



Let's Grow

Issue #8: 2 Years

Your toddler has a tremendous desire to develop their own way of doing things. Whether its wearing shorts in February or finishing the tower before anything else. They think in the present and usually only think of themselves. This is a good thing, as it helps your toddler develop a strong sense of self. In time, they will be able to take other people's feelings and thoughts into account. Your toddler likes to do things "right now," and doesn't always understand the need to wait. Encouraging your child to do another activity while waiting is a good way of teaching them the concept of time.

It's hard for your two-year-old to listen to a long explanation or sort out a lot of choices. Try giving your child two acceptable choices, "would you like to wear the blue shirt or the red one?" It is important for your toddler to start to do things for themselves, such as starting to dress or feed themselves. These should be encouraged in a positive way.

Understanding the kind of temperament your toddler has makes it easier for all. Every child is different. If your child is shy, don't force them to interact directly with other people. Praise them for giving a simple wave. This is how they learn polite behaviour. With encouragement and support they will become more comfortable interacting with others. Be patient and understanding. Helping your child to feel good about themselves sets the right path for this next stage of growing independence.



Feeding & Nutrition



From age two, [Canada's Food Guide](#) is a suitable resource for food and nutrition recommendations, but today's guide is not what it used to be. The Guide is now online and includes recipes, videos, tips, and more. There are now three food groups (Vegetables and Fruit, Whole Grains, and Protein Foods), and prescribed servings based on ages are gone. As the guide now says, "Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat."

At 2 years old, appetites can vary day by day. Offer 3 small meals and 2 nutrient-dense snacks per day. Health Canada recommends that one half of your child's plate be filled with vegetables and fruit, 1/4 with whole grain foods, and 1/4 with protein foods such as meats, beans, lentils, chickpeas, eggs, milk products, fish, nuts & seeds, or tofu. It recommends making water your drink of choice and choosing protein foods from plants often. Reading food labels and limiting highly processed foods can help you make the best choices for fueling your family activities. You can check out the [Food Guide Kitchen](#) for new recipes that your family may enjoy.



Help your child set healthy habits for life with the Guide's Top 5 recommended behaviours too:

1. Be mindful of your eating habits

Being mindful means taking time to eat and noticing when you are hungry and when you are full. Toddlers can sometimes struggle to take the time to eat if their attention is pulled to play or other activities. Turn off any screens during meals and snacks to help them focus on their food and their body. Setting a regular schedule helps make sure that your toddler is hungry, and ready to eat at meals and snack time. Always remember to respect your child's hunger and fullness cues. Never force them to eat when they say they are finished.



2. Cook more often

Toddlers love to be involved in whatever you are doing. Daily cooking activities are a great way for kids to gain important [fine and gross motor skills](#) and food literacy. Keep your kitchen a safe place for your toddler by helping them understand where hot surfaces or sharp objects may be and setting clear kitchen safety rules. Always supervise children when they are in the kitchen. Consider what tasks they can help with like washing veggies or dumping and mixing ingredients. Keep everyone from getting sick by teaching toddlers to wash their hands before cooking or eating. Busy families can mean rushed meal prep, so cooking with your toddler may not be a daily activity, but each time helps.

3. Enjoy your food

Everyone has food traditions that reflect their family, culture, and community. Part of the enjoyment of eating is choosing foods that reflect your traditions and preferences. Introduce your child to new cultures and ways of knowing through festivals, restaurants, or friends. There are so many foods and cultures to enjoy, teaching your child to be excited about these opportunities will prevent future picky eating.

4. Eat meals with others

With everyone's busy schedules, taking time to sit down and eat together may take some planning, but it is worth it. Children in families that eat together have better mental and physical health. Eating with friends and family keeps us connected to those we love. Create a habit of eating with others to support one another through all of life's up and downs.

5. Be aware of food marketing

Food marketing influences our food choices and encourages us to buy certain products. No one is immune to its effects. Limit your child's exposure to food marketing by avoiding screen time. Remember, your toddler can eat most of the foods you can eat. Food products designed for toddlers are rarely needed. If you are grocery shopping with your toddler, write a list and explain that you will be buying only the items on the list – or you can skip the aisles all together by grocery shopping online for pick up. Canada's Food Guide is one tool you can use to set your child up with healthy habits. Your entire family can use the guide to support your child(ren) by role modelling the positive relationship with food it helps build.

