



Toddler Tales

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19-21 Months

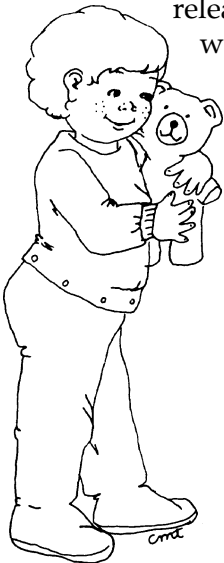
Physical Development

At 19 months of age, your toddler is probably walking without falling. He may walk up stairs while holding your hand.

By the end of 21 months, his improved balance may allow him to squat without falling. Instead of toppling over, he can squat for a short time to play with a toy. Your child also may be able to kick a ball across the floor. He loves to move his body! Put on a record and dance. Or, hop and run with your child. Ten to one, you won't be able to keep up with him!

Your toddler's small muscles also are developing. He will begin to stack toys such as boxes, cans or stacking rings. This play will be fun as he gains more control over his fingers and coordinates his eyes and hands.

Your toddler is probably good at throwing his toys. He may, however, have difficulty releasing or dropping an object when he wants to. Remember when you went bowling for the first time and the ball went bouncing down the alley? It took time to learn when and how to release that big, heavy ball. Your child also needs time to learn how to release objects he is holding. Give him bean bags and soft toys that he can pick up and then release.



Language Development

Before she was 18 months of age, your child probably babbled without trying to communicate with you through words. By the time she is 21 months, however, she may be saying 20 words or more. These words may not sound correct. For example, she may say "mook" for milk, "jou" for juice and "wa" for water.

She's letting you know with words what she wants. She also may ask a lot of questions by saying "what's 'at?" or "why." She's curious about everything. When talking to your child, pronounce words correctly. Don't use baby talk or the "cute" words she uses. You are a model for her. Soon you will hear her use two-words sentences such as, "Daddy home," "Dolly wet," or "Me do."

Personality Development

Do you sometimes feel like toddlerhood is an up and down roller coaster ride? Your child sometimes feels all grown up. He wants to practice his new independence by feeding and dressing himself. At other times, he swings back to feeling timid and insecure. He may want you to help him with his puzzle or pick him up and hold him. His language skills are improving, but your child may still have trouble expressing his needs. There is no magical way of knowing when "No" means "No" and when it means "Yes, Help Me!"

Keep two points in mind

1. Stay calm.
2. Give him plenty of time and space for dressing, eating and other self-help activities.

Here are some ways you can help your toddler become independent.

- Strangers may still frighten your child. Your presence is a comfort. Also, having a security blanket or special toy may help him feel safe and comforted.
- Have low shelves or drawers for your toddler's toys and clothes so he can reach them without your help.
- Put a coat rack at his height and have him practice hanging up his coat.
- Give your toddler little chores he can do. He can carry silverware to the table. Invite him to dust and to fold clothes with you. Vacuum cleaners fascinate many toddlers. Your child may enjoy pushing one back and forth on the rug. You can ask him to take turns doing this with you.
- If you haven't provided your toddler with a toothbrush, washcloth and towel of his own, do it now. Put a sturdy stool by the sink so your toddler can wash and brush his teeth without falling.
- At dinner time, let your child feed himself. Don't worry about table manners yet. Expect spilled milk! Put only a small amount of milk in the cup. Then you will have less to clean up! Also, a toddler can handle a cup more easily if it contains only a small amount of milk.
- Set up routines to help your child understand what's going to happen in his life. For example, before bed you wash hands, get pajamas on, brush teeth, read a story, and then put the lights out.



- Does your toddler say "No" when you tell him it's time to wash for dinner? Try telling him five minutes before the deadline. You may say, "Very soon you will need to wash your hands for dinner." He may be a little more tolerant when you ignore his "No" and help him wash up!
- Praise your toddler when he remembers the routine before you tell him! Ask him, "What do we do before we eat?" When he says "wash" or goes to the sink, give him a round of applause and a hug. You are teaching him memory skills!
- Remember that your toddler still learns by touching and poking objects. It's easier to child-proof your home than constantly to say "no." Dangers like electrical outlets can't be moved out of your toddler's path, so put safety caps over them.

