

## **FROM ONE TO TWO YEARS**

### **Babies become toddlers**

#### **Keeping young toddlers healthy**

##### **At twelve months babies usually have a full health check**

At twelve months babies usually receive a full health check and this is your opportunity to ask health visitors and health professionals questions and discuss any issues which are troubling you. Within a month of their first birthday they will receive their next set of vaccinations MMR, Hib/MenC and PCV. ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations))

##### **Babies will tell you that they are ready to start weaning by accepting soft finger foods**

Babies will probably have started eating solid foods by 12 months and they should be encouraged to try and eat independently using fingers or a spoon even though this may be messy. A varied and healthy diet should be offered in small portions and if your baby does not seem to like a certain food initially it is good practice to offer it again as it may just be a case of the baby getting used to different textures, tastes and colours. Babies will usually know when they are full and should never be forced to eat food. They should always be supervised when eating and take care not to offer food on which your baby may choke e.g. nuts. By age one babies should be encouraged to change from using a bottle to an open cup or free flow cup without a valve. This will help them sip rather than suck which is better for their teeth.

##### **Babies usually become active and mobile during this period and physical demands on carers may increase**

Babies will start to pull themselves up and want to begin walking at some point in this period and they will need opportunities to practice their new-found skills and develop their muscles and strength. They will change rapidly and may start to run and be able to kick a ball in the second year. They need lots of opportunities for healthy physical activities as physical development and brain development are closely linked. The more mobile a baby becomes the more supervision is needed which puts extra demands on parents and carers. It is important that parents and carers keep themselves healthy and look after their own well-being in order to keep up with the demands of an increasingly mobile toddler.

##### **Babies come to recognise themselves as independent beings with strong feelings during this period**

As babies become more independent and mobile they begin to recognise themselves as separate from their parents. They want to establish themselves as a person in their own right. They may become frustrated when they are unable to make their view or desires known and this may result in temper tantrums of varying intensity. Many parents find this stage in their toddler's development hard to manage. It is best to try to remain calm in these situations and initially try to fathom why the toddler is frustrated, maybe by suggesting that he wants certain things such as food, a sleep, a drink. If the tantrum continues distraction may help or holding

them and taking them away from the situation completely. Parents need to be reassured that this behaviour is normal and that the toddler or young child will grow out of it at some point. More helpful information can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/Pages/temper-tantrums.aspx#close>

### **Babies still rely on special people for security and comfort**

A baby will still depend on key people for reassurance and confidence and want these people close by particularly if trying something new and unfamiliar. They may show an interest in other young children although they may not yet be ready to socialise. It is a beneficial experience for a baby to see and be with other young children and this will happen naturally if your baby is at a nursery. Children reach developmental stages at very different ages and no two children are alike, however a rough guide can be found at [www.nhs.uk/Tools/developmental](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/developmental)

## **Keeping young toddlers safe**

### **Young toddlers cannot keep themselves safe**

It is entirely the responsibility of the adults caring for the child to keep them safe. Toddlers cannot keep themselves safe. They are too young to understand rules and any explanations that you might give so adults need to be vigilant in caring for the toddler. There are very many real dangers for toddlers mainly because of their curiosity about the world around them. This is the age when serious accidents can happen, for example from being left alone in the bath or playing with nappy sacks which are known to have caused suffocation. The sections below give you some guidance on how to minimise these dangers.

### **At the time when children start to walk their head is still too heavy for their body which often causes them to lose balance and tumble over**

As a toddler becomes more mobile so the likelihood of the toddler getting hurt increases and beginning to walk can in itself be a dangerous activity. At this stage children's heads are still heavy in proportion to their bodies, a fact which does not help balance in the first stages of walking. Consequently toddlers fall over a lot. Most of these falls are unlikely to be serious but it is important that babies who are just beginning to walk are supervised carefully and that any potential hazards are removed. Surfaces on which a baby is walking are an important factor but soft surfaces will lessen the impact of falling.

### **Making the home safe**

A check of the home needs to be carried out with the toddler in mind as opposed to the non-walking baby. Toddlers will reach out and grasp for anything completely unaware of the potential dangers. For example are there things like hanging wires or curtain cords that the toddler might get caught up in? Can the toddler pull anything down on himself, such as a hot kettle or a pan? Is the toddler protected from electricity and gas outlets and are plug sockets covered? Are there breakables in range which the toddler can reach and harm himself with? Are all cleaning products and other toxic substances out of reach? Can they access the stairs or outdoors without an adult? Although toddlers need to be within sight all the time it is sensible to remove things which could be dangerous to them.