Feeding can be hard as infants and toddlers want to eat the same thing. This is called a “food jag”. It will last for a while and then go away. Please be patient. Offer small portions of foods from the food guide.

To learn more about the food guide, visit food-guide.canada.ca





Safety

Curiosity and excitement can lead your child into very dangerous situations. Keep development in mind when setting rules. Toddlers might be able to turn the taps for a bath, so make sure toddlers aren't alone in the bathroom. Check water temperatures with your elbow or wrist, swish it around and make sure there are no pockets of hot water before getting your child into the tub. Keep the water temperature in your home set no higher than 49 degrees C (120 degrees F).

Toddlers love water but have no idea of the danger. Toddlers' heads are still big compared to the rest of their body, so it means that they can lose their balance easily. Their lungs are small and can fill with water quickly. Please make sure to empty all buckets, baths and pools when not in use.

You can start to teach simple traffic rules. Always hold your child's hand when walking along the roads, sidewalks, in parking lots and especially when you cross the street. Make sure toddlers have a safety approved helmet when riding bikes and tricycles.

Remember to keep rules clear and simple, so that your child can understand them.



Positive Parenting

Toilet Learning

Toilet learning is a special time for you and your child. Relax and enjoy this stage of development. Most children are open to toilet learning between the age of 2 and 4. Let their behaviour be your guide, and not your own timetable. Girls tend to learn the art a little bit sooner than boys. Patience and encouragement will help your child feel good about their success.

Signs of readiness:

- Shows an interest in the potty.
- Tell you they need to go to the bathroom.
- Has regular bowel movements about the same time every day, or knows when they are peeing or having bowel movements.
- Stay dry in their diaper for at least 2 hours at a time.
- Understands and follows simple directions.
- Understands the concept of wet and dry and finds a dirty diaper uncomfortable.

Every child is different! If your child is not interested, this is okay. Wait until they show you they are ready.

One step at a time:

1. Decide on your toilet terminology, and encourage all family members and caregivers to be consistent. Teach the correct names for body parts - a penis is a penis. This is less confusing for all.
2. Change your toddler's diapers as soon as they are wet or soiled. This helps them to distinguish wet and dry.
3. Encourage your child to sit on the toilet or potty with their clothes on several times a day. This will help them get used to the new habit.
4. Once they are comfortable have them sit on it with their clothes off. This is practice, so don't expect results.
5. Try leaving their diaper off for a short period of time - they can go by themselves if they wish.
6. After much success with step number five, try training pants or regular underpants. Keep helping them. This new habit can take months to learn.
7. Praise all successes or partial successes.

Be supportive. Read a book to them about toilet learning. If they aren't ready, try again in a few months.

Routines

Toddlers feel more secure when we follow our daily routines. They start to know when it is time to eat and when it is bedtime. Toddlers need meals, snacks and naps at their usual time, or they can become cranky. Children rely on caregivers to follow a schedule. Brushing their teeth after each meal and at bedtime helps teach good habits. Bath time is fun - blow bubbles or pour and splash water. The most important routine is bedtime. Brushing teeth, reading a book, snuggles and kisses are a good way to get toddlers settled for sleep.

Healthy Growth and Development

These developmental milestones have been provided to show some of the skills that mark the progress of young children as they learn to communicate. You may use these milestones to help monitor your child's development. For more information visit [Early child development | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/page/early-child-development)

By 30 months most children can:

- understand the concepts of size (big and little) and quantity (a little, a lot, more)
- use some adult grammar (for example, "two cookies", "bird flying", "I jumped")
- use more than 350 words
- use action words (for example, run, spill, fall)
- begin taking turns with other children, using both toys and words
- show concern when another child is hurt or sad
- combine several actions in play (for example, feed a doll then put it to sleep, put blocks in train then drive train and drop blocks off)
- include sounds at the beginning of most words (for example, say "cat" rather than "at")
- produce words with two or more syllables or beats (for example, "ba-na-na", "com-pu-ter", "a-pple")
- recognize familiar logos and signs, for example stop sign
- remember and understand familiar stories

Early Years Check-In

As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in your child's growth. The Early Years Check-In is a tool that helps you to identify any concerns about your child's development. The results can be used to start a conversation with an early years professional about any concerns you may have. Use this simple and convenient tool to quickly identify any concerns you may have about how your child is developing. [Early Years Check-In - Welcome | Health HQ](https://www.health.hq.ca/early-years-check-in)



Let's Talk

Your child is starting to learn about where things are, like the ball is under the chair. Play a hide and seek game with them. Hide their toys around the room and ask: "Is it on the table?" "Is it in your toy box?"