Playing With "The Big Guys"

At 18 months, your toddler is trying to act very grown-up! When she's with older children, she may want to play with their toys or join in their fun. This may cause problems. Older children will often tell toddlers to go away and push them. Or, your toddler may follow older children into dangerous situations. She may walk in front of a child on a swing or toddle in front of the pitcher as she pitches the ball.

You will need to find a balance between protection and freedom. Here are some safety tips to think about:

- You may see older children push your toddler away. Don't rush in to defend her unless she's hurt. Next year you may see your toddler pushing younger children. Most of the time, children of different ages will work out disagreements without adult involvement. For now, have a couple of favorite toys to distract her.
- Toddlers need close supervision when playing outdoors. Just as you baby-proof your home, you should check playgrounds and yards. Look for broken glass, empty cans, broken equipment and other objects that may be dangerous.

- Play equipment, like swings and teeter totters and slides, can be dangerous. Your toddler might climb and fall, or be hit by moving equipment. Watch her closely.
- Check the sandbox for broken glass and sharp objects. Young children like sand play almost as much as water play. Provide safe toys like buckets, shovels, spoons and cups.

Especially For You

Your child enjoys playing with someone his own size. Parents also need to get together with other adults. Stress can build up if you spend a lot of time alone with a small child. Many parents find that getting together with others can help release pressure. You'll probably be relieved to find out other families are having some of the same problems as you are having. Parents can share feelings and ideas for raising children.



Here are some ideas for taking breaks from the absorbing, exhausting job of parenting.

- Take a bubble bath without your child
- Spend time with an adult you really care about
- Rearrange your schedule to allow time for a nap or a walk
- Visit the public library
- Attend a parent education class or a parent support group
- Join a church or social group

Discipline

Do you pay attention to your toddler when she's behaving well or when she's in trouble?

Do you pay attention to her when she's scribbling on the walls? Do you respond when she's scratching your furniture with her favorite toy truck? Or, do you talk to her when she's playing quietly with her toys?

Praise is an important part of discipline. Your child wants and needs your attention. Pay attention to her when she's doing what you like. If she is playing with toys on the carpet say, "You are playing with your trucks! Let me see you push them!"

Sometimes her behavior may annoy you, but it isn't harmful. In this case, ignore it. If she's making loud noises, try to refrain from saying "quiet down." Your attention may encourage her to test your patience. She wonders "What will Mommy do if I yell even louder?"

If you pay attention to your toddler only when she misbehaves, she will misbehave to get your attention. She will learn that tearing a book, breaking a toy or writing on the walls will get some attention. If you can't ignore what she's doing, redirect her. Tell her what she can do instead. Say, "You may color in your coloring book" or "You may play with your truck on the floor." When she does what you say, praise her. "I like to see you coloring on paper. You've used your blue crayon!"

Let your toddler know when she is pleasing you. Remember:

Praise her when she does what you like.

Ignore behavior that's annoying, but not harmful.

Redirect her to other activities.

Making Choices

Do you sometimes dislike making decisions? Is it easier to let others decide for you? Many adults have trouble making decisions. Many adults also have difficulty taking responsibility for their choices. Often they didn't have the chance to make decisions as a child.

You can begin to teach your child how to make decisions when he's a toddler. For instance, if you want your child to stop climbing on the coffee table, give him a simple choice. You might say, "You may either climb on your big wheel or you can climb on the sofa." Give your child two specific choices rather than saying, "Go find something else to do." Also, try to make the choices similar to what the

child is doing. For example, climbing on big wheels and furniture are active choices. Looking at a book and doing a puzzle are quiet activities.

