

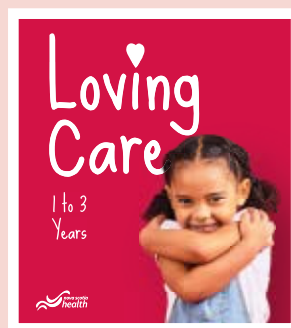
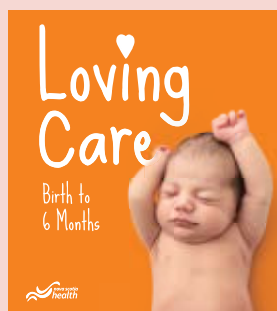
Loving Care

1 to 3
Years



Loving Care is a series of four books for parents of children from birth to age 3 developed by Nova Scotia’s Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health. As a public health resource, **Loving Care** focuses on information that will help young families to protect, promote, or improve their health, and to prevent illness, injury or disability.

Three of the **Loving Care** books focus on babies and children at specific ages—**Birth to 6 Months**, **6 to 12 Months**, and **1 to 3 Years**. The fourth book—**Loving Care: Parents and Families**—offers information that will be useful to families whatever their child’s age. You’ll find references to **Parents and Families** in all of the other books.



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The information in this book is up to date as of the date of printing. This information is not a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Introduction

Loving Care is the title of this series of books for parents. Each book gives information based on the age of your baby or child. We try to answer the questions you'll have as your tiny newborn grows into a busy toddler. This book gives you information about your toddler from ages 1 to 3 years.

Children are born into many kinds of families. You may be on your own, married, or in a relationship. You may be a parent by birth, surrogacy, adoption, or fostering. You may have lots of family around or be far from home. You may have one baby, or two, or more!

Children are raised by many different kinds of parents. You may be young or an older parent, able-bodied or living with a disability. You may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, queer or straight. You may be male, female, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, non-binary, queer or cisgender. You may be Indigenous, new to Canada, or from a family who's lived here for generations with Acadian, African, Asian, European, or Middle-Eastern roots.

This book is written for all the parents and families that make Nova Scotia a good place to live.

Did you know?

The information in all of the **Loving Care** books applies mainly to healthy, full-term babies.

If your child was premature or has special needs, you'll still find these books helpful. However, you may want to look for more information from your health care provider and other sources.



Introduction

Double check

In **Loving Care** we use the term “health care provider” to mean professionals who offer primary health care services to parents and families.

As well, Public Health and many other professionals and community resources are available to offer advice and support.

You’ll find more information in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Double check

Don’t forget about **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. It contains information that will continue to be helpful as your baby grows.

Did you know?

Some people use the term “breasts” and some use “chest” to talk about their body. Similarly, the term “breastfeeding” can be used to explain a method of infant feeding, and some people use “chestfeeding”, “bodyfeeding” or “nursing.” You can decide your own preferences and share them with your health care team.

Becoming a parent is the start of a relationship that lasts forever. All parents wonder if they’ll be a good parent, if they’ll know what to do. You grow and learn as a parent by watching and listening to your child. Your child grows and learns with your love and support.

Life is a journey of discovery that you and your child are taking together. No parent starts out having all the answers. Every day brings something new. You and your child will both discover new skills and new strengths as you go along.

We hope these books will help you on your journey and will help you to make your own decisions about what’s best for you and your family.

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Building love, trust, and confidence

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“Even though my toddler is becoming more independent every day, they’re still my baby! They cry when I leave them and they are shy with strangers. Are they too attached?”

Did you know?

You can continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your toddler enjoy it.

Breastfeeding fosters a close and comforting relationship between you and your child. The time you spend breastfeeding is special for you both.

Attachment

The bond between you and your toddler grows stronger every time you cuddle or care for them, respond to their needs, kiss away their tears, talk to them, sing to them, or play with them.

A strong attachment to you affects how your child’s brain develops. It shapes the way your toddler will learn, grow, and respond to people for their whole life. Healthy attachments will help your child to:

- Trust other people
- Be eager to learn and to try new things
- Feel good about themselves
- Care about others and how they feel
- Express how they feel
- Get along with other people
- Come to you with their problems

The relationship you have with your toddler will be the model for the other relationships they will have as they grow up. A strong attachment to you will give them a strong base for building healthy relationships throughout their life.

Your toddler can’t be too attached!



Did you know?

“Attachment” means the bond between a child and their most important caregivers—usually their parents and other family members.

Toddlers can be very fond of a special toy or blanket, but this is not the same as attachment to a parent. These things can offer comfort, but when a child is hurt, sick, or upset, they need more than a toy. They need your love and care.

Did you know?

Sometimes things happen that make you wonder if you’ve missed your chance for attachment.

- You may be adopting or fostering a toddler, or forming a blended family. Use the information in this book. Responding to your child’s needs will build love and trust at any age.
- You may be separated from your toddler. (See **page 13**, “**Building attachment when you are away from your child.**”)
- You may have been suffering from depression and unable to respond to your baby. (See **Loving Care: Parents and Families** for more information on depression.)

It’s never too late to build or strengthen the bonds between you and your child.



Attachment and your toddler's brain

When a baby is born, their brain is still developing. It continues to grow and develop along with their body. This means that the things that happen during the early years of life will affect the way your toddler's brain develops.

Your toddler learns to see the world as a good place when you respond to their needs with love and care—especially when they are sick, hurt, or upset. They become strongly attached to you. They learn that they matter. They learn what it feels like to be loved.

When you ignore your child's needs or don't respond to their cues, they learn to see the world as a place that they can't depend on. They learn that they don't matter and that they can't get what they need.

The way your toddler sees themselves and the world becomes built into their brain as it develops. As they grow, they carry this with them and it affects how they respond to people and experiences.



Stages of attachment

During the first year of your baby's life, you and your baby built your attachment to each other. During this time, your baby needed to be held close and touched gently to feel secure.

By the end of the first year, your toddler begins to explore the world. But they still come back to you for comfort when they're afraid or lonely.

Many toddlers are shy with strangers. This is because they now know the difference between the people they are attached to and everyone else. They may also be upset when you go away. They know they need you, but don't yet understand that you will return.

Did you know?

Even the most securely attached toddler has times when they feel worried or insecure. They'll show this by:

- Hiding behind you
- Climbing onto your lap
- Wanting to be held
- Hiding their face in your neck
- Wanting to breastfeed more often

Follow your toddler's cues and give them the closeness and cuddling they need to feel safe again.

After your toddler is about 2 years old, their way of showing their attachment slowly begins to change. They still need the comfort of hugs and kisses, but they'll begin to get better at talking about what they want and feel. They'll also—very slowly!—get better at waiting for what they want. This makes it easier for them to understand that when people they love go away, they come back.

When a toddler is strongly attached, they usually show it in these ways:

- **They depend on you for love and comfort.** You are the safe centre of their life. The bond between you gives them the confidence to reach out and explore because they know they can depend on you to be there when they need you.
- **They are upset when you go away.** Your toddler knows how much they need you and doesn't like it when you go away. Over time, your child begins to learn that when you leave, you come back.
- **They are happy when you return.** Even when your child has gotten to the point where they aren't too upset when you leave, they're still glad to see you come back!

Remember that every child is different. Your child may show their attachment in other ways. You know your child best.



Helping your toddler develop new relationships

As your toddler grows, their world grows too. There will be more and more people in it—extended family members, family friends, caregivers, teachers, and others.

To help your toddler learn to love and trust the new people in their life:

- **Be with them when they meet anyone new.** Give your toddler time to get used to new people. Don't leave them alone with someone they don't know. Help them get to know and have fun with new people while you're there with them.
- **Show them how much YOU like the new people.** Let them know that you're glad to see the new people. Tell your toddler what you like about them.
- **Help your child remember people they don't see often.** Put a photo on the fridge—a photo of the person with your toddler is especially good. Show it to your toddler often.
- **Make a picture book with photos of your toddler with all of the people who know and love them.** This can include you, siblings, grandparents, other relatives, caregivers, and friends. Look at it often and talk about everyone in it and how much they love your toddler.

Building attachment when you are away from your child

Some parents find that they must be away from their toddler for long periods of time—for example, when working away from home.

No matter what your child's age or what's happening in your life, there are still ways you can help them feel safe and secure.

When you're away:

- **Show your child that they are always important to you.**

Show them that you think about them when you aren't together. Call them while you're away. When you return, tell them that you missed them.

You can also:

- Record a bedtime story so they can hear your voice while you're away.
- Make a scrapbook of photos of you and your toddler together.
- Send letters while you're away.
- Leave a piece of your clothing for them to hug when they miss you.

Your partner(s)—or whoever cares for your child while you are away—can help by talking about you while you're away.

Building love, trust, and confidence

Did you know?

Signs that your toddler may **not** be strongly attached include:

- They don't seem to care when you leave. They ignore you when you return.
- They're very clingy and afraid when you leave, but angry and upset when you return. Nothing you do comforts them.

Talk to a health care provider if you are concerned about your toddler's attachment to you.





When you come home:

- **Be patient when you return after a long absence.** Give your child time to remember you.
- **Respond consistently with love and comfort.** Help them learn they can depend on you when they need you.
- **Spend lots of time with your toddler.** Play together. Have fun. Be silly. Read and sing together. Go for walks. Follow their lead. Do things that your toddler is interested in.
- **Have a regular daily routine.** Continue to have meals, snacks, bedtime, naps, and other activities at about the same time every day. This kind of routine helps your toddler to feel safe.
- **Support your child's other relationships.** Relationships with grandparents and child care providers are important to your child. They are a part of your child's life. Your child will feel safe if you welcome people who are important to them as part of your life too.

Remember: All children are different. Your child's temperament will have a big impact on how they react to being separated from someone they love. Some children react strongly, while others seem to take it more calmly.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem means feeling good about yourself. It means believing that you matter, that you deserve to be loved, and that you have a place in the world.

A strong, healthy attachment to you is where your toddler's self-esteem begins.

To help your toddler build self-esteem:

- **Give them chances to learn, explore, and try new things.** Toddlers build self-esteem by trying new things over and over until they finally succeed in doing them. When they learn a new skill, they learn more about what they can do. They begin to believe that they are able to do many things. Their self-esteem grows.
- **Let your child do things for themselves.** Toddlers naturally want to do things on their own. Give your child a chance to succeed and learn. When they succeed at something, they feel good. This gives them the confidence to try something else. Don't be too quick to help when your child is trying to do something for themselves. Give them time to figure it out. Show them you believe in them. Tell them, "You can do it!" or "Keep trying." Facing a challenge and succeeding builds confidence and self-esteem. When they need help, offer just enough to keep them going. Don't worry about doing everything perfectly. Praise them for trying.
- **Be a good example.** Let your toddler see you try to figure things out. Show them that even when something is difficult, you keep trying.

Double check

Your self-esteem is important too! Taking care of yourself is not selfish.

You'll find information on self-esteem, taking care of yourself and handling problems in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Double check

Temperament and self-esteem

How you respond to your toddler's temperament will affect how they see themselves. If you see your child as special and lovable just as they are, they'll develop a strong sense of self-esteem.

Remember: You can't change your toddler's temperament. For more information on temperament and how it can affect behaviour, see **page 67**.

Did you know?

Advertising and self-esteem

Advertising and marketing messages can affect your child's self-esteem. The messages your child hears on TV and in other places can affect how they feel about their body and what they want to eat, wear, and play with. These messages can also lead your child to judge others based on things like the clothes they wear and the toys they play with.

Advertising can affect even a very young child. Be aware of these messages. Talk to your child about what they see and hear. Let your child enjoy childhood. Try to limit the amount of advertising they see.

For more information on marketing to children, see the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

- **Treat your child respectfully.** Listen when they talk. Pay attention to their cues. Don't tease them or make fun of them when they try new things. Avoid nicknames that could embarrass your child when they get older. It's also not helpful to give your child a label—like telling others that they're “shy,” “difficult,” “a picky eater,” or “bad.” These kinds of labels may make your toddler feel bad about themselves as they get older.
- **Accept your child for who they are.** Every toddler is different. Each will follow their own path as they grow and develop. Love and accept them for who they are. Don't compare your toddler's size, shape, or abilities with anyone else. Teach them that people come in different shapes and sizes. Help them understand that people have different abilities. Help them to see and value their own talents and abilities.

Remember that your toddler sees themselves through your eyes. If you tell and show your child that they are special and lovable, and that they are important to you, they will develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.



