getting a tooth and are just fussy. Stay calm and patient. Let your baby know that you love them, you are sorry they are sad, and you are trying to help. If you need a break, ask for help from family or friends.

Keep in Mind

- Your baby can begin to learn ways to self-soothe. Your baby may be able to calm down by sucking on their fingers or thumb. Your baby may be able to calm down with just the sound of your gentle voice, your touch, or even your smell.
- Responding to your baby's cries builds trust and a sense of security in their world. You can't spoil your baby at this age. Comfort your baby when they cry.
- Your baby's cries are the way they talk to you. Each cry means something.
 - **"I'm Hungry."** (Please feed me.)
 - **"I'm Uncomfortable."** (Please change me.)
 - **"I'm Tired."** (Please put me down for a nap.)
 - **"I'm Sick."** (Check with your health care provider if there are signs your baby is sick.)
 - **"I'm Lonely or Scared."** (Keep me close.)
 - **"I'm Bored."** (Let's do or see something new.)
- Your baby may develop "separation anxiety" at around 7 to 9 months. This is normal. Your baby may cry when you leave the room or when you leave them with a babysitter. When you need to leave your baby, tell them what is happening. "I am going to work. I will be back soon." Give your baby a kiss and tell them you love them. Do not try to sneak away.

(continued)

3-9 months



Calming Your Baby, 3-9 months (continued)

Suggestions

- Rule out the basics. Feed, burp, change the diaper, or put your baby down for a nap.
- Try one or more of the following when your baby is fussy. Try one approach for a few minutes, and if your baby does not calm down, try another one.
 - Pick your baby up and hold them close to your body. A baby carrier is helpful. Physical touch is calming for you and your baby.
 - Swaddle your baby. Gently hold both of your baby's arms across their chest and close to their body. Gently move your baby's body up and down.
 - Talk quietly, hum, or sing to your baby.
 - Try changing your baby's position. Try new ones to see which ones your baby prefers.
 - Your baby might like the sound of the dryer, a vacuum, a fan, or other "white noise." Watch your baby carefully to see how they react to these sounds.
 - Try movement. Go outdoors. Go for a walk, rock your baby, dance with your baby, or put your baby in a baby swing.
 - Try soft massage. Gently pat or stroke your baby. Rub your baby's back while they are on your lap.
 - Give your baby a warm bath.
- Encourage your baby to self-soothe. Give your baby their fingers (or a pacifier) to suck on to calm themselves.
- Always stay gentle and calm. Your baby's body is very delicate. Never shake your baby.
- Take a break. If you feel overwhelmed, give yourself and your baby a break. Place your baby on their back in a safe place and step away for a little while.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Calming a Colicky Baby

Some babies develop colic at some point between 2 weeks and 4 months of age. *Colic* involves inconsolable crying in a baby who is healthy and well-fed. Talk to your baby's doctor if you think your baby might have colic. If your baby does have colic, it will be a stressful time. You may find yourself not having fun with your baby. Get help from others when you are tired and need a break. Remember that even if you cannot make your baby feel better, you are helping by holding and trying to soothe them. Be as positive with your baby as you can. Your everyday back and forth interactions are important to your baby. Your baby knows you are trying to help, even if it is still hard for them.

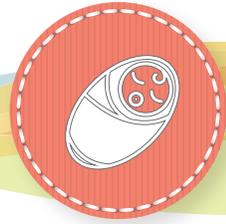
Keep in Mind

- Colicky crying is crying that lasts for more than 3 hours a day for more than 3 days a week for 3 weeks.
- Colicky crying begins and ends for no clear reason.
- Neither you nor any other adult in your baby's life caused your baby to have colic.
- Colicky crying frequently occurs in the late afternoon or evening.
- No one knows the cause of colic, and there is no single treatment.
- Most babies grow out of colic by 4 months of age.
- If your baby has colic, it does not mean they will be a difficult toddler.

Things to Try

- Remember to burp your baby. Gas does not cause colic, but it is good to rule out gas as a problem for your baby.
- If you breast feed, consider avoiding foods that cause gas for you, as well as caffeine and milk products.
- If you bottle feed, talk to your baby's health care provider about trying a different formula.

(continued)



Calming a Colicky Baby *(continued)*

General Tips for Calming

These tips may be helpful whether your baby has colic or not.

- Learn how to swaddle your baby. (Ask your health care provider.)
- Hold your baby close next to your body. A baby carrier is helpful.
- Change your baby's position. Try new positions to see which your baby prefers.
- Give your baby a pacifier, or help them find their fingers to suck.
- Try gentle massage. Softly pat or stroke your baby. Rub your baby's back while they are on your lap.
- Turn the lights down or off to make the room darker.
- Give your baby a warm bath, or put a warm compress on your baby's tummy.
- Get noisy. It was very loud in the uterus. Your baby might like the "white noise" sound of a dryer, vacuum, or fan. Or, your baby might like music. Try making shushing sounds or singing quietly in your baby's ear.
- Try movement. Take a ride in a car, go for a walk, rock your baby, dance with your baby in your arms, or put your baby in a baby swing.
- Try one tip for a minute or two. Then, if that does not help, try something else.
- Try more than one tip at a time. For example, swaddle, hold, and sing to your baby.
- Your baby's body is delicate. Never shake your baby.
- If you feel overwhelmed, give yourself and your baby a break. Place your baby on their back for 5 to 10 minutes while you both take a break. You will feel calmer when you return to your baby.
- Take turns caring for your baby with your partner, a friend, or a relative so you get enough rest and sleep. You need rest and sleep to help you respond to your baby in a positive way.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your baby's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Babies

Like many parents, you may have to work outside the home. You may find this difficult because it is hard to leave your baby. Choosing the best child care possible makes it easier to return to work. You know your baby and your family's needs, and this knowledge will help you choose the option that is best for your family. Most importantly, you want a safe, caring, loving place for your baby. The interactions between your baby and other caregivers is important to your child's social-emotional development. Remember that your baby will be okay. You will enjoy seeing each other at the end of the day.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important things to consider as you start the process of choosing a caregiver:

- Choose a caregiver who fits your family's needs. Do you want an in-home caregiver? A licensed provider? Do you have a relative who can provide care?
- Choose a caregiver you like and who shows an interest in your baby. Your baby learns how to build positive relationships by interacting with and watching caregivers in their life.
- Choose a setting that fits your baby's personality. Do they like a setting that is calm and quiet, or loud and active? Does your baby need time to warm up with new people, or do they warm up quickly? Does the style of the caregiver or program meet your baby's needs?
- Choose a caregiver who will be positive and loving with your baby. Observe the caregiver with other children in their care. Loving interactions between your baby and caregiver are important to your baby's social-emotional development.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you carefully. Open communication with your caregiver is important for building the trust you need to leave your baby in someone else's care.

Asking Questions

Once you have a few possible providers in mind, visit their programs, observe, and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Can you visit anytime?
- Are they licensed?
- Does the place feel good? Do the children seem happy? Do the caregivers seem happy?
- Is the setting safe, clean, and cheerful? Do you see books and toys?
- Are there enough adults? Ideally, there should be a minimum of 1 adult for every 4 infants.
- Is there a consistent routine?

(continued)



Child Care for Babies *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Do caregivers hold the babies? Are they loving with the babies?
- Do you trust the caregivers? Do they listen and ask questions about your baby?
- What are the expectations for drop-off and pick-up? Is there time for you and your baby to say goodbye and greet each other?
- Do other parents like the caregivers?

Preparing for Your Baby's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your baby's routine. Work together to establish a routine that works well and helps your baby feel safe and secure, both at home and in the care setting.
- Share what you know about your baby with the caregiver. Tell the caregiver how you help your baby go to sleep, how you feed them, and any diapering tips.
- Share any special ways your baby communicates and how you calm or soothe them. This will help the caregiver support your baby's needs and help your baby learn to trust them.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition for your baby.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your baby. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

Supporting Your Baby's Transition

- Take your baby's comfort items, such as a special blanket or stuffed toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend a little time with your baby before you leave. When it's time for you to go, don't sneak away! Tell your baby you love them, and let them know you will be back. Knowing that you will return helps your baby learn to trust.
- Your baby may cry when you leave but should recover quickly. This is normal.
- Spend time with your baby at pick-up time. Give them your full attention. Your baby missed you. Tell them how much you love and missed them.
- Keep in mind that, over time, your baby should seem happy and relaxed with the caregiver.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider or contact your local child care resource and referral organization.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

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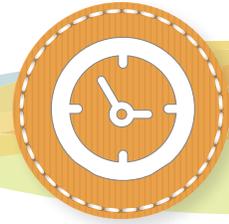


Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

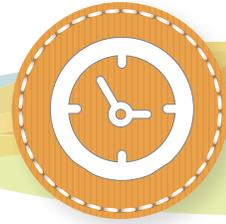
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: “Go get your shoes from your room.” This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, “You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you.” You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development

9 to 15 months

Your older baby is becoming a little person with their own likes and dislikes. Your baby is interested in exploring and trying new things but gets scared or frustrated easily. This is an exciting time that may also feel confusing for you. You may feel pride about your baby's new skills. You may feel hurt when they do not want your help. You may feel sad that your baby is moving away from you. These are normal feelings. Keep in mind that your baby's growing independence is a sign of their confidence and healthy social-emotional development.

"Safe Spots"

Your baby is on the move. Create safe places in your home to explore. Watch your baby move away from you—and then stop and look back to make sure you are watching. Encourage them: "Look at you go! What did you find?" Your baby will move farther away from you as they become more confident. Remember that your baby will need you nearby for a long time. You are, and always will be, their safe spot in the big world.

Your Open Arms

Your baby is moving and exploring more but needs to come back to your arms when upset. Touch is calming and reassuring for both of you. Over and over, your baby will come to your arms for help with calming. Then off they will go again!

I'm Watching You

Your baby is learning by watching and listening to you. They are trying to do things you do, such as waving bye-bye or clapping. Your baby learns about feelings from you too. They love to laugh and love to make you laugh. Your baby may cry or look upset if they see you or someone else sad. They are learning how to be kind and loving from you and will give kisses and hugs to others. Keep talking about feelings, and help your baby learn words for feelings. Soon they will be telling you, "I'm sad" or "I love you."

Stranger Anxiety and Fears

Your baby is becoming more aware of everything. This new awareness may bring on strong fears of new situations or new people. Fear of new people is called **stranger anxiety**. These fears are normal. Your baby will look at your face and listen to your voice to know how to feel. "Is that person scary?" "Is this okay?" "What is that noise?" Let your baby know they are okay: "It's okay, sweetie. I'm here. You are safe."

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your baby's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your baby's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Baby's Social-Emotional Development, 9–15 months

Feelings and Frustrations

Your baby can now tell you how they are feeling. They talk to you through sounds, frowns, smiles, gestures, and the look in their eyes—letting you know when they are happy, fearful, hurt, sad, or uncomfortable. Your baby still cries and has tantrums when tired or frustrated. Help your baby learn the names for their feelings. “You are mad. Can I help you?” Give them a blanket or stuffed animal to cuddle. With your help, your baby will get better at naming their feelings and self-calming.

Good Sleep

Good sleep is important to health and happiness, for both you and your baby. Your baby's sleeping patterns are changing. They still need as much sleep at night as before but will sleep less during the day. You can feed your baby right before bedtime, but avoid feeding them to sleep. Do your best to keep consistent sleep routines, even if your baby fusses or gets angry. When you stick to the routine, your baby learns that bedtime is not a choice.

Fun with Finger Foods

Your baby is changing fast. They are learning new skills and are interested in trying to do things without help—including feeding. Finger foods are easiest at this age. Your baby can also practice drinking from a small cup with a little help. Talk to your health care provider about what foods you can offer your baby. Now your baby can control what they are eating and how fast they eat! They will take pride in these new skills.

Day-to-Day Routines

Day-to-day activities that are consistent (routine) help your baby feel safe and secure. They are now old enough now to know the routine and what activity comes next: “First we eat a snack, and then it's playtime.” Your baby will look forward to the next activity—especially when each activity includes a little fun or special time. For example, when you change your baby's diaper, sing a special song, or play a little game. These little things make every activity enjoyable and make it easier for your baby to move from one activity to the next.

Little Limits

Now is the time to start setting limits gently. When safety is involved, be firm but also positive. Let your baby know what things they *can* do. Redirect them to a new activity. Offer a choice of two toys your baby enjoys and let them choose one. Providing choices lets your baby feel some control—even though you are in charge.



Sights and Sounds

Your baby is listening and watching. Scary sights and loud sounds are stressful and will upset them. Be careful about what your baby sees and hears at home, whether from people, television shows, movies, video games, or other things.

Helping Your Baby Grow

Activities for 9 to 15 months



9-15 months

Playtime is special time for you and your baby. Take time to focus on them while playing. Mute your phone and let go of thoughts about everything you need to do. Your baby's curiosity is a sign of their well-being. A baby who feels happy and confident will want to explore and learn about their world. Their favorite times will be social games with you, siblings, and other important people in their world. Positive back-and-forth interactions with family are the foundation of your baby's social-emotional development.

What's the Point?

Show your baby interesting things. Point to a dog and say, "Look, a dog!" Watch your baby wave their hand or point at something they are interested in too. Respond to them. If your baby waves their hand at a spoon say, "Oh, you want your spoon?" Your response lets them know you are paying attention to them. It also lets your baby know you are interested in what interests them! This builds your baby's confidence.

Little Games

Your baby will love playing games with you, such as peekaboo or pat-a-cake. They may also love to play "I drop it, you pick it up." This game helps your baby learn that even if they cannot see something, it is still there. Over time, they learn this is true for people too! This understanding helps your baby worry less when they can't see you or when you are away.

My Story

Your baby will love to snuggle with you and look at baby books together. Make a picture book with photos of your baby, friends, and family. Talk about the people in the pictures. "There you are with your Nana Jane. Remember we went to her house? She has a dog." Talking about people in your baby's life opens up their world a little. It teaches them that friends and family are important.

Check This Out

Gather a few baby-safe household items for your baby to explore. Your confident baby will be curious and explore new things such as wooden spoons, pots with lids, a soft brush, or any other safe items. Change the items every few days so they have new things to explore and try. You do not need expensive toys. Talk about these new things with your baby. "What is this?" "What can you do with it?" "Here, you try." Everything is new and interesting to your baby!

Let's Go

Your baby will enjoy going out in the world. Think about timing and what they might need while you are gone so you can be prepared. Is it close to naptime or mealtime? Take diapers, snacks, a toy, and a change of clothes. Talk to your baby about what you are doing, seeing, and hearing. Introduce them to new people. These outings help your baby learn that the world is an interesting place. Being physically close to you helps them feel safe and secure.

(continued)

Up So High

Movement is important to your baby. It helps them explore and get to things they want. If you have a low table or a couch, put one of your baby's toys on it. They will need to think about how to get the toy. If your baby gets frustrated, help them pull up. They will soon be able to hold onto a small table or couch and move around. Let your baby know you are proud. "Look how big you are. You are standing all by yourself." Your baby will feel proud too.

Play Dates

Your child is interested in other children. You may see them smiling at or watching other children while you are out and about. Make plans for play dates or times to be with other children. Make sure that the children are well fed and rested. Be sure there are plenty of toys so your baby does not have to share. At this age, babies just enjoy being near each other. Your baby will watch and listen to the other babies while playing on their own.

Break Time

Your baby needs quiet time. They will let you know this by fussing, rubbing eyes, or turning away. Most babies need some quiet times and some active times each day. This helps them rest and relax and gives you some time to do the same. Put on some relaxing music, hold your baby gently, and breathe.

The Beautiful World

Introduce your baby to the natural world. Look up at the sky and watch the clouds. Watch a bird flying, or watch a tree sway in the wind. Sit on some grass in a park. Being still in nature is calming for you and your baby. Breathe and appreciate the beauty of small things.

Who Is Silly Now?

Be silly with your baby. Do something unexpected. Make funny noises, wear pants on your head, or gobble up their fingers. Shared laughter makes your connection even stronger—and it is fun to make your baby laugh. It's the happiest sound on earth! Your baby's laugh will make the whole family laugh together.



Feeding Your Baby, 9-15 months

Mealtimes are a wonderful time for the whole family to connect. It is a time to have fun with and talk to your baby. Your older baby will begin eating more types of foods. Provide a variety of healthy choices, and let your baby explore foods and try to feed themselves. This may be hard for you as a parent. You may feel like your baby is stubborn. You may not want to deal with a mess. Try not to get into a power struggle. Keep in mind that your baby's interest in being more independent is a positive sign of their confidence and well-being. Your baby will feel proud of new skills. Let your baby know how proud you are too!

Keep in Mind

- Breast milk or formula is still important to your baby. However, your baby should be eating some solid foods now. Talk to your health care provider about good first foods.
- Make a safe, secure spot for your baby to sit when eating solid foods. Feed your baby in the same place so it becomes a routine. Your baby can sit on your lap, in a high chair, or in a booster seat.
- Your independent baby will want to try to feed themselves. Your baby will be messy while they are learning to eat. A drop cloth under their chair will help you relax.
- Your baby can learn to use signs before words. If your baby can tell you what they want, there will be fewer upsets. Teach your baby the signs for *more*, *all done*, *drink*, and *please*.
- Never force your baby to eat. Children have more taste buds than adults do and flavors may be more intense. Don't worry. Your baby's tastes will change and they will eat when they are hungry.

Suggestions

- Keep mealtimes and feeding times relaxed and fun. Mealtime is a wonderful time to get close and connect with your baby:
 - Include your baby in family mealtimes. Talk and enjoy time together.
 - Turn off televisions and phones so everyone can focus on each other.
 - Keep offering your baby small amounts of healthy foods. It may take many tries before your baby likes a new food.
 - Let your baby touch new foods or take a small taste or lick. Sit and eat new foods with your baby and say how much you enjoy it: "Yum. I like blueberries."
 - Let your baby try to eat without help. Your baby can eat bits of cereal or fruit with their fingers. Let your baby practice using a small cup and a small spoon.

(continued)

9-15 months



Feeding Your Baby, 9-15 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Listen to your baby during mealtimes. Your baby will talk to you, first with behaviors and then with first words. Respond and let your baby know you're listening.
 - **I'm Hungry.** Fussing, looking, reaching for food; saying or signing *more*.
 - **This Is Great.** Eating happily!
 - **Feed Me Faster!** Getting fussy during feeding; reaching for food or spoon.
 - **I'm All Done.** Playing with food. Pushing hand or spoon away. Shaking head or saying *no* or signing *all done!* Respect your baby's communication.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's primary health care provider.



Helping Your Baby Sleep, 9-15 months

You will notice that your baby's sleep patterns are changing. Your baby will be sleeping for longer periods at night and may have a predictable nap schedule. Sleep is very important for both you and your baby. Your well-rested baby will be a joy to interact with when awake. There are so many "firsts" at this age, such as first steps and first words. Make sleep a priority for both of you so that you can celebrate these milestones together.

Keep in Mind

- On average, younger babies need 10 to 12 hours of sleep at night and two or three daytime naps (for another 3 to 4 hours of sleep). By around 12 months, the number of daytime naps usually drops to 2. Without enough sleep, your baby may be fussy and less able to engage in positive interactions with you.
- Your baby may be getting new teeth, which may cause pain. Teething may wake your baby up or make your baby more difficult to soothe. Comfort your baby and let them know you understand and are trying to help. Talk to your health care provider about ideas for helping your baby through teething.
- Being close to you while sleeping helps your baby feel safe. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in the same room as you but not in your bed. Put your baby to sleep on their back (not on their tummy).
- Babies are sensitive and can become easily stressed. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. Create a calm, consistent environment for your baby so they feel safe and secure and can rest well.

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for naptimes and bedtimes. Consistent sleep times help your baby's body get into a wake and sleep rhythm.
- Create a consistent routine for naptimes and bedtime. For example, first feed your baby (or give them a snack), give them a warm bath, snuggle up with stories, and then put your baby to bed. Routines help your baby know what comes next and help prepare them for sleep.
- Keep the room where your baby sleeps cool, dark, and quiet. This helps your baby realize when it's time to sleep.

(continued)

9-15 months



Helping Your Baby Sleep, 9-15 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Help your baby get ready for sleep:
 - Talk quietly, hum, or sing to your baby.
 - Play relaxing music softly.
 - Walk or rock your baby in a rocking chair.
 - Gently pat or stroke your baby.
- Put your baby to bed drowsy (not asleep). Give your baby their fingers (or a pacifier) to suck on. This helps your baby learn to fall asleep and soothe on their own.
- Decide with other adults in your baby's life how you will handle it when the baby cries at night:
 - Wait a little before responding. Your baby may be able to self-calm, or regulate, on their own and return to sleep.
 - Speak to your baby in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
- Move slowly and gently if you have to wake your baby. Talk softly and let your baby know why you need to wake them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Calming Your Baby, 9-15 months

Your older baby has new reasons to be fussy. Your baby may be feeling fear around new people or in new settings. Your baby may be angry to learn there are limits to what they can and can't do. Your baby may be getting new teeth and may be in pain. Watch your baby closely, and do your best to understand what they are trying to tell you. Talk to your baby and help them learn to name their feelings. Once your baby can talk about their feelings, there is much less need to cry! Your child can then use words to tell you what they need or want. There are still times when nothing you try works. Take a break. Breathe. Let your baby know you are sorry that they are upset. Let your baby know you are trying to help and that you love them.

Keep in Mind

- Your baby has new ways to talk to you. Your baby will use their voice, facial expressions, and gestures to let you know their wants or needs. Your older baby may use first words.
- Your baby will still cry at times to let you know:
 - **"I'm Hungry."** (Please feed me.)
 - **"I'm Uncomfortable."** (Please change me. Make sure my clothes are not too tight. Check to see if I'm too hot or too cold.)
 - **"I'm Tired."** (Please put me down for a nap or to sleep for the night.)
 - **"I'm Sick."** (Check with your health care provider if there are signs your baby is sick.)
 - **"I'm Lonely or Scared."** (Keep me close.)
 - **"I'm Bored."** (Let's do or see something new.)

Suggestions

- Rule out the basics. Feed, burp, change the diaper, or put your baby down for a nap.
- Hold your baby close to your body. Physical touch is calming for you and your baby.
- Learn your baby's language by watching your baby carefully. What are they trying to tell you?
- Talk about feelings. Take your best guess about what your baby is feeling: "It sounds like you are sad." "Did that noise scare you?"

(continued)

9-15 months



Calming Your Baby, 9-15 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Begin to set limits for your baby. Use positive words when setting limits or providing rules of behavior: "Be gentle." "Time to go." "Quiet voice inside."
- If your baby is teething, give them teething biscuits or a frozen washcloth. Talk to your health care provider about other ideas.
- Your baby may develop stranger anxiety and be fearful of new people. Give your baby some time to warm up. Stay close and let your baby know they are safe.
- Mix it up. Your curious baby may just need a change of pace:
 - Go outdoors. Go for a walk, or go somewhere new.
 - Play peekaboo or other games.
 - Move around. Turn on music and dance with your baby.
 - Sing to your baby. Choose songs your baby knows and likes. Encourage them to sing along.
 - Give your baby a bath. Play with toys or running water.
 - Snuggle up with your baby and read a book. Let them choose the book they want to read.
 - Get social. Visit with relatives, friends, or other children.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Babies

Like many parents, you may have to work outside the home. You may find this difficult because it is hard to leave your baby. Choosing the best child care possible makes it easier to return to work. You know your baby and your family's needs, and this knowledge will help you choose the option that is best for your family. Most importantly, you want a safe, caring, loving place for your baby. The interactions between your baby and other caregivers is important to your child's social-emotional development. Remember that your baby will be okay. You will enjoy seeing each other at the end of the day.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important things to consider as you start the process of choosing a caregiver:

- Choose a caregiver who fits your family's needs. Do you want an in-home caregiver? A licensed provider? Do you have a relative who can provide care?
- Choose a caregiver you like and who shows an interest in your baby. Your baby learns how to build positive relationships by interacting with and watching caregivers in their life.
- Choose a setting that fits your baby's personality. Do they like a setting that is calm and quiet, or loud and active? Does your baby need time to warm up with new people, or do they warm up quickly? Does the style of the caregiver or program meet your baby's needs?
- Choose a caregiver who will be positive and loving with your baby. Observe the caregiver with other children in their care. Loving interactions between your baby and caregiver are important to your baby's social-emotional development.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you carefully. Open communication with your caregiver is important for building the trust you need to leave your baby in someone else's care.

Asking Questions

Once you have a few possible providers in mind, visit their programs, observe, and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Can you visit anytime?
- Are they licensed?
- Does the place feel good? Do the children seem happy? Do the caregivers seem happy?
- Is the setting safe, clean, and cheerful? Do you see books and toys?
- Are there enough adults? Ideally, there should be a minimum of 1 adult for every 4 infants.
- Is there a consistent routine?

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Child Care for Babies *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Do caregivers hold the babies? Are they loving with the babies?
- Do you trust the caregivers? Do they listen and ask questions about your baby?
- What are the expectations for drop-off and pick-up? Is there time for you and your baby to say goodbye and greet each other?
- Do other parents like the caregivers?

Preparing for Your Baby's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your baby's routine. Work together to establish a routine that works well and helps your baby feel safe and secure, both at home and in the care setting.
- Share what you know about your baby with the caregiver. Tell the caregiver how you help your baby go to sleep, how you feed them, and any diapering tips.
- Share any special ways your baby communicates and how you calm or soothe them. This will help the caregiver support your baby's needs and help your baby learn to trust them.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition for your baby.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your baby. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

Supporting Your Baby's Transition

- Take your baby's comfort items, such as a special blanket or stuffed toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend a little time with your baby before you leave. When it's time for you to go, don't sneak away! Tell your baby you love them, and let them know you will be back. Knowing that you will return helps your baby learn to trust.
- Your baby may cry when you leave but should recover quickly. This is normal.
- Spend time with your baby at pick-up time. Give them your full attention. Your baby missed you. Tell them how much you love and missed them.
- Keep in mind that, over time, your baby should seem happy and relaxed with the caregiver.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider or contact your local child care resource and referral organization.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

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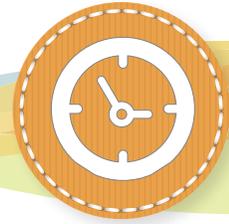


Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

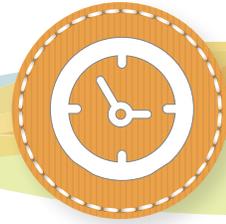
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: "Go get your shoes from your room." This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, "You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you." You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development

15 to 21 months

Your baby is growing up and is becoming a toddler. First steps and first words are exciting times. Your child is learning more about themselves and becoming more independent. Your toddler is curious and wants to explore the world around them. This stage also brings new challenges for parents. You may feel mixed emotions. You may be proud of your child's new skills and sad that your baby is growing up so fast. You may feel hurt when your child sometimes pushes you away or when they yell "No!" for the first time. Talk to other parents or friends about your feelings.

"Big Emotions"

Your toddler is developing their personality and will reward you with laughter, funny faces, and loving hugs. Your child's feelings include anger, fear, joy, curiosity, and love. Name your child's feelings for them: "You sound mad! Can I help you?" Your child may begin to develop more intense fears of things like noises or dogs. Hold your child and talk to them about their fears. In time, these fears will fade.

You Are My Safe Base

Your open arms and gentle touch are where your relationship with your child develops. Your toddler is moving and exploring more but will look back at you to make sure you are watching and keeping them safe. Over and over, they will come back to your arms when they are scared or need help calming down. Your touch and kind words are calming and reassuring for your child. Then off they go again, ready to explore their world!

I Said No!

Your sweet, happy baby may suddenly seem stubborn. Your child's first words will probably include the word *no*. It's a frustrating time for your child. Toddlers have a lot of ideas, but they do not know how to express them. They want to "do it myself!" but don't have all the skills they need. Keep a sense of humor and try not to take it personally. This struggle to be independent is an important part of your child's social-emotional development. Teach them words or signs to let you know what they want or need.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development, 15–21 months

Little Friends

Your toddler is interested in other children and will love to watch and play near them. Short visits with other children can be fun for your child. At this age, they are still too young to share with other children. Make sure there are enough toys. Stay close by to help when there are struggles. Your child will learn how to play with others with your help and guidance.

New People, New Places

Your child may be shy with strangers and may become upset when separated from you. This is normal and a good thing. It means they are attached and feel safe with you. If you do need to leave your child in someone else's care, give them time to warm up before you leave so they can get comfortable. Don't sneak away—this will only make your child more anxious. Let them know when you are going and when you will be back. Your child may cry some, but they will know you are coming back.

Sights and Sounds

Your child is listening and watching. Scary sights and loud sounds are upsetting and confusing for your toddler. Be careful what they see or hear at home. Monitor and limit screen time. If your child does watch a television show, watch with them. Talk to your child about what they are watching, explain parts that might be confusing, and ask them simple questions.

What Comes Next?

A consistent day-to-day routine helps your toddler understand their world. This helps them feel safe and secure. Talk to your child about what will happen next. "After lunch, it will be naptime." Stick to the routine even when they fuss. Your child will learn that fussing will not change the routine. This will help your day go easier too!

Bath Time and Bedtime

Your child will be happier and more easygoing with a good night's rest. You will also be more available to meet your child's emotional needs when you are well rested. Stick with a regular sleep schedule and bedtime routine. "First, it's time to take a bath, change into pajamas, and brush teeth. Then comes snuggle and book time." Help your child learn to fall asleep by themselves. Play quiet music, give them a comfort item such as a stuffed toy or blanket, and turn the lights down low.



Mealtime Is Family Time!

Turn off digital device screens, mute phones, and focus on each other during mealtimes. Take care that mealtimes do not become a struggle for control between you and your child. Limit struggles by offering your child a variety of healthy foods they can explore and eat by themselves. Don't worry about what your child eats or does not eat. Your job is to offer food. Your child's job is to eat when hungry.

Helping Your Toddler Grow

Activities for 15 to 21 months



15-21 months

Set aside times during the day to play with your child. These special times together will be their favorite times of the day. Your positive back-and-forth interactions with your toddler are the building blocks of your loving relationship. Create safe indoor play areas—and outdoor spaces if possible—so your independent toddler can explore. Follow your child's lead and let them try to do things without your help. Give them some help if they get frustrated. As your child gains more skills, give them less help. They will take pride in being a “big boy” or “big girl.”

Watch Me

Watch your child closely and guess what they are thinking. One fun thing to do is to “narrate” your child's play. Talk about what they are doing, seeing, and hearing. Use simple language: “Jalin has the ball. Wow. Look. Jalin threw the ball!” Your child will learn language this way *and* feel special because you are paying attention to what they are doing.

What Am I Feeling?

Label your child's emotions when they are mad, sad, scared, or happy. This teaches them how to use words to express feelings. “You sound mad. You wanted more.” If your child can talk about their feelings and what they want or need, they will not get as upset.

The Beauty of Nature

Take your child on outings to explore nature. Mute your phone and share the wonder of little things with them. Point out the clouds in the sky. Laugh at a squirrel. Touch the grass. Listen to the wind in the trees or to the birds. Breathe and relax together. Appreciating nature together can be calming for both of you.

Listen to Me

Your child will try to tell you things all day, including what they want or need. Help them learn the words, gestures, or signs for things they want. For example, if your child points to or reaches for a block, you can say, “Block. You want the big block.” They may tell you that they like something by looking at it or that they do not like something by pushing it away. Keep your words simple. As your child learns how to use words, they will get less frustrated.

Story Time

Read stories together every day if possible. Story time is special because it is a wonderful time to cuddle. Gentle touch is calming for both you and your child. Books with pictures and just a few words are good for now. Story time is important to your child's learning. It is also a wonderful time to get close, connect, and nurture your relationship with your child.

(continued)

Check This Out!

Offer toys that can make your child feel more grown up. You can make a dress-up box with hats, scarves, and coats. They may enjoy “talking” on a play phone. Try cooking together. Fill a drawer or cupboard full of safe things for your little explorer to play with while you cook. “Thanks for the help with cooking!” Your child will feel proud of helping and being a “big boy” or “big girl.”

Simple Choices

Help your toddler make their own decisions by giving them simple choices. During playtime, you could ask your child, “Do you want to play with the toy animals, or with the ball?” Giving your independent toddler choices gives them a little sense of control, even though you are still in charge. Offer only two or three choices. More than that may be overwhelming.

My Turn, Your Turn

Your child is still too little to share with others. However, now is a good time to start introducing turn-taking. Play turn-taking games like rolling or kicking a ball back and forth. You can say “My turn!” when you roll it to your child, and “Your turn!” when it’s time for your child to roll it back. Taking turns is the first step in learning to share!

Let’s Move

Your toddler is curious and loves to see new things and meet new people. Your active toddler also needs a lot of exercise! Go on outings to playgrounds, parks, or other open spaces. Let your child jump, run, and play. They may feel a little nervous or fearful in new settings. This is normal. When your child feels scared, talk to them and take it slowly. They need your loving arms and reassuring words to know what is safe in this big world.

Give Me a Break

Everyone needs a break sometimes, even your active child. Quiet times are as important as play times, and they are good times to get close and cuddle. Choose or make a quiet place and make times every day for your child to settle down and take a break.



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Having regular meals and snacks is important to your growing toddler. A hungry toddler may cry, have tantrums, or become clingy when they get hungry. Offer a snack in between meals and one before bedtime to keep your toddler from getting overly hungry. Your toddler can sit at the table now. Eating together is a perfect way to get close and connect as a family. Talk, tell stories, and enjoy each other's company during mealtimes. Your independent toddler will want to have more and more control over their daily activities. The more choices and control you give your toddler, the more positive and relaxed mealtimes become.

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility is to offer healthy foods. Your toddler's responsibility is to decide what and how much they eat. Offer foods you know your child likes and some new foods.
- Your toddler needs five or six small meals or snacks each day. They may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Never force your child to eat. Toddlers are typically nervous about new foods. Offer tastes of new foods *many* times. In time, your child will accept most foods if they aren't forced.
- Your independent toddler can now sit at the table in a high chair or booster seat. A drop cloth may help keep things less messy as your child practices feeding themselves.
- It will be hard for your toddler to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable. A good goal is 10 minutes or so. This time gets longer as your child gets older.

Suggestions

- Create a consistent daily routine that includes times for meals and snacks. This will decrease the possibility that your child will get overly hungry during the day.
- Create a routine around meals and snacks: First wash hands, then sit and eat, then clean up. This helps your toddler know when meals and snacks begin and end.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Help everyone focus on eating and interacting with each other during mealtimes. Rules such as "no toys or phones at the table" also help.
- Make time to sit and talk with your toddler. You may not be able to sit with your child at every meal, but they will love having your company while eating.

(continued)

15-33 months



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Provide choices. Simple choices give your child a little bit of control and may decrease upsets. "Do you want warm peas or frozen?" "Do you want carrot sticks or circles?"
- Teach your child to use (or sign) words. The words *more*, *all done*, *please*, and *thank you* will help your child request (and reject) foods politely!
- Let your independent child start to feed themselves. Your child can eat finger foods and learn to use a spoon, fork, and cup. Now they can control how fast or slowly they eat.
- Catch your toddler doing the right thing. Let your child know you are proud of them when they eat like a big kid, wait patiently, or use words (or signs) to ask for food.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months

Sleep is important to your toddler's well-being. A well-rested toddler is more easygoing and happy during the day. Your good sleep helps you have patience and a sense of humor about your emotional toddler! Your independent toddler's interest in control is a positive sign of their healthy social-emotional development. However, this need for control may also result in pushback on the "time for bed" routine. Give your child some choices during the routine, such as what they want to wear to bed. Be kind but firm, and stick to the plan. Your toddler will learn that even if they fuss, the bedtime routine is going to happen the same way, every day.

Keep in Mind

- On average, toddlers need about 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 2 to 3 hours of napping during the day. Napping is different for each toddler. Many still take two naps a day.
- Watch your toddler for signs that they are not getting enough sleep. Signs include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often having tantrums and being fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in toddlers looks different than in adults. Stick to your toddler's bedtime routine even if your child is very active and "hyper." These behaviors may be signs that your child is overly tired. Learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Around 24 months, toddlers typically get their second molars (back teeth). This is painful and may wake up your toddler at night. Comfort your toddler and let them know you understand and are trying to help. Talk to your health care provider about ways to help.
- Your toddler needs a lot of exercise. Give your active toddler a lot of opportunities to move their body during the day. This helps your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Your emotional toddler experiences big feelings. They may begin to have real nighttime fears and real sadness about being alone. Let your toddler know that you understand their big feelings, love them, and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your toddler sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds stress your toddler and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems.

(continued)

15-33 months



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months (continued)

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime, naptime, and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- Create a consistent bedtime routine. Use “wind-down” time before bedtime for quiet activities. Take a bath, brush teeth, and read a bedtime story. Limit food and drink close to bedtime. This routine helps your toddler get their body ready for sleep.
- Give your toddler several alerts before starting the bedtime routine. It’s hard for your child to stop playing. Alerts may prevent upsets. “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.” Give additional alerts at 5 and 3 minutes.
- Provide choices during the bedtime routine: “Do you want to wear your whale pajamas, or your cat pajamas?” “This book first, or that book?” All these small choices give your independent toddler a little sense of control over bedtime.
- Put your toddler to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your toddler their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie to cuddle with at night. These items help your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults about how to help your toddler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your toddler in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your toddler has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your toddler know that everything is okay. Rub your toddler’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Reassure your child that they are safe and you are close by.
- If you need to wake your toddler, move slowly and gently. Talk to your child about why you are waking them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Your baby is becoming a toddler. Your independent toddler wants to do things without help and explore everything. This push to become more independent brings up big feelings for your child. Your child may feel frustration from trying to do new things or anger at being told not to do something. Your child may feel disgust at the taste of a new food or fear around new people or situations. These big feelings overwhelm your child. Your toddler may cry, scream, hit, or throw themselves on the floor as a way to express their feelings. Your child needs to learn how to self-calm and talk about their feelings. Teach your child what they can do instead of punishing them for “naughty” behaviors.

Keep in Mind

- Your toddler’s behaviors have meaning. What feelings (anger, sadness, fear) or sensations (hunger, tiredness, pain) might be causing the behavior?
- Your child is watching and learning from you. When you are angry, show your child how to stay calm. Be patient and respectful with your child.
- Your toddler cannot hear your words or think clearly when upset. Comfort your child first and help them calm down. Talk with them once they are calm.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hold, cuddle, and gently touch your toddler many times every day.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears. Adult television shows and movies can be confusing and scary for your toddler. Your child will also try out behaviors they see and hear on electronic devices or in the home.
- Your toddler’s behavior may be a reaction to stress. For example, did your child just start with a new caregiver?

Suggestions

- Check the basics. Is your toddler hungry? Tired? Bored? Keep a consistent daily routine with regular meals, snacks, and rest times, and a mix of active and calm activities.
- Talk to your child about feelings: “You sound frustrated. Do you need some help?” “Are you worried?” “Can I give you a hug?”
- Give your independent toddler time to try to do things on their own. Watch your child and give them a little help if they are getting frustrated.

(continued)

15-33 months



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Provide alerts. It is hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Give them an alert before moving to a new activity: "In 10 minutes it will be time to . . ."
- Focus on the positive. Your child wants your attention. Tell your child when they are doing the right thing, and they will do these behaviors more: "Thanks for waiting." "You put on your shoe!" "Thanks for using your words."
- Give your independent toddler simple choices so they feel a little control: "Do you want to wear your green shirt, or your blue one?"
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Your toddler can start to learn rules:
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touches, not hitting. Hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative. Teach your child what you want them to do instead: "Use your words. Say, I want the ball."
 - Stick to the rules every time. Be consistent so your child can learn the rules.
- If your toddler starts to get upset, stay calm and try one or more of these ideas:
 - Help your toddler calm down: "I can help. First let's take five breaths."
 - Distract your toddler, to change their focus to something else.
 - Move your toddler if a situation is unsafe. Gently pick your child up and carry them to a safer place: "I am going to help you cross the street so you are safe."
 - Ignore the behavior. Make sure your toddler is safe, and walk away until they calm down.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

(continued)



Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Many families have their children attend child care or preschool. Look for a care setting that provides a safe, nurturing, and interesting place for your child. The interactions your child has with the teachers and children are important to their social-emotional development. Child care can be a great place for children to learn how to play with other children. Observe the child care setting before sending your child. Ask questions. Choose a program that is right for your child and family.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important guidelines to help you begin the process of choosing a program for your child:

- Choose a caregiver who shows real interest in your child. Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and how you comfort them.
- Choose a caregiver who celebrates your child's strengths. This builds your child's confidence.
- Choose a caregiver you like. Your child learns how to build healthy relationships by watching the adults in their life. They will learn from the positive interactions between you and their caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you. Developing open and positive communication with your caregiver builds trust.
- Choose a caregiver who interacts lovingly with your child. Children need positive attention from caregivers to help them feel safe and secure.
- Choose a caregiver who uses positive discipline rather than punishment. Caregivers who use positive discipline observe and listen to children carefully. They try to understand *why* the child is doing a behavior such as hitting and then teach the child a positive behavior to replace the negative behavior. For example, the caregiver may teach your child how to use their words to ask for something instead of hitting.
- Caregivers who utilize positive discipline also frequently "catch" children doing the right thing. They comment on a child's positive behaviors and praise the child: "Thank you for sitting so patiently."

Asking Questions

Once you have a few providers in mind, visit the programs you are considering. Observe and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Does the place feel good? Are the caregivers loving? Do the children seem happy?
- Are there safe and clean indoor and outdoor spaces for children?

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Are there enough adults? Ideally, for toddlers, there should be a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children. For preschoolers, the minimum is 1 adult to 10 children.
- Is the provider licensed?
- Do the caregivers welcome the children and families when they arrive?
- Are parents allowed to visit during the day?
- Do the caregivers support children in separating from their parents?
- Is there a consistent daily routine? Consistency helps your child feel secure.
- Are there a lot of opportunities for free play with friends? During free play, your child learns to make choices, to share, and to work cooperatively with friends.
- Do the caregivers join the children in play? Do they help children play with one another? Adults can model positive interactions by playing with the children in their care.
- How do the caregivers help children work out conflicts? Your child will learn how to solve conflicts from observing others.
- Ask about the provider's discipline policy. How do they deal with tantrums?

Preparing for Your Child's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your child's routine. Work with your child and your caregiver to make the transition between home and school smooth.
- Tell your child what will happen at child care. Read or tell stories about going to child care. Ask your librarian for books about the first day of child care or preschool.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition is for your child.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your child. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

Supporting Your Child's Transition

- Take your child's comfort items, such as a special blanket or toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend time with your child before you leave. Tell them you love them when you say goodbye. Let your child know when you will be back. They will learn to trust that you will return. Don't sneak away!
- It is normal for your child to cry when you leave. They will stop crying once you leave and they get engaged in play.
- Spend time with your child when you pick them up. Pay attention to them without other distractions. Ask your child to show you what they made at child care, or have them introduce you to a new friend. They missed you and want to share their day.
- Check in with your child's caregiver to find out how the day went.
- Remember, your child should seem happy and relaxed in the care setting over time.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Learning to Use the Toilet

Most parents are eager for their child to learn to use the toilet. However, learning to use the toilet is hard for your little one. It is important to make sure your child is physically and emotionally ready. Starting toilet training too soon can make it a negative experience. Power struggles during toilet training can leave children feeling frustrated or bad about themselves. The key is to stay calm and patient during this time. The more emotional you are, the more your child learns how much it matters to you. Refusing becomes a way for your child to feel in control. If you are starting to sense a struggle, relax and back off for a while. Do your best not to worry or get frustrated. Your child will learn, but it will take some time. Learning to use the toilet is another step toward your child's independence.

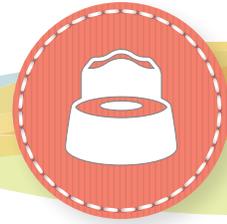
Keep in Mind

- Children need to be developmentally ready to use the toilet. Some are ready at 18 months, some at 3 years.
- Here are some signs that your child is physically and emotionally ready to use the toilet:
 - Your child shows interest in using the toilet. They may want to wear "big kid" underwear.
 - They ask to be changed when their diaper is dirty.
 - Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
 - They have some control over their muscles and know when they are going "potty." For example, your child might go "hide" when having a bowel movement.
 - Your child has the motor skills needed to use the toilet. For example, your child can walk, pull their pants up and down, and get on and off the toilet with some help.
 - Your child can follow simple directions.
- Your family's beliefs and values about learning to use the toilet are important to consider.
- Your child may "lose" toileting skills during big life events, such as moving or welcoming a new baby into your family. These big life events are not good times to start learning to use the toilet.

