



The Two-Year-Old: Physical Changes

Two-year-olds are wonderful, exciting, busy and very demanding. They've come a long way in two years and there's much more growing ahead! This factsheet is designed to provide information that might be helpful as you play with and care for the two-year-old in your life.

The average two-year-old is 34 inches tall and weighs 28 pounds. This is only the average. Toddlers range in height from 31 to 37 inches and in weight from 23 to 35 pounds.

The body proportions of a two-year-old are beginning to resemble those of an older child. Her head is growing more slowly, and her arms and legs are growing more quickly than during infancy. Her chest and stomach are longer, but her legs are still short compared to the rest of her body.



During toddlerhood, developmental differences among children become noticeable. Some toddlers can walk up and down stairs alone, while others need to hold an adult's hand.

Below are some general guidelines to the physical development of a two-year-old:

By 24 months, the toddler can:

- run without falling
- walk up and down stairs
- turn pages of a book

By 27 months, the toddler can:

- walk on tiptoes
- jump with both feet
- stand on one foot

By 30 months, the toddler can:

- show a need to go to the toilet
- build simple block structures

By 36 months, the toddler can:

- hop on one foot
- begin to use scissors to cut paper
- put on coat and shoes, but can't tie bows
- climb stairs placing one foot on each step

Remember, each child is an individual developing at his or her own rate. If you have questions about your child's development, be sure to share your concerns with your health care provider.

Using the toilet

How toddlers love to play! Often, they don't want to stop to eat or use the toilet! From the time your child is 2½ years of age, you may begin to notice longer periods between his eliminations. He is beginning to set up an elimination schedule unique to his own body. Don't force too many trips to the bathroom. This may cause resistance, frustration, or undo all he has learned about using the toilet.

Some call this the “grab and run” toilet stage. Children wait until the very last second to go to the bathroom. When your toddler heads to the bathroom, she needs to get her clothes off right now.

Clothes that slip off easily will help him get through these times. When accidents happen, don’t scold your child. You might say to your child, “Accidents happen sometimes. Let’s get you all cleaned up!” Help your toddler by giving him everything he needs to clean himself with some help from you. Give him clean underwear, clothing, washcloth, and a towel.

Cleaning and dressing himself with as little help as possible will allow him to develop his independence. Being sensitive to your toddler’s need to gain control over his or her life will help build self-esteem. Toddlers feel happy when they can do things for themselves.

Sleep

Many parents and caregivers face sleep-related problems during the toddler years. Toddlers may demand elaborate, sometimes ridiculous, bed-time routines or refuse to go to bed altogether. Some toddlers wake up several times during the night and wander through the house. Here are some survival suggestions:



- Recognize that you can’t force your child to sleep.
- Recognize that sleep needs differ. Some toddlers need nine hours of sleep while others require 18. Most fall somewhere in between.
- Relax with your toddler rather than rough-house right before bed-time.
- Set up a bedtime routine so everyone knows what will happen next.
- Rely on your ability to tell the difference between “fussing” for a few minutes and potential hysteria.
- Resort to unusual as well as practical ways to make bedtime tolerable. Try putting the mattress on the floor if your child has learned to escape her crib. Be sure the bedroom is clear of toys and other objects if you have a night wanderer.

Toddlers don’t want to go to sleep for two main reasons: (1) They’re not tired. (2) They’re lonesome. Children can feel devastated if you lock their bedroom door. A safety gate works well without causing trauma or panic.

Remember, children don’t wake themselves on purpose. This won’t last forever. Ask the parents of children with early morning paper routes about how long it takes to wake a child!

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