Healthy sexual development

Every person is a sexual being from birth until death. Sexuality is a natural part of all of our lives. No matter our country, culture, or religion, we all develop as sexual beings.

For very young children, sexuality includes:

- How we feel about ourselves
- How we feel about our bodies
- How we relate to others

As children get older, they begin to think about other parts of their identity, such as gender and sexual orientation.

Between ages 1 and 3 years, it's normal for children to:

- Be curious about their own bodies and about other people's bodies
- Begin to notice differences between bodies
- Enjoy being naked
- Explore their own bodies, including their genitals
- Masturbate—touch their genitals because it feels good
- Talk about their bodies
- Be able to understand the correct words for body parts



What parents can do

Learning about sexuality starts at birth and continues for as long as we live.

As a parent, you are your children's first and most important teacher. Many parents find talking about sexuality uncomfortable. But it's an important part of your child's development and worth the effort. It may help you to know that you teach your children a lot about sexuality and about your family's values by how you relate to them and to other family members.

- Your gentle care teaches children about love and affection.
- Treating your children with love and respect teaches them about healthy relationships.
- Your everyday actions teach them your values and what you think is right and wrong.
- The way you react to normal behaviour like masturbation and to your children's genitals—for example during diaper changes or while learning to use the toilet—affects how they feel about their body.



To help your child develop healthy feelings about sexuality:

- **Know what to expect.** It's normal and healthy for toddlers to be curious about all parts of their body. It's normal for them to touch their genitals—it feels good and is comforting. It's normal for them to have erections or vaginal wetness—it's a physical reflex.
- **Be aware of how you react.** It's important for children to feel good about all of their body parts, including their genitals. Be aware of how you react to poop and pee when changing diapers and while toddlers are learning to use the toilet. Treat it as normal and natural.

Try not to make faces or seem disgusted. Toddlers touch their genitals the way they touch any part of their body. It's normal and natural for them to do this. When children touch themselves in private, ignore it or give them something else to do.

- **Teach your child that everyone is different.** People can look different from one another. People can live in different kinds of families. This is okay.
- **Teach the correct names for all body parts.** Children need to learn the words “penis,” “vulva,” and “anus” just as much as they need to learn “ear,” “knee,” and “hand.” Bath time and diaper changes can be good times to teach these words for body parts.

Knowing the names of all their body parts helps children develop self-esteem and a healthy body image. It also makes it possible for them to talk about their body.
- **Teach your child what's okay and what's not. There are things that are okay to do in private, but not in public.** Teach your children that the sexual parts of their body are private. Tell children clearly what is okay and what isn't without making them feel guilty or ashamed. You could say, “I know it feels good when you touch your body like that but it's something that you do when you're by yourself at home.”

- **Teach children that their body belongs to them.** They have the right to decide who can and can't touch their body. They have a right to say "No" when they don't want someone to touch them. Help your children understand this by not forcing them to sit on laps or kiss people when they don't want to. Teach your children that other people's bodies are private, too.
- **Answer questions clearly and simply.** Questions about where babies come from or why some children have penises are a chance to start talking about sexuality. All children are different. Some ask lots of questions. Others don't. There are good books about sexuality for children of all ages. Many parents find these helpful in answering questions. Books can also be a good way to start talking about sexuality when children don't ask questions.
- **Take advantage of "teachable moments."** Teachable moments happen often. For example, you can look at family photos and talk about relationships. "Pat and Jamie are married." Or if a pet is pregnant, you can talk about where puppies and babies come from. Be sure to talk at a level your children are able to understand. If they want more information, they'll ask.

Whether you know it or not, you are teaching your children about sexuality every day. You can help them develop healthy feelings about sexuality by continuing to learn about it yourself. Read about sexuality. Talk about sexuality with people whose ideas you respect.

Did you know?

Many parents want more information about sexuality.

Some good sources of information are:

- Health care providers
- Public health staff (contact information, **page 188**)
- Libraries (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**)
- Sexual health centres (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**)

The more you know, the more comfortable you'll be in talking about sexuality with your children. If you start talking with your children about sexuality when they're young, it will likely be easier to talk with them as they grow older.

When you are open and honest about sexuality, you are teaching them that they can trust you and talk to you. They'll know that when they come to you with questions you'll listen respectfully and answer honestly.



A photograph of a man in a green t-shirt hugging a young child in a yellow and blue striped shirt in a kitchen. The man is seen from the back, and the child is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The kitchen background includes a microwave, shelves with various items, and a window.

Your toddler wants you to know...

Hug me. Pay attention to me. I need to know that you'll love me forever. This will help me to feel good about who I am and what I can do.





Development

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“My baby isn’t such a baby anymore! They’re growing fast and it seems like they can do something new every day. What can I expect?”



Developing skills

Between the ages of 12 and 36 months, your baby will grow into a toddler. They’re no longer a baby, but they’re not quite a “big kid” yet either.

Your toddler’s stage of development has a big effect on when they’re ready for things like learning to use the toilet and moving to a bed.

Remember that your toddler will grow and develop in their own way, at their own speed. Every child is different—for example, some develop muscle skills sooner than they develop speaking skills. Some develop speaking skills sooner than muscle skills.

Give your toddler the time and love they need to grow and develop in their own way.

Did you know?

Languages and development

The ability to speak more than one language is a gift many families are able to give to their children. It may seem that your child learns to speak more slowly when learning two or more languages. This is common. As children develop, most do fine in more than one language.

Did you know?

Breastfeeding and development

Breastfeeding continues to give your child the nourishment they need to grow and develop. As your toddler develops, your breastmilk changes to meet their changing needs.

Breastfeeding to 2 years and beyond has many benefits for your toddler.

New skills to watch for

Between 12 and 18 months, your toddler will learn to...

Walk by themselves.

Push and pull things while walking.

Crawl upstairs or walk upstairs holding your hand. Crawl backwards downstairs.

Bend over or squat to pick things up.

Stack 2 blocks, then 3 blocks, then 4 blocks.

Hold and drink from a cup. Drink from a straw.

Pick up and eat finger food.

Take off some clothes—like shoes, socks, mittens and hats.

Turn pages in a book—probably more than one at a time!

Roll and throw a ball.

Put small things through holes into a container.

Say about 10 words, but understand more words than they can say.

Respond to their own name.

Use some familiar words, like, “No,” “Mine,” “Bye-bye,” and “Uh-oh.”

Understand simple questions and directions. “Roll the ball.” “Say goodnight.”

Use words and actions to communicate—like pointing and saying, “Milk,” to get a drink, or waving and saying “Bye-bye.”

Use two-word sentences— “What’s that?” “All gone.”

Copy what adults and other kids do. Try to copy what they say.

Know they’re a separate person. Know themselves when they see their face in a mirror. Call themselves by name.

Show love for parents and family.



Between 18 and 24 months, your toddler will learn to...

Stand on tiptoes.

Walk backwards and sideways.

Walk downstairs holding your hand.

Run, jump, and hop.

Dance to music.

Push themselves along on a riding toy.

Climb on and off furniture.

Kick a ball.

Stack as many as 6 blocks.

Put things into a small container.

Sort toys and other things by shape or colour.

Open cabinets and drawers.
Turn knobs.

Scribble with a large crayon.

Eat with a spoon without too much mess.

Eat most foods without gagging.

Say about 50 words.

Point to people or things when you say their name. Point to a picture of a ball when you ask, “Where’s the ball?”

Say the names of familiar people, animals or parts of their body. Point to parts of their body if you ask. For example, “Where’s your knee?”

Use sentences with 3 or more words—
“Doggy go bye-bye.” “Me do it!”

Follow simple directions. “Hold my hand.” “Close the door.”

Make-believe and pretend when playing—like pretending to talk on the phone, feed a teddy with a spoon, or breastfeed a doll.

Play near other children. Like to watch other children.

Become very upset and angry when they can’t do what they want. They may have tantrums.



Between 24 and 36 months, your toddler will learn to...

Walk up and down the stairs alone, putting one foot on each step.

Run. Climb. Jump. Throw and kick a ball.

Seat themselves on a chair.
Open doors.

Put on their coat. Dress and undress themselves—with a little help!

Build a tower of 6 or more blocks.

Eat with a spoon and fork—and not too much mess!

Scribble. Copy lines and circles.

Turn pages one at a time.

Screw and unscrew lids.

Use 200 or more words. Speak in sentences 3 to 5 words long.

Ask questions—“Why?” is a favourite!

Answer simple questions. “Where’s the ball?”

Repeat simple rhymes and songs.
Understand simple stories.

Use pronouns. “I want some milk.”
“We go to the store.”

Know their first and last name.

Understand two-part directions. “Please get your hat and bring it to me.” “Pick up your ball and put it in the basket.” (They can’t always *follow* your directions, but can understand them better now.)

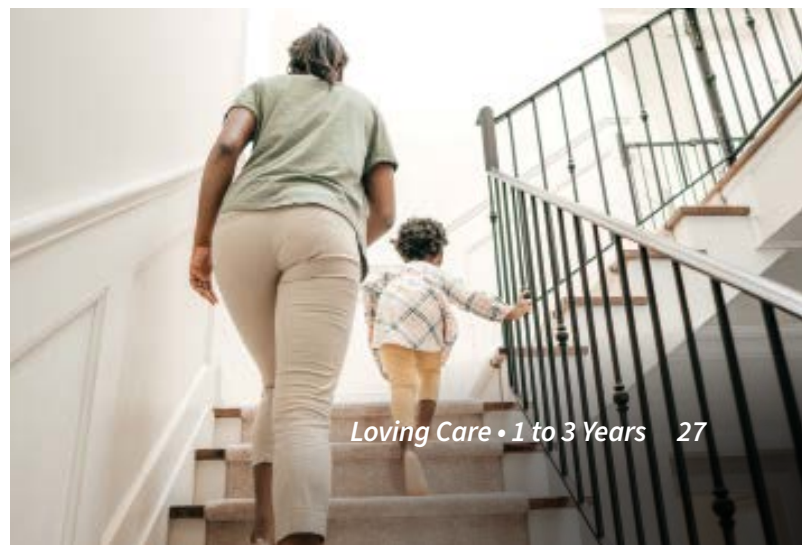
Understand opposites, like hot and cold, stop and go, in and out.

Tell you about what they’re doing.
Tell little stories.

Use their imagination and make things up while playing. For example, having imaginary friends. Or playing house with dolls or stuffed animals.

Laugh at silly ideas, words or stories.

Enjoy guessing games.





24 to 36 months cont.

Name pictures in books.

Do simple puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces.

Count “1-2-3.”

Pay attention for about 3 minutes at a time.

Understand more about time. They can remember what happened yesterday. They understand “now,” “soon,” and “later.”

Want to do everything for themselves.

Be more interested in other children and like being with other kids. They’re learning to play with other kids in a group.

Know what “mine” means. They’re still learning to share and take turns.

Like to help you. They want to do what you do—for example, help with housework.

Begin to understand simple rules.

Be able to express their love for other people.

When to wonder about your toddler's development

Trust your instincts. If you are concerned about your child's development at any time, you can contact Early Intervention Nova Scotia (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**), your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**) or your health care provider. You can also get information about your child's development through Family Resource Centres and early childhood educators.

Double check

Remember: You know your child best! You'll find information on looking for help from health services in your community in the **"Welcome"** section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

You have a right to information about your toddler's health and development. Ask questions until you get the information you need.



Look for help if you notice one or more of these things about your toddler.

***By 18 months,
your toddler:***

- Can't walk by themselves
- Can't say at least 8 to 10 words that you can understand
- Doesn't seem to know common things around the home—like a brush, phone, fork, or spoon

***By age 2,
your toddler:***

- Doesn't use sentences with at least 2 words.
- Can't copy other people's actions or words—for example, can't wave or clap when they see others doing it
- Can't follow simple instructions
- Can't run without falling

***By age 3,
your toddler:***

- Has trouble going up and down stairs
- Doesn't speak clearly enough for others to understand them most of the time
- Has trouble picking up and handling small things
- Can't understand simple instructions
- Isn't interested in other children
- Can't build a tower of more than 4 blocks
- Can't copy a circle

Screen time and development

In the first 2 years of life, your baby's brain triples in size. As it grows, your baby's brain is making connections that will enable them to learn to speak, to think, and to pay attention.

How well your baby's brain develops depends on what they see, hear, and do.

Children learn best and have the most fun playing with people and exploring their world. Children under 2 years old don't understand screens—they might be interested in colours and sounds, but screens do not help them to learn.

Toddlers learn best through face-to-face interactions with parents and caregivers. Your child develops best through live, interactive experiences with real people in real settings.

Using devices regularly to distract or calm down your child might prevent them from learning how to calm themselves. Your child might learn to depend too much on screens to manage their feelings. Research has shown that children who have trouble managing their emotions tend to spend more time on screens by the time they reach age 2.

Screen time—with TV, tablets, phones, and computers—can't replace your love and attention. Screen time can't replace the benefits your child gets from playing.

The only good kind of screen time is interactive video chatting—like FaceTime or WhatsApp—when it's used to strengthen and maintain long-distance relationships with family and friends.

In fact, the more time a toddler spends watching TV or videos, or playing video games, the more likely screen time is to have a bad effect. Children who spend time with TV, videos, and video games can have slower language development and more trouble focusing. Language development is when children learn to talk, listen, understand, and use words.



Did you know?

Many parents are tempted to use TV as a way to keep children busy while they are cooking or doing other chores. There are lots of other activities that toddlers will enjoy instead. Your toddler could be:

- Playing near you
- Singing silly songs with you
- Putting on some music
- Colouring or doing puzzles at the table or in a high chair near you
- Helping you to stir, mix, tear lettuce or do other safe parts of cooking
- Using empty plastic containers to make towers or to dump and pour
- Using empty pots and pans to copy you while you cook

To help your child develop:

- **Do not allow any screen time, except for video chatting, for children younger than 2 years old.**
- **Minimize screen time for children aged 2 to 5 years.** Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years should have a maximum of 1 hour of screen time per day. Provide other activities for your child to do instead of watching screens. See below for activity ideas.
- **Avoid exposing your child to background screens** by turning off the TV and other technology if no one is watching or if your baby is present in the room.
- For children over 2 years old:
 - **Watch videos and other online content with your child.** Guide their viewing by setting screen-time rules, discussing what they see, and asking them questions about what they are watching.
 - **Choose slow-paced programs and avoid programs with commercials.**
 - **Avoid using screen media to calm your child,** except during special situations like medical procedures.
 - **Avoid using screens during meals, playtime, right before naps or bedtime, and during family gatherings.**
 - **Encourage your child to be active.** The more time they spend in front of a screen, the less time they have for play. Children need at least 2 hours of active play each day.

Playing alone, playing with you, doing things for themselves, and being active are more important for your child's development—in mind and body—than any video, TV show, or computer game.

You'll find more information on limiting screen time in the "**Families**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



***Your toddler wants
you to know...***

I'm getting more and more curious about everything around me. I want to see it all! I want to try everything! Keep me safe while I learn, grow, and explore.





Play

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“My child plays all the time!
Everything’s a game to them.
Are they actually learning
anything or is it just a big
waste of time?”

Did you know?

Spending time outdoors with your child will help them develop in many ways—physically, mentally, and socially.

Give your child lots of chances to play outside and to experience the outdoors.

Did you know?

Playing and learning are both natural for children.

Toddlers learn by:

- Seeing something they want to do
- Trying to do it
- Doing it over and over

They play the same way.

Play is important

Children love to play! They do it naturally, easily, and joyfully. And they love to play with you.

Play teaches children the joy of doing and learning new things. Play is children’s work. It is never a waste of time. Play is how children learn about themselves, their world, and the people in it. Play helps the brain develop.

Toddlers are curious about everything. They want to try everything and do everything. Play helps them satisfy their need to know. It helps them learn to think and to solve problems. They explore, ask questions, find answers, and try new things.

- **Active play** helps keep toddlers’ growing bodies strong and healthy. It helps them learn what their body can do—like run, jump, spin around, throw, and catch.
- **Playing with others** helps toddlers learn social skills—like making friends and getting along in a group.
- **Messy play** teaches them to enjoy the world around them. Things like splashing in puddles, digging in sand, and squishing playdough between their fingers teach them how things feel and what they do. Toddler play can be messy! Getting dirty is part of the fun and learning.
- **Stories, rhymes, and musical play** help develop language skills.
- **Make-believe play** helps children understand their feelings and use their imagination. It gives them a chance to try out skills they’ll use in daily life.

There are many ways to play. All of them help children to learn, grow, and have fun!

Make time for play

Make time for children to play in their own way and explore their world.

- **Give your child lots of chances to play in different ways**— active play, creative play, imaginary play, quiet play. Give them time to play alone and time to play with you.
- **Arrange play dates.** Playing with other children and adults will help your child to learn the give and take that comes with being in a group. A play date doesn't have to be at someone's home. Group activities like storytime at the library or playtime at a Family Resource Centre also give your child a chance to play with others.

Keep in mind that when toddlers play in a group, they don't always play **with** each other.

For example, a child may play by themselves, even though there are other children around them. Or they may play side by side with another child. And sooner or later, children do learn to play together!

No matter how your toddler chooses to play in a group, being with other children is important and helps your child learn and develop.

Did you know?

Play is fun and exciting for toddlers. Sometimes it's so much fun that they don't want to stop.

It can be difficult for a toddler to stop doing something they're enjoying. It often helps to give them some time to get used to the idea and be ready to move on. For example, start with something like: "I know you're having fun, but we have to go home."

Then, after a minute or two: "One more minute. Then we have to stop and go home."

Then, when the minute is up: "Okay, time to go."

When it's time to go, leave. Your toddler may not like this at first but if you're consistent, they'll get used to it.

You'll find more information about this in the "**Behaviour**" section on **page 63**.



Play with your child

You are your child's most important playmate and first teacher.

There are many reasons to spend lots of time playing with your child.

- Playing with your toddler is a natural way to teach important skills—like taking turns, seeing other points of view, and being kind to others. Playing with you can help your child learn to communicate—both with words and actions.
- Playing together makes your attachment to each other stronger. It makes your child feel special and loved. It builds their self-esteem. (For more information on self-esteem, see **page 15**.)
- Playing together can give you and your child a chance to relax and enjoy one another.

When you play with your child:

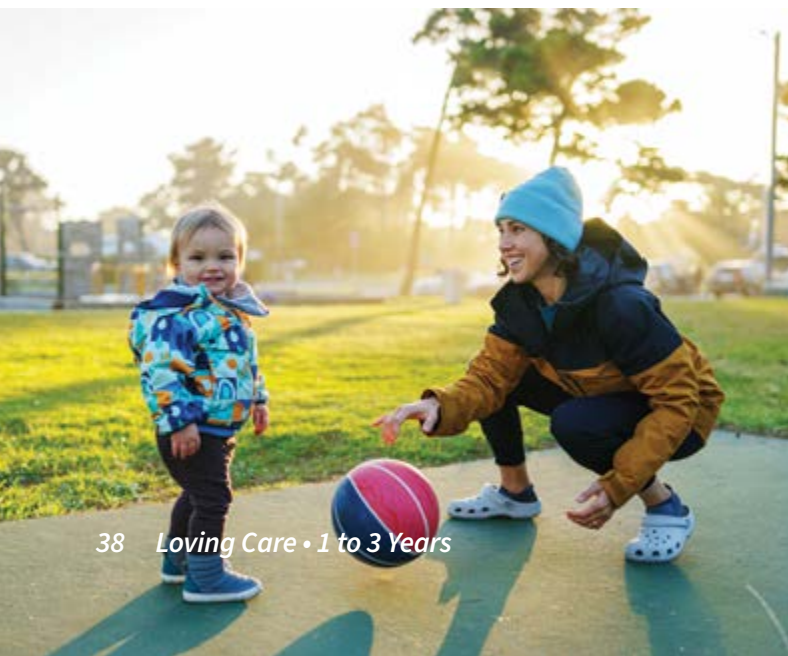
- Keep it simple and safe.
- Follow your child's lead—children know how to play.
- Give your child your full attention. Get down on the floor with them. **Play together.**
- Show your child how to get along by being a good example—say “Please” and “Thank you.” Take turns.
- Do lots of different things together—sing, dance, roll on the floor, blow bubbles, splash in water, finger paint, read.

Did you know?

You don't need a special “play time” to have fun with your toddler. Anytime you spend together can be playtime. For example:

- On the bus
- At the market
- In the car
- Walking outdoors
- Bath time
- Getting dressed

Anytime you talk, sing, tell stories, or laugh together, your toddler is learning.



Playing games and doing things together are fun ways to help your toddler to learn and grow.

Follow your toddler's cues. They'll let you know what they like best and what they don't like.

They'll also let you know when they're tired of one thing and ready to move to another. You may get tired of a game, song, or story long before your toddler does.

Play with your toddler when they're alert and interested. Let them set the pace. If you try an activity and your toddler isn't interested, wait a few days or weeks and try it again.

Keep in mind that your toddler will continue to enjoy many of the same activities over time—for example, playing dress-up or playing house. As they develop more skills, they'll be able to play the same games in new ways.

It's also helpful to remember that many games and activities develop several skills at the same time. For example, dancing helps develop both social skills and physical skills.

Try lots of different activities with your toddler. Throughout this section, you'll find games and activities to get you both started.

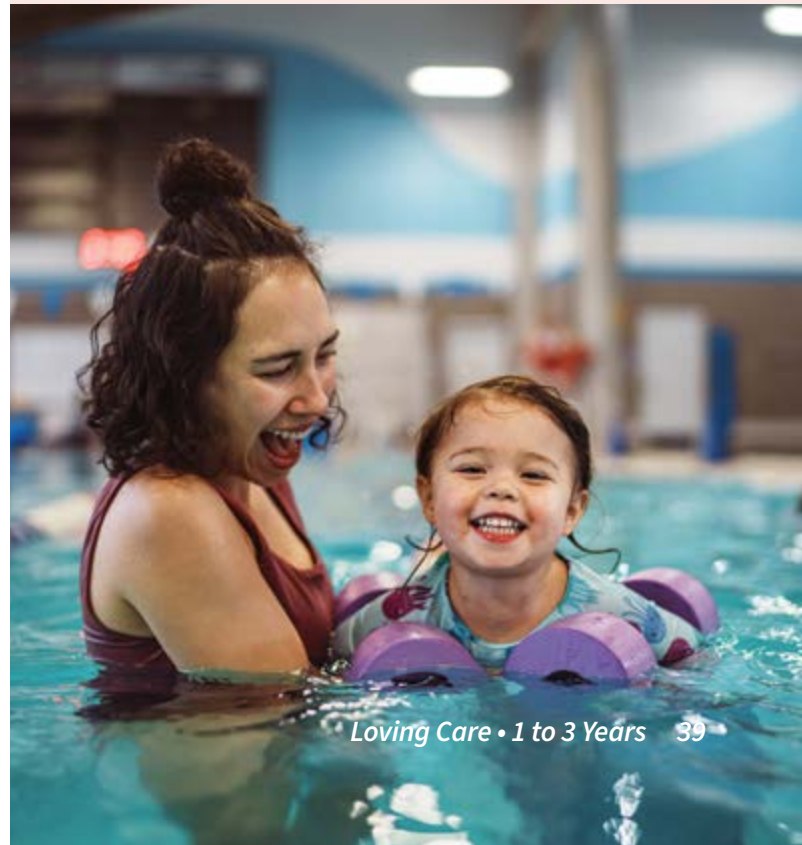
Enjoy every minute! Discover the fun of playing and learning together.

Did you know?

Your praise is important to your toddler. You can encourage your toddler by being very clear about what you're praising. Say things like:

- “You did it!”
- “You pushed the box all the way to the kitchen!”
- “You found the puppy in the picture!”

When you praise your toddler, smile and clap. Let them see and hear how proud you are.



Play and development

Play helps children develop language, social, thinking, and physical skills.

While playing, children develop their ability to use words to say what they want and how they feel.

While playing, children learn to solve problems. They develop their ability to figure things out for themselves.

While playing, children learn through their senses. They find out that playdough is squishy, that sand runs through their fingers, and that bubbles float away.

While playing, children learn how to use their body. They learn how it feels to jump up and down, run through the grass, and push their stroller. They learn the joy of moving through their world.

Play helps children develop a sense of who they are and what they can do.



Play develops language skills

Between ages 1 and 3 years, your toddler’s ability to use words develops by leaps and bounds.

Talk, read, and play with your child whenever you can. All of these activities will help them learn to listen, pay attention, and remember. Play is a natural way for children to develop language skills. Follow your child’s lead. Encourage and support them as they play.