Suggestions

- Start to look for toileting patterns. Is your child dry when waking up from a nap? This is a good time to have your child try to use the toilet.
- Incorporate regular times to use the toilet into the routine. For example, "Before nap, it's time to try to use the toilet." This helps your child know what to expect.

(continued)



Learning to Use the Toilet *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Go to the library and check out books or videos on using the toilet. Show excitement about potty training when you read or watch them. Check in with your child and see how they feel.
- Give your child some choice over whether to use the toilet or a diaper each day. This will help your child start to feel independence and control during potty training.
- Work on undressing and dressing skills. Go shopping for “big kid” underwear. Let your child choose underwear they like.
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing so it is easier for them to help pull down their pants. Now is not the time for zippers and buttons. They can be frustrating for your child.
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.
- Give your child the tools they need, such as a small potty, potty seat, or stool. These tools help your child feel more comfortable and independent.
- There is no need to use “rewards.” Your child feels proud about learning this “big kid” skill. Your child is learning the natural consequence of going to the bathroom independently. If you do choose to use rewards, choose small things you think your child would want, such as stickers.
- Celebrate your child’s successes during potty training: “Yay! You went potty in your toilet!” Give them high-fives or big hugs to help them feel proud.
- Potty training takes time. Be patient and understanding. This lets your child know you support and love them as they learn to use the toilet. This is another step in building their independence and self-confidence.
- It is important never to punish or shame your child when they have accidents. Accidents are going to happen, so be prepared for them. Punishment or shame makes your child feel bad and can make potty training a lot harder. Positive praise helps your child feel pride in their accomplishment.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

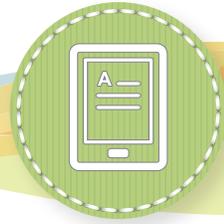
Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

(continued)



Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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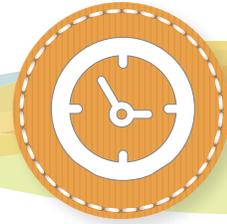


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

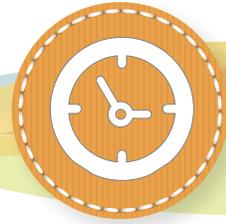
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

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Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: "Go get your shoes from your room." This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, "You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you." You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development

21 to 27 months

Toddlers are learning about themselves and their world. You may hear your child say “No!” and “Mine!” a lot. This is a normal stage as your child pushes to become more independent and do things without help. As much as possible, give your child opportunities and time to practice new skills. With your busy life, this stage may also be frustrating for you. Remember that your positive interactions with your toddler build their confidence. Take a deep breath and be patient. The more your child practices, the faster they will learn. Take pride in your child's accomplishments.

“Letting Go While Staying Connected”

Your child's inner push to become more independent and do things on their own is called **autonomy**. They are learning how they feel about themselves: Are they proud and confident? Doubtful about their abilities or ashamed? You have the most influence over how your child feels about themselves. Let them try new things on their own, but stay connected and offer help as needed. Encourage, support, and celebrate your child along the way.

First Friends

Toddlers like to watch other children at play and copy each other. However, at this age they are not yet ready to share. This can cause conflicts. Watch your child closely. When a conflict happens, your support is needed. Teach them what to do. “Aleesha has the boat. You can play with the boat when she is finished. Right now you can play with the truck or the ball.”

Calm First, Talk Later

Your child is learning to express and control their feelings. This is hard! Remember that your child learns how to self-calm through your example and with your help. If they have a tantrum, make sure they are in a safe place. Once your child calms, let them know you notice their feelings and understand. “You are mad. It's hard to stop playing.” Teach them ways to calm down, such as taking deep breaths.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development, 21–27 months

Don't Leave Me!

Your child might cry or get fearful or upset when you leave. This is called *separation anxiety* and is normal. Before you leave, take some time to talk with your child about what is going to happen next. "Meghan is going to take you to the park. You can slide and play together. I'm leaving now. I love you. I will be back before lunch." Although "sneaking away" may seem like a good idea, it does not build trust with your child. Even if your child cries when you leave, they will remember what you said. When you return, they learn that you keep promises.

Routines

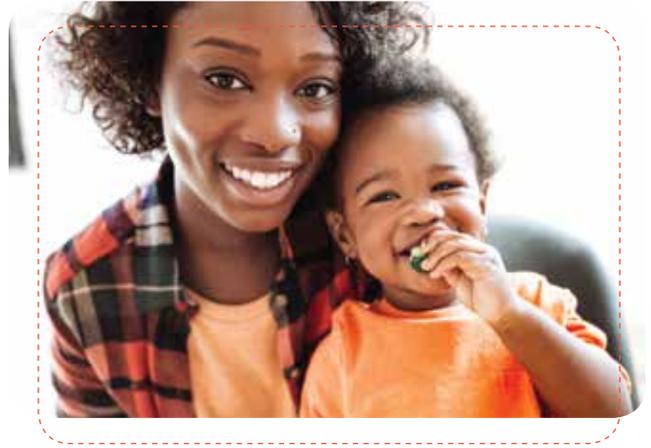
Having consistent routines helps your toddler make sense of their world. This helps them feel safe and secure. Consistent routines also reduce struggles. For example, your toddler may know that every day after brushing teeth, it is story time and then bedtime. Your child has learned that even if they fuss, these activities happen the same way. Help them feel "in charge" of the routine by asking them what comes next: "You brushed your teeth. What's next?"

Good Sleep

Getting enough sleep is important for your child and for you. A tired toddler is usually fussy and gets mad easily. You will have more patience for your emotional toddler when you get enough sleep too. Help them know when it is time to sleep by keeping naptimes and bedtime around the same time each day. Give your child simple choices at bedtime: "Blue pajamas, or yellow ones?" "Which book first?" Choices give your child a little control over bedtime, and can reduce struggles. Now it's time to cuddle up, read stories, and go to sleep.

Not Mac and Cheese Again!

At this age your child can try many new foods. Help them learn to try different foods so that they do not end up eating the same thing over and over. At snack times and mealtimes, offer your child small amounts of different types of healthy foods. Let your child explore foods on their own and eat on their own timeline. Don't worry if your child chooses not to eat or does not eat much. They will eat when hungry.



Monitoring Screen Time

Exposure to screens can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. Your child's back-and-forth interactions with family and friends in real activities are the foundation for healthy relationships. If your child does watch screens, make the activity interactive by watching together. Talk about what your child is seeing and hearing, and ask questions.

Helping Your Toddler Grow

Activities for 21 to 27 months



21-27 months

Your toddler is excited about their new skills and growing independence. Watch them and notice what they are trying to do. Are they trying to build something? Draw? Help with a chore? Give your child chances to try new things. Watch them take pride in their new abilities. Turn off electronics and focus on your child—computers, televisions, and cell phones get in the way of giving your attention to each other. Your child learns who they are and develops a positive self-image through their interactions with you. A positive self-image helps them try new challenges, cope with mistakes, and try again.

Take Care of Me

Help your child learn how to take care of others through pretend play. Show your toddler how to comfort a stuffed animal: “Look at Bear-Bear. He looks sad. How can we help him feel better?” Pretend-play doctor or veterinarian. “Uh-oh. Dolly fell down. She might have a boo-boo.”

Simple Jobs

Your child will want to “do it myself!” They will feel pride in learning new skills or helping you. Simple jobs your child can do include washing the table (or front of the dishwasher or refrigerator) with a sponge, putting their dirty clothes in a bin, getting clean diapers, or undressing themselves. Give a little help if they are getting frustrated. Let them know you are proud of them. “Thank you for washing the table! You are a big help.”

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Child

Make up a song with your child’s name. You can use one you both know and change it just a little: “Twinkle, twinkle, little (Mia). How I love my little (Mia).” Make this your special song that you sing when your child is tired or upset.

Bubbles!

Blowing bubbles can be a fun way to help your child learn to take turns. First, blow some bubbles and let them catch and pop them. Encourage siblings to pop bubbles together. Then let your child take a turn blowing the bubbles while you hold the bubble wand. Now it’s your turn to catch and pop them!

Out and About

Take your child on walks or to children’s activities around your neighborhood. This will help them get to know the community and meet new people with your support. Talk to your child about where you are going: “We are going on a walk to the park.” Introduce your toddler to new people: “This is Amy. She is the librarian.” Help them learn to greet others: “Say hi to Amy.”

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Let's Trade!

When you play with your child, help them learn how to trade with you. Notice when they reach for or look at a toy you have. "Would you like to play with my bear? Let's trade. You can have my bear, and you can give me your dog." Learning to trade will help your child learn to share with friends when they get older.

Baby Bird

Make a cozy little nest with blankets and pillows. You and your child can pretend you are a bird family. You can feed your baby bird crackers and pretend they are "bugs." Big brother or sister can be part of the family too. Don't forget to let your baby bird know how much you love them.

Follow Me!

Play follow the leader with your child. Say, "Follow me and do what I do!" Then move around the room, changing what you do as they follow. Give simple directions: "Stomp your feet! Now wave your hands high in the air. Now jump, jump, jump!" Invite siblings to play. Put some music on to make it extra fun. Next, let your child take a turn as the leader.

Reading Emotions

Read simple children's books about feelings. You can find many books about emotions at the library. Find books that show children with different facial expressions. Cuddle up with your child to look at the pictures together and talk about the "feeling faces." Encourage them to try to make the different feeling faces, and name the emotion you see: "There's your sad face."

Treasure Hunt

Have your child close their eyes while you hide a "treasure." The treasure can be anything you choose. Make the hiding place not too easy or too hard. Tell your child to open their eyes and start looking for the treasure. If they need help, give hints: "Oh, you are close!" "Look a little higher!" Encourage your child not to give up—unless they are getting frustrated. Next it's their turn to hide a treasure for you. Playing simple games together is fun for both of you and teaches your child how to play games with rules. This will help them play with friends when they get a little older.



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Having regular meals and snacks is important to your growing toddler. A hungry toddler may cry, have tantrums, or become clingy when they get hungry. Offer a snack in between meals and one before bedtime to keep your toddler from getting overly hungry. Your toddler can sit at the table now. Eating together is a perfect way to get close and connect as a family. Talk, tell stories, and enjoy each other's company during mealtimes. Your independent toddler will want to have more and more control over their daily activities. The more choices and control you give your toddler, the more positive and relaxed mealtimes become.

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility is to offer healthy foods. Your toddler's responsibility is to decide what and how much they eat. Offer foods you know your child likes and some new foods.
- Your toddler needs five or six small meals or snacks each day. They may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Never force your child to eat. Toddlers are typically nervous about new foods. Offer tastes of new foods *many* times. In time, your child will accept most foods if they aren't forced.
- Your independent toddler can now sit at the table in a high chair or booster seat. A drop cloth may help keep things less messy as your child practices feeding themselves.
- It will be hard for your toddler to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable. A good goal is 10 minutes or so. This time gets longer as your child gets older.

Suggestions

- Create a consistent daily routine that includes times for meals and snacks. This will decrease the possibility that your child will get overly hungry during the day.
- Create a routine around meals and snacks: First wash hands, then sit and eat, then clean up. This helps your toddler know when meals and snacks begin and end.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Help everyone focus on eating and interacting with each other during mealtimes. Rules such as "no toys or phones at the table" also help.
- Make time to sit and talk with your toddler. You may not be able to sit with your child at every meal, but they will love having your company while eating.

(continued)

15-33 months



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Provide choices. Simple choices give your child a little bit of control and may decrease upsets. "Do you want warm peas or frozen?" "Do you want carrot sticks or circles?"
- Teach your child to use (or sign) words. The words *more*, *all done*, *please*, and *thank you* will help your child request (and reject) foods politely!
- Let your independent child start to feed themselves. Your child can eat finger foods and learn to use a spoon, fork, and cup. Now they can control how fast or slowly they eat.
- Catch your toddler doing the right thing. Let your child know you are proud of them when they eat like a big kid, wait patiently, or use words (or signs) to ask for food.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months

Sleep is important to your toddler's well-being. A well-rested toddler is more easygoing and happy during the day. Your good sleep helps you have patience and a sense of humor about your emotional toddler! Your independent toddler's interest in control is a positive sign of their healthy social-emotional development. However, this need for control may also result in pushback on the "time for bed" routine. Give your child some choices during the routine, such as what they want to wear to bed. Be kind but firm, and stick to the plan. Your toddler will learn that even if they fuss, the bedtime routine is going to happen the same way, every day.

Keep in Mind

- On average, toddlers need about 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 2 to 3 hours of napping during the day. Napping is different for each toddler. Many still take two naps a day.
- Watch your toddler for signs that they are not getting enough sleep. Signs include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often having tantrums and being fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in toddlers looks different than in adults. Stick to your toddler's bedtime routine even if your child is very active and "hyper." These behaviors may be signs that your child is overly tired. Learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Around 24 months, toddlers typically get their second molars (back teeth). This is painful and may wake up your toddler at night. Comfort your toddler and let them know you understand and are trying to help. Talk to your health care provider about ways to help.
- Your toddler needs a lot of exercise. Give your active toddler a lot of opportunities to move their body during the day. This helps your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Your emotional toddler experiences big feelings. They may begin to have real nighttime fears and real sadness about being alone. Let your toddler know that you understand their big feelings, love them, and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your toddler sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds stress your toddler and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems.

(continued)

15-33 months



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months (continued)

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime, naptime, and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- Create a consistent bedtime routine. Use “wind-down” time before bedtime for quiet activities. Take a bath, brush teeth, and read a bedtime story. Limit food and drink close to bedtime. This routine helps your toddler get their body ready for sleep.
- Give your toddler several alerts before starting the bedtime routine. It’s hard for your child to stop playing. Alerts may prevent upsets. “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.” Give additional alerts at 5 and 3 minutes.
- Provide choices during the bedtime routine: “Do you want to wear your whale pajamas, or your cat pajamas?” “This book first, or that book?” All these small choices give your independent toddler a little sense of control over bedtime.
- Put your toddler to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your toddler their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie to cuddle with at night. These items help your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults about how to help your toddler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your toddler in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your toddler has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your toddler know that everything is okay. Rub your toddler’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Reassure your child that they are safe and you are close by.
- If you need to wake your toddler, move slowly and gently. Talk to your child about why you are waking them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Your baby is becoming a toddler. Your independent toddler wants to do things without help and explore everything. This push to become more independent brings up big feelings for your child. Your child may feel frustration from trying to do new things or anger at being told not to do something. Your child may feel disgust at the taste of a new food or fear around new people or situations. These big feelings overwhelm your child. Your toddler may cry, scream, hit, or throw themselves on the floor as a way to express their feelings. Your child needs to learn how to self-calm and talk about their feelings. Teach your child what they can do instead of punishing them for “naughty” behaviors.

Keep in Mind

- Your toddler’s behaviors have meaning. What feelings (anger, sadness, fear) or sensations (hunger, tiredness, pain) might be causing the behavior?
- Your child is watching and learning from you. When you are angry, show your child how to stay calm. Be patient and respectful with your child.
- Your toddler cannot hear your words or think clearly when upset. Comfort your child first and help them calm down. Talk with them once they are calm.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hold, cuddle, and gently touch your toddler many times every day.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears. Adult television shows and movies can be confusing and scary for your toddler. Your child will also try out behaviors they see and hear on electronic devices or in the home.
- Your toddler’s behavior may be a reaction to stress. For example, did your child just start with a new caregiver?

Suggestions

- Check the basics. Is your toddler hungry? Tired? Bored? Keep a consistent daily routine with regular meals, snacks, and rest times, and a mix of active and calm activities.
- Talk to your child about feelings: “You sound frustrated. Do you need some help?” “Are you worried?” “Can I give you a hug?”
- Give your independent toddler time to try to do things on their own. Watch your child and give them a little help if they are getting frustrated.

(continued)

15-33 months



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Provide alerts. It is hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Give them an alert before moving to a new activity: "In 10 minutes it will be time to . . ."
- Focus on the positive. Your child wants your attention. Tell your child when they are doing the right thing, and they will do these behaviors more: "Thanks for waiting." "You put on your shoe!" "Thanks for using your words."
- Give your independent toddler simple choices so they feel a little control: "Do you want to wear your green shirt, or your blue one?"
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Your toddler can start to learn rules:
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touches, not hitting. Hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative. Teach your child what you want them to do instead: "Use your words. Say, I want the ball."
 - Stick to the rules every time. Be consistent so your child can learn the rules.
- If your toddler starts to get upset, stay calm and try one or more of these ideas:
 - Help your toddler calm down: "I can help. First let's take five breaths."
 - Distract your toddler, to change their focus to something else.
 - Move your toddler if a situation is unsafe. Gently pick your child up and carry them to a safer place: "I am going to help you cross the street so you are safe."
 - Ignore the behavior. Make sure your toddler is safe, and walk away until they calm down.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

(continued)



Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Many families have their children attend child care or preschool. Look for a care setting that provides a safe, nurturing, and interesting place for your child. The interactions your child has with the teachers and children are important to their social-emotional development. Child care can be a great place for children to learn how to play with other children. Observe the child care setting before sending your child. Ask questions. Choose a program that is right for your child and family.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important guidelines to help you begin the process of choosing a program for your child:

- Choose a caregiver who shows real interest in your child. Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and how you comfort them.
- Choose a caregiver who celebrates your child's strengths. This builds your child's confidence.
- Choose a caregiver you like. Your child learns how to build healthy relationships by watching the adults in their life. They will learn from the positive interactions between you and their caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you. Developing open and positive communication with your caregiver builds trust.
- Choose a caregiver who interacts lovingly with your child. Children need positive attention from caregivers to help them feel safe and secure.
- Choose a caregiver who uses positive discipline rather than punishment. Caregivers who use positive discipline observe and listen to children carefully. They try to understand *why* the child is doing a behavior such as hitting and then teach the child a positive behavior to replace the negative behavior. For example, the caregiver may teach your child how to use their words to ask for something instead of hitting.
- Caregivers who utilize positive discipline also frequently "catch" children doing the right thing. They comment on a child's positive behaviors and praise the child: "Thank you for sitting so patiently."

Asking Questions

Once you have a few providers in mind, visit the programs you are considering. Observe and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Does the place feel good? Are the caregivers loving? Do the children seem happy?
- Are there safe and clean indoor and outdoor spaces for children?

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Are there enough adults? Ideally, for toddlers, there should be a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children. For preschoolers, the minimum is 1 adult to 10 children.
- Is the provider licensed?
- Do the caregivers welcome the children and families when they arrive?
- Are parents allowed to visit during the day?
- Do the caregivers support children in separating from their parents?
- Is there a consistent daily routine? Consistency helps your child feel secure.
- Are there a lot of opportunities for free play with friends? During free play, your child learns to make choices, to share, and to work cooperatively with friends.
- Do the caregivers join the children in play? Do they help children play with one another? Adults can model positive interactions by playing with the children in their care.
- How do the caregivers help children work out conflicts? Your child will learn how to solve conflicts from observing others.
- Ask about the provider's discipline policy. How do they deal with tantrums?

Preparing for Your Child's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your child's routine. Work with your child and your caregiver to make the transition between home and school smooth.
- Tell your child what will happen at child care. Read or tell stories about going to child care. Ask your librarian for books about the first day of child care or preschool.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition is for your child.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your child. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

Supporting Your Child's Transition

- Take your child's comfort items, such as a special blanket or toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend time with your child before you leave. Tell them you love them when you say goodbye. Let your child know when you will be back. They will learn to trust that you will return. Don't sneak away!
- It is normal for your child to cry when you leave. They will stop crying once you leave and they get engaged in play.
- Spend time with your child when you pick them up. Pay attention to them without other distractions. Ask your child to show you what they made at child care, or have them introduce you to a new friend. They missed you and want to share their day.
- Check in with your child's caregiver to find out how the day went.
- Remember, your child should seem happy and relaxed in the care setting over time.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Learning to Use the Toilet

Most parents are eager for their child to learn to use the toilet. However, learning to use the toilet is hard for your little one. It is important to make sure your child is physically and emotionally ready. Starting toilet training too soon can make it a negative experience. Power struggles during toilet training can leave children feeling frustrated or bad about themselves. The key is to stay calm and patient during this time. The more emotional you are, the more your child learns how much it matters to you. Refusing becomes a way for your child to feel in control. If you are starting to sense a struggle, relax and back off for a while. Do your best not to worry or get frustrated. Your child will learn, but it will take some time. Learning to use the toilet is another step toward your child's independence.

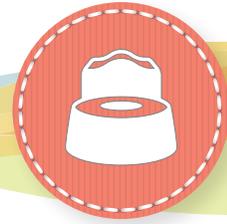
Keep in Mind

- Children need to be developmentally ready to use the toilet. Some are ready at 18 months, some at 3 years.
- Here are some signs that your child is physically and emotionally ready to use the toilet:
 - Your child shows interest in using the toilet. They may want to wear "big kid" underwear.
 - They ask to be changed when their diaper is dirty.
 - Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
 - They have some control over their muscles and know when they are going "potty." For example, your child might go "hide" when having a bowel movement.
 - Your child has the motor skills needed to use the toilet. For example, your child can walk, pull their pants up and down, and get on and off the toilet with some help.
 - Your child can follow simple directions.
- Your family's beliefs and values about learning to use the toilet are important to consider.
- Your child may "lose" toileting skills during big life events, such as moving or welcoming a new baby into your family. These big life events are not good times to start learning to use the toilet.

Suggestions

- Start to look for toileting patterns. Is your child dry when waking up from a nap? This is a good time to have your child try to use the toilet.
- Incorporate regular times to use the toilet into the routine. For example, "Before nap, it's time to try to use the toilet." This helps your child know what to expect.