### **Making the yard or garden safe**

Children benefit from being outdoors and seeing the world around them and the back yard or garden gives young children opportunities to practise their developing physical skills. Just as indoors toddlers are too young to recognise hazards so adults have to take steps to make sure the outdoors is safe. It is a good idea to make soft surfaces, such as a piece of old carpet in the yard or have grass, where if they fall heavily they are less likely hurt themselves badly. Are there things around over which the toddler may trip? Are there glass structures which may be fallen into? Are there any unsafe gardening implements around? Is there a fish pond or any substantial amount of water anywhere? These should be fenced off so that the toddler cannot get to them. If there are pets in the home they should never be left alone with a toddler. Young children cannot know how to treat pets and pets do not understand the nature of children and each can cause the other harm.

### **All external boundaries should be secure**

Boundaries to an outside area must be made very secure so that the toddler cannot wander onto the street or into the road. Toddlers are very small and can get through very small spaces and although adults may intend to watch the toddler every minute distractions come along so that it is always best practice to play it safe and make sure fences, hedges and gates are one hundred percent toddler proof.

## **Helping young toddlers learn**

### **Making opportunities for physical activity helps brain development**

Brain development and physical activity are closely linked throughout life and being physically active helps the toddler's brain networks to increase. Toddlers need to realise what their body can do in the space around them and need to practise their gross motor skills. These are the big movements used in running, jumping, climbing, rolling over which help them to develop their finer motor skills using their hands and fingers for putting lego together, building a tower, putting rings on a stand. Opportunity and safe spaces need to be provided for them to practise these physical skills. Go to the website below to learn about play opportunities which are ideal for children of this age.

[www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/heuristic-play](http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/articles/heuristic-play)

### **Talking to your toddler has enormous benefits for intellectual development**

It is important to talk to a child from birth and to continue talking and explaining throughout childhood. Children not only need to hear the spoken word, they acquire ten words a day at this stage, but need to be involved in conversations even if responses are limited. They need to hear the rhythms of conversations, hear the pauses and stops for responses and they need to feel part of this unique human activity. They will respond using sounds and begin to use words so they need time to respond. Talking with a child (not talking at a child) makes them feel included and accepted. This is why the value of real conversations with people who display facial expressions can never be taken over by television or a computer. Not only do children acquire words and learn patterns of speech by hearing talk but they are emotionally involved with the speaker and are learning to become part of the family or social group.

### **Reading stories and looking at books with your child helps the brain to grow**

Snuggling up and reading stories with your toddler and giving them this special time has many benefits beyond just learning new vocabulary and grammar. You are their learning companion in so many areas. They will delight in looking at the pictures and soon learn which way up the book should be held, which is the front and which is the back, and they will soon have special stories which they will want to see and hear again and again. Nurturing a child's love of books is a major factor in reading readiness as only if children have experienced the delight and joy of the written word will they want to read themselves in order to repeat that pleasure.

### **Providing items such as crayon and paint improve manipulative skills and support eye-hand co-ordination**

As children progress through this second year and their physical skills develop they will enjoy using crayons, paint, manipulating small items and will take pleasure in fitting one thing into another. These activities help them to develop their skills for more complex activities such as writing. They will enjoy 'posting' shapes. A cardboard box with different sizes and shapes of holes can be made for posting safe household items. This will benefit the child as much as a commercially produced item. They may want to post everything they can find and repeat the activity again and again which is perfectly normal as they try to make sense of the world. Safe household items for investigating and making noises with are often favoured by children more than purchased ones. Collections of these in a basket or box which the child can reach unaided provide opportunities for in depth and sustained investigation. Children are interested in most things and parents can be very creative about the resources and experiences they wish to make available to their child, taking care they are safe to handle.

### **Playing alongside your toddler in make - believe play supports developing imagination**

Children almost always welcome a companion in their investigations and learning and will particularly want you to play with them in their imaginative play. They will enjoy pretending to talk on the phone to someone or pretending to feed a baby. Adults need to join in this form of play in order to help their imagination grow. Items used in imaginative play do not always need to be real but one thing can be used to represent another. Wooden pegs may be people, small cardboard boxes can be a car and lengths of material can be any kind of dressing up clothes. At this stage toddlers will also enjoy building with blocks and making these balance and stand in a tower but if blocks are not available then strong cardboard containers will be fine. It is surprising how many safe household items can be used to good effect in children's play.

*Children with disabilities may have a wider range of developmental milestones and so their needs may differ - always consult with your Doctor, Health Visitor or Nursery who will be able to provide more information on supporting individual children's development.*

**Enjoy being with your child being at this age, as that is the best way to prepare them for the next stage of their learning and development!**