How you can help develop language skills through play

- **Play with words.** Sing songs, play rhyming games, and tell stories with your child. Listen to the stories your child tells you. Read, sing, and tell stories in a playful way. Use different voices. Be silly. Show your child how much fun they can have with words.



- **Have fun with books.** Choose books that encourage your child to participate and play—to repeat words, to count, to turn pages, to lift flaps, to feel textures. Help them to name the colours, objects, and letters they see on the pages. Read books that repeat the same words and sounds. Choose books that have funny-sounding or rhyming words. Look for books that connect with your child’s life or that are about things they’re interested in. Make up stories about the pictures in books. Keep books in different places around your home so they’re always easy to find. Read to your toddler several times each day. You’ll find lots of good books to choose from at your local library (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Double check

You’ll find more information on when toddlers develop language skills in the “**Development**” section (**page 22**).



- **Talk to your toddler.** Name their body parts while dressing and bathing. When they point to something, tell them what it is. Tell them the names of the food they eat. Tell them the words for their clothes while they're getting dressed. Describe what they're doing as they play. Help them learn words that describe their feelings. "You look happy!" "Are you feeling sad?" "Did that make you mad?" Help them count toys as they drop them into a bag. Show them what words like first and last, up and down, big and little, fast and slow mean.
- **Pay attention when your toddler talks to you.** Try to understand what they're telling you. Help them find the words they need.
- **Point out familiar sounds**—like birds singing, dogs barking, cars passing, children playing. Tell them what these sounds are. Make the sounds yourself—bark like a dog, meow like a cat. Encourage them to copy you.
- **Play music.** Give your little one all kinds of music to listen to and sing along with. Hold their hands and dance. Clap, hop, and march to the music.
- **Give your toddler time with other adults and family members.** Having more people to talk to will help develop their speaking skills.
- **Give your toddler time with other children.** Children learn language skills from adults, but they practice while they play with other children.

Did you know?

Toddlers learn new words by hearing other people say them. They repeat the words they hear. The more words they hear, the more words they learn.

If your toddler says a word that sounds funny, don't laugh at them or criticize them.

Just say the word the right way so they can hear it again.

Did you know?

If you are uncomfortable about reading aloud to your toddler, literacy programs offer classes that can help improve your skills (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).





Play develops social skills

Between ages 1 and 3 years, your toddler is starting to relate to other people and move into a wider world.

Your toddler will be able to show a wider range of feelings. They'll respond more to others and show their love for their family. While they're playing, they'll copy what they see adults and other children doing.

At this age, children start to know that some things belong to them—"Mine!" is a favourite word. They don't yet understand how to share. They also start wanting to be more independent and do things for themselves—"Me do it!" is another favourite saying.

Play develops a child's social skills—the ability to feel emotions, to form bonds with their family, and to make friends. Play allows children to develop these skills while they are safe and secure in their family, community, and culture.

How you can help develop social skills through play

- **Spend lots of time playing with your child.**

Follow your child's lead. Let them decide what to play.

- **Play “pretend” together.** Toddlers watch what grown-ups and older kids do and try to do the same things. Join in the games—for example, pretend to talk to your child on the phone. Use toys and household items to let your child pretend to do things like visit the doctor, go grocery shopping, cook dinner, and breastfeed the baby. When your child plays with dolls or stuffed animals, show your child how to give them the same loving care that you give your child. This kind of play helps children make sense of real life. It helps them understand how others feel and helps them feel good about themselves.

- **Arrange play dates.** Spending time with other children is important to toddlers. Be patient and keep a close eye on your toddler when they play with others. It will take a while for them to learn how to get along and share. When your child is ready to play with others, teach them how to be a friend.
- **Support your toddler's growing independence.** Give them the time they need to solve problems. Offer help when they need it, but give them a chance to do things for themselves.
- **Have daily routines and set limits.** Help your toddler learn what you expect of them. Children feel safe when they know what to expect and this makes it easier for them to learn.



Play develops thinking and creative skills

Toddlers' brains are always busy. They want to know how things work. They want to know why things happen. They want to know how things fit together—and how they come apart.

They want to see how high they can build a tower of blocks. And they want to hear the noise it makes when it comes crashing down!

They want to see, feel, hear, smell, and taste new things. They're using all of their senses to understand their world.

Play is how children answer their questions and begin to understand how things work.



How you can help develop thinking and creative skills through play

- **Play games that help your child figure things out.** Hide things under pillows for your toddler to find. Help them sort things by shape, size, or colour. For example, put all the red toys together or sort the big trucks from the small ones. Help them match lids to pots of different sizes. Give them toys that they can take apart and put together. Sorting shapes and putting puzzles together teaches about matching, counting, and how things fit together.
- **Give them quiet time to think.** They'll be able to pay attention to one thing for a little while. Slowly, they'll be able to spend more time looking at or playing with one thing.
- **Give them good experiences using all their senses.** Playing with different shapes, smells, and textures helps them explore their senses. They learn what things smell good and what things don't. They learn how some things squish when they're squeezed. They learn that things feel different when they're wet and when they're dry. Give your child:
 - Interesting things to look at—indoors and out
 - Lots of different smells and tastes
 - Different kinds of music to listen to
 - Textures to feel—water to splash in, playdough to squish, sand to run through their fingers

- **Enjoy lots of books with your child.** Let them turn the pages. Ask them to tell you what's in familiar pictures.
- **Give your toddler time to draw and paint** with chubby markers, crayons, and non-toxic paints.
- **Let them play in the water** with sponges, plastic cups, toys that sink, and toys that float. Go for walks on rainy days. Splash in the puddles!
- **Give them chances to dig and play in sand or dirt**—at the beach or playground.
- **Encourage their imagination.** Join in when they play “pretend.” Listen when they tell stories. Ask them to make up stories about pictures in books.

Double check

Spending a lot of time in front of a screen—watching TV or videos or playing with video games—can affect your child's development. For more information, see the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Play develops physical skills

Toddlers love to move! They're on the go from morning to night exploring their world. It's amazing how much energy a little body holds!

And toddlers need every bit of that energy. By the time they're 3, your toddler will learn a lot about using their body. They're learning to use big muscles to run, jump, climb, throw, and kick a ball, and pedal a tricycle. They're learning to use small muscles to open doors, build a block tower, get dressed, hold crayons, and draw.

Being active is not just fun for toddlers—it's necessary.

They need active play to develop the physical skills they'll be using every day for the rest of their life.

Physical activity is necessary for your toddler now.

- It helps them understand what their body can do. It helps them develop the skills they need every day.
- It helps with brain development and learning.
- It builds strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination.
- It helps them to eat and sleep better.
- It helps them to burn off energy and feel calmer and happier.

Double check

Physical activity and healthy eating are both important for healthy growth and development. You'll find information about healthy eating in the section on **"Food," page 114.**





Physical activity is necessary for your child as they grow.

- Supporting your child's love of being active now will make it more likely that they'll stay active as they grow. This means that they'll be healthier and feel better throughout their life.
- Having basic physical skills will allow your child to enjoy many sports and activities as they get older.

Children play naturally and are naturally active. But they do need your help and support to learn physical skills like jumping, kicking, throwing, catching, and running.

Physical activity needs to be a natural part of your child's day—like sleeping, eating, and learning.

Help your child to learn to love active play and the joy of using their body. Make time for your child to be active every day. Rain, shine, fog, and snow are all fun for children.

How you can help develop physical skills through play

- **Be active with your child.** Play active games together—hide and seek, tag, follow the leader. Let your toddler see you walking, running, climbing, and jumping while you play together. Children learn by copying what you do. Let your child see you living a healthy, active life every day.

Did you know?

You're not the only one who can give your child chances to play actively.

Be sure your child's other caregivers—like babysitters and grandparents—know how important active play is.

When you choose a child care centre or family home daycare, look for one that plans for active indoor and outdoor play every day.

- **Encourage walking and moving.** Give them the chance to push and pull chairs, big boxes, laundry baskets, and toys—like a wagon or toy lawnmower. Toddlers love to push their own strollers. Swing at the playground. Run in the park. Climb—in and out of a big box, up and down stairs, on and off the sofa. Jump off of a step. Kick and throw balls. Slide in the snow. Splash in the water. Wiggle, dance, and spin to different kinds of music—fast and slow. Roll like a log, balance on one leg, practice stopping and starting, and walking forward and backward. Help your toddler learn how to use their body. Encourage them as they try new skills.
- **Give your little explorer space for moving and being active**—indoors and outdoors. Set up a play space in your home. Visit parks, playgrounds, and beaches. Walk around your neighbourhood.
- **Give your toddler lots to do with their hands.** Blocks to stack and knock down. Toys to pull apart and put back together. Big crayons to scribble with. Containers to open and close. Toys and other things to sort by shape, size, or colour. Play finger games—like “Itsy Bitsy Spider.”

Did you know?

Toddlers need **a lot** of physical activity every day. Try to avoid long periods of time in cribs, strollers, seats, and jumpers. A toddler shouldn't be still for longer than 60 minutes at a time—unless they're sleeping!

Your child needs active play every day—at least 2 hours. More activity is even better. Try to take your child outdoors for some of their daily active play.

You don't have to do all the active playing at once. It can build up over the day. In fact, lots of short periods of active play are better than one long one.

Double check

If you are interested in active play programs in your area, check the Recreation Nova Scotia website for the recreation centre closest to you. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

Your local Family Resource Centre may also offer programs. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)



Games and activities

12 to 18 months

Games with words, songs, and actions

Your toddler will continue to enjoy many of the games you are already playing—like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” and “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” You can also add new songs, like “The Wheels on the Bus,” “I’m a Little Teapot,” or any singing or rhyming games you enjoyed as a child. Grandparents and Elders can be a good source for songs and rhymes from your culture. You’ll find many books of rhymes and songs in your local library, Family Resource Centre (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**) or bookstore.

Name game

Everything has a name! Help your toddler learn by saying the names of people, parts of the body, and everyday items—like plates, chairs, trucks, fruits, and vegetables. Play this game when you go for walks, when you’re in a car, at the market, on the beach, in the park—anywhere there’s something to see.

Animal noises

Show your toddler how to make the sounds animals make. Cats say “Meow.” Dogs go “Woof woof!” Cows say “Moo.” Pigs go “Oink.” Read books about animals and make the sounds with your child. Pretend to be a dog and let your toddler be the puppy. Talk to each other in barks and woofs!

Dance with me!

Put on some music and show your toddler how to dance. Pick them up and dance around. Put them down and dance together. If other family members are around, ask them to join in.





More lids

Your toddler can now start to do a lot more with the lids they've been playing with (see the “**Play**” section of **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months**). For example, you can cut a slit about 1 cm wide and 10 cm long (½ in. wide, 4 in. long) in the lid of a plastic container. Show your toddler how to put the lids through the slot. Or put stickers of different kinds of animals on the lids and ask them to find the lid with the dog, etc.

The collector

Let your child pick up things that catch their eye when you're out for walks. Shells from the beach, stones from the park, and sticks or leaves on the ground all interest toddlers. Talk about what they find. Carry them around in a bucket. Remember to remind them, “Put this in the bucket, not in your mouth.”

This game is also fun indoors. Give your child a paper or cloth bag so they can carry things they collect—like lids, stuffed toys, blocks.

Tossing and dumping

Put a large box or basket on the floor. Show your toddler how to toss (not drop) soft balls and small toys into the basket. Join in and toss too. After you've finished tossing, let them dump everything back onto the floor and start again.

Obstacle course

Set up a course that lets your child do many kinds of movement. You can include boxes and tunnels to crawl through, pillows to climb over, boxes or blocks to run around, small things to jump over, balls to throw into a box—anything you can think of.

Play

Water play

Toddlers enjoy splashing and playing in water. Fill a bucket or large bowl and let your child scoop out water to fill a smaller container. Add some dish soap so your toddler can play with the bubbles.

Blowing bubbles is also fun for toddlers. Young toddlers like to chase them. Older toddlers like to blow the bubbles themselves.



Playdough

Playing with playdough is fun now and your child will continue to enjoy it as they get older. Playdough is easy to make at home.

Playdough

What you need

- 1 cup (250 mL) of flour
- ¼ cup (60 mL) of salt
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) cream of tartar
- 1 cup of water
- a few drops of food colouring
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) cooking oil

What you do

1. Mix everything together in a pot.
2. Stir over medium heat until the mixture is warm and makes a lump in the pot.
3. Scrape onto a flour-covered counter and knead until smooth.
4. Store in a plastic bag or container. Keep in the fridge.

Where does this go?

When you are getting dressed or folding laundry, ask your toddler to tell you what part of the body things go on. For example, hold up a pair of socks and ask, “Where do socks go?”

Feelings

When looking at books, name the feelings of the people in the pictures. For example, “That person looks angry.” “The child is smiling. They look happy.”

Let’s pretend

Play pretend with a stuffed animal. Help and encourage your child to feed and dress the ‘baby.’ For example, “It’s cold today. Do you think teddy needs a blanket?” “Teddy hurt their head. Can you kiss it to make it better?”



Double check

The *Read to Me* bag you received when your baby was a newborn contains a CD of rhymes and songs you can enjoy with your toddler.



18 to 24 months

Puppet play

Use a puppet (or just put your hand in a clean sock) to talk to your toddler. “Hi! I’m Joe Sock. What’s your name?” Give your child a puppet, too. Encourage their puppet to talk to your puppet.

Baby pictures

Make a little book of baby pictures of your toddler. Talk about what was happening in the pictures. Talk about the other people in the pictures. “This is you with Ted. You were just born! See how little you were! I made that blue blanket for you when you were born.” Ask questions about the people in the pictures. “Who’s that holding you?”

Helping game

Ask your toddler to help you. Give easy directions, like: “I need help. Would you bring me my shoe?” or “Time for a clean diaper! Please bring me a diaper.” You may need to help at first by pointing to what you want. And don’t forget to say “Thank you” and tell them what a big help they are when they bring what you asked for!

Playing house

Set up a little kitchen where your toddler can play house. A few cooking utensils, some spoons, and plastic dishes are all you need. You can make a stove by drawing on an empty box. A plastic dishpan can become a sink. Help your toddler pretend to cook and to feed their dolls and stuffed animals. You can also make a little bed for a doll or stuffed animal so your toddler can tuck it in and play bedtime.

I can help!

Toddlers love to help. Let your child do things with you to help around the house. They can help sweep the floor with a little broom or shovel snow with their own shovel.

Caution!

Laundry baskets and cardboard boxes make safe dress-up boxes.

Be sure everything in your child’s dress-up box is clean and safe—for example, no strings, beads, or buttons to choke on.

For more information on safe toys, see **page 60**.

For more information on childproofing, see the section on “**Safety**,” **page 164**.



Dress-up box

Make a dress-up box with colourful hats, shoes, handbags, and costumes. Your child will enjoy dressing up and admiring themselves. Clothes from a dress-up box also help with playing pretend—pretending to be a grown-up, an animal, or a character from a favourite story. Your closet is a great place to find things for a dress-up box. So is a thrift shop. As your child gets older, you can add new things to the dress-up box.

Find the real thing

Cut out pictures of everyday items—like pots, dishes, clothes, toys, etc. Show your child the picture and ask them to find the real thing. For example, “This is a picture of a chair. Can you find a real chair for me?”

Sorting

Let your toddler help when you fold the laundry. For example, ask them to find all the socks, then all the underwear. Another sorting game is to match different-sized plastic containers with their lids.

Animal action

Pretend to be different kinds of animals. (This can include dressing up with whiskers and tails, too!) Make animal noises and move like the animals do—wiggle like a snake, flap your wings and fly like a bird, arch your back like a kitten, run like a horse, waddle like a duck.

Lids again

Your toddler will still enjoy the lids they’ve been playing with for a while. Put colours and shapes on the lids and play games where you find the colours or shapes that match.

The helper

Give your child small tools so they can play at doing jobs around the home. For example, with a paintbrush and a small bucket of water, they can paint the porch. With a flashlight, they can look for things in dark closets and under the bed.

Little artist

Give your child large crayons or markers and a large piece of paper. Let them hold their own crayon and make their own scribbles. Let them paint with a large paintbrush or their hands. Tape the paper to the floor or table to keep it still. You can use this activity to talk about colours, lines, and shapes, too. Look for non-toxic paints and markers.

Copy cat

Ask your toddler to copy what you do when you say, “Copy cat!” You can try many actions, like: “Copy cat! Run in a circle!” “Copy cat! Roll on the ground!” “Copy cat! Jump!” “Copy cat! Clap your hands!” Turn this around and let your toddler be “Copy cat” and tell you what to do!

24 to 36 months

What did you do today?

In the evening—maybe at the dinner table—ask everyone what they did that day. Give your toddler a turn, too. Let them take their time. Help them remember if they forget things, but let them tell the story their own way. Soon they'll be able to tell the family about their day.

My special book

Make a small book of photos of your toddler, family members, pets, neighbours, and friends. You can include photos of your own home and other family members' homes, too—anything that might interest your toddler. Talk about the people and places in the photos. Encourage your child to talk about them. “Who’s that?” “Show me our house.” “What’s the puppy’s name?”

Silly game

Pretend you don't know what things are. Point to a dog and ask, “Is that a cow?” Let your child tell you what it really is. Be surprised. Say, “Are you sure? Isn't it an elephant?” It's fun for toddlers to be the one answering the questions for a change!

Tell me a story

When looking at books or magazines, ask your child to tell you what's going on in a picture. “What's the kitty doing?” Ask questions to help keep the story going. For example, “Do you think the kitty has friends?” “Could another kitty be hiding in the tree?” Listen to the story your child tells.

Walk the line

Help your child learn balance by laying a board or long strips cut from cardboard boxes on the floor or ground. Show them how to walk heel to toe along it. Show them how to spread their arms for balance, to look at something straight ahead, and to take slow steps.

How do you feel

Help your toddler name what they're feeling. “You're smiling. Do you feel happy?” “Are you frustrated? I know it's hard to wait for your turn.” “You look like you feel sad. How about a hug?” Knowing that feelings have names will help your child understand what they're feeling and help them to talk about it. It's also the beginning of understanding that other people have feelings too.

Cutting with scissors

Help your child learn how to hold child-sized scissors and cut things themselves. They can cut different kinds of paper or even playdough.



Big and small

Show your toddler 2 different sizes of the same thing—for example, 2 spoons, 2 shoes, 2 apples. Talk about, “Which is the big one? Which is the small one?” You can play this game anywhere, with anything—for example, dogs in the park, children on the playground, cans, boxes, and vegetables at the market. This game is fun to turn around. Have your toddler ask you, “Which is big?”

Touchy-feely

Put together sets of 2 each of several items with different shapes, sizes, and textures—2 spoons, 2 small balls, 2 soft mittens, 2 blocks. Put 1 of each into 2 paper bags. Take 1 out of a bag and show it to your toddler. Ask them to find the same item in the other bag without looking—just by feeling it. Hold the bag closed over their hand so they can’t peek!

Freeze

Begin by singing and dancing around the room. Then you (or your child) yells, “Freeze!” and everyone has to stop in whatever position they’re in. Count to 3, then start singing and dancing again.

Bowling alley

Line up several plastic bottles, milk cartons, or tissue boxes set on their ends. Show your child how to roll a ball to knock them down.



Where is it?

Hide a toy under a pillow or blanket. Ask your toddler to find it. Help and encourage them. “Where’s the little car? Where do you think it is?” Give clues. “It’s hiding under something green.”

Little chef

Let your child help prepare meals. They can help pick out food at the market. They can stir and pour ingredients. They can tear up lettuce for a salad. They can help set the table. They’ll enjoy helping and enjoy telling the family about it while they eat.

Catch the ball

Use a fairly big, soft ball. Start by rolling and tossing it to your child to help them get used to its size and feel. Ask your child to hold out their arms. Then stand close to them and gently throw the ball so it lands in their arms. Watch the ball leave your hands and keep watching until it is safely in their hands. Tell them to hold tight. Have them throw the ball back to you. Learning to catch takes longer than learning to throw, so be patient.

Toys

Toys don't need to be expensive, or even store-bought. Lots of things in your home make great toys for toddlers.

Your toddler will enjoy:

- **Toys for active play:** Toys to push and pull; ride-on toys to push along with their feet; a wagon or wheelbarrow to fill and pull around; balls and bean bags to throw; tunnels or boxes to crawl through; outdoor toys like swings, climbing gyms, tricycles, and sleds; music to move and dance to.
- **Toys for pretend play:** Old clothes, hats, costumes, and handbags for dress-up; dolls and stuffed animals; play tools, brooms and shovels; play phone; pots, pans, dishes, and spoons; cars and trucks; puppets; a small table and chairs.
- **Toys to sort, stack, put together, and take apart:** Nesting cups; stacking rings; puzzles; little cars and small animal and human figures; boxes, buckets, and containers to sort things into and to carry things in; lids with stickers; toys with dials to turn, switches to flip, and knobs to pull.



Did you know?

Children love to play with their toys. They can learn to love putting them away when they're done playing, too. Start slowly and teach them that cleaning up is part of the game.

Make cleaning up fun. Do it together.

- Play special music at cleanup time or make up a cleanup song.
- Make a game of cleanup. For example:
 - Pick up all the red toys.
 - Pick up all the trucks.
 - Put small toys in a dump truck and drive them to the toy box.

Did you know?

Don't forget books!

Your child will enjoy all kinds of books—picture books, books of rhymes, storybooks, books about animals.

And most of all, your child will enjoy reading books with **you**.

- **Toys for creative play:** Crayons, markers, finger paints, safe child-sized scissors, glue, playdough; old greeting cards, wrapping paper, and magazines to cut up; blocks to build with; big boxes to turn into tunnels or cars.
- **Toys for messy play:** Bubbles to blow; sand—with pails and shovels, spoons and containers; water in a dishpan or old baby bath tub with toys that float or sink, and containers to pour from; bath toys; garden toys for digging and planting.
- **Toys for noisy play:** Toys that make music—drums, tambourines, bells, rattles. You can make music with pots or large plastic containers to drum on and pans to bang together.



Play



Caution!

Everything your toddler plays with should be safe, clean, and right for their age.

Safe toddler toys:

- Have no sharp points or edges.
- Have no small parts that could break or pull off.
- Are too big to swallow or choke on. Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small.
- Have no strings or cords that are long enough to wrap around your toddler's neck.
- Are not too noisy. If a toy is so loud that you have to raise your voice above the noise, it could damage your toddler's hearing.

Did you know?

It can be a good idea to put some toys away for a few days once in a while. Then, when you bring them back, they'll seem new to your toddler.

Check your toddler's toys often. Keep them clean. Carefully wash any household items you use as toys. Throw away broken or damaged toys.

Check with Consumer Product Safety (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**) to see if any of your child's toys have been recalled. This includes second-hand toys and toys you receive as gifts.

Remember: Your child is always safest when an adult is watching them while they play.

A man with a beard, wearing a blue mask and a red scarf, is smiling and holding a young girl. The girl is wearing a pink mask and a purple cape. They are both smiling and appear to be in a playful mood. The background is bright and out of focus.

***Your toddler wants
you to know...***

Play with me! The games we play together help me to learn and grow. The time you give me when we play tells me that you love me.





Behaviour

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What to expect

The years from 1 to 3 can be a fun, exciting, and frustrating time for you and your toddler.

Fun—because your toddler is growing into a little person who’s interested in the world around them.

Exciting—because they’re learning new things and developing new skills every day.

Frustrating—because your toddler wants to do things for themselves and have some control over their life. When they can’t do what they want to do, they can get frustrated and angry. And this can be very frustrating for parents!

“My toddler is changing so fast! I never know what they’ll do or say next. Some days I wonder where my sweet baby has gone! What can I expect from them? And what can I do to help them?”

Did you know?

The toddler years can be challenging for parents.

This can be a good time to reach out to other parents and to resources and programs in your community for support.

Your local Public Health office can be a good source of information (contact information, **page 188**). So can the Helpline and the other resources in the “**Support and Information Contacts**” section in the back of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



You can expect your toddler:

- **To be curious.** They want to know everything. They want to try everything. Every day is filled with “firsts.” They are learning to walk, run, and talk. They’re learning every minute.
- **To want to be independent.** They want to do things for themselves—feed themselves, dress themselves. Expect to hear the words “Me do it!” often.
- **To develop a mind of their own.** They are also starting to want some control over what happens to them. They get upset when they don’t get what they want. You can expect to hear the word “No!” a lot.
- **To be more interested in other people.** They are starting to show how much they love the people close to them. They are **very slowly** learning how to get along with others and to play with other children. But you’ll still hear “Mine!” when other children are around.