(continued)



Learning to Use the Toilet *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Go to the library and check out books or videos on using the toilet. Show excitement about potty training when you read or watch them. Check in with your child and see how they feel.
- Give your child some choice over whether to use the toilet or a diaper each day. This will help your child start to feel independence and control during potty training.
- Work on undressing and dressing skills. Go shopping for “big kid” underwear. Let your child choose underwear they like.
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing so it is easier for them to help pull down their pants. Now is not the time for zippers and buttons. They can be frustrating for your child.
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.
- Give your child the tools they need, such as a small potty, potty seat, or stool. These tools help your child feel more comfortable and independent.
- There is no need to use “rewards.” Your child feels proud about learning this “big kid” skill. Your child is learning the natural consequence of going to the bathroom independently. If you do choose to use rewards, choose small things you think your child would want, such as stickers.
- Celebrate your child’s successes during potty training: “Yay! You went potty in your toilet!” Give them high-fives or big hugs to help them feel proud.
- Potty training takes time. Be patient and understanding. This lets your child know you support and love them as they learn to use the toilet. This is another step in building their independence and self-confidence.
- It is important never to punish or shame your child when they have accidents. Accidents are going to happen, so be prepared for them. Punishment or shame makes your child feel bad and can make potty training a lot harder. Positive praise helps your child feel pride in their accomplishment.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

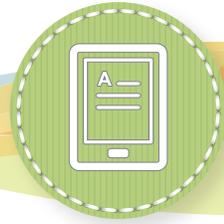
Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

(continued)



Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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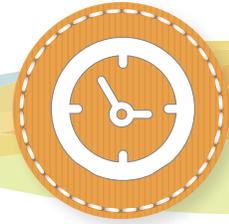


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

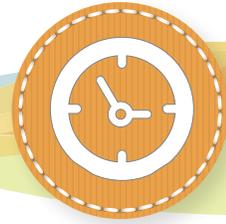
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: "Go get your shoes from your room." This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, "You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you." You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



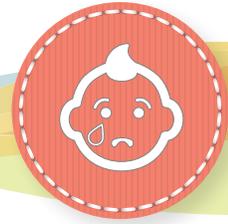
Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development

27 to 33 months

Your child is learning what they can do and is more confident in their abilities. They are proud of their big kid skills. Your child also wants control. They want to do things their way and on their timeline. It can be frustrating when your child tells you “no” or wants to do things “by myself.” The trick is to give your child a little control while still being in control yourself. For example, always offer two acceptable choices when requesting something of your child: “Do you want to put on your red shirt or your blue shirt?” This small choice provides a little bit of control that feels good to your independent toddler.

“Keep on Trying”

Your toddler is taking on more challenges, and these challenges can trigger big feelings. It may not take much for your child to become discouraged and give up on a task that is hard or to say, “You do it.” Encourage and support your child: “Keep on trying. You can do it.” Stay close and, if needed, help them before they do give up. Let your toddler know you have confidence in their abilities. When your child learns something new, let them know how proud you are.

First Friends

Make times when your child can be with other children their age. Your child may enjoy attending music, movement, or dance classes with other children. If that is not possible, consider trips to the park or dancing together during play dates. Such activities are low-stress for your child, since there is little need to share toys or other belongings.

Calm First, Talk Later

Your child is learning to express and control their big feelings. This is a very hard thing to do! If your child is upset, help them calm down before trying to talk to them. Hold them lovingly in your arms and breathe together. “You’re okay sweetie. Mommy’s here.” Talk about and practice calming ideas at times when your child is not upset. Ideas include deep breathing, using words to talk about feelings, taking a break, or switching to a new activity.

Exploring the World

Give your toddler opportunities to explore new activities and places. Take your child to a park, the library, or other fun places. New places may be scary for your child at first. Keep them close and let them watch before joining in activities. Show your child how to greet new people, such as a clerk at a store. It is okay if your child is shy at first. When they are ready, they will let you know.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child’s ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child’s success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Toddler's Social-Emotional Development, 27–33 months

Big Feelings

Your emotional toddler may be happy one minute and mad the next. They may want to do something without your help and then get frustrated and start to cry. These big feelings are normal. Name your child's and other people's feelings: "Jimmy looks happy to see you." When your child is eager, say, "You look excited! I am excited to make cookies, too." When your child is upset, say, "You sound mad."

I Missed You!

Find time each day to have special one-on-one time with your child. Mute your phone and turn off other electronic devices so you can focus on each other. This is especially important if your child was away from you in care during the day. Your child missed you and needs to reconnect with you to feel secure. Even a small amount of one-on-one time soon after you come home will reassure your child that you are still connected. Otherwise, your child may act out to try to get your attention.

Setting Limits

Your independent toddler will start to test limits. Have a few simple rules, such as, "Always use gentle hands." Be consistent. When your child forgets, go back to the rule. "You are mad, but it is not okay to hit. Remember, we use gentle hands." Notice when they follow the rules. "You asked for the toy and waited for your turn!" The more you notice your child doing the right thing, the more often they will do the right thing. They want you to notice!

Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. Screen time includes television, games, computers, phones, and tablets. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems. Social-emotional skills develop through interactions with real people and real activities. Your child feels pride and develops self-confidence through real-life experiences.

Same Way, Every Day!

Routine activities happen every day, such as mealtime and bedtime. Consistent routines help your child know what to expect, so they feel safe and secure. Routines also help them move from one activity to the next with fewer struggles. For example, your child learns that after play, toys go in the bin, and then it is snack time. They learn that even if they fuss, snack won't happen until toys are picked up. Same way, every day!

Change Is Hard

Change can be confusing and scary for your child. If a change in the routine must happen, talk to them ahead of time and let them know what will be different. Your child can understand a lot. They may want to ask questions. Help your child understand why the change needs to happen. Holding a comfort item, such as a favorite stuffed animal or blanket, may help them stay calm.

Bedtime Fears

Your toddler is becoming more aware. Your child may struggle with bedtime because of new fears, such as being afraid of the dark. Comfort your child and try different things to help. A stuffed animal, a nightlight, or quiet music might help them relax. Stay kind but firm and stick to the routine. The benefits of a good night's sleep are important to your child's overall mood and behavior during the day—and to yours!



Mealtime and Snacks

Your happy toddler may suddenly become grumpy. They may just be hungry. Your child's stomach is small, so they can't eat much at one time. Offer food every couple of hours. Offer small amounts of healthy foods you know your child likes and new foods to try. Let your child explore foods and feed themselves. Do not force your child to eat. Your child will eat when hungry.

Helping Your Toddler Grow

Activities for 27 to 33 months



27-33 months

Your independent toddler may feel like a challenge at times—but playtime is a wonderful time to get close and connect with each other. During play your child builds language, learns how to take turns, and learns how to enjoy time with friends and family. Watch them closely and follow their lead. Comment on what your child is doing, seeing, or hearing. Respond when they try to show or tell you something. Encourage siblings to join in, too! Turn off televisions and computers, and mute your phone so you can focus on each other. Your child will love this special time together. Share laughs and giggles together.

A Trip to the Library

When your child can talk about their feelings and needs, there will be fewer upsets. Find children's books about feelings and emotions at the library. Point out the characters' faces and talk about their emotions. "Look at her face. She looks mad. What can she do to feel better?" Talk to your child about how they can help themselves calm down. Teach them ideas such as breathing in and out for 5 seconds, or going to a quiet space to calm.

Imagination Station

Your toddler has a big imagination and loves pretend play. Provide a few dress-up props, such as hats, scarves, or ties. Gather the items for playing restaurant, with a pot, pan, wooden spoon, and some unbreakable plates, cups, and spoons. Be creative! Make time to join your child and help them use their imagination. Pretend play can also be used to "act out" difficult situations that worry your child. Help them talk about feelings and think about solutions by using their imagination: "Uh-oh, Mousy is sad because Daddy is leaving for a trip. What can Mousy do?"

Bugs, Bugs, Bugs!

Everything is interesting to your child. Go exploring outdoors to see what you can find. Look under rocks for bugs. It's wonderful to experience nature through your child's eyes. Talk to them about how the bugs look or what the bugs are doing. Encourage their curiosity. Teach your child how to be gentle with small creatures. Slow down and focus on the little things. Being in nature can be calming for both of you.

Encourage Me!

Your toddler is learning a lot of new things at this age. Give your child safe opportunities to do things on their own. Put a step stool in the bathroom so they can reach the sink to wash their hands. Give your child time to try putting on their shoes. Let them practice using a spoon, fork, and cup at mealtimes. Your child may get frustrated trying new skills. Encourage them to keep trying. Give them a little help before they give up.

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Little Chef

Your toddler will love to help prepare snacks or meals. They can scoop, stir, and pour. Be ready for a bit of a mess. Your child can help clean up too! They can wash the table with a sponge, or wash their hands. Let your child know what a big help they are: “Wow. Look at you help clean up. I’m proud of you!”

Cozy Spot

Sometimes your child needs a break. Make a cozy space where they can be alone and relax. Work with your child to make a fort with a blanket and some chairs. Add pillows, blankets, books, and quiet toys. They may just want to snuggle in your arms. That’s okay too. Being in your arms is calming for both of you.

Game Time!

Invite a friend over for a play date. At this age, your child enjoys being near friends but has a hard time playing *with* friends. These little friends will need your help to know how to play together. Friends can take turns throwing small balls into a basket or kicking balls. They can play ring-around-the-rosy or just run together. Keep playtimes short and sweet. Don’t forget a yummy snack!

Dance Party

Turn on some music and dance. Have fun together being silly! Show your toddler a dance move and have them try to copy you. Then encourage your child to show you a dance move. Young children love being the leaders and having other people follow them.

Bragging Rights

Have a conversation with another adult that your child can overhear “by accident.” Talk about your love for your child or the joy they bring you. Talk about something kind or generous your child did: “Do you know what James did? He shared his toys with his friend. I was so proud of his kindness.” Watch your child’s face light up. You have the most impact on how your child feels about themselves.

Family and Friends

Help your child make a book of the special people in their life. Glue pictures of family members and friends onto sheets of paper and staple the pages together. Let them decorate the book. Look at the book together and encourage your child to tell you who is in each picture. Talk to them about the special people who love them. If your child is going to be in a new setting, such as a new childcare, they may want to take this book along. It will be uplifting for them to look through.



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Having regular meals and snacks is important to your growing toddler. A hungry toddler may cry, have tantrums, or become clingy when they get hungry. Offer a snack in between meals and one before bedtime to keep your toddler from getting overly hungry. Your toddler can sit at the table now. Eating together is a perfect way to get close and connect as a family. Talk, tell stories, and enjoy each other's company during mealtimes. Your independent toddler will want to have more and more control over their daily activities. The more choices and control you give your toddler, the more positive and relaxed mealtimes become.

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility is to offer healthy foods. Your toddler's responsibility is to decide what and how much they eat. Offer foods you know your child likes and some new foods.
- Your toddler needs five or six small meals or snacks each day. They may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Never force your child to eat. Toddlers are typically nervous about new foods. Offer tastes of new foods *many* times. In time, your child will accept most foods if they aren't forced.
- Your independent toddler can now sit at the table in a high chair or booster seat. A drop cloth may help keep things less messy as your child practices feeding themselves.
- It will be hard for your toddler to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable. A good goal is 10 minutes or so. This time gets longer as your child gets older.

Suggestions

- Create a consistent daily routine that includes times for meals and snacks. This will decrease the possibility that your child will get overly hungry during the day.
- Create a routine around meals and snacks: First wash hands, then sit and eat, then clean up. This helps your toddler know when meals and snacks begin and end.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Help everyone focus on eating and interacting with each other during mealtimes. Rules such as "no toys or phones at the table" also help.
- Make time to sit and talk with your toddler. You may not be able to sit with your child at every meal, but they will love having your company while eating.

(continued)

15-33 months



Feeding Your Toddler, 15-33 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Provide choices. Simple choices give your child a little bit of control and may decrease upsets. "Do you want warm peas or frozen?" "Do you want carrot sticks or circles?"
- Teach your child to use (or sign) words. The words *more*, *all done*, *please*, and *thank you* will help your child request (and reject) foods politely!
- Let your independent child start to feed themselves. Your child can eat finger foods and learn to use a spoon, fork, and cup. Now they can control how fast or slowly they eat.
- Catch your toddler doing the right thing. Let your child know you are proud of them when they eat like a big kid, wait patiently, or use words (or signs) to ask for food.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months

Sleep is important to your toddler's well-being. A well-rested toddler is more easygoing and happy during the day. Your good sleep helps you have patience and a sense of humor about your emotional toddler! Your independent toddler's interest in control is a positive sign of their healthy social-emotional development. However, this need for control may also result in pushback on the "time for bed" routine. Give your child some choices during the routine, such as what they want to wear to bed. Be kind but firm, and stick to the plan. Your toddler will learn that even if they fuss, the bedtime routine is going to happen the same way, every day.

Keep in Mind

- On average, toddlers need about 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 2 to 3 hours of napping during the day. Napping is different for each toddler. Many still take two naps a day.
- Watch your toddler for signs that they are not getting enough sleep. Signs include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often having tantrums and being fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in toddlers looks different than in adults. Stick to your toddler's bedtime routine even if your child is very active and "hyper." These behaviors may be signs that your child is overly tired. Learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Around 24 months, toddlers typically get their second molars (back teeth). This is painful and may wake up your toddler at night. Comfort your toddler and let them know you understand and are trying to help. Talk to your health care provider about ways to help.
- Your toddler needs a lot of exercise. Give your active toddler a lot of opportunities to move their body during the day. This helps your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Your emotional toddler experiences big feelings. They may begin to have real nighttime fears and real sadness about being alone. Let your toddler know that you understand their big feelings, love them, and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your toddler sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds stress your toddler and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems.

(continued)

15-33 months



Helping Your Toddler Sleep, 15-33 months (continued)

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime, naptime, and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- Create a consistent bedtime routine. Use “wind-down” time before bedtime for quiet activities. Take a bath, brush teeth, and read a bedtime story. Limit food and drink close to bedtime. This routine helps your toddler get their body ready for sleep.
- Give your toddler several alerts before starting the bedtime routine. It’s hard for your child to stop playing. Alerts may prevent upsets. “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.” Give additional alerts at 5 and 3 minutes.
- Provide choices during the bedtime routine: “Do you want to wear your whale pajamas, or your cat pajamas?” “This book first, or that book?” All these small choices give your independent toddler a little sense of control over bedtime.
- Put your toddler to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your toddler their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie to cuddle with at night. These items help your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults about how to help your toddler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your toddler in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your toddler has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your toddler know that everything is okay. Rub your toddler’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Reassure your child that they are safe and you are close by.
- If you need to wake your toddler, move slowly and gently. Talk to your child about why you are waking them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months

Your baby is becoming a toddler. Your independent toddler wants to do things without help and explore everything. This push to become more independent brings up big feelings for your child. Your child may feel frustration from trying to do new things or anger at being told not to do something. Your child may feel disgust at the taste of a new food or fear around new people or situations. These big feelings overwhelm your child. Your toddler may cry, scream, hit, or throw themselves on the floor as a way to express their feelings. Your child needs to learn how to self-calm and talk about their feelings. Teach your child what they can do instead of punishing them for “naughty” behaviors.

Keep in Mind

- Your toddler’s behaviors have meaning. What feelings (anger, sadness, fear) or sensations (hunger, tiredness, pain) might be causing the behavior?
- Your child is watching and learning from you. When you are angry, show your child how to stay calm. Be patient and respectful with your child.
- Your toddler cannot hear your words or think clearly when upset. Comfort your child first and help them calm down. Talk with them once they are calm.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hold, cuddle, and gently touch your toddler many times every day.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears. Adult television shows and movies can be confusing and scary for your toddler. Your child will also try out behaviors they see and hear on electronic devices or in the home.
- Your toddler’s behavior may be a reaction to stress. For example, did your child just start with a new caregiver?

Suggestions

- Check the basics. Is your toddler hungry? Tired? Bored? Keep a consistent daily routine with regular meals, snacks, and rest times, and a mix of active and calm activities.
- Talk to your child about feelings: “You sound frustrated. Do you need some help?” “Are you worried?” “Can I give you a hug?”
- Give your independent toddler time to try to do things on their own. Watch your child and give them a little help if they are getting frustrated.

(continued)

15-33 months



Calming Your Toddler, 15-33 months (continued)

SUGGESTIONS (continued)

- Provide alerts. It is hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Give them an alert before moving to a new activity: "In 10 minutes it will be time to . . ."
- Focus on the positive. Your child wants your attention. Tell your child when they are doing the right thing, and they will do these behaviors more: "Thanks for waiting." "You put on your shoe!" "Thanks for using your words."
- Give your independent toddler simple choices so they feel a little control: "Do you want to wear your green shirt, or your blue one?"
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Your toddler can start to learn rules:
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touches, not hitting. Hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative. Teach your child what you want them to do instead: "Use your words. Say, I want the ball."
 - Stick to the rules every time. Be consistent so your child can learn the rules.
- If your toddler starts to get upset, stay calm and try one or more of these ideas:
 - Help your toddler calm down: "I can help. First let's take five breaths."
 - Distract your toddler, to change their focus to something else.
 - Move your toddler if a situation is unsafe. Gently pick your child up and carry them to a safer place: "I am going to help you cross the street so you are safe."
 - Ignore the behavior. Make sure your toddler is safe, and walk away until they calm down.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

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Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Many families have their children attend child care or preschool. Look for a care setting that provides a safe, nurturing, and interesting place for your child. The interactions your child has with the teachers and children are important to their social-emotional development. Child care can be a great place for children to learn how to play with other children. Observe the child care setting before sending your child. Ask questions. Choose a program that is right for your child and family.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important guidelines to help you begin the process of choosing a program for your child:

- Choose a caregiver who shows real interest in your child. Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and how you comfort them.
- Choose a caregiver who celebrates your child's strengths. This builds your child's confidence.
- Choose a caregiver you like. Your child learns how to build healthy relationships by watching the adults in their life. They will learn from the positive interactions between you and their caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you. Developing open and positive communication with your caregiver builds trust.
- Choose a caregiver who interacts lovingly with your child. Children need positive attention from caregivers to help them feel safe and secure.
- Choose a caregiver who uses positive discipline rather than punishment. Caregivers who use positive discipline observe and listen to children carefully. They try to understand *why* the child is doing a behavior such as hitting and then teach the child a positive behavior to replace the negative behavior. For example, the caregiver may teach your child how to use their words to ask for something instead of hitting.
- Caregivers who utilize positive discipline also frequently "catch" children doing the right thing. They comment on a child's positive behaviors and praise the child: "Thank you for sitting so patiently."

Asking Questions

Once you have a few providers in mind, visit the programs you are considering. Observe and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Does the place feel good? Are the caregivers loving? Do the children seem happy?
- Are there safe and clean indoor and outdoor spaces for children?

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Are there enough adults? Ideally, for toddlers, there should be a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children. For preschoolers, the minimum is 1 adult to 10 children.
- Is the provider licensed?
- Do the caregivers welcome the children and families when they arrive?
- Are parents allowed to visit during the day?
- Do the caregivers support children in separating from their parents?
- Is there a consistent daily routine? Consistency helps your child feel secure.
- Are there a lot of opportunities for free play with friends? During free play, your child learns to make choices, to share, and to work cooperatively with friends.
- Do the caregivers join the children in play? Do they help children play with one another? Adults can model positive interactions by playing with the children in their care.
- How do the caregivers help children work out conflicts? Your child will learn how to solve conflicts from observing others.
- Ask about the provider's discipline policy. How do they deal with tantrums?

Preparing for Your Child's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your child's routine. Work with your child and your caregiver to make the transition between home and school smooth.
- Tell your child what will happen at child care. Read or tell stories about going to child care. Ask your librarian for books about the first day of child care or preschool.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition is for your child.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your child. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

Supporting Your Child's Transition

- Take your child's comfort items, such as a special blanket or toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend time with your child before you leave. Tell them you love them when you say goodbye. Let your child know when you will be back. They will learn to trust that you will return. Don't sneak away!
- It is normal for your child to cry when you leave. They will stop crying once you leave and they get engaged in play.
- Spend time with your child when you pick them up. Pay attention to them without other distractions. Ask your child to show you what they made at child care, or have them introduce you to a new friend. They missed you and want to share their day.
- Check in with your child's caregiver to find out how the day went.
- Remember, your child should seem happy and relaxed in the care setting over time.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Learning to Use the Toilet

Most parents are eager for their child to learn to use the toilet. However, learning to use the toilet is hard for your little one. It is important to make sure your child is physically and emotionally ready. Starting toilet training too soon can make it a negative experience. Power struggles during toilet training can leave children feeling frustrated or bad about themselves. The key is to stay calm and patient during this time. The more emotional you are, the more your child learns how much it matters to you. Refusing becomes a way for your child to feel in control. If you are starting to sense a struggle, relax and back off for a while. Do your best not to worry or get frustrated. Your child will learn, but it will take some time. Learning to use the toilet is another step toward your child's independence.

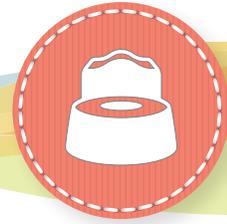
Keep in Mind

- Children need to be developmentally ready to use the toilet. Some are ready at 18 months, some at 3 years.
- Here are some signs that your child is physically and emotionally ready to use the toilet:
 - Your child shows interest in using the toilet. They may want to wear "big kid" underwear.
 - They ask to be changed when their diaper is dirty.
 - Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
 - They have some control over their muscles and know when they are going "potty." For example, your child might go "hide" when having a bowel movement.
 - Your child has the motor skills needed to use the toilet. For example, your child can walk, pull their pants up and down, and get on and off the toilet with some help.
 - Your child can follow simple directions.
- Your family's beliefs and values about learning to use the toilet are important to consider.
- Your child may "lose" toileting skills during big life events, such as moving or welcoming a new baby into your family. These big life events are not good times to start learning to use the toilet.

Suggestions

- Start to look for toileting patterns. Is your child dry when waking up from a nap? This is a good time to have your child try to use the toilet.
- Incorporate regular times to use the toilet into the routine. For example, "Before nap, it's time to try to use the toilet." This helps your child know what to expect.

(continued)



Learning to Use the Toilet *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Go to the library and check out books or videos on using the toilet. Show excitement about potty training when you read or watch them. Check in with your child and see how they feel.
- Give your child some choice over whether to use the toilet or a diaper each day. This will help your child start to feel independence and control during potty training.
- Work on undressing and dressing skills. Go shopping for “big kid” underwear. Let your child choose underwear they like.
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing so it is easier for them to help pull down their pants. Now is not the time for zippers and buttons. They can be frustrating for your child.
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.
- Give your child the tools they need, such as a small potty, potty seat, or stool. These tools help your child feel more comfortable and independent.
- There is no need to use “rewards.” Your child feels proud about learning this “big kid” skill. Your child is learning the natural consequence of going to the bathroom independently. If you do choose to use rewards, choose small things you think your child would want, such as stickers.
- Celebrate your child’s successes during potty training: “Yay! You went potty in your toilet!” Give them high-fives or big hugs to help them feel proud.
- Potty training takes time. Be patient and understanding. This lets your child know you support and love them as they learn to use the toilet. This is another step in building their independence and self-confidence.
- It is important never to punish or shame your child when they have accidents. Accidents are going to happen, so be prepared for them. Punishment or shame makes your child feel bad and can make potty training a lot harder. Positive praise helps your child feel pride in their accomplishment.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

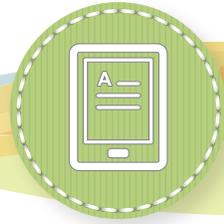
Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

(continued)



Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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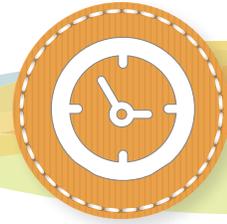


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

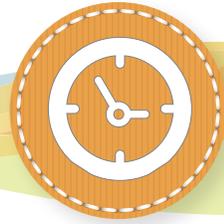
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: “Go get your shoes from your room.” This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, “You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you.” You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

33 to 42 months

Your child is growing fast and is now a preschooler! Your child is talking much more, and you are getting to know who they are as a person. They are better able to manage their emotions now, and there are fewer physical or vocal outbursts. However, your child can still fall apart under stress. Take a deep breath and help them calm. This ability to calm—or regulate—is one of the most important skills your child is learning. They learn how to regulate with your help and through your example. What helps you stay calm? Breathing? Taking a break? Talking to someone? Talk to your child about how you calm down when you are having a big feeling.

“I’m Still Your Baby”

Your independent child still needs the comfort of your arms and gentle touch many times a day. Touch and physical connection are an important part of your relationship with them. There will be times when your child has big feelings and only a loving hug from you will help. Research shows that touch is calming for both your child and you.

Friends Forever

Friends are becoming more important to your child. While playing with friends, they may engage in pretend play, becoming a fairy, a pirate, a doctor, or a teacher. Playtime still results in conflicts and big feelings, but your child has more words and ideas now about how to solve problems. Your preschooler may think about ideas such as turn taking or sharing. Often, they will come to you for help solving problems.

The Beginnings of Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize someone else’s emotions and respond with care. Empathy is a complicated skill that develops over many years. Your child may be able to express their own feelings now. They are beginning to learn how to recognize other people’s emotions too: “Look at Emma’s face. She looks scared.” Teach your child how to respond with care: “Daddy looks like he’s sad. I bet a hug would cheer him up.” They learn how to care for others from you and your example.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child’s ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child’s success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development, 33–42 months

Routine Check-Ins

Your child's sense of safety and security in the world is growing. They can now explore and interact with friends and family without you as close by. Your child may ask you to stay with them at a friend's house, yet rarely come over to touch base with you. You may feel a little sad or neglected. Keep in mind that this is a sign of your child's growing confidence. You still play a critical role in supporting them emotionally. When your child does have big feelings, they will come right back to the comfort of your arms.

Special Jobs

Your child is gaining new skills every day and can be truly helpful around the home. Give them special jobs around the house, like sorting socks after the laundry is done, handing out napkins at dinner, and finding their pajamas for bedtime. Your child will take pride in doing these jobs and their important role in the family. "Thank you for sorting socks, honey! You are a big help."

Nighttime Connections

A good night's sleep can mean the difference between an easygoing, happy child and an angry, fussy child. You also need to get enough sleep to be emotionally available for your child. Use your bedtime routine as a special time to connect. At this age, your child may have nightmares, fears of the dark, or fears of being alone. Let them talk about their fears. Cuddle up and let your child know you will keep them safe. A nightlight, special blanket, or stuffed animal may help.

Hungry and Fussy

When your child is fussy or falling apart, they may be hungry. Offer food every 2 to 3 hours. Make sure you take healthy snacks along whenever you go on an outing. If your child is starting to get fussy, offer a little food. Now you and your child can keep having fun, positive interactions with each other!

Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. Your child develops healthy relationships through positive back-and-forth interactions with you, family members, and friends. Healthy relationships prepare your child for school and life. Screens cannot!



The Trouble with Change

Having a consistent daily routine offers a sense of safety and security to your preschooler. However, sometimes changing activities may make your child angry or frustrated. This is especially true when you are interrupting an activity your child enjoys. During these times, make sure you give your child a warning: "In 5 minutes it will be time to clean up your toys so we can go shopping." Make sure the next activity includes something your child will enjoy: "I need your help shopping. Let's make a list together."

Helping Your Child Grow

Activities for 33 to 42 months



33-42 months

Spend time cuddling and playing with your child every day. This is especially important if you have been away from each other during the day. Your child missed you and needs to reconnect! Give them 10 minutes of one-on-one time soon after you come home from work. Sit down, breathe, and hold your child. Let them know how much you missed them. Ask your child about their day. That little bit of focused time will help them feel secure and calm. Without this, your child may become fussy or act out to try to connect with you.

Night-Night Talk Times

Bedtime is a special time to get close and connect with your child. Talk about the day and what will happen tomorrow. Ask them simple questions about their day: "What was the best part?" "Were there any hard parts?" "How did you feel?" Listen carefully so your child knows that what they are thinking is important to you. You may need to help them get started talking. Even if your child can't answer all your questions, they are still listening and learning how to think about their day.

Puppet Friends

Your child is discovering their imagination. Through pretend play, they can explore different feelings and imagine they are someone (or something) else. Maybe your child wants to be a superhero, a fairy, a cat, or a police officer. One fun way to do this is with puppets. You can make a simple puppet from a sock or a small paper bag. Draw eyes and a mouth with a marker, cut out ears, and glue on yarn for hair. Make one puppet for your child and one for yourself. Have your puppets go on adventures together and explore their world.

Feelings Faces

Draw simple pictures of faces that show feelings, such as happy, sad, mad, surprised, or scared (emojis are good examples!). Talk about these feelings with your child. Have them point to the face that shows how they feel on the inside. Ask your child why they are feeling that way. Then have them point to one that shows how someone else may be feeling: "Can you point to the picture that shows how you think your baby brother is feeling?" "Why do you think he's feeling that way?"

Nature Walk

Go on a nature walk with your child and take turns showing each other interesting things. Be curious together! Everything is new and interesting to them. Pick up a bug that is safe to handle and talk about it. You can talk about how the bug looks or feels. "Look at this little red ladybug. Its legs feel tickly on my hand. Do you want it to hold it?" Now it's your child's turn to find something interesting. They may be scared of new things. Teach your child which things are dangerous and which ones are safe.

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How Does It Feel?

Stay close by when your child is playing with another child. At this age, children need help sharing and taking turns. Use conflicts and disagreements as learning opportunities. Ask your child to think about how their friend may feel. “Maria, you have all the dolls. Look at Alma’s face. How do you think she feels?” Encourage them to try to solve this problem: “What would help Alma feel better?” When your child does show signs of caring for others, make sure you notice: “You shared your doll with Alma. What a kind friend you are! Nana is very proud of you.”

Story Time

Ask a librarian to help you find some children’s books about feelings. Reading stories about feelings helps your child think and talk about their own feelings. Talk to them about the story: “Lion got really mad in this story. Do you feel mad sometimes?” “What makes you feel better when you are mad?” Teach your child ideas for how to calm down. For example, breathing in and out for 5 seconds, or talking about their feelings with a parent or teacher.

The Great Big World

Show your child new things, and take them to new places. Are there museums nearby? Parks? Interesting neighborhoods? Libraries? See the world through your child’s eyes. Talk about the things that they are seeing. When your child is feeling confident, calm, and happy, they will be curious about everything—especially when you are sharing this experience with them.

Big Helper

Your child is watching you and wants to try doing the things you do. When you sweep, give your child the broom (or a dustpan) and let them help. “You are sweeping. What a big boy. Thanks for the help!” This is a way for your child to learn from you. It also helps them know they play an important role in the family. They will feel good about their new skills and feel proud they are “helping.”

Let’s Dance

Your child needs times to move around and use their arms, legs, and the rest of their body. Put on some music and dance together! You can use scarves or light blankets to wave around while you dance. Try different types of music. Ask your child if the music sounds happy, sad, silly, mad, or scary. Talk about how the different kinds of music make each of you feel. Encourage them to make a facial expression to show the feeling.

Give Me a Break

Your child needs quiet times to relax. Children do not need to be busy all the time. If your child is in childcare, there will be break times. At home, you may need to plan quiet times. Make a comfy nest with pillows, blankets, and books. When possible, cuddle up together and take a break. After lunch, a rest time or a nap may help the rest of the day go more smoothly.

Little Challenges

Little challenges help your child learn to work hard and keep trying (persist). They will need encouragement when they are getting frustrated: “You can do it.” “You’re almost there—keep trying.” Your confidence in your child’s skills will help build their confidence. Skills such as learning to ride a tricycle (or bicycle with training wheels), climbing to the top of a structure, or drawing a simple shape offer opportunities for them to learn how to persist.



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months

Mealtimes are an important time to share the day's events and connect with your child. Teach your child how to listen when another family member is speaking, and help your child share stories about their day. Try to keep snack time and mealtime relaxed. The more you try to control what your child eats, the more your independent, strong-willed child will push back against you. Let your child take the lead when it comes to eating. One thing that makes mealtimes fun is involving your child in preparing or getting ready for meals. Helping with household tasks builds your child's confidence and makes them feel like an important part of the family. "Thanks for putting out the napkins. You are a big help!"

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility during meals is to offer your child a variety of healthy foods. Always include foods you know your child likes as well as something new to try.
- Your child's responsibility is to explore foods and decide what they will eat, how much, and how fast. Children may need to be offered a food many times before they will try it.
- Take care not to make mealtimes a battle for control. Avoid using food as a way to reward your child's behavior. Never force your child to eat.
- Your child needs five or six small meals or snacks every day. Your child may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Your child is learning their likes and dislikes. Your child has favorite foods and some that they do not like. Respect your child's choices as long as they eat a variety of foods.
- It may be hard for your child to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable for your child to sit with the family. A good goal is about 15 minutes. "Thanks for sitting and eating with us. Please put your bowl in the sink, and you can play while we finish."

Suggestions

- Develop a clear routine around snack time and mealtime: First wash hands, then come to the table and eat, then help clean up. Your preschooler may already know this routine.
- Involve your child in mealtimes. Your preschooler can help prepare simple meals. They can help set the table, put away dishes in the sink (or dishwasher), and use a sponge to wash the table or wipe down appliances. Say, "Thanks for the help!"

(continued)

33-72 months



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make food fun. Pancakes that look like a mouse are much yummier than simple circles. Let your child come up with ideas to help make foods fun too.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Try to eat one meal a day together as a family. Have everyone share about their day: "What was the best part?" "Did anything funny happen?" Shared mealtimes build healthy, close relationships.
- Let your child be independent. Your child can use utensils and serve themselves. Your preschooler can pour from a small pitcher and drink from a cup. Your independent child will enjoy being a "big kid" and doing things by themselves.
- Encourage your child to try new foods. Let your child pick out healthy foods at the store that they would like to try. Make simple rules around new foods: "Try a bite or a lick." Consider introducing a "no, thank you" bowl where your child can put food they do not like.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months

Getting enough sleep is important to your child's overall well-being. The world is exciting, though, and most children do not want to miss out on anything. In fact, your child might say they are not tired or sleepy and fall asleep at the table. As a parent, you continue to set the sleep schedule and the daily routine. Make the bedtime routine special and connect with your child. Talk with your child about their day, including the best parts and any parts that may have been hard. Talk with your child about what they can look forward to tomorrow. Bedtime is a wonderful time to cuddle, ask your child questions, and listen to your child's ideas about their world.

Keep in Mind

- On average, preschool children need between 10 and 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 1 to 2 hours of napping during the day. Most 3- and 4-year-olds still nap. Many 5-year-olds no longer take naps. A quiet time every day instead of a nap may be helpful.
- Your preschooler needs a lot of sleep. Signs that your child is not getting enough sleep include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often being cranky and fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in children looks different than in adults. Watch your child closely and learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Your child needs exercise. Plenty of exercise during the day will help your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Preschoolers may have nighttime fears or nightmares, or they may sleep walk. Help your child talk about their feelings. Let your child know you love them and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds will stress your child and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. If you let your preschooler watch television or use screens, turn these devices off at least an hour before bedtime.

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- If your child naps, stick with a consistent naptime. If your child does not nap, plan a rest time during the day. After lunch is often a good time to look at books quietly.

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33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Create a consistent bedtime routine. For example, first take a bath, then brush teeth, then read stories, and then “lights off.” Use this “wind-down” time to help your preschooler prepare their body for sleep. Limit food and drink close to bedtime.
- Give your child alerts before the bedtime routine. It is hard to stop playing. Alerts help your child prepare: “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.”
- Let your child do things without assistance. Your preschooler can practice brushing their teeth but needs your help to finish. By 5 years old, your independent preschooler can dress themselves in their pajamas, although they may need a little help.
- Put your child to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your child their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie, to cuddle with at night. This helps your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults for how to help your preschooler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your child in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your child has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your child know that everything is okay. Rub your child’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Let your child know that you are nearby and that they are safe.
- If you have to wake your child, wake them gently and slowly. Talk to your child softly about why you need to wake them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months

Your child now often lets you know what they need before they get upset. However, they still struggle to calm down when they have big feelings. With your support, your child can learn how to stay calm and focus (self-regulate). These social-emotional skills are important to your child's overall well-being and ability to learn. Preschoolers who can self-regulate find it easier to make friends and adapt to home and school routines. Use the ideas on this tip sheet to help prevent upsets and to teach your child how to stay calm when they do have big feelings.

Keep in Mind

- All behaviors have meaning. Is your child hungry, tired, sick, bored, or stressed? Do they need attention? Learn your child's rhythms and personality. Aim to prevent upsets.
- You have the biggest influence on your child's behavior. Your child learns how to self-regulate from you. Be kind and respectful with your child, even when you are angry.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hug, hold, and touch your child many times a day. Cuddle up and read to your child if they need to calm down.
- Open-ended playtime with friends helps your child learn to self-regulate. Your child learns how to wait (take turns), talk through disagreements, and negotiate while playing.
- Monitor and limit screen time. Screen time can lead to attention and behavior problems. Your child needs to learn to stay calm and focused while engaging in real-life activities with real people.

Suggestions

- Stick to a consistent daily routine. Consistent routines can decrease struggles. Your child learns that even if they fuss, bedtime is still going to happen the same way, every day. Consistency means there is less need to fuss!
- Develop clear expectations, and be consistent. Your child can learn rules if you stick to them every time.
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touch because hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative: "If you need something, tap me gently and use your words to tell me what you want."

(continued)

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Teach play skills by playing with your child. Teach your child how to share, trade, and take turns with friends. Teach them how to talk about it when they get frustrated or disappointed during play.
- Give alerts. It's hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Before you move your child to a new activity, give them an alert so they have a little time to finish up: "In 10 minutes it will be time to clean up and have a snack."
- Provide simple choices. Choices allow your independent child a little control over their day: "Blue shirt or red shirt?" "Crackers or toast?" "Store first or bank?"
- Focus on the positives. Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Good idea!" "Thanks for your help." "I'm proud of you." "High five!" "Thanks for waiting patiently."
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Teach your child a "calm-down plan." Choose a time when your child is calm and talk to them about ways to calm down. Examples of calm-down plans include taking several slow breaths, taking a break, talking it out, asking to be held, and switching to a different activity.
- Read books about big feelings. Ask a librarian for suggestions. Reading books about others' big feelings lets your child know their feelings are okay.
- When your child starts to have a big feeling or tantrum, stay calm and try these ideas:
 - Move your child if they are not in a safe spot. For example, if your child is lying in the middle of a busy grocery store aisle, gently pick them up and move them to a safe place.
 - Help your child calm down. Your child cannot listen to words or think clearly when upset. Say, "I want to help. You need to calm down first." Use the calm-down plan you made.
 - Resist the temptation to bribe. Offering your phone or candy to calm your fussy child does not help them learn how to self-regulate.
- Once your child is calm, talk about feelings and solutions. "You were angry. You and your friend both wanted the toy. What can you do?" "You seem sad. How can I help?"

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

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Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

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Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Many families have their children attend child care or preschool. Look for a care setting that provides a safe, nurturing, and interesting place for your child. The interactions your child has with the teachers and children are important to their social-emotional development. Child care can be a great place for children to learn how to play with other children. Observe the child care setting before sending your child. Ask questions. Choose a program that is right for your child and family.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important guidelines to help you begin the process of choosing a program for your child:

- Choose a caregiver who shows real interest in your child. Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and how you comfort them.
- Choose a caregiver who celebrates your child's strengths. This builds your child's confidence.
- Choose a caregiver you like. Your child learns how to build healthy relationships by watching the adults in their life. They will learn from the positive interactions between you and their caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you. Developing open and positive communication with your caregiver builds trust.
- Choose a caregiver who interacts lovingly with your child. Children need positive attention from caregivers to help them feel safe and secure.
- Choose a caregiver who uses positive discipline rather than punishment. Caregivers who use positive discipline observe and listen to children carefully. They try to understand *why* the child is doing a behavior such as hitting and then teach the child a positive behavior to replace the negative behavior. For example, the caregiver may teach your child how to use their words to ask for something instead of hitting.
- Caregivers who utilize positive discipline also frequently "catch" children doing the right thing. They comment on a child's positive behaviors and praise the child: "Thank you for sitting so patiently."

Asking Questions

Once you have a few providers in mind, visit the programs you are considering. Observe and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Does the place feel good? Are the caregivers loving? Do the children seem happy?
- Are there safe and clean indoor and outdoor spaces for children?

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Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Are there enough adults? Ideally, for toddlers, there should be a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children. For preschoolers, the minimum is 1 adult to 10 children.
- Is the provider licensed?
- Do the caregivers welcome the children and families when they arrive?
- Are parents allowed to visit during the day?
- Do the caregivers support children in separating from their parents?
- Is there a consistent daily routine? Consistency helps your child feel secure.
- Are there a lot of opportunities for free play with friends? During free play, your child learns to make choices, to share, and to work cooperatively with friends.
- Do the caregivers join the children in play? Do they help children play with one another? Adults can model positive interactions by playing with the children in their care.
- How do the caregivers help children work out conflicts? Your child will learn how to solve conflicts from observing others.
- Ask about the provider's discipline policy. How do they deal with tantrums?

Preparing for Your Child's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your child's routine. Work with your child and your caregiver to make the transition between home and school smooth.
- Tell your child what will happen at child care. Read or tell stories about going to child care. Ask your librarian for books about the first day of child care or preschool.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition is for your child.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your child. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

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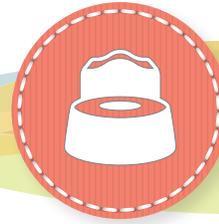


Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

Supporting Your Child's Transition

- Take your child's comfort items, such as a special blanket or toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend time with your child before you leave. Tell them you love them when you say goodbye. Let your child know when you will be back. They will learn to trust that you will return. Don't sneak away!
- It is normal for your child to cry when you leave. They will stop crying once you leave and they get engaged in play.
- Spend time with your child when you pick them up. Pay attention to them without other distractions. Ask your child to show you what they made at child care, or have them introduce you to a new friend. They missed you and want to share their day.
- Check in with your child's caregiver to find out how the day went.
- Remember, your child should seem happy and relaxed in the care setting over time.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Learning to Use the Toilet

Most parents are eager for their child to learn to use the toilet. However, learning to use the toilet is hard for your little one. It is important to make sure your child is physically and emotionally ready. Starting toilet training too soon can make it a negative experience. Power struggles during toilet training can leave children feeling frustrated or bad about themselves. The key is to stay calm and patient during this time. The more emotional you are, the more your child learns how much it matters to you. Refusing becomes a way for your child to feel in control. If you are starting to sense a struggle, relax and back off for a while. Do your best not to worry or get frustrated. Your child will learn, but it will take some time. Learning to use the toilet is another step toward your child's independence.

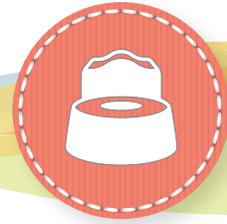
Keep in Mind

- Children need to be developmentally ready to use the toilet. Some are ready at 18 months, some at 3 years.
- Here are some signs that your child is physically and emotionally ready to use the toilet:
 - Your child shows interest in using the toilet. They may want to wear "big kid" underwear.
 - They ask to be changed when their diaper is dirty.
 - Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
 - They have some control over their muscles and know when they are going "potty." For example, your child might go "hide" when having a bowel movement.
 - Your child has the motor skills needed to use the toilet. For example, your child can walk, pull their pants up and down, and get on and off the toilet with some help.
 - Your child can follow simple directions.
- Your family's beliefs and values about learning to use the toilet are important to consider.
- Your child may "lose" toileting skills during big life events, such as moving or welcoming a new baby into your family. These big life events are not good times to start learning to use the toilet.

Suggestions

- Start to look for toileting patterns. Is your child dry when waking up from a nap? This is a good time to have your child try to use the toilet.
- Incorporate regular times to use the toilet into the routine. For example, "Before nap, it's time to try to use the toilet." This helps your child know what to expect.