Remember to share books with them. They will especially like books with flaps that they can flip over and see what's underneath. Toddlers like books with heavy pages that they can turn more easily. Point out objects, people, and actions when you are reading with them! Reading books and singing songs together are a special time for them to share the world with you!

Let's Play

Toddlers still like to play with all their old toys, along with some new ones to challenge their physical and intellectual growth. Please encourage their search for knowledge. They need to know why things work the way they do. They are learning to entertain themselves, but still often need someone to play alongside them. They are beginning to learn to be able to take turns in play. Come play!

Exploring the Senses

- Texture books, peek a boo books and puzzles
- A surprise bag – hide a familiar toy in it for them to feel and guess what it is
- Warm water play/cool water play, washing dolls is a fun activity
- Play dough to roll, squish and push things into (with supervision only)
- Musical instruments including a toddler tape recorder or homemade shaker
- Play in the mud and in a pile of leaves
- Help them notice smells and sounds around the house and in our neighbourhood

Visit Play&Learn for expert reviewed games and activities to do with your child to help them develop their skills. [Play & Learn - Games and Activities-Early Child Development | Health HQ](#)



Help! Monsters!

Sometimes children start waking in the night at this age. Chronic sleep deprivation can take its toll on your energy and patience levels. Trading the “night shifts” with a support person can help with catching up on your sleep.

There are a few reasons why children don't sleep through the night:

- Physical discomfort; teething, ear infections, and illness.
- Environment; becoming too hot or too cold in the night or wetting the bed. Blankets may fall off or the room is too hot.
- Nightmares or bad dreams; these can be related to daytime events such as new caregiver, starting preschool, a scary movie or story. Gently reassure and comfort them without confirming their fears. Then continue the normal bedtime routine.
- Night terrors; these are different to nightmares as the child does not wake with these. Your toddler may let out a terrifying yell, sit upright in bed with eyes wide open and cry. They're unaware of their surroundings and may not recognize you. It is impossible to wake the child and you should not try. Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns.

Meeting Friends

Toddlers are very curious about the world around them. Be patient with them. They do not always want to share toys with friends but like to be around other children. You can take them to visit new places. Resources centres, drop-ins, libraries and community playgroups are good places for them to practice their social skills. While visiting let them have some independence and feel secure. Let them do things themselves - that's how they learn.

New Baby

If you are bringing a new baby home, that can be a big change for your toddler. Let them know that they are not alone and that they don't need to feel insecure. Make sure to spend some time to make them feel important. Tell them what it will be like before bringing a new baby home. Let them be active in helping to prepare for a new sibling. They can help pick out sleepers or toys. Don't be upset if they don't like the baby right away. It might take some time for your toddler to like their new sibling. There are lots of resources available about preparing your toddler for becoming an older sibling.





For More Information

- The Healthy Babies Healthy Children program provides information and home visits to parents who are eligible and need more support during pregnancy, after their baby is born and as their child grows. For more information or to self-refer to the program visit Grey Bruce Public Health's website at [Home Visiting Program](#) (publichealthgreybruce.on.ca) Call Grey Bruce Public Health at 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456 extension 5.
- 211 quickly and confidentially connects people to social services and community programs across Ontario. 211 is available by phone for those looking to speak to a friendly voice or by text, online search, email or chat. Service is available in multiple languages.
- Call 811 to find health services or information or get health advice from a registered nurse. Toll free TTY line: [1-866-797-0007](tel:1-866-797-0007). Live chat is also available. [Health811 - Health811 \(ontario.ca\)](#)
- Looking for guidance about food and nutrition, including infant and child feeding? Residents of Ontario can connect with a Registered Dietitian to access free nutrition information and advice by calling 811 or starting a chat at [Health811](#).
- Caring for Kids, a website developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society, provides parents with information about their child's health and well-being. [Home | Caring for kids \(cps.ca\)](#)
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free programs for families and children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people and get advice from early childhood professionals.
 - Find an EarlyON child and family centre: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre>
 - For more information about Grey County: <https://www.grey.ca/resident-services/community-services/early-learning-and-child-care/earlyon>
 - For more information about Bruce County: <https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/human-services/earlyon>
- Discover how to prevent injuries before they happen – Parachute: www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics