

# AGES & STAGES

## 2-YEAR OLDS

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Two-year-olds like to be independent! Favorite words are "Mine" and "No" and "I do it!" Emotions take on a roller coaster-like quality as 2-year-olds can go from excitement to anger to laughter within a few moments. A great deal of time is spent exploring, pushing, pulling, filling, dumping, and touching.

Two-year-olds are surer of themselves and of what they can do as they grow. Their bodies stretch out, and most will lose the potbellied look during this third year of life. Their appetites lessen, and they may be particular about food. They are still growing fairly rapidly.

Toddlers are very attached to their caregivers. You may find them trying out new ideas and exploring their surroundings, but still staying close to you as they need a base of support and trust. Two-year-olds are usually interested in other children. However, social interest and physical abilities sometimes collide as a hug becomes a tackle and a gentle pat becomes a whack. You will need to teach children how to express affection appropriately.

### **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- plays alongside others more than with them
- acts shy around strangers
- likes to imitate parents
- easily frustrated
- affectionate - hugs and kisses
- insists on trying to do several tasks without help
- enjoys simple make-believe like talking on phone, putting on hat
- very possessive - offers toys to other children but then wants them back
- needs considerable time to change activities
- capable of frequent tantrums, which are often a result of his inability to express himself even though he has ideas
- can show aggressive behavior and the intent to hurt others
- can be extremely demanding and persistent
- destructive to objects around him when frustrated and angry
- possessive about caregiver's attention; show feelings of jealousy
- has fears and nightmares
- has sense of humor; capable of laughter
- shows interest in dressing, brushing hair and teeth
- cannot sit still or play with a toy for more than a few minutes

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

- weight: 22-38 pounds
- height: 32-40 inches
- has almost a full set of teeth
- walks up and down stairs by holding onto railing
- feeds self with spoon
- experiments by touching, smelling, and tasting
- likes to push, pull, fill, and dump
- can turn pages of a book
- stacks 4-6 objects
- scribbles vigorously with crayons or markers
- many children (but not all) will learn to use toilet
- walks without help
- walks backwards
- tosses or rolls a large ball
- stoops or squats
- opens cabinets, drawers
- can bend over to pick up toy without falling

## **INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

- enjoys simple stories, rhymes, and songs
- uses 2-3 word sentences
- says names of toys
- hums or tries to sing
- enjoys looking at books
- points to eyes, ears, or nose when asked
- repeats words
- interested in learning how to use common items

## **IDEAS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

- Baby-proof your house again. Two-year-olds are taller and more skillful at opening doors and getting into mischief.
- Read aloud to children every day. Encourage toddlers to look at books with large pictures and sturdy pages. Simple story lines are best.
- Try to expand a 2-year-old's knowledge of words and sentence structure. Let her hear the correct word order, but don't demand that she imitate you. For example, if she says "more juice," say "Anna wants more orange juice."
- Encourage them to identify noises like vacuum, tap water, dogs barking, thunder, airplane, and car.
- Let toddlers help you with simple chores such as picking up toys or putting clothes in the laundry basket. Encourage them to name things that you are using.
- Add new information to what a child is saying. "Yes that's a blanket, a soft, warm blanket."

- Give toddlers clear and simple choices. "Do you want to drink milk or juice? Do you want to wear green or blue socks?"
- Know how to handle a temper tantrum:
  1. don't yell or hit the child,
  2. remain calm,
  3. talk in soothing tone,
  4. put your hand gently on child's arm if possible.
- Provide newspaper, flattened grocery sacks, and computer scraps for drawing and painting. Color books, workbooks, and ditto sheets are not recommended.
- Avoid making models of clay or drawing pictures for children to copy. They learn more by working out their own ideas, and adult-induced items can actually hinder learning.
- Do not expect toddlers to share or take turns. Right now they are focused on learning how to physically handle themselves and on learning to talk. Learning to share will come later.
- Provide spaces where toddlers can spend time alone. An old cardboard box or a blanket over a card table works great.
- Avoid pressuring children to be right or left handed. A few 2-year-olds will begin to show preference for one hand, but many children will continue to use both hands for a few years.
- Provide safe outlets for physical activity and space exploration like small steps, boxes, barrels, tires, pulling and pushing toys, ride-on and ride-in toys.
- Provide opportunities for learning about cause and effect by giving toddlers many opportunities to fill, dump, collect, gather, give, hide, and seek.
- Play "parade" or "follow the leader." Sing sequential songs like "Old MacDonald" to explain sequences.
- Encourage verbal skills by giving simple directions like "Close the door, please" or "Would you pick up the doll?"
- Encourage a toddler's love for imitation by teaching fingerplays and songs. Play "you are a mirror." Stand or sit facing the children and have them copy everything you do. Reverse roles and let the child lead while you mirror the actions.
- Encourage sand, mud, clay, and water play. Toddlers enjoy messy play and learn a great deal from mixing, sifting, pouring, stirring, and shaping.

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