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Learning to Use the Toilet *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Go to the library and check out books or videos on using the toilet. Show excitement about potty training when you read or watch them. Check in with your child and see how they feel.
- Give your child some choice over whether to use the toilet or a diaper each day. This will help your child start to feel independence and control during potty training.
- Work on undressing and dressing skills. Go shopping for “big kid” underwear. Let your child choose underwear they like.
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing so it is easier for them to help pull down their pants. Now is not the time for zippers and buttons. They can be frustrating for your child.
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.
- Give your child the tools they need, such as a small potty, potty seat, or stool. These tools help your child feel more comfortable and independent.
- There is no need to use “rewards.” Your child feels proud about learning this “big kid” skill. Your child is learning the natural consequence of going to the bathroom independently. If you do choose to use rewards, choose small things you think your child would want, such as stickers.
- Celebrate your child’s successes during potty training: “Yay! You went potty in your toilet!” Give them high-fives or big hugs to help them feel proud.
- Potty training takes time. Be patient and understanding. This lets your child know you support and love them as they learn to use the toilet. This is another step in building their independence and self-confidence.
- It is important never to punish or shame your child when they have accidents. Accidents are going to happen, so be prepared for them. Punishment or shame makes your child feel bad and can make potty training a lot harder. Positive praise helps your child feel pride in their accomplishment.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

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Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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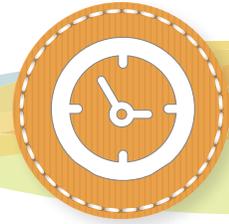


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

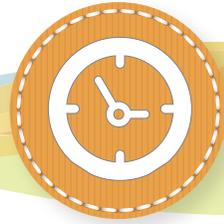
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

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Routines and Your Child *(continued)*

FOR BABIES *(continued)*

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

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Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: "Go get your shoes from your room." This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, "You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you." You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

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Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

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Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

42 to 54 months

Your child is enjoying real friendships with other children and can play for longer periods with close friends. Your child's ability to regulate (or self-calm) when upset and negotiate with friends keeps conflicts to a minimum. However, there are still times they need your help to solve problems. Your child's ability to play with friends gives you some short breaks. Take a little time for yourself. What makes you feel good? Reading? Talking to a friend? Do a little something for yourself every day so you can be emotionally available to your child.

"Empathy with Family and Friends"

You may notice your child trying to take care of you or someone else who is sick or has a big feeling. The ability to recognize another person's feelings and respond with care is called empathy. Your child is learning how to be empathetic from your example. Keep teaching them about this important skill: "How do you think Kevin feels when he has no toys?" "Your sister had a hard day. She is sad. I bet she'd love a hug from you."

Real and Make-Believe

Your child uses their imagination to learn about who they are. They can try out different personalities through play. Your shy child might want to pretend to be a superhero. Your rough-and-tumble child might want to pretend to be a bunny. Your child's imagination is so vivid that it may be difficult for them to understand the difference between real and pretend. You can help them understand: "Pretending to be a bunny is fun. Being you is also fun. What fun did you have today?"

Take Joy in Your Child

Your young child wants nothing more than to be seen and heard by you. They love to make you laugh. Notice your child when they are doing the right thing or being kind. Put away your phone and talk to your child about their thoughts and feelings. Your child is small for a short time. They have a lot to say. Enjoy these moments together.

Just Hold Me

Your child may have very big fears or get scared easily. This is normal. When they are scared, they need you to help them know everything is all right: "It's okay. You are here with me. I will keep you safe." Your child will also get mad at times. When they are in the middle of a big feeling, they won't be able to listen. Wait until your child calms down—with your help, or by themselves. Now they can talk about their big feelings.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development, 42–54 months

Early Signs

Pay close attention to signs that your child might be getting tired, hungry, or bored. Are they rubbing their eyes? Fighting with a sibling? Starting to whine? If you can catch these early signs and address them, you may be able to prevent a tantrum. Make sure you offer healthy snacks every couple of hours. Mix up active and quiet activities. Try new things and explore new places.

Bedtime Is Special Time

Your child enjoys bedtime routines when it means special time with you. They can listen to the same bedtime stories over and over for a long time. This may be a little frustrating for you, but it is very normal. The repetition helps your child learn new words. This time together helps them calm their body and fall asleep quickly. Relax and enjoy being physically close to your child. It is calming for you too.

Family Mealtimes

Family meals are about more than eating. Mealtimes are about spending time together, listening to each other, and building relationships. Turn off phones, televisions, and other distractions. Find out about everyone's day. Your child can now share a lot of details about their day. Take turns talking and listening. Give your child ideas about what to talk about by asking questions. What was your favorite thing that happened today? The funniest thing? Did anything hard happen today? What did you do?

What Do You Think?

Your child is developing an understanding of who they are and how they feel about themselves. If they make a mistake or do something wrong, try not to shame them. Let your child know that everyone makes mistakes and that you will always love them. You are the biggest influence on how your child feels about themselves. Remember to tell them how smart, kind, helpful, trustworthy, and funny they are. Watch your child light up with pride.

I Can Help Too

Your child has more and more skills to help at home. Help them think of ways to help in daily routines. Your child can put away their toys, fold towels, or feed a family pet. Talk to them about what it means to be part of a family and how everyone helps take care of each other. Let your child know how important they are and how proud you are of them.



Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. If your child does watch shows, watch and talk about the show together. Choose shows that include characters who are kind and who take care of each other.

Helping Your Child Grow

Activities for 42 to 54 months



Spend some time playing with your child each day. Follow their lead and let them choose activities. When you play with your child, it lets them know you enjoy spending time with them. When you follow your child's lead, it lets them know you think their ideas are good ones. These things help support their confidence and positive self-image. Spend time talking and listening to your child: "What was the best part of your day?" "Any yucky parts?" Tell them about your day. These loving interactions reconnect you with your child and are especially important if you are away from each other during the day. Your undivided attention helps your child feel safe, secure, and valued.

Pretend Feelings

Your child is full of ideas and has a wonderful imagination. Pretend play helps children work out their own ideas, thoughts, and feelings. If your child is struggling with a fear or other big feeling, work this into your pretend play. For example, maybe they are suddenly scared of the dark. Pretend you and your child are part of a cat family where a kitten has this fear too. Your child could take the role of an older cat who helps the little kitten get over their fear.

Appreciations

At mealtime, have each family member say something kind or give thanks to another family member. You can talk about the word *appreciation*. Give an example: "I appreciated how you picked up your toys today. Thanks so much." Model gratitude so your child learns to appreciate others and the things your family has.

Faces and Feelings

Help your child find pictures of faces in old magazines that they can cut out and glue on paper. Ask them to guess how they think each person feels. Write the name of the feeling under each face. Help your child learn "fancy" words for feelings. For example, *mad* can also be *annoyed*, *frustrated*, *angry*, or *furious*!

The Story of Me

Tell your child the story of their name. Why was it chosen? What does it mean? You could also tell the story of other family names, or your child's birth or adoption story. This type of information helps develop your child's positive self-identity. Record the story on a phone or other device and play the recording at night like a bedtime story.

My Plant

Your child can practice taking care of a plant. Teach them what a plant needs to grow. Talk to your child about water, sun, and food. Ask your child questions to help them think about what the plant needs. "What would happen to your plant if you didn't water it?" Taking care of something teaches your child responsibility.

(continued)

Bath Time for Toy

When it's bath time, tell your child that one of their toys also needs a bath. Help them collect soap, a washcloth, a towel, and clothes for after the bath. You can make the toy speak using feeling words, and encourage your child to take care of the toy or help it if needed: "Uh-oh, Dolly's scared she's going to get soap in her eyes. Can you help her?" "Dinosaur is getting cold and looking sad. How can you help?" This activity begins to teach your child about empathy and how to respond to the feelings of others with care.

Flashlight Fun

Once your child is in bed, give them a flashlight. Play with the flashlight together in the dark room. Take turns shining the light on something. Ask them questions, and talk about what you see. Whisper together. Having fun makes the dark less scary. You can use this time at the end of the day to cuddle and relax. Having you there makes your child feel safe, secure, and calm.

Dinner Helper

Your child will feel good about helping make dinner. Think about what simple dishes they can help make. For mashed potatoes, your child can help wash the potatoes or measure and add the milk and butter. You can work together to mash the potatoes. "Yummy! You were a big help. I'm proud of you."

Placemats

Your child can make a placemat for each family member by drawing, painting, or gluing a photograph or picture from a magazine onto each placemat. Help them write each family member's name on the placemat. Cover with clear contact paper to make the placemats last—or have your child make new ones!

Big Feelings, Little Feelings

Read books about feelings together. Ask a librarian to help you find good ones. Reading about other children's feelings helps your child think about their own. It also helps them know that feelings—even big ones—are okay and normal. Talk with your child about the story: "What can you do if you feel mad? Sad? Worried?" Talk about ideas for calming down, such as breathing, talking about feelings, taking a break, or switching to a different activity.



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months

Mealtimes are an important time to share the day's events and connect with your child. Teach your child how to listen when another family member is speaking, and help your child share stories about their day. Try to keep snack time and mealtime relaxed. The more you try to control what your child eats, the more your independent, strong-willed child will push back against you. Let your child take the lead when it comes to eating. One thing that makes mealtimes fun is involving your child in preparing or getting ready for meals. Helping with household tasks builds your child's confidence and makes them feel like an important part of the family. "Thanks for putting out the napkins. You are a big help!"

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility during meals is to offer your child a variety of healthy foods. Always include foods you know your child likes as well as something new to try.
- Your child's responsibility is to explore foods and decide what they will eat, how much, and how fast. Children may need to be offered a food many times before they will try it.
- Take care not to make mealtimes a battle for control. Avoid using food as a way to reward your child's behavior. Never force your child to eat.
- Your child needs five or six small meals or snacks every day. Your child may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Your child is learning their likes and dislikes. Your child has favorite foods and some that they do not like. Respect your child's choices as long as they eat a variety of foods.
- It may be hard for your child to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable for your child to sit with the family. A good goal is about 15 minutes. "Thanks for sitting and eating with us. Please put your bowl in the sink, and you can play while we finish."

Suggestions

- Develop a clear routine around snack time and mealtime: First wash hands, then come to the table and eat, then help clean up. Your preschooler may already know this routine.
- Involve your child in mealtimes. Your preschooler can help prepare simple meals. They can help set the table, put away dishes in the sink (or dishwasher), and use a sponge to wash the table or wipe down appliances. Say, "Thanks for the help!"

(continued)

33-72 months



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make food fun. Pancakes that look like a mouse are much yummier than simple circles. Let your child come up with ideas to help make foods fun too.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Try to eat one meal a day together as a family. Have everyone share about their day: "What was the best part?" "Did anything funny happen?" Shared mealtimes build healthy, close relationships.
- Let your child be independent. Your child can use utensils and serve themselves. Your preschooler can pour from a small pitcher and drink from a cup. Your independent child will enjoy being a "big kid" and doing things by themselves.
- Encourage your child to try new foods. Let your child pick out healthy foods at the store that they would like to try. Make simple rules around new foods: "Try a bite or a lick." Consider introducing a "no, thank you" bowl where your child can put food they do not like.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months

Getting enough sleep is important to your child's overall well-being. The world is exciting, though, and most children do not want to miss out on anything. In fact, your child might say they are not tired or sleepy and fall asleep at the table. As a parent, you continue to set the sleep schedule and the daily routine. Make the bedtime routine special and connect with your child. Talk with your child about their day, including the best parts and any parts that may have been hard. Talk with your child about what they can look forward to tomorrow. Bedtime is a wonderful time to cuddle, ask your child questions, and listen to your child's ideas about their world.

Keep in Mind

- On average, preschool children need between 10 and 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 1 to 2 hours of napping during the day. Most 3- and 4-year-olds still nap. Many 5-year-olds no longer take naps. A quiet time every day instead of a nap may be helpful.
- Your preschooler needs a lot of sleep. Signs that your child is not getting enough sleep include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often being cranky and fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in children looks different than in adults. Watch your child closely and learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Your child needs exercise. Plenty of exercise during the day will help your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Preschoolers may have nighttime fears or nightmares, or they may sleep walk. Help your child talk about their feelings. Let your child know you love them and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds will stress your child and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. If you let your preschooler watch television or use screens, turn these devices off at least an hour before bedtime.

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- If your child naps, stick with a consistent naptime. If your child does not nap, plan a rest time during the day. After lunch is often a good time to look at books quietly.

(continued)

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Create a consistent bedtime routine. For example, first take a bath, then brush teeth, then read stories, and then “lights off.” Use this “wind-down” time to help your preschooler prepare their body for sleep. Limit food and drink close to bedtime.
- Give your child alerts before the bedtime routine. It is hard to stop playing. Alerts help your child prepare: “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.”
- Let your child do things without assistance. Your preschooler can practice brushing their teeth but needs your help to finish. By 5 years old, your independent preschooler can dress themselves in their pajamas, although they may need a little help.
- Put your child to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your child their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie, to cuddle with at night. This helps your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults for how to help your preschooler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your child in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your child has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your child know that everything is okay. Rub your child’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Let your child know that you are nearby and that they are safe.
- If you have to wake your child, wake them gently and slowly. Talk to your child softly about why you need to wake them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months

Your child now often lets you know what they need before they get upset. However, they still struggle to calm down when they have big feelings. With your support, your child can learn how to stay calm and focus (self-regulate). These social-emotional skills are important to your child's overall well-being and ability to learn. Preschoolers who can self-regulate find it easier to make friends and adapt to home and school routines. Use the ideas on this tip sheet to help prevent upsets and to teach your child how to stay calm when they do have big feelings.

Keep in Mind

- All behaviors have meaning. Is your child hungry, tired, sick, bored, or stressed? Do they need attention? Learn your child's rhythms and personality. Aim to prevent upsets.
- You have the biggest influence on your child's behavior. Your child learns how to self-regulate from you. Be kind and respectful with your child, even when you are angry.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hug, hold, and touch your child many times a day. Cuddle up and read to your child if they need to calm down.
- Open-ended playtime with friends helps your child learn to self-regulate. Your child learns how to wait (take turns), talk through disagreements, and negotiate while playing.
- Monitor and limit screen time. Screen time can lead to attention and behavior problems. Your child needs to learn to stay calm and focused while engaging in real-life activities with real people.

Suggestions

- Stick to a consistent daily routine. Consistent routines can decrease struggles. Your child learns that even if they fuss, bedtime is still going to happen the same way, every day. Consistency means there is less need to fuss!
- Develop clear expectations, and be consistent. Your child can learn rules if you stick to them every time.
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touch because hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative: "If you need something, tap me gently and use your words to tell me what you want."

(continued)

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Teach play skills by playing with your child. Teach your child how to share, trade, and take turns with friends. Teach them how to talk about it when they get frustrated or disappointed during play.
- Give alerts. It's hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Before you move your child to a new activity, give them an alert so they have a little time to finish up: "In 10 minutes it will be time to clean up and have a snack."
- Provide simple choices. Choices allow your independent child a little control over their day: "Blue shirt or red shirt?" "Crackers or toast?" "Store first or bank?"
- Focus on the positives. Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Good idea!" "Thanks for your help." "I'm proud of you." "High five!" "Thanks for waiting patiently."
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Teach your child a "calm-down plan." Choose a time when your child is calm and talk to them about ways to calm down. Examples of calm-down plans include taking several slow breaths, taking a break, talking it out, asking to be held, and switching to a different activity.
- Read books about big feelings. Ask a librarian for suggestions. Reading books about others' big feelings lets your child know their feelings are okay.
- When your child starts to have a big feeling or tantrum, stay calm and try these ideas:
 - Move your child if they are not in a safe spot. For example, if your child is lying in the middle of a busy grocery store aisle, gently pick them up and move them to a safe place.
 - Help your child calm down. Your child cannot listen to words or think clearly when upset. Say, "I want to help. You need to calm down first." Use the calm-down plan you made.
 - Resist the temptation to bribe. Offering your phone or candy to calm your fussy child does not help them learn how to self-regulate.
- Once your child is calm, talk about feelings and solutions. "You were angry. You and your friend both wanted the toy. What can you do?" "You seem sad. How can I help?"

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

(continued)



Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Many families have their children attend child care or preschool. Look for a care setting that provides a safe, nurturing, and interesting place for your child. The interactions your child has with the teachers and children are important to their social-emotional development. Child care can be a great place for children to learn how to play with other children. Observe the child care setting before sending your child. Ask questions. Choose a program that is right for your child and family.

Choosing a Caregiver

Here are some important guidelines to help you begin the process of choosing a program for your child:

- Choose a caregiver who shows real interest in your child. Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and how you comfort them.
- Choose a caregiver who celebrates your child's strengths. This builds your child's confidence.
- Choose a caregiver you like. Your child learns how to build healthy relationships by watching the adults in their life. They will learn from the positive interactions between you and their caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver who listens to you. Developing open and positive communication with your caregiver builds trust.
- Choose a caregiver who interacts lovingly with your child. Children need positive attention from caregivers to help them feel safe and secure.
- Choose a caregiver who uses positive discipline rather than punishment. Caregivers who use positive discipline observe and listen to children carefully. They try to understand *why* the child is doing a behavior such as hitting and then teach the child a positive behavior to replace the negative behavior. For example, the caregiver may teach your child how to use their words to ask for something instead of hitting.
- Caregivers who utilize positive discipline also frequently "catch" children doing the right thing. They comment on a child's positive behaviors and praise the child: "Thank you for sitting so patiently."

Asking Questions

Once you have a few providers in mind, visit the programs you are considering. Observe and ask questions. The information you get will help you choose the best option for your family.

- Does the place feel good? Are the caregivers loving? Do the children seem happy?
- Are there safe and clean indoor and outdoor spaces for children?

(continued)



Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

ASKING QUESTIONS *(continued)*

- Are there enough adults? Ideally, for toddlers, there should be a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children. For preschoolers, the minimum is 1 adult to 10 children.
- Is the provider licensed?
- Do the caregivers welcome the children and families when they arrive?
- Are parents allowed to visit during the day?
- Do the caregivers support children in separating from their parents?
- Is there a consistent daily routine? Consistency helps your child feel secure.
- Are there a lot of opportunities for free play with friends? During free play, your child learns to make choices, to share, and to work cooperatively with friends.
- Do the caregivers join the children in play? Do they help children play with one another? Adults can model positive interactions by playing with the children in their care.
- How do the caregivers help children work out conflicts? Your child will learn how to solve conflicts from observing others.
- Ask about the provider's discipline policy. How do they deal with tantrums?

Preparing for Your Child's First Day in Care

- Talk with the caregiver about their daily routine and your child's routine. Work with your child and your caregiver to make the transition between home and school smooth.
- Tell your child what will happen at child care. Read or tell stories about going to child care. Ask your librarian for books about the first day of child care or preschool.
- Consider writing down information to share with the caregiver. The more consistency there is between home and the care setting, the easier the transition is for your child.
- Discuss the drop-off and pick-up process so you can prepare yourself and your child. Having a plan will help things go more smoothly.

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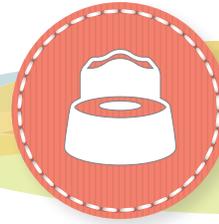


Child Care for Toddlers and Preschoolers *(continued)*

Supporting Your Child's Transition

- Take your child's comfort items, such as a special blanket or toy, with you to the care setting.
- Spend time with your child before you leave. Tell them you love them when you say goodbye. Let your child know when you will be back. They will learn to trust that you will return. Don't sneak away!
- It is normal for your child to cry when you leave. They will stop crying once you leave and they get engaged in play.
- Spend time with your child when you pick them up. Pay attention to them without other distractions. Ask your child to show you what they made at child care, or have them introduce you to a new friend. They missed you and want to share their day.
- Check in with your child's caregiver to find out how the day went.
- Remember, your child should seem happy and relaxed in the care setting over time.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Learning to Use the Toilet

Most parents are eager for their child to learn to use the toilet. However, learning to use the toilet is hard for your little one. It is important to make sure your child is physically and emotionally ready. Starting toilet training too soon can make it a negative experience. Power struggles during toilet training can leave children feeling frustrated or bad about themselves. The key is to stay calm and patient during this time. The more emotional you are, the more your child learns how much it matters to you. Refusing becomes a way for your child to feel in control. If you are starting to sense a struggle, relax and back off for a while. Do your best not to worry or get frustrated. Your child will learn, but it will take some time. Learning to use the toilet is another step toward your child's independence.

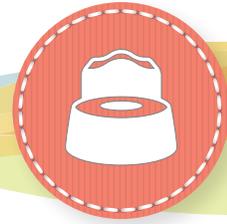
Keep in Mind

- Children need to be developmentally ready to use the toilet. Some are ready at 18 months, some at 3 years.
- Here are some signs that your child is physically and emotionally ready to use the toilet:
 - Your child shows interest in using the toilet. They may want to wear "big kid" underwear.
 - They ask to be changed when their diaper is dirty.
 - Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time.
 - They have some control over their muscles and know when they are going "potty." For example, your child might go "hide" when having a bowel movement.
 - Your child has the motor skills needed to use the toilet. For example, your child can walk, pull their pants up and down, and get on and off the toilet with some help.
 - Your child can follow simple directions.
- Your family's beliefs and values about learning to use the toilet are important to consider.
- Your child may "lose" toileting skills during big life events, such as moving or welcoming a new baby into your family. These big life events are not good times to start learning to use the toilet.

Suggestions

- Start to look for toileting patterns. Is your child dry when waking up from a nap? This is a good time to have your child try to use the toilet.
- Incorporate regular times to use the toilet into the routine. For example, "Before nap, it's time to try to use the toilet." This helps your child know what to expect.