Your toddler needs your patience, understanding, and love. They need to know that they’re important to you. Set aside some time every day to talk and have fun doing something your child enjoys. This could be during bath time or right before bedtime—anytime when you can give them your complete attention. Be sure your child knows how much you like spending time with them. Be sure they know how special they are to you. This time you spend together will help your child feel good about themselves and strengthen the bond between you.

Did you know?

Your toddler is learning to get along with their siblings, too. You’ll find information on this in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Why do toddlers act the way they do?

A toddler's development, temperament, and changes in their life or routine can all affect their behaviour.

Development

The way a toddler behaves is very closely tied to their development. This is because there are some things they are still learning to do. For example, they're still developing the ability to understand reason, to be patient, and to control themselves. Until they develop these abilities, they won't be able to understand the reasons why they should or shouldn't do things. They won't know how to share or take turns.

When you understand your child's development, you'll have a better idea about why they act the way they do and what you can do to help them. For example:

- A toddler who "gets into everything" is just doing what they need to do to learn about their world. They're being curious. It's your job to make your home safe and watch them closely so it's safe for them to explore. (You'll find more information on childproofing in the "**Safety**" section, **page 164**.)

Did you know?

Make sure that what you expect from your toddler is in line with their development.

A 1-year-old can't act like a 3-year-old. A 3-year-old can't act like a 5-year-old.

It's not fair to expect too much, too soon.

- A toddler who grabs toys away from another child is trying to figure out how to get what they want. They need your help to learn how to ask for a turn.
- A child having a tantrum is letting off steam because they're frustrated or angry and don't know what to do about it. They need you to help them understand their feelings and to find better ways to show them. (For more information on tantrums, see **page 84**.)
- A toddler who hits, bites, or behaves aggressively is trying out different ways to get what they want. They may hit one day and be hit by another child the next day. They need you to stay close and not label them as either a bully or a victim. They need you to help them find better ways to get what they want and to get along with others.

Development doesn't happen quickly. Your toddler develops skills and self-control bit by bit. Over time, they'll very slowly begin to understand reason and to cooperate with others.

Temperament

Your toddler's temperament also affects their behaviour. By now, you have a pretty good idea of what your toddler's temperament is like.

- You'll know how they react to new people, places, and things.
- You'll know if they're outgoing or shy, calm, or active.
- You'll know if they move quickly from one thing to another or if they can focus on one activity for a little while.

Your child's temperament will have a big impact on their behaviour.

Your own temperament will affect how you respond to them. For example:

- You may need to be patient while a shy, quiet child slowly gets used to playing with other children.
- You may have to control your frustration while you help an active child learn to wait for their turn and not push other children out of their way.
- You may have to give a child who has trouble focusing lots of support while they're learning new skills.

You can't change your toddler's temperament.

But how you respond to their temperament will affect how they see themselves. If you see your child as special and lovable, they'll develop a strong sense of self-esteem.

As a parent, it's your job to understand your toddler's temperament and find ways to help them feel good about themselves.



Double check



You'll find information about your child's development in the "**Development**" section of this book (**page 22**).

Behaviour

Change

When something in a toddler's life changes, their behaviour might change, too.

Some of the changes that can affect a toddler's behaviour are:

- A new baby
- Moving
- Being away from parents—for example, when you return to work or school
- Parents separating
- Parents fighting
- Being sick
- New child care
- Family and friends who stay for a while and then go away

Double check

You'll find information on helping your child deal with several kinds of change in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

These include:

- Dealing with loss and grief
- Getting along with siblings
- Adjusting to child care

You'll find information on helping your toddler adjust when a parent is away for long periods of time on **page 13** of this book.

Did you know?

Even small changes in daily routines can affect a toddler's behaviour.

Holidays, visitors, and birthday parties are exciting! Your toddler will feel this and show it in their behaviour.

A toddler will often react to these changes by acting more like a baby. They may be clingy. They may want to breastfeed more often or drink from a bottle again. They may start to wet the bed again. Your toddler may also react by becoming more frustrated and angry than usual.

Stick to daily routines that your toddler is used to. When your child reacts to change, be patient. Give your toddler the extra time and attention they need. Help them to feel loved and special. As your toddler gets used to the change in their life, this behaviour will stop.



Loving guidance

You give your toddler loving guidance by being patient, understanding, gentle, and consistent.

Loving guidance is teaching your child to:

- Care about and respect others
- Learn the difference between right and wrong
- Develop the skills they need to solve problems and get along with others

It can be difficult for a parent not to label what their toddler does as “good” or “bad.” Toddlers act the way they do because their brains are still developing. For example, your toddler wants to get along with others but they don’t know how. They aren’t being “bad” when they grab toys or push another child away. They don’t need to be punished. They need you to help them find a better way to get what they want.

The goal of your loving guidance is to help your child learn to control their own behaviour. The best way to do this is to help your child learn that doing the right thing feels good. Praising and encouraging your child’s efforts to listen to you, to share, and to get along with others will help them learn this. Giving them toys or treats teaches them to expect a reward. Feeling good should be reward enough!

And remember: Nobody’s perfect, especially toddlers! It will take time for your child to learn and remember everything they need to know. Your toddler will do exactly as you ask one day and exactly the opposite the next. This doesn’t mean that your child is trying to drive you crazy. It’s a normal part of their development.

Did you know?

Some things that may seem cute when a toddler does them—for example, using bad words or spitting—won’t be cute when they’re older.

Now is the time to help your child learn the kind of behaviour they’ll need to get along with others.



Double check

Punishment will not help a toddler learn to behave.

Punishments like sending a child to bed without their dinner or putting them in a room by themselves are dangerous.

They can affect a toddler's development. They can lead to abuse. For more information about the kinds of discipline that DON'T work, see **page 73**.



Did you know?

Just as your toddler is learning new skills, you are learning new parenting skills every day.

It will take time to learn everything you need to know. It can take a few tries to find what works best for you and your child.

Keep trying. It's not too late to change the way you respond to your child's behaviour. It's not too late to find the best way to help your child learn to behave and to get along with others.



Time-in and time-out

You may have heard that “**time-out**” is a good way to help a child calm down when they are upset or misbehave. Time-out means having the child sit quietly, alone, for a few minutes. **Time-out does not work.**

Many parents find that “**time-in**” works better as a way to help a child learn to behave the way you want them to. Time-in means sitting quietly with your child on your lap or close beside you until they’ve calmed down.

Your goal is to help your toddler to:

- Begin to understand their feelings and control their actions
- Learn better ways to get what they want
- Get along with others

Punishment won’t help with this. Time, patience, and loving guidance will.

<p>Time-out does NOT WORK because...</p>	<p>Time-in WORKS because...</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your toddler is alone. Being left alone can be very frightening for your toddler. And being frightened makes them even more upset. • Time-out is punishment. It makes a child feel bad about what they’ve done. It doesn’t help them learn what they should do. It doesn’t help them learn to calm themselves down. It doesn’t teach them a better way to do something. • Time-out cuts off communication between you and your child. Your child is alone, with no one to talk to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your toddler is not alone. They’re with you and will feel safe and loved while they settle down. • Time-in offers support. Your toddler is still learning how to control themselves and how to get along with others. They need lots of love and support to do this. Time-in teaches them that you will help and support them when they need it most. It gives them a chance to calm themselves down in a place where they feel safe. • Time-in opens up communication between you and your child. It gives you a chance to talk about what happened. Toddlers communicate through touch. Being close and holding your toddler tells them that they matter to you. It helps them feel safe and secure. When they feel this way, they’re much better able to learn to control themselves.

Understanding and empathy

Understanding and caring about how another person feels is called “empathy.” Empathy is an important part of loving guidance.

Treating your child with understanding and empathy will show them that their feelings are important and that they matter to you. It will help them learn to understand their own feelings. It will also help them to begin to understand that other people have feelings too.

Did you know?

The way you were treated as a child can affect how you treat your children.

Talk to a health care provider if you are concerned that things that happened to you as a child might affect how you respond to your children.

To show your understanding and empathy:

1. **Put yourself in your child’s shoes.** What are they thinking or feeling?
2. **Help them to give their feelings a name.** Put what they’re feeling into words. “You seem excited!” “Do you feel sad?” “You’re looking happy today!”
3. **Offer support. You know your child best.** Offer whatever help or support they need. This could be almost anything: a hug, a kiss, a smile, some help with what they’re doing, a change of activity, praise, encouragement, or saying you’re sorry.

Once you’ve helped your toddler understand their own feelings, they can begin to understand other people’s feelings. You can help by pointing out how their actions can affect others. For example:

“It makes Ali sad when you take their toy.”

“It hurts when you pull my hair.”

“Tanisha is crying. It hurts their feelings when you won’t let them play with you.”

“Look how happy Noah is to see you!”

Treat your child the way you’d like to be treated. Toddlers are people too. The more understanding and empathy you show to your toddler now, the more they will be able to show to you and to others as they get older.



What **WON'T** help your child behave

There is now a lot of research showing that hitting and yelling at children hurts their body and mind. It can actually make their behaviour worse.

Helping your child learn all the things they need to know to be safe and to get along with others can take a long time.

You need to be patient, gentle, and consistent.

Every parent has days when patience is hard to find. When you feel this way, it's important to remember the things that **WON'T** help your child to learn and behave the way you'd like them to.

Spanking

Hurting your child doesn't work. Spanking, smacking, hitting, and shaking won't teach your child right from wrong. Spanking teaches your child that it's okay to hit other people, especially if you're bigger. It teaches them to be afraid of you. It teaches them that hitting is a way to handle angry feelings. It teaches them that the important thing is not to get caught.

In fact, the more a child is spanked, the more likely it is they will do all the things you **DON'T** want them to do.

Spanking teaches your child to be afraid—afraid of you and afraid of being hurt. It makes it hard for your child to trust you, hard for your child to respect you, and hard for your child to learn.

Spanking doesn't affect only your child. It can also have a serious impact on your entire family. If you spank your child, it's easy to cross the line into abuse. Any kind of punishment that injures a child is considered to be physical abuse. This includes scratches and bruises. Both the police and child protection services investigate child abuse. This can lead to assault charges. Your child could be removed from your care.

Yelling

Yelling and screaming frightens small children. When your toddler is afraid, they can't hear or understand what you want.

Yelling will teach your child to yell at you and others. It will teach them to be afraid of you. It will make it hard for them to trust you.

What WON'T help your child behave

Threatening, embarrassing or making fun of your toddler

You will not help your child learn by doing things like:

- Telling your child you won't love them if they don't do what you want
- Telling them they're stupid, bad, dumb, or a liar
- Letting them hear you tell others that they're stupid or bad
- Making fun of them

These are different kinds of emotional abuse—they hurt your child's spirit. Over time, they make your child feel worthless, worried, and angry. They make it hard for your child to trust you. They make it hard for them to love and trust other people.

As a parent, your job is to help your child learn to control their own behaviour. Spanking, yelling, and threatening won't help your child. All those things do is hurt them and teach them to fear and mistrust you.



Double check

No matter how much time, patience, and loving guidance you give to your toddler, there will be times when they do things that upset or embarrass you.

This doesn't mean that you are a bad parent. At some point, nearly every parent has to deal with things like their toddler having a tantrum in the supermarket or grabbing other children's toys in a playgroup.

Parents often feel that others are judging them. Maybe they are. But there's nothing you can do about what other people think, so don't worry about it. All you can do is be patient and consistent and be the best parent you can be.

Toddlers can act in ways that are very frustrating. However, losing your temper won't help either of you. If you find yourself getting very angry, walk away. Give yourself a few minutes to calm down.

You'll find information on how to handle anger and stress in the "**Parents**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Common concerns

Sooner or later, most toddlers do things that parents find hard to deal with.

All children are different. How you handle these common concerns will depend on what you know about your child—for example, their age, their temperament, and how they're feeling on a particular day.

You may have to try several different things before you find something that works for you and your child. You know your child best. It's up to you to decide what works best for you, your child, and your family.

The behaviours in this section are a normal part of a child's development—most toddlers will do one or more of these things at some point. However, they should ease off over time. Talk to your health care provider, Family Resource Centre, or an early childhood educator if the behaviour seems to be getting worse or if it gets harder for you or your child to handle it. You'll find contact information for many programs and sources of support in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Double check

Everything you do with your toddler works better if everyone who cares for your child handles things the same way.

You'll find information on sharing parenting in the “**Parents**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Aggressive behaviour

Biting, hitting, pushing, kicking, hurting others, throwing things

Why is my toddler doing this?