Choices help your child feel independent, but only if you mean what you say. If you ask, "How about taking a nap?" your toddler probably will say, "No!" Were you really saying what you meant? You gave your child a choice when there was no choice. If there is no choice say, "It's time for your nap." You can add a choice by saying "You can bring your bear or your blanket."



Child Care

It's hard for a parent to wave good-bye to a teary toddler and walk out the door. Many parents worry "Am I doing the right thing?" or "Will she be alright?" "Is she getting the best care?" Choosing child care is an important decision. If you have confidence in your child care, you and your child may feel better about the separation. Here are some tips and guidelines.

Having a caregiver in your home

- It will be easier on your toddler if only one person provides child care. A familiar person who is caring and comfortable can ease separation from parents.
- When you do have a new person care for your child, ask him or her to come early so your toddler can warm up to the caregiver.
- When you leave, tell the caregiver: 1. where you will be, 2. how to reach you, 3. when you will be back, 4. the phone numbers of your doctor, the hospital and the Poison Control Center in your area (1-800-562-8236). Write this information down and leave it near the phone.

For out-of-home child care

Here are questions and suggestions of what to look for in a child care center, family child care home or preschool setting:

1. Is the home or child care center clean and safe? Is it as child-proof as your home?
2. Are there safe, age-appropriate toys available for children to use?
3. Is there a separate room or quiet corner for sleeping?
4. Is there a fenced outdoor area with some toys and swings?
5. What is the staff-to-child ratio? In group child care settings, there should be:
 - one adult for every four infants of ages six weeks to 12 months
 - one adult for every five children of ages 13 to 24 months
 - one adult for every six children of ages 25 to 36 months
6. Does the caregiver or child care center allow you to visit and watch your child without calling in advance? If possible, watch for a couple of hours, a day or several days when you take your child to a new caregiver.
7. Have the adult caregivers had medical examinations to insure they are healthy enough to care for young children?
8. How do caregivers handle behavior problems? Are their techniques familiar to you? Are their techniques similar to methods you have used, read or heard about?
9. Do the caregivers listen to your suggestions and answer your questions?
10. Is there a telephone that caregivers can use to contact you or others in case of emergencies? Are the telephone numbers of the police, fire, ambulance, and Poison Control Center next to the phone?
11. Is the center licensed with the N. H. Dept. of Health and Human Services?

12. Is there a parent's support group if this is of interest to you?
13. Do the caregivers talk with parents about the children's day when parents come to pick up their children?

Easing the transition:

- If you need full-time care for your child, try to arrange a special time every day to spend with your toddler. You are still the most important person in your child's life. Take that special time to read together, play, go to the playground, or do whatever activity you like doing together. Spending time together will show your child just how much you love her.
- It's common for toddlers who are in child care to "act up" when their parents come to get them at the end of the day. Prepare for a strong reaction. Your child may fuss, cry or even throw a tantrum. It may be frustrating but this is a normal way for your child to learn to cope with the separation. It doesn't mean your child hates her day care. It doesn't mean you have done something wrong.
- Toddlers may feel comfortable with caregivers but their attachment to parents is strong. When they act up it's as if they are saying, "I trust you to love me no matter how I behave." Show your child you do love her. Show her patience and reassurance.

Activity

Part of learning language is learning to group similar objects and to tell the difference among objects. Here are some games to develop this skill:

Sort the laundry:

Let your child help you sort the laundry in different ways. Divide it by color, by article of clothing, by the person to whom it belongs (Dad's shirt, Baby's rompers), or by the room in which it goes. Let your toddler help you sort it. If your child makes mistakes, be patient! It's a

learning game. Even if you have to do it over, it's a good exercise for him. Be sure to talk to him about the clothes as you sort them.