(continued)



Learning to Use the Toilet *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Go to the library and check out books or videos on using the toilet. Show excitement about potty training when you read or watch them. Check in with your child and see how they feel.
- Give your child some choice over whether to use the toilet or a diaper each day. This will help your child start to feel independence and control during potty training.
- Work on undressing and dressing skills. Go shopping for “big kid” underwear. Let your child choose underwear they like.
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing so it is easier for them to help pull down their pants. Now is not the time for zippers and buttons. They can be frustrating for your child.
- Teach your child words for body parts, urine, and bowel movements.
- Give your child the tools they need, such as a small potty, potty seat, or stool. These tools help your child feel more comfortable and independent.
- There is no need to use “rewards.” Your child feels proud about learning this “big kid” skill. Your child is learning the natural consequence of going to the bathroom independently. If you do choose to use rewards, choose small things you think your child would want, such as stickers.
- Celebrate your child’s successes during potty training: “Yay! You went potty in your toilet!” Give them high-fives or big hugs to help them feel proud.
- Potty training takes time. Be patient and understanding. This lets your child know you support and love them as they learn to use the toilet. This is another step in building their independence and self-confidence.
- It is important never to punish or shame your child when they have accidents. Accidents are going to happen, so be prepared for them. Punishment or shame makes your child feel bad and can make potty training a lot harder. Positive praise helps your child feel pride in their accomplishment.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

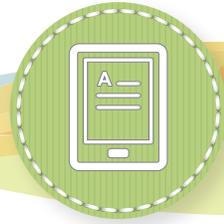
Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

(continued)



Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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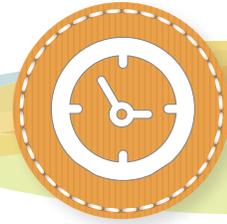


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

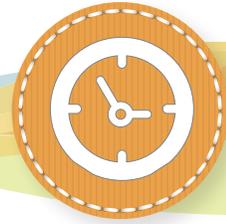
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

(continued)



Routines and Your Child (continued)

FOR BABIES (continued)

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: “Go get your shoes from your room.” This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, “You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you.” You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



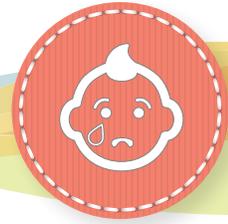
Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

Hello, Parent!

Welcome to parenthood—a journey like no other, and one that reminds us of our own childhoods.

How were you parented as a child? Do you want to parent the same way, or differently? What kind of experience do you want your child to have? Whatever your answers to these questions, one thing is certain: None of us is born knowing how to take care of babies and young children!

It's important to let go of any embarrassment you might feel and ask questions about parenting. Ask for help when you need it, and let someone know when you feel frustrated, exhausted, or overwhelmed. Talk to family members or friends you trust. Talk to your child's doctor, your child care provider, or other supportive people in your life.

We know that

- Your child's brain develops fastest in the first 5 years of life
- How you interact with your child affects the way their brain develops
- Positive, loving interactions between you and your child support healthy social-emotional development
- Healthy social-emotional development is the most important foundation your child needs to be ready for school

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, manage, and express positive and negative emotions. Your child is able to
 - Experience a range of emotions, such as anger, fear, sadness, joy, and pride
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Learn how to calm down *with your help* (baby or toddler)
 - Learn how to calm down *on their own*, even when all worked up (preschooler)
- Develop close, enjoyable relationships with other children and adults. Your child is able to
 - Attach to you or other primary caregivers (baby or toddler)
 - Develop close relationships with other family members and friends as they get older
- Actively explore the environment with curiosity and confidence. Your child is able to show interest in
 - You and other family members
 - Who they are as a person, their body, and their likes and dislikes
 - Objects and the environment around them
 - Trying new things, learning new skills, and experiencing everything!

Learning More. Use the handouts from *ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More* to explore social-emotional information about your child and find tips about

- What your child may experience during each stage of development
- Ways you can support your child's social-emotional development
- Parent-child activities that promote social-emotional development
- What you might be experiencing or feeling during each stage of development
- How to take care of yourself

Your Home, Your Family. These handouts offer suggestions and ideas for being with your child in ways that support their healthy social-emotional development. You may feel that some of these ideas are not appropriate for you or your child. Over time, as you and your child get to know each other and grow together, you will learn what works for you both. You may remember games or songs from your own childhood, or family traditions and routines that were part of your life when you were younger. Passing these on to your child is a gift. Your child will learn about your family through the traditions and routines you pass on and those you develop together.

Most important, take joy in this amazing journey!



NEWSLETTER

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development

54 to 72 months

Your child will soon be off to kindergarten. You may feel happy, sad, or worried about this new step for your child. It can be difficult to see your baby grow up and go out in the world. Many parents feel a sense of loss during this time. Talk about these feelings with someone you trust. Your child may also have mixed feelings. They might be both excited and worried about starting kindergarten. Prepare yourself and them for this big step. Visit the new school. Meet the teacher. Help your child make a friend before the school year starts. Getting more information will help both of you feel confident about the change.

I Like You, I Like Me

One of the best things you can do for your child is to help them feel good about themselves. Talk to them about their strengths. "Wow. You run so fast! It's amazing." Avoid criticizing or shaming your child. Talk positively about them in front of other people. Talk positively about yourself too! Thinking and hearing positive thoughts is very powerful—for both of you.

Right and Wrong

Your child is starting to explore ideas about good and bad behavior. They are thinking about what is fair and what is not. Your child might lie or take things that do not belong to them. It is completely normal to try out these behaviors. Stay calm. Talk to your child about right and wrong. Let them know that everyone makes mistakes and that you will always love them.

Special Times

Your child loves to spend time with friends but needs special time just with you. They want your attention above anyone else's. Your child wants to tell you about their day and will love to make you laugh. They have ideas and questions about how the world works. Spend some time every day playing with, talking to, and getting to know your child. They are growing fast and becoming their own little person.

Friends Forever

Friends are important to your child now. They may be able to play with a friend for a long time without conflicts. Your child has learned play strategies such as sharing, trading, and turn-taking. If their feelings get hurt during playtime with a friend, encourage your child to talk to their friend: "I didn't like it when you yelled at me. It made me sad." Teach them how to listen respectfully to their friends and how to say they are sorry.

What Is Social-Emotional Development?

Social-emotional development is your child's ability to

- Experience, express, and manage emotions
- Develop positive relationships with you and others
- Explore their environment with curiosity and confidence

Social-emotional skills

- Develop through positive and loving interactions with you and others
- Are key to your child's success in school and in life

(continued)

Your Child's Social-Emotional Development, 54–72 months

Learning to Self-Calm

Your child has fewer and fewer meltdowns. They may often be able to identify, name, and talk about their feelings—but there are still times that are hard! Find a time when your child is *not* upset and talk about calming strategies. Ask, “What can you do when you have a big feeling to help yourself calm down?” Teach them calming strategies such as deep breathing, taking a break, doing a different activity, or talking to someone about their feelings. Learning these skills now will help your child throughout life.



Rest and Relaxation

Think about how busy your and your child's lives are. Are you feeling stressed? If you are, chances are your child is feeling stressed too. Do both of you need more time to relax? As your child begins school, this will become more and more important. Limit the number of activities your child does. Make sure they have some “down time” every day. Stay consistent with bedtime and wake-up times so both of you are rested and ready for the day.

More Peas, Please!

Mealtimes are great times to learn about manners and how to be polite. It may be important in your family to say “please,” “thank you,” and “you're welcome.” Mealtimes are times to use manners and encourage your child's manners. Mealtimes are also times to learn “rules” for talking. Rules might include looking at the person you are talking to and listening to the person who is speaking. “It's your brother's turn to talk. Put on your listening ears.”

It's My Body

Teach your child to say “no, thank you” if they do not want a hug or kiss. Teach them to respect other people's bodies as well. Let your child know it is never okay for someone to look at or touch their private parts, except a doctor if needed during a health check-up. Remind your child about these things. Let your child know that secrets about bodies are never okay. Let your child know they can always talk to you about their thoughts and feelings.

Day-to-Day Helpers

As your child gets older, they can take more responsibility throughout the day. Choose routine jobs that are not too difficult so your child can feel successful. Watering plants, feeding pets, setting and helping clear the table, and folding towels are examples. Make sure you let them know you appreciate their help and how important it is to the family. Your child will feel pride in their growing ability to help.

Monitoring Screen Time

Too much screen time can lead to sleep, eating, and attention problems. This includes television, game, computer, phone, and tablet screens. Scary or violent screen time can lead to stress, fears, and behavior problems. Your child develops healthy relationships by interacting with real people. Your child develops skills, confidence, and pride in themselves by participating in real-life activities. Television shows and games can't help develop these important skills that your child needs for success in school and in life.

Helping Your Child Grow

Activities for 54 to 72 months



54-72 months

Your child will soon be going to kindergarten. Now they will have relationships with many people outside of the home. Some days at school may be difficult. Your child will need your advice and encouragement. Make sure your child knows they can talk to you. Make time to relax and de-stress after the day. Both of you need time to reconnect with each other after spending a long day apart.

Nighttime Check-Ins

Have a check-in with your child at bedtime: "How was your day?" "What was fun?" "Did anything hard happen?" Your child may have some worries about their day. Friendships may be upsetting or confusing. With your support and reassurance, they can clear their mind of worries before bedtime. This will make it easier for them to fall and stay asleep.

Move Your Body!

Exercise supports healthy bodies and minds. Make sure your child gets a lot of exercise every day. It is important for you, too. Dancing with them is fun. Turn on different kinds of music. Add some props to the show. Take turns showing your dance moves. Your child will love it if you get silly. Get the whole family dancing! You can take turns picking out the music.

Race the Clock

Helping out is an important part of being in a family. Try different ways to make cleanup time fun. Try "race the clock": "I wonder how fast you can put away your toys. I'll time you. Are you ready? On your mark, get set, go!" You might need to break bigger jobs into steps or provide other direction. Try using a flashlight: "I'll shine the light on what you can put away. Ready? Go!"

Potlucks and Picnics

Make time in your busy lives for family and friends. Open up your child's world to people you like and trust. Help them plan a simple potluck or picnic and invite friends and family to attend. Your child can make invitations. Connecting with other people feels good. These visits will be good for both you and them!

School Days

Ask a librarian to help you find good books about going to kindergarten. Reading them will help your child think about their own feelings. Talk with them about what happened in the story. Ask your child questions about how they are feeling: "What do you think about going to school? How are you feeling?" They might be feeling excited and nervous at the same time.

What Do You See?

Find a quiet place outdoors. Lie under a tree at a park. Look at the leaves. Listen to the sounds. Talk about what the cloud shapes look like: "I see an elephant!" Take time to enjoy the beauty of the natural world. Your child might want to sit quietly and draw something they see. Being in nature is calming. Teach them other ideas for calming too, such as breathing in and out slowly.

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All About Me

When your child goes to school, they will need to know some basic information about themselves. Help them make an "All About Me" book. Include your child's full name on a page in big, easy-to-write letters. Include a page with the names of family members. Include a phone number page. Your child can draw pictures for each page. Read the book often. Another trick to help them learn this information is to sing it. Choose a familiar tune and "sing" the phone number song. Singing may make it easier for your child to remember.

Map It

Help your child make a map of your neighborhood. Include the school where they will go for kindergarten. Ask, "Where do our friends live? Do we have other family members in the neighborhood?" Knowing the neighborhood is part of growing up. Your child won't feel so far from home if they know the way home.

Stop, Look, and Listen!

Teach your child about general safety rules. Start with crossing the street. Your child should never do this alone, but they can learn the rules to follow. Teach them how to 1) stop; 2) look both ways; and 3) listen for cars. Practice crossing streets. Have your child tell you when it is safe to cross. Let them know that they did a good job staying safe and following the rules.

Supper Chats

Dinnertime is a good time to connect after a busy day. Ask each person at the table, "What was the best thing that happened today?" "What made you laugh today?" Avoid asking questions with "yes" or "no" answers. Ask open-ended questions instead: "Tell me about your day." "What happened first?" "Then what happened?" Open-ended questions invite your child to share details about the day. You may need to start the conversation. Make this a ritual. Over time, your child will come to the meal with daily events to share.

Mealtime Helper

Your child will take pride in helping with tasks around the house, such as setting the table. Do it together the first few times. Ask your child how many people will be at the table and how many of each item they need. Don't worry about how the place settings look. "You set the table! Everyone has a plate, cup, fork, and napkin. Thanks for helping!"

Fancy Dinner

Host a "fancy dinner." Your child can make special place cards for everyone. Have them decorate a small square of paper for each "guest," then fold the paper in half so it stands up. Help your child write each person's name on a card and set all the cards on the table. They will enjoy making dinner a special time.

My Family Book

Help your child create a book about their family with paper, glue, scissors, photographs (or copies), and pictures from newspapers or magazines. They can decorate the book with crayons or stickers. Talk with your child about what they want to put in the family book. Ask, "Who is in our family?" "What types of activities does our family like?" "Where is our family from?" "What kinds of food does our family eat?" "What kind of music does our family like?"

(continued)

Story Boxes

Find several big cardboard boxes. Fill each with materials your child can use for a different pretend-play scene. Some examples are a grocery store, an office, a restaurant, or a shoe store. Include different materials in each story box, and let your child's imagination take it from there. Give them some paper, markers, tape, and scissors to make menus, bills, money, or other items that build on their idea. Find a place in your house where they can keep the pretend-play scene set up for a few days.

Family Stories

Record a family member reading your child's favorite stories aloud. Are there family members who do not live with you, or someone your child does not see often? This is a nice way your child can be "with" the person. They can follow along in the book or just listen. If you have headphones, your child can listen in a quiet place.



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months

Mealtimes are an important time to share the day's events and connect with your child. Teach your child how to listen when another family member is speaking, and help your child share stories about their day. Try to keep snack time and mealtime relaxed. The more you try to control what your child eats, the more your independent, strong-willed child will push back against you. Let your child take the lead when it comes to eating. One thing that makes mealtimes fun is involving your child in preparing or getting ready for meals. Helping with household tasks builds your child's confidence and makes them feel like an important part of the family. "Thanks for putting out the napkins. You are a big help!"

Keep in Mind

- Your responsibility during meals is to offer your child a variety of healthy foods. Always include foods you know your child likes as well as something new to try.
- Your child's responsibility is to explore foods and decide what they will eat, how much, and how fast. Children may need to be offered a food many times before they will try it.
- Take care not to make mealtimes a battle for control. Avoid using food as a way to reward your child's behavior. Never force your child to eat.
- Your child needs five or six small meals or snacks every day. Your child may eat a lot at one meal and skip the next. This is fine. Your child will eat when they are hungry.
- Your child is learning their likes and dislikes. Your child has favorite foods and some that they do not like. Respect your child's choices as long as they eat a variety of foods.
- It may be hard for your child to sit for an entire meal. Decide how long is reasonable for your child to sit with the family. A good goal is about 15 minutes. "Thanks for sitting and eating with us. Please put your bowl in the sink, and you can play while we finish."

Suggestions

- Develop a clear routine around snack time and mealtime: First wash hands, then come to the table and eat, then help clean up. Your preschooler may already know this routine.
- Involve your child in mealtimes. Your preschooler can help prepare simple meals. They can help set the table, put away dishes in the sink (or dishwasher), and use a sponge to wash the table or wipe down appliances. Say, "Thanks for the help!"

(continued)

33-72 months



Feeding Your Child, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make food fun. Pancakes that look like a mouse are much yummier than simple circles. Let your child come up with ideas to help make foods fun too.
- Turn off electronics and mute phones. Try to eat one meal a day together as a family. Have everyone share about their day: "What was the best part?" "Did anything funny happen?" Shared mealtimes build healthy, close relationships.
- Let your child be independent. Your child can use utensils and serve themselves. Your preschooler can pour from a small pitcher and drink from a cup. Your independent child will enjoy being a "big kid" and doing things by themselves.
- Encourage your child to try new foods. Let your child pick out healthy foods at the store that they would like to try. Make simple rules around new foods: "Try a bite or a lick." Consider introducing a "no, thank you" bowl where your child can put food they do not like.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months

Getting enough sleep is important to your child's overall well-being. The world is exciting, though, and most children do not want to miss out on anything. In fact, your child might say they are not tired or sleepy and fall asleep at the table. As a parent, you continue to set the sleep schedule and the daily routine. Make the bedtime routine special and connect with your child. Talk with your child about their day, including the best parts and any parts that may have been hard. Talk with your child about what they can look forward to tomorrow. Bedtime is a wonderful time to cuddle, ask your child questions, and listen to your child's ideas about their world.

Keep in Mind

- On average, preschool children need between 10 and 11 hours of sleep at night, and another 1 to 2 hours of napping during the day. Most 3- and 4-year-olds still nap. Many 5-year-olds no longer take naps. A quiet time every day instead of a nap may be helpful.
- Your preschooler needs a lot of sleep. Signs that your child is not getting enough sleep include always falling asleep in the car, needing to be woken up in the morning, or often being cranky and fussy during the day.
- Tiredness in children looks different than in adults. Watch your child closely and learn what tiredness looks like for your child.
- Your child needs exercise. Plenty of exercise during the day will help your child fall asleep sooner and sleep longer.
- Preschoolers may have nighttime fears or nightmares, or they may sleep walk. Help your child talk about their feelings. Let your child know you love them and will keep them safe.
- Monitor what your child sees and hears in the home, including electronics. Scary images and sounds will stress your child and increase nighttime fears. Stress may lead to sleep or other behavior problems. If you let your preschooler watch television or use screens, turn these devices off at least an hour before bedtime.

Suggestions

- Keep a consistent schedule for bedtime and wake-up time. Stick to these times over the weekends, too.
- If your child naps, stick with a consistent naptime. If your child does not nap, plan a rest time during the day. After lunch is often a good time to look at books quietly.

(continued)

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Sleep, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Create a consistent bedtime routine. For example, first take a bath, then brush teeth, then read stories, and then “lights off.” Use this “wind-down” time to help your preschooler prepare their body for sleep. Limit food and drink close to bedtime.
- Give your child alerts before the bedtime routine. It is hard to stop playing. Alerts help your child prepare: “In 10 minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed.”
- Let your child do things without assistance. Your preschooler can practice brushing their teeth but needs your help to finish. By 5 years old, your independent preschooler can dress themselves in their pajamas, although they may need a little help.
- Put your child to sleep in their bed. Keep sleeping areas cool, dark, and quiet. Use a nightlight. Give your child their comfort items, such as a special stuffed animal or blankie, to cuddle with at night. This helps your child self-soothe and fall asleep on their own.
- Make a plan with other adults for how to help your preschooler go back to sleep if they wake up at night:
 - Talk to your child in a gentle voice, and use a gentle touch.
 - If your child has a nightmare, comfort them. Let your child know that everything is okay. Rub your child’s back and give them another goodnight kiss. Let your child know that you are nearby and that they are safe.
- If you have to wake your child, wake them gently and slowly. Talk to your child softly about why you need to wake them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months

Your child now often lets you know what they need before they get upset. However, they still struggle to calm down when they have big feelings. With your support, your child can learn how to stay calm and focus (self-regulate). These social-emotional skills are important to your child's overall well-being and ability to learn. Preschoolers who can self-regulate find it easier to make friends and adapt to home and school routines. Use the ideas on this tip sheet to help prevent upsets and to teach your child how to stay calm when they do have big feelings.

Keep in Mind

- All behaviors have meaning. Is your child hungry, tired, sick, bored, or stressed? Do they need attention? Learn your child's rhythms and personality. Aim to prevent upsets.
- You have the biggest influence on your child's behavior. Your child learns how to self-regulate from you. Be kind and respectful with your child, even when you are angry.
- Physical touch is calming for both you and your child. Hug, hold, and touch your child many times a day. Cuddle up and read to your child if they need to calm down.
- Open-ended playtime with friends helps your child learn to self-regulate. Your child learns how to wait (take turns), talk through disagreements, and negotiate while playing.
- Monitor and limit screen time. Screen time can lead to attention and behavior problems. Your child needs to learn to stay calm and focused while engaging in real-life activities with real people.

Suggestions

- Stick to a consistent daily routine. Consistent routines can decrease struggles. Your child learns that even if they fuss, bedtime is still going to happen the same way, every day. Consistency means there is less need to fuss!
- Develop clear expectations, and be consistent. Your child can learn rules if you stick to them every time.
 - Keep rules simple and positive—the simpler, the better. For example: "Use gentle touch."
 - Explain why a rule is a rule: "We use gentle touch because hitting hurts. We don't hurt each other."
 - Give a positive alternative: "If you need something, tap me gently and use your words to tell me what you want."

(continued)

33-72 months



Helping Your Child Calm Down, 33-72 months *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Teach play skills by playing with your child. Teach your child how to share, trade, and take turns with friends. Teach them how to talk about it when they get frustrated or disappointed during play.
- Give alerts. It's hard for your child to stop an activity they are enjoying. Before you move your child to a new activity, give them an alert so they have a little time to finish up: "In 10 minutes it will be time to clean up and have a snack."
- Provide simple choices. Choices allow your independent child a little control over their day: "Blue shirt or red shirt?" "Crackers or toast?" "Store first or bank?"
- Focus on the positives. Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Good idea!" "Thanks for your help." "I'm proud of you." "High five!" "Thanks for waiting patiently."
- When you ask your child to do a task, use a "first/then" statement. A first/then statement pairs a request with something you know your toddler enjoys: "First pick up your toys [request], and then we'll go to the park [fun]."
- Teach your child a "calm-down plan." Choose a time when your child is calm and talk to them about ways to calm down. Examples of calm-down plans include taking several slow breaths, taking a break, talking it out, asking to be held, and switching to a different activity.
- Read books about big feelings. Ask a librarian for suggestions. Reading books about others' big feelings lets your child know their feelings are okay.
- When your child starts to have a big feeling or tantrum, stay calm and try these ideas:
 - Move your child if they are not in a safe spot. For example, if your child is lying in the middle of a busy grocery store aisle, gently pick them up and move them to a safe place.
 - Help your child calm down. Your child cannot listen to words or think clearly when upset. Say, "I want to help. You need to calm down first." Use the calm-down plan you made.
 - Resist the temptation to bribe. Offering your phone or candy to calm your fussy child does not help them learn how to self-regulate.
- Once your child is calm, talk about feelings and solutions. "You were angry. You and your friend both wanted the toy. What can you do?" "You seem sad. How can I help?"

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Body Awareness

Young children are learning about who they are and are interested in their bodies. Babies explore bodies through touch and sight. Toddlers become curious about how their bodies are different from other people's bodies. Preschoolers may ask questions about where babies come from. Answer your child's questions using facts and simple words. Let your child know it is always okay to ask questions. You might be embarrassed, but your child is just curious. Talking to your child about their body builds your child's self-esteem and builds trust between you and your child. Your child learns that bodies and body functions are normal.

Babies and Toddlers

- Babies learn about their bodies through touch. It is normal for babies to touch their own bodies, even their genitals.
- Erections are normal in young boys (including babies). Some boys have many, and some have few. Both are normal.
- It is never too early to learn the names of body parts, including genitals. Use simple but real terms. Bath time and diaper changing are good times to talk about body parts.