Children can act aggressively when they are angry, frustrated, frightened, jealous, or upset. Toddlers have strong feelings. They don't yet know how to control these feelings. Hitting, biting, or throwing things may be the only way they have to show how they feel. Your job is to help them learn better ways to show their feelings.

Toddlers copy what they see others do. If they see adults or other children yelling, hitting, or being aggressive, they may copy this behaviour.

Toddlers are still learning that other people have feelings, too. They haven't learned that when they hit someone, it hurts.

Sometimes, toddlers hurt without meaning to. They think they are playing. They are still learning what their body can do. They don't know how strong they are. A toddler might hit when they mean to touch gently. Or push when they mean to pat.

What can I do?

When your toddler hurts someone...

Be clear about what you want. Don't just say, "No!" If your child hears the word "no" over and over, they'll stop paying attention. Gently move your child away from whoever they've hurt. Remain calm. Say, "I know you want a turn, but you need to ask Nick with words. Hitting hurts Nick."

Try time-in. If your child is hurting others, move them away from the other children. Sit with them until they calm down. They may want you to hold them on your lap or help them find something else to do.

Use logical results. Your toddler needs to learn to connect what they do with what happens because of it. But the result must make sense and be connected to what they did. For example, it won't make sense to your toddler if you cancel a trip to the park because they pushed their friend. But taking them away from their friend for a while will help them understand.

"I know it's hard to share, but pushing hurts people. Come with me and we'll find another toy for you. You can play with Eli again later."

Be consistent. Respond in the same way every time your child hurts someone. It's also helpful when all of your toddler's caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond in the same way that you do.



To make aggressive behaviour less likely...

Be a good example. Your toddler will copy anything they see you doing. If you yell, so will they. If you hit, so will they. Let your child see you handle anger and frustration in positive ways. You'll find information on handling anger in the **"Parents"** section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Respect your child. Listen when they talk to you. Pay attention to them while they play. Notice what makes them angry or frustrated. Step in to help when you see them getting upset. Help them handle their frustration before they hurt someone.

Try to limit the number of times you say "No." It's frustrating to always be told, "No" or "Stop that!" Make your home safe so you have less reason to say "No." When you need to ask your child to stop doing something, explain why. "Please stop throwing your toys. You could hurt someone." Notice and praise behaviour that you like.

Set up and stick to routines. To feel safe and calm, your toddler needs to have things they can depend on. A daily routine will help them know what to expect. Children become angry and frustrated more easily when they are tired, hungry, or haven't had enough physically active play. A daily routine will make it easier for you to predict how your child will feel at different times of the day.

Make a few simple rules. Having limits helps your toddler feel safe. On the other hand, your toddler is too young to remember too many rules, so keep rules clear and simple. "We don't hurt people. Pushing hurts." You will have to remind your toddler of the rules many times. Your toddler wants to please you, but they are still too young to be able to remember rules all the time.





Plan ahead. Plan errands and activities for times when your child is rested and alert. Think about your toddler’s temperament. Think about how they feel at different times of the day. For example, are they likely to be tired and easily upset in the afternoon? Try to avoid things that you know will frustrate your child when they’re likely to be tired or hungry.

Help your child learn what to do. Toddlers often hit, bite, grab, push, or throw things because they don’t know another way to get what they want. Show your toddler a better way. For example, you can show them how to say, “No, it’s my toy,” instead of pushing another child away.

Describe their feelings to help them learn the words they need to tell you how they feel. “I think you’re feeling angry at Max.”

Help your child work out ways to solve problems before they lead to hitting. For example, if your toddler is getting frustrated because the baby has grabbed one of their toys, you can show them how to offer the baby a different toy. You can use pretend games to help your child practice these kinds of problem-solving skills. For example, you can have teddy bears take turns sharing a toy.

It can also help reduce your toddler’s frustration if you spend time helping them learn new skills—like eating and dressing. Build on their strengths. As they master more skills, they’ll have fewer sources of frustration in their life.

Clinging ***Not wanting to be separated from you***

Why is my toddler doing this?

Toddlers can be afraid of many things, but one of their greatest fears is that you will go away and not come back.

Clinging—or separation anxiety—is a normal part of your toddler’s development. At some point between age 8 months and 3 years, most children go through a period where they are worried, frightened, and upset when they are separated from a parent or caregiver. They have learned that they love you and need you. When you go away they are afraid that you won’t come back. They cling, cry, and scream because they want you to stay. These fears can become worse when there are changes or stress in your toddler’s life—for example, a new baby or a parent returning to work.

How long this lasts, and how strongly your child reacts when you leave, depends on:

- Your child’s temperament
- How well you can help them get used to the idea that sometimes you must leave for a while, but that you will come back

What can I do?

To make it easier for your child to be away from you...

- **Set up and stick to routines.** When your toddler knows what to expect every day, they feel safe and secure. This means they will be calmer and less worried overall. Make sure that all of your child’s caregivers know and follow your routines.
- **Help your child to develop warm relationships with other adults**—friends, relatives, babysitters, and neighbours. Give them lots of chances to spend time with other people while you’re around. This will help them learn that there are other people they can trust and depend on when you aren’t there.
- **Respect your child.** The fear that you won’t come back is very real to your child. Don’t get angry or make fun of their fear.
- **Plan ahead.** Spend some time helping your child understand the idea of going away and coming back. For example, you can read stories about it or play pretend games with dolls or teddies.

Double check

For more information on attachment, see “**Building love, trust, and confidence,**” page 6.



When you have to leave...

- **Plan ahead.** Plan to leave at a time when your child is relaxed and calm, not tired, hungry, or feeling stressed.

Be sure your child has had a chance to get to know the caregiver before you leave. For example, if you are leaving your child with a babysitter, have the sitter spend some time with your child a day or so before you have to go away. If you will be taking your child to a babysitter's home or to a child care centre, spend some time there with your child before you leave them.

When you are taking your child to a sitter or child care, it may help them feel better if they can take a favourite blanket or stuffed toy with them. Some children like to have a photo of their family.

- **Don't sneak out.** When your child is screaming and the sitter is struggling to hold them, it can seem easier to just sneak away when they're not looking and avoid the fuss. Don't do it. This will only teach your toddler that they can't trust you. It will make them more worried. They'll cling to you more.

When you leave, say goodbye. Tell them you love them. Tell them when you'll be back. "Bye-bye! I have to leave now. I love you. I'll be back after lunch." Then give them a hug and leave right away.

- **Be consistent.** Act the same way every time you leave. Don't give in and play for a few more minutes one time and rush out the next.

If you are taking your toddler to child care or to a sitter every day, allow enough time so you aren't rushed and tense as you leave them. Follow a consistent routine. Your child will be calmer when they know what to expect.

- **Stay calm and positive.** It can be very difficult to leave when your child is so upset. You can feel very guilty. You can feel angry with your child for making you feel that way. Don't let your child see how you feel. It will only make them more upset. Act relaxed and calm. Be patient, but firm. Yes, you're leaving for a while but you'll be back. If it helps you to feel better, call a little while after you've left to be sure everything is all right. On the way to child care or the sitter's, talk with your child about all the things they'll be doing with the caregiver. Be positive. If you are worried, your child will feel it. And they'll worry too.

Fears

Why is my toddler doing this?

Fears are a normal part of toddler development.

Fears happen because:

- **Your toddler's world is getting bigger** and it's full of new things—for example, loud noises, big animals, and people in costumes (including clowns and Santa). New experiences can be scary. A toddler can feel very small and helpless.
- **Your toddler's imagination is getting bigger**—they can imagine a monster under the bed.
- **Your toddler's memory is getting better**—they can remember things that frightened them or that it hurt when they got stung by a bee.



What can I do?

To help your toddler...

- **Respect your child.** At this stage of their development, toddlers think differently than adults. This is why a child's fears don't always make sense to you. For example, you know that they really won't go down the drain with the bathwater. But their fears are very real to them. Take them seriously, even when they can't explain what they're afraid of. Don't make fun of your child or their fears. Don't tease them. Listen when they talk about what they're afraid of. Tell them that you know they're afraid. Help them feel safe. Don't talk about your child's fears with others when your child might hear you.
- **Be patient.** You cannot talk your child out of their fears. And just when they seem to be getting over one fear, they may become frightened of something new. Be patient. With time and support, they will eventually get over their fears.
- **Be gentle.** Don't force your toddler to face their fears. Help them get over their fear slowly. For example, if your child is afraid of dogs, you can look at pictures of dogs in books. You can read stories about dogs. Your child can dress up and pretend to be a dog. You can talk about what dogs do—for example, bark loudly and run after balls. Very slowly work up to actually being near a dog.



- **Help your child learn what to do.** Fear makes toddlers feel helpless. Giving them a sense of control can help them get over fears.
For example, if your toddler is afraid of the dark, you can help them feel more in control by having a small lamp in their room or by giving them a small flashlight to turn on when they're scared.
If your child is afraid of the loud noise the vacuum cleaner makes, you can teach them to turn it on and off.
If your child is afraid of monsters, you can make up stories to help them feel braver. For example, if they sleep with a teddy bear, you can tell a story about how monsters are afraid of teddy bears.

- **Plan ahead.** Children often develop fears when they are surprised or upset by a new experience. It may help to talk to your child about what they will see and what will happen before you take them somewhere new. For example, if you're going to a circus, to see Santa, or to a parade or cultural festival, read books about it and look at pictures. However, remember that the real world is different. Seeing the real thing can still be scary.
- **Praise them for trying.** Praise your toddler for every small step they take toward getting over their fears.
- **Be a good example.** Parents often have fears of their own. Are you afraid of spiders or snakes? Don't let your toddler see your fears. If they see that you're afraid, your toddler will be afraid of the things that frighten you. If you have trouble coping with your own fears, it may help to talk with a health care provider.
Every culture and religion has beliefs and stories that can be scary for toddlers. Be thoughtful about how you introduce these ideas and stories to your child.

Shopping with a toddler

Why is my toddler doing this?

Parents often find shopping with a toddler to be frustrating—for them and for their toddler. This is because shopping involves two things that a toddler is not yet able to do—sit still and be patient.



What can I do?

To help avoid problems...

- **Plan ahead.** Try to avoid shopping when your toddler is hungry or tired. Try to plan errands for times when the shop is less busy. If you can, keep your errands short. Try not to do too much at one time.
- **Be prepared.** Shop with a list. Bring along a small snack to eat or a book or toy to play with.
- **Set rules.** These should be few, simple, and consistent. For example, “Stay close to me.” “Leave things on the shelves.” Remind your child about the rules every time you go shopping.
- **Make it interesting.** Play games like “I Spy.” Talk to them about what you’re looking at and what you put in the cart. Talk about the shapes and colours you see. Count things as they go into the cart. Talk about why you’re buying things. For example, “Louise is coming tomorrow so we’re buying their favourite food.”
- **Let them help.** Let them put unbreakable things into the cart. Give them some simple choices—“Shall we get apples or oranges?”
- **Praise what you like.** “You’re being very helpful!” “What a good choice!”

If your toddler loses control, follow the advice for tantrums: Be gentle, consistent, and pay as little attention as possible. Take them to a quiet place. Wait for them to calm down. Then ask if they are ready to try again.

Tantrums

Why is my toddler doing this?

Life can be very frustrating for a toddler. They have to learn to do everything—feed themselves with a spoon, walk, run, get along with others. They don't have the skills to do the things they want to do. They don't have the words to tell you what they need or how they feel. They can't always have or do what they want to. Sometimes it all gets to be too much! They lose control and have a tantrum.

What can I do?

During a tantrum...

When your toddler is having a tantrum, they are out of control. Talking won't help. What they need most is to know that when they are out of control, you are in control. Yelling, getting angry, or letting your own frustration show will only frighten your child and make things worse.

Did you know?

Most parents feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when their toddler has a tantrum in public. They wonder what to do. They worry about what others might think.