Body part naming:

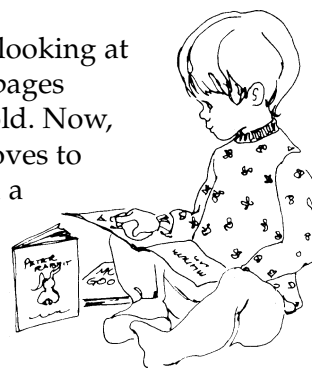
This is like the "Show me" games in the 16-18 months issue of Toddler Tales. Start by having the child point to your different body parts. Ask, "Where are my ears, my mouth, my hair?" When she is familiar with these, you can expand the game. Talk about what each body part does. For example ask, "What do we see with?" Answering the questions "What do we smell with?" and "What do we hear with?" are the hardest questions. It takes longer for toddlers to learn what noses and ears do.

Button, button, where's the button?:

Select three cans of different sizes, and, if possible, different colors. (You can cover the cans with colored construction paper.) Put a large button or another object under one of the cans while the toddler watches. Be sure these objects are large enough so he can't swallow them. Then shuffle the cans around and ask him to find the object. Be sure to use clues to help your toddler tell the difference between cans. Say, "I'll put it under the blue can" or "Is it under the middle can?"

Toddlers and Books

Some babies enjoy looking at pictures and turning pages before they're a year old. Now, your child probably loves to sit on your lap to read a favorite picture book. She may enjoy books about animals, trucks, or children doing the every-day activities she does herself. Usually one sentence from you about each picture is enough.



"There's a brown dog!"

"Look at the snowplow!"

"That boy has red boots just like yours!"

Sometimes your child will want to read to you. She'll point to the object she recognizes and say "doggie." Don't force her to sit and listen. Allow her to point and call out the name of the object she sees.

If she does this, pay attention. Give her a smile or hug. Say, "That's right, there's the brown dog." These are the early steps in reading. What you say or do will influence your toddler's attitude toward books in the future.

Some parents store toddler's books in a basket their child can carry from one room to another. Children like to move objects, and by doing so, a book is always nearby for a quiet time!

If you haven't already done so, explore your local library. You may find a story hour or special book collection for toddlers. Looking at pictures in a book with a loving adult is better than watching a television.

Food And Nutrition



The foods we like to eat, we learn about from others. Children copy what we eat and do at mealtime.

There are many ways for you to build good eating habits for your child.

Children have an interest in food. They like to smell, touch, and look at new foods. It may take longer for your child to taste the food. Offer the food each time you serve it and eventually your child will try it. Offer the food in more than one way like mashed potatoes and boiled potato chunks.

Try many types of foods. Chop or slice foods so they are easy to eat. Food can make mealtime more fun. Food comes in different colors, textures, tastes, smells and sounds making eating fun for your child. Eat meals and snacks with your child. You still need to supervise because it's so easy for a young child to choke.

Children choke easily on small, hard, round shaped foods. Never give children under five any food that could get stuck in their throat. Avoid peanuts, hot dog slices, grapes, popcorn, hard round candies and raw carrot pieces.

The new eater can best handle foods that can be cut into pieces. Little fingers can pick these up easily. Here are some finger foods to try:

- ☞ soft raw vegetables like cucumbers and zucchini cut into sticks
- ☞ most cooked vegetables, whole or cut into sections
- ☞ hard-boiled egg slices
- ☞ cheese strips
- ☞ bite-sized pieces of soft meat, poultry and tuna
- ☞ quarter slices of bread, whole-grain muffins
- ☞ cooked noodles



Look Forward To -

Physical, language, and personality development, in Toddler Tales, 22-24 months. Also included is information on helping toddlers adjust to a new baby, toilet training, gender roles, discipline, health, activities, and food and nutrition.

Need Some Additional Information?



If you have questions about your toddler and can't find the answers, please call the Extension educator, Family Development, at your UNH Cooperative Extension County office.



Adapted from *You and Your Baby*, The Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service; *Crib Courier*, The Arizona Cooperative Extension Service; *Nourishing and Nurturing Two-Year-Olds*, New York Cooperative Extension Service; *Toddler Topics*, Cornell Cooperative Extension.

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