Preschoolers and Young Children

- Teach your child simple body boundaries. Let your child know they can say "no, thank you" if they don't want to be hugged, kissed, or touched.
- Teach your child that it is not okay to hug or kiss someone who does not want to be hugged or kissed. This helps your child learn to listen to and respect others.
- Tell your child in a calm and simple way that no one should touch their private parts, except a health care provider if needed during a health examination. Let your child know that no one, friend or stranger, should ask them to touch another person's private parts.
- Teach your child that secrets, especially about bodies, are never okay. Let your child know that they need to tell you if anyone is asking them to keep a body secret.

(continued)



Body Awareness *(continued)*

PRESCHOOLERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN *(continued)*

- Many preschoolers learn that touching or rubbing their genitals feels good. This is normal. Try not to embarrass, shame, or frighten them. Talk to your child about what is okay to do in public and what is okay to do in private.
- It is normal for preschoolers to explore each other's bodies. Stay calm if they are playing doctor. Ask them to get dressed. Talk with them about boys' and girls' bodies.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Caring for Yourself

The parent–child relationship is the child’s first relationship. A warm, nurturing relationship is important for a child’s social-emotional development and sets the stage for future relationships. Parenting a child can be an amazing and joyful experience, and it can also be tiring and difficult. It is natural for parents to put their child’s needs ahead of their own. At some point, though, it is important to take care of yourself. Parents can best support their child’s social-emotional development when their own needs are met. Taking care of yourself ensures you can care for your child. Happy, relaxed parents have more to give to their children. Find time for yourself to do things that make you happy.

Keep in Mind

- Taking care of yourself is not selfish.
- Your state of mind does affect your child—even when your child is a baby.
- Taking care of yourself helps you have more patience with them.
- Taking care of yourself helps you bring joy to parenthood.
- Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your child.
- Taking care of yourself is easier said than done.

Tips for Self-Care

- Ask for help when you need it—and let others help you. For example, ask a friend or relative to care for your child while you take a nap or other time for yourself.
- Join a parent support group, or connect with other parents of young children. Friendships help you get through difficult times.
- Take care of your body—your body and mind are connected. Eat healthy foods. Get regular exercise.
- Make a list of things to do that make you feel good. Include little things, like drinking a cup of tea, reading a magazine, listening to music, or taking a walk. Do one thing for yourself every day.
- Limit extra activities in your life. Decide what things are most important. Now may not be the time to take on a volunteer job or learn a new skill.

(continued)



Caring for Yourself *(continued)*

TIPS FOR SELF-CARE *(continued)*

- Take time to stop, breathe, and feel gratitude for what you have.
- Every day, spend some time away from the phone and other distractions. Play with and enjoy your child and your family.
- As your child gets older, involve them in what you are doing. When you go out to grocery shop, take your child with you. Let them go on a walk outdoors with you.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your health care provider.



Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Entering kindergarten is a big change for you and your child. It is an exciting time, and it also might be a little scary for you both. You can help by preparing yourself and your child for this big step well ahead of time. Provide opportunities for your child to practice being away from you and being more independent with self-help skills such as eating and dressing. Visit the school and find out what to expect. These steps will increase your child's confidence and make both of you feel more prepared for this big change!

In the Year Before Kindergarten

- Set up times for your child to play with other children—including future classmates, if possible. Knowing how to play and get along with peers is a big part of kindergarten. Having a friend in class will help your child feel more comfortable.
- Teach your child how to do things independently. This will help your child start to build autonomy—the ability to do things separately from you.
- Let your child dress without your help. Teach your child how to open food containers. Teach them all the steps of using the bathroom alone. Your child's self-confidence will grow as they learn how to do things independently. Be sure to praise your child's growing independence: "You dressed all by yourself this morning!"
- Encourage your child to practice writing their first name. Teach them their address and telephone number.
- Limit television and other screen time to 1 to 2 hours a day. Your child will need to be able to stay calm and focus on real-world activities or a teacher for periods of time.
- Encourage your child to stick with activities for longer periods of time. This helps your child build self-regulation skills—the ability to monitor and control their own behavior.
- Take your child with you out into the world—to the library, grocery store, and other places. This will help your child feel more secure exploring new places.
- Create bedtime and wake-up routines over the summer before kindergarten starts. Help your child prepare for the school schedule.
- Visit your local school and your child's classroom. Meet the teacher. Find the bathroom! This will help build your child's confidence.

(continued)



Getting Ready for Kindergarten *(continued)*

In the Weeks Before School Starts

- Encourage your child to share how they are feeling about starting kindergarten. Talk with them about any concerns or fears.
- Visit a library. Find books about starting kindergarten, and read and talk about them together.
- Let your child know it's okay to be nervous and excited all at the same time.
- Talk about things that made (or make) you nervous. Share with your child about how you take care of yourself when you are nervous.
- Talk positively about school and the fun activities and new friends your child will make.
- Teach your child how to ask for help from the teacher.
- Make a plan for the first day of school. Talk about what will happen.

On the First Day

- Spend some time with your child at the school on the first day. Let your child know when you will leave and what time you will return. Your child trusts you to return and needs to be told when that will happen. Do not sneak away.
- When you see your child at the end of the day, give them a big hug and tell them you missed them. Talk to your child about their first day! Attend to your child without other distractions.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Media and Technology

Young children know only a world with cell phones, televisions, computers, tablets, and Internet. These tools have benefits but also come with challenges. Use of computers, televisions, and phones can take away from face-to-face time with your child. Your child learns about relationships through positive interactions with you and other people in their lives, not through technology. Limit the amount of time you use technology around your child. This will help you be less distracted and better able to focus on your child's needs. Researchers are still learning about good and bad effects of technology and media on very young children. As a parent, you can support the good and limit the bad.

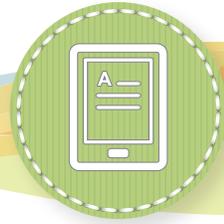
Keep in Mind

- Screens or technology include television, games, computers, phones, and tablets.
- Images and sounds on screens can be scary and stressful—even for babies!
- Too much screen time can lead to poor eating habits and attention problems.
- Avoid screen use in your child's bedroom. Research has shown a connection between sleep problems and technology in bedrooms.
- Scary or violent content can lead to fears, sleep issues, and behavior problems.
- Your child learns best by interacting with you and your family and friends.
- Some technology can have positive effects. When adults and children share screen time together, it can be a tool for learning. Face-to-face video chatting can help children connect with family members or friends who don't live nearby.

Suggestions

- Try to follow recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. For children under 18 months, limit screen time to video chatting only. For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen time to 1 hour a day.
- When you do use screen time with your child, turn off those screens a few hours before bedtime. You are showing your child that you are setting limits. They will learn from you and your example.
- Limit your screen use, including phones, when you are with your child. It is easy for adults to become distracted by screens too. When you turn your attention to your child, it lets them know they are important.

(continued)



Media and Technology *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Make “real” playtimes for your child—both for you and your child together, and with other children. This helps build your child’s social skills. Your child is learning how to interact with others.
- Choose shows and games for your child that are age appropriate and show positive role models. Children mimic what they see on the screen.
- Watch shows and play games on screens with your child. Talk about what you are watching or doing. This makes screen time more interactive and social.
- Talk about what is real and what is pretend. Young children have a hard time understanding that what they see on television isn’t real.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when scared or afraid of something they have seen on screens. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know they are safe.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Positive Discipline

To discipline means to teach. Children need to learn how to behave from you! Discipline is different from punishment. Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child how to stay calm, or calm down, and make good choices to meet their needs. Teaching your child how to behave is a process that takes time and patience. It is normal for them to test limits. Using positive discipline keeps your interactions with your child healthy and supportive. This helps them feel secure in their relationship with you. It also builds your child's confidence and self-esteem.

Keep in Mind

- Positive discipline focuses on teaching your child what you want them to do, rather than on punishing them for doing something wrong.
- Punishment (such as spanking) causes your child to feel fear but does not teach them how you want them to behave.
- It is normal for young children to test limits. Your job is to set appropriate limits and be consistent in keeping them.
- Positive discipline takes time and patience. Your child may try to test your rules (limits) many times. Stay calm and consistent.
- Positive discipline begins by setting limits, acknowledging your child's good behavior, and discouraging behaviors you don't want your child to do.
- Positive discipline helps foster cooperation between you and your child.

Suggestions

- Try to understand your child's behavior. What do they need? What do they want? Young children often act out when they are tired, hungry, bored, or not feeling well. If your child is acting out to get your attention, think about how you can build in special times to connect with them and give them your full attention.
- Teach your child why a behavior is not okay. Maybe it is not safe. Maybe it is rude. Maybe it hurts your feelings. Maybe it hurts your ears.
- Teach your child what they can do instead that IS okay. For example, if you want your child to stop running in the house, make up a game where they tiptoe. If your child is yelling at you, teach them how ask using a quiet "inside" voice.

(continued)



Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Your child may not understand your directions. Show them how. For example, after playtime tell your child, "Time to clean up all the toys." Show them how to pick up a toy and where to put it away. When you do this, say, "My turn." Then say, "Now it's your turn." Praise them when they are done. "You helped pick up all the toys!"
- State rules in short simple ways. This helps your child understand. For example, "No hitting—it hurts."
- Set clear limits with your child and stick to them. For example, "First we clean up, then we can go outside." Or, "One more book and then bedtime."
- Catch your child doing the right thing and praise them: "Wow, you put your toys away all by yourself! Thank you for cleaning up!" Your child wants this positive attention from you. This will encourage them to keep doing the right thing. They are building their self-confidence and their independence.
- Talk to your child about consequences. Use "natural" consequences instead of punishment. For example, if your child throws a toy, put the toy away. Tell them why you put the toy away. "The rule is no throwing. I put the toy away because you threw it."
- Stay calm when you discipline your child. They learn by watching you. If you get angry and yell, they learn to get angry and yell. Your child is learning how to interact with others by watching you.
- Be consistent, even if your child gets upset. It is okay for them to get upset. They need to learn that the rules stay the same, even if it makes them mad. Acknowledge your child's feelings. "I know you are upset because you have to put the toys away." This helps them learn to express their emotions and acknowledge feelings.
- Acknowledge your child's big feelings while setting limits. "I know you are sad. We need to go. We will come back tomorrow."
- Remember that tantrums are normal for toddlers. They experience big feelings—fear, frustration, and sadness—as they try to be more independent. Stay calm and consistent.
- If your child is upset, help them (or give them time) to calm down. After they have calmed down, you can talk to them about their behavior.
- Teach your child how to calm down. Pick a time when they are not upset. Talk and practice calming ideas such as breathing, talking it out, or taking a break. This helps your child learn to control their emotions.
- Provide choices when you make a request. "Would you like me to help you clean up, or do you want to do it by yourself?" This little bit of control may help your child respond.

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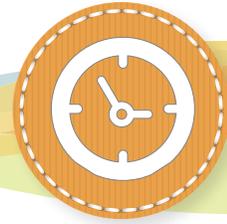


Positive Discipline *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Give an alert before changing activities. This helps your child prepare. For example, “You can go down the slide two more times and then it is time to go.”
- Use natural consequences rather than bribes. Using bribes teaches your child to behave only when a reward is offered. Using natural consequences helps them learn to control their own world rather than expecting you to do so. For example, when your child throws their snack on the ground, the natural consequence is no more snack.
- Remember to always reassure your child about your love. Their behavior may be inappropriate, but they are not a “bad kid.” After your child misbehaves, make sure you quickly reconnect with them, hold them close, and let them know you love them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



Routines and Your Child

Routines are how you organize daily activities to get things done. Every family has its own routines. Routines help family members—including children—know who should do what and when. If daily activities happen about the same way, and in the same order every day, your child learns what to expect. This helps them feel safe and secure. There is also less room for arguments. Your child learns that even if they get upset about having to go to bed, bedtime is still going to happen at the same time every night. Routines help your child build trust in you and their world.

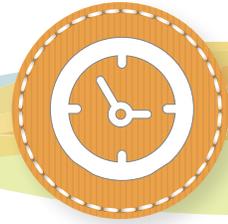
Keep in Mind

- Routines help you and your child sleep well, eat well, and stay happy and healthy.
- Routines help your child feel safe because they start to learn what to expect. When your child feels safe, they can explore their world.
- Routines can help teach your child healthy habits, such as getting exercise or brushing teeth every day.
- Routines help your child become more independent and confident in taking part in daily activities.
- Routines help you and your child deal with stress and change in your lives.
- Routines can be changed for special events. Return to the normal routines as quickly as possible afterward.
- When you need to adjust a routine, start with small changes. Talk to your child about what is going to happen. They need you to let them know things are okay and their world is still safe.
- Your child takes pride in helping with daily routines. For example, they may help set the table before dinner or help put food away after shopping.
- As your child gets older, they will know what to do during a routine before you tell them. For example, they may get themselves dressed and ready in the morning.

For Babies

- For young babies, routine activities may not happen at the same time each day. Read and respond to your baby's cues, making sure they get regular feedings, diaper changes, and sleep.
- As your baby gets older, start setting regular routines, such as having naptime at the same time each day.

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Routines and Your Child (continued)

FOR BABIES (continued)

- Following regular routines will help your baby learn to self-regulate. For example, when they are fed at regular times each day, they start to learn when food is coming. This helps them stay calm even if they have to wait a little to be fed.
- As your baby gets older, you will add more routines to their day. This helps them trust you and know what is going to happen next.

For Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Set routines by doing the same things in the same order, and close to the same time, every day.
- Some everyday routines you may want to consider for your young child include:
 - Getting up in the morning at about the same time
 - Getting dressed and ready for the day in the morning
 - Eating meals
 - Playing and talking with a parent
 - Moving and getting exercise
 - Reading books and telling stories
 - Having quiet times in the afternoon and evening
 - Going to bed at night at about the same time
- Create a ritual for every daily activity you do with your child. For example, give kisses and hugs after bedtime stories.
- Give your child a mental picture of the day's activities by describing them in the order they will happen. Your child may like seeing real pictures of activities, in the order they will occur. *"First we get up. Then breakfast. . . ."* This helps your child understand the routine.
- As your child gets older and knows the routine, encourage them to do parts of each routine independently. Comment on what they do. *"Wow, you put your pants on all by yourself!"* This helps your child feel more confident.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Safety and Your Little Explorer

As soon as babies can move on their own, they want to explore everything. Exploring is how babies and young children learn. Creating safe places for your child to explore helps them learn new skills. This builds their curiosity and self-confidence. Children feel more comfortable exploring when they feel safe and secure with their caregiver. Creating safe places to explore also helps you relax and enjoy time with your child. Stay close and enjoy seeing the world through your child's eyes. "Wow, look what you found!" The whole world is interesting—indoors and out. Your child is learning to trust the world around them.

For Newborns

- Bring your newborn home to a safe, calm, happy home. This will help build your baby's sense of safety and security.
- Create a safe, calm, quiet sleeping area for your baby.
- Talk to your health care provider about safety and your newborn.
- Learn infant first aid and CPR. This may help you feel prepared to care for your new baby.

For Babies

- Create safe places to explore *before* your baby starts to roll over and move around. This helps you worry less too.
- Crawl around your house at your baby's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Move an electrical cord? Secure a book shelf or piece of furniture to the wall? Move your special treasures up and out of reach? Store the cleaning supplies in a different place? These are just a few examples of safety issues for your little explorer.
- Your baby wants to be near you. Babyproof the places where your baby spends time with you.
- Stay close to your baby and encourage them to explore the space and toys around them.

For Toddlers

- Create safe places to explore *before* your toddler starts to stand up and take steps.
- Walk around your house and notice what is at your child's level. What do you need to do to make the house safe? Think about your climbing explorer as well as your crawler and walker.

(continued)



Safety and Your Little Explorer *(continued)*

FOR TODDLERS *(continued)*

- Your toddler will want to touch everything and climb on everything. Your toddler will open cabinets and drawers. Be patient and help them learn what is safe.
- Provide spaces where everything is okay to touch and climb. This allows your toddler independence.
- Provide a lot of opportunities for your child to walk, run, and climb safely!
- Stay close so your toddler feels safe and secure.
- Comment on what your toddler is doing so they feel proud.
- Provide new things for your child to explore every day!

For Preschoolers and Young Children

- As your child gets older, they will learn what is okay to touch and what is not.
- You can open more areas of your home to your child as they get older.
- Encourage your child to go to different parts of the house on their own: “Go get your shoes from your room.” This will build their self-confidence and ability to separate from you.
- Your child needs a lot of exercise! Go to parks, schoolyards, or malls where your child has room to move!
- Encourage your child to explore new places. Stay close so your child feels safe and secure.
- Set limits and rules around exploring. For example, when you go to the park, tell your child, “You can go play with your friends, but stay where I can see you.” You are teaching your child that you trust them.
- Rotate toys and materials. Your child will be happy to see old toys after a month.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.



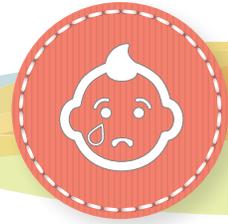
Stress and Your Child

Stress occurs from many things, such as having too much to do, not having enough money, moving, or losing a job. Trauma occurs when someone experiences something that is physically or emotionally harmful. Are there times when your life is stressful? Have you or your child seen or experienced anything scary or frightening? Sometimes, adults think babies and young children are “too young to understand” or “too young to remember.” However, research shows that babies and young children do get stressed and do have memories of trauma. Both babies and children feel stress in their bodies and show stress through their behaviors. The good news is that you can do things to protect and help your child—even if life is stressful or you have experienced trauma. Remember, whatever is going on in your life is not your child’s fault. Take a deep breath when you are frustrated. With your love and protection, you can help your child feel safe.

Keep in Mind

- Babies and young children show stress through their behavior. Changes in your child’s behavior, such as in sleeping or feeding, might be a sign of stress.
- Long-term stress affects a child’s developing brain. It is important to recognize stress in your child so you can help reduce it.
- Here are some possible signs of stress in young children:
 - Eating disturbances
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Regression in skills such as potty training
 - Clinginess; not wanting to leave you
 - Headaches or stomachaches
 - New fears; nightmares
 - Problem behaviors such as hyperactivity or aggression
- Your child might experience stress when developing and learning new skills—for example, when they begin to separate from you, or when they are toilet training.
- Young children don’t understand why they feel stress. You can help your child by naming their feelings and reassuring them that they will be okay.
- All families experience different types of stress. Children and families also react to stress in different ways. Your child learns to react by watching you.
- Your love, comfort, and gentle touch help to protect your child against stress.
- Behavioral health specialists can help you and your child deal with severe or ongoing stress. Talk to your health care provider.

(continued)



Stress and Your Child *(continued)*

Suggestions

- Be aware that your baby or young child is paying attention to everything they see and hear.
- As much as possible, keep your baby or child away from situations or images that are violent or scary. This includes shows or games on television, phones, computers, and tablets.
- Limit talk about your fears and worries around your baby or young child. When your child is nearby, be positive.
- You can reduce your child's stress by staying calm and using a calm voice—even when you are stressed.
- Comfort your child when they are scared or worried. Hold them close and talk to them. "That loud noise was scary. Did it scare you? How can I help?"
- Talk to your young child, even your baby, about how you think they are feeling. Use words such as happy, scared, mad, or worried. When your child begins to talk, encourage them to use feeling words.
- When big changes happen in your family's life, such as welcoming a new baby or moving, keep your schedule and routines as much the same as possible. Routines help children feel safe and secure.
- Make sure your child's day has a mix of active and quiet times. This gives your child different ways to deal with any stress.
- Prepare children for the big changes (such as starting preschool) and little changes (such as saying goodbye at preschool) in their lives. Change is stressful. Knowing what to expect will help decrease fears and worries.
- Let your child know you love them and will always be there for them. Your child needs you to let them know things are okay. They will feel secure knowing that you are there for them.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child's health care provider.



Welcoming a New Sibling

A new baby in the family can be hard emotionally for your older child. They may be unsure or have fears about what it means to have this new baby in the family. They may be wondering, "Am I still your baby?" or "Will you still love me?" Your older child may act out or regress (lose skills) even before the new baby is born. However, siblings often become a primary support for each other in childhood and adulthood. You play a big role in shaping this sibling relationship. With your loving support, your older child can prepare for the new baby's arrival. They can begin to understand their new role as "big brother" or "big sister." With your understanding, they will learn that they are not losing you or your love. They will come to know that they will always have a special place in your heart.

Keep in Mind

- Your child's personality has the most influence on their reaction to a new baby. An outgoing child may look forward to being a big sister or big brother. A shy child may worry more about this change.
- Your child's age or stage may affect how well they can share your attention with a new baby. For example, 2-year-olds may have a hard time getting used to a new baby because they are still very dependent on you.
- Stress on the family can make your older child's adjustment harder.

Suggestions

Here are some tips for before the new baby is born:

- Prepare your child for the coming of the baby. Talk to them about what to expect.
- Talk to your child about how they can help welcome the new baby.
- Talk to them about the role they will have with the new baby.
- Read books and tell stories about welcoming the new baby.
- Keep letting your child know how much you love them and how important they are.

When the new baby arrives:

- Have the new baby and older child exchange gifts.
- Plan some special "big brother" or "big sister" gifts for your older child.
- Remind visitors to pay attention to your older child and not just the baby.

(continued)



Welcoming a New Sibling *(continued)*

SUGGESTIONS *(continued)*

- Spend one-on-one time with your older child. Even 10 minutes a day can help them feel special and help calm them. “Baby” your older child—if they like this!
- Help your child talk about their feelings about the baby. Listen carefully and let them know you understand their feelings—even if the feelings are negative.
- Teach your child how to touch and handle the baby safely.
- Make sure older children have their own special items and spaces that they do not need to share.
- If your older child likes to be a helper, give them special jobs to help with the baby. They can help push a stroller, get diapers, or pick out baby’s clothes. “What a helpful big brother you are!”
- Point out the benefits of being the older sibling. Older children get to make choices about what they eat, and whether to go to the park or play with friends. Babies don’t get to do those things!

As your new baby gets older:

- Encourage the children to play together. You may need to show them how.
- Talk to your children and teach them how to resolve conflicts. They are learning how to interact positively and resolve conflicts in their future relationship.
- Once your children have learned some skills for resolving conflicts, give them time to solve disagreements by themselves when possible.

Questions? Concerns? Talk to your child’s health care provider.