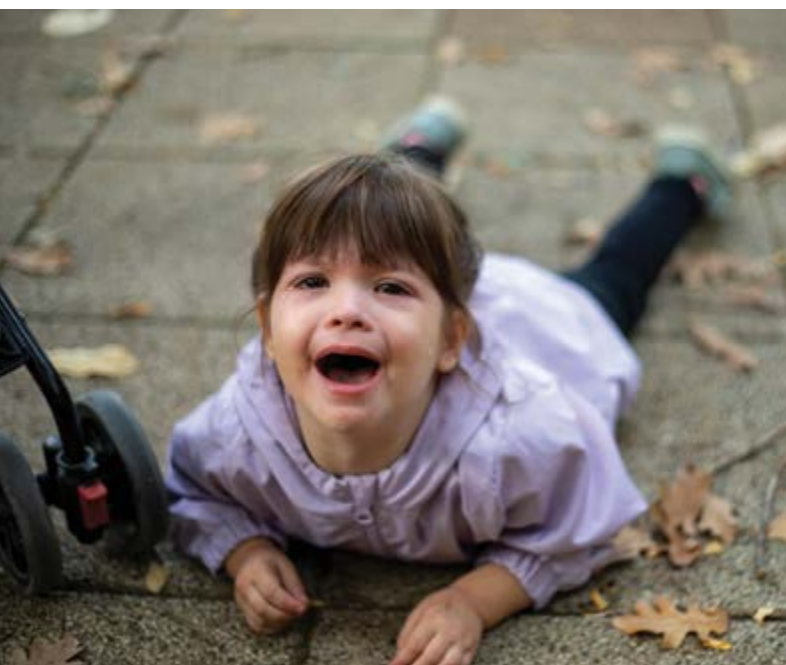
Stay calm and try not to worry. Do the best that you can. You're not the first parent this has happened to.

- **Be gentle.** Stay calm. Don't argue. Don't try to reason. Don't grab or handle them roughly. Don't try to rush them. Give them time to calm down. If you're in a public place, move to somewhere quiet and out of the way.
- **Pay as little attention as you can.** Your toddler will repeat behaviour that gets them what they want. Don't try to bribe them or offer treats if they'll stop. This will only teach them that tantrums work. When the tantrum is in a public place, take the child to a quiet place until they calm down.
Whenever it's possible, ignore the tantrum. Be sure your child is safe and can't hurt themselves. Stay nearby, but don't look at your child or give them any attention. After the tantrum is over, give them a hug and act as if it never happened.
- **Be consistent.** Try to respond to every tantrum in the same way—stay calm, and pay as little attention as possible. It's helpful when all of your toddler's caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond in the same way that you do. If you and your child's other caregivers disagree, talk about your differences. Find a way to work together. This isn't always easy, but it's important for your child.
- **Use logical results.** For example, if you are out when a tantrum happens a logical result could be that you would leave where you are and go home. But if you tell your child that you will go home if they don't stop, be prepared to follow through.

To make tantrums less likely...

You can make a tantrum less likely by making your toddler's life less frustrating.

- **Set up and stick to routines.** When your toddler knows what to expect during the day, they'll be more relaxed and less likely to get frustrated.
- **Make your home a safe and interesting place for your toddler.** The more often you have to say, "No," the more frustrated your toddler will be.
- **Help your child learn what to do.** Toddlers become frustrated when they can't figure how to get or do what they want. Pay attention. When you see your toddler starting to get frustrated, help them figure out what to do.
- **Praise behaviour you like.** It's frustrating to always be told, "No" or "Stop that!" Notice and praise behaviour that you like.
- **Plan ahead.** Tantrums are much more likely to happen when your toddler is tired or hungry. Plan outings for times when your child is rested and full. Bring along a nutritious snack.
- **Help your child move from one activity to another.** When your toddler is having fun doing something, it can be very frustrating to be told they have to stop and do something else. Make it easier by giving them time to get used to the idea of changing the activity. Tell them you understand how they feel and give them a countdown. For example, "I know you're having fun with Evan, but we have to go home soon." Then, "We have to leave in 3 minutes." "We have to leave in one minute." "Okay, time to go!"
- **Be a good example.** Let your child see you handle your own anger and frustration in a positive way. You'll find information on handling anger in the "**Parents**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.
- **Offer simple choices.** Your toddler can feel frustrated and angry when they feel like they have no control over what happens to them. Giving simple choices can help them feel less frustrated.



Whining

Why is my toddler doing this?

Whining can happen when a toddler is tired, hungry, worried, bored, or feeling insecure. It continues when they learn that whining is a good way to get what they want.

What can I do?

If your toddler whines...

- **Be clear about what you want.** Tell your child that you listen better when they use their “regular” voice. When they whine, say, “Please use your regular voice. When you use your regular voice, then I can hear what you’re saying.”
- **Ignore behaviour you don’t like.** If your child continues to whine, ignore it. Don’t whine back at them. Pay attention when they **stop** whining. Ignoring behaviour can be very difficult because when you begin ignoring something, it often gets worse before it gets better. Keep telling yourself that if you give in to the whining, your child will learn that whining works.
- **Be consistent.** Respond to whining in the same way, every time. Be sure all of your toddler’s other caregivers—parents, grandparents, and others—respond to whining in the same way that you do.



To make whining less likely...

- **Help your child learn what to do.** Teach your child how to ask for things in a regular voice. The next time they whine, you can say, “Remember how to use your regular voice.”
- **Be a good example.** Keep your tone of voice positive. If you whine and complain, your child will be more likely to whine too.
- **Plan ahead.** When you go out, be sure you have books or toys to avoid boredom and nutritious snacks to avoid hunger. Plan activities and errands for times when your child is well-rested.
- **Respect your child.** Children often whine when they feel that you are not paying attention to them. Give your child more attention, encouragement, and support. Listen when they talk. It might help to bend or kneel down so you can look into their eyes. Don’t copy them or whine back at them.
- **Praise behaviour you like.** When your child asks for something in a normal voice, praise them for it. “Thank you for using your regular voice.” This doesn’t mean that you have to give them what they ask for just because they didn’t whine, but you should praise the effort. Help your child develop hearing and speaking skills (**page 41**) so that they can talk about what they want and need without whining.

Your toddler wants you to know...

I need your help and your patience to learn all the things I need to know. Help me learn to understand my feelings and to get along with others.





Learning to use the toilet

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Using the toilet

In this section, you'll find information to help you teach your child how to use the toilet.

Our advice is to teach your child to use the same toilet the rest of the family uses, rather than starting with a potty. There are several reasons for this:

- Potties are very difficult to keep clean.
- Potties aren't very portable. When you go to the mall or visit other families, there probably won't be a potty there.
- Daycares don't use potties. The children use a toilet.
- If you start with a potty, you'll likely have to teach your toddler all over again to use a regular toilet. So why not just save a step and start out with the toilet?

“I'm getting tired of changing diapers! When will my toddler be ready to use the toilet?”



Development and learning to use the toilet

In order to learn to use the toilet, your child needs to have developed several skills:

- They need physical skills so they can control the muscles that stop and start pee and poop. They also need to be able to pull their own pants up and down.
- They need language skills so they can tell you when they have to pee or poop.
- They need social skills to want to do what they see parents and older children doing.

Most children are ready to start learning to use the toilet sometime between ages 2 and 4. Some start a little earlier, some a little later. Every child is different.

There is no point in trying to teach your child to use the toilet before they've developed the skills they need. It will just make you both upset and frustrated. And in the end, your child will not learn to use the toilet any sooner.

Let your child take the lead in learning to use the toilet. For example, if your child is afraid of the toilet, wait until this fear has passed before starting to teach them to use the toilet.



Did you know?

Even when your child has the skills they need to be ready to learn to use the toilet, it's best to begin during a calm time when there is little stress in their life.

When your child is facing changes in their life, it's difficult for them to learn something new.

Wait until things have settled down if:

- Your family is moving
- Your toddler is starting or changing child care
- Your toddler is moving to a bed
- You have a new baby
- There has been a major family crisis—for example, a death, separation, or serious illness

It's also best to wait until your toddler has passed the stage where they say “No” to everything.

Even after your toddler has been using the toilet for a while, they may start wetting themselves again if they're feeling stressed.

How will I know when my child is ready?

Your child has developed the skills they need to **start** learning to use the toilet when they:

- Can stay dry in their diapers for a few hours.
- Notice when they're peeing or pooping. For example, they may get a certain look on their face, pull at their pants, or squat. Or they may go off somewhere to be alone while they poop.
- Notice when their diapers are dirty. They like clean, dry diapers and like being changed when their diaper is wet or dirty.
- Poop at regular times during the day.
- Can get on and off the toilet using a sturdy stool.
- Can pull down their pants.
- Know words like pee, poop, dry, wet, and toilet—or whatever words your family uses. They can tell you—in words or actions—that they need to use the toilet.
- Are interested in the toilet. They watch you or older children use the toilet. They're interested in books about using the toilet.
- Want to be independent—a big kid.

When your child has most of these skills, you'll know that they are able to use the toilet and able to let you know when they need to use the toilet. But the most important sign that your toddler is ready to begin learning to use the toilet is that they **want** to.



What do I do?

Be sure that YOU are ready

Your attitude is key. You need to understand that it's up to your toddler to decide when they're ready. You need to be very patient and let them take the lead. Treat learning to use the toilet calmly and casually. It's just one more of the many things your toddler is learning. Praise them when they succeed. Reassure them when they don't. Don't get too excited when they use the toilet. Don't get upset when they have accidents. Be prepared to do lots of laundry!

Your toddler needs to feel that they are in control. If you make learning to use the toilet into a big deal, your toddler will figure out that not cooperating is a way for them to be in control.

Start slowly

- **Get an adapter seat for your toilet and a sturdy footstool.** Your child's feet should rest on the stool while they're sitting on the toilet.
- **Let them follow you into the bathroom when you use the toilet.** Help them get used to bathroom noises by letting them flush the toilet. Let them help by getting toilet paper for you. You can tell them, "When you're a big kid, you'll use the toilet to poop and pee like I do."
- **Help them get used to the toilet.** If they're interested, have them sit on the adapter seat on the toilet—wearing their clothes. Let them play pretend and help a doll or stuffed animal use the toilet.



Practice

- **Dress your toddler in clothes that are easy to pull up and down.**
- **Follow your child's cues.** Have your child pull down their pants and sit on the toilet at the times of day when they usually poop. For example, this could be when they get up in the morning, about 20 minutes after meals, when they get up from a nap, or before bedtime. Praise your child when they cooperate, even if they don't poop or pee. "You're sitting there like a big kid!"
- **Pay attention.** When you notice your toddler looking like they're about to poop or pee, say something like, "You need to poop (or pee) now. Let's use the toilet." Encourage your toddler to tell you when they need to go to the toilet.

At the toilet

- **Lead your child to the toilet.** Help them pull down their pants and sit on the toilet. Encourage them to poop or pee. Reading them a story might help them relax. If your child isn't interested in sitting, don't force them. Even if they like sitting on the toilet, have them get up after 5 minutes, unless they're pooping or peeing.
- **Praise your child when they get to the toilet in time.** "Good job! You waited until we got to the toilet!"
- **Don't flush while your toddler is still on the toilet!** This can be very scary. Encourage them to flush for themselves.
- **Teach your child how to wipe themselves.** You'll have to do this for a while, but show them how so when they're ready they'll know what to do. Teach them to wipe from front to back.
- **Show your child how to wash their hands after using the toilet.** A sturdy stool will help them reach the sink. See **page 146** for information on hand washing.



Did you know?

If at any point in this process your toddler loses interest or resists using the toilet, just stop. Wait a while and then start again.

Make it a habit

- **When your toddler has successfully used the toilet for a week or so, see if they'd like to try training pants or regular underpants.** They may still need a diaper for naps and at night. Pull-on diapers aren't necessary.
- **Expect accidents.** Don't get angry or punish your child. Reassure them that accidents happen and they'll get better at using the toilet in time. "Don't worry. I know you wanted to pee in the toilet. You'll make it next time." Change your child as soon as possible after an accident. Bring extra clothes when you go out.

Caution!

Talk to a health care provider if your child:

- Is older than 4 and still hasn't learned to use the toilet
- Is holding back poop or is in pain when they use the toilet
- Has blood in their poop or pee
- Suddenly seems to need to go to the toilet much more often than usual





Did you know?

Toddlers are often very interested in their poop and pee. They want to look at it in the toilet. Some even want to play with it.

Let your child look if they want to, but not touch. Don't make faces or show that you think the poop is yucky. Your toddler used the toilet to please you. Let them see that you appreciate their effort!

Using the toilet at night

- **Be patient.** It can take much longer for your child to learn to stay dry overnight. Even when your child stays dry all day, they will still need diapers for naps and at night for a while.
- **Tell them to call you for help if they need to use the toilet at night.** Go to them promptly. They'll be sleepy, so hold them on the toilet to prevent accidents.
- **Try training pants or underpants when they've stayed dry at night for a week or so.** Protect the mattress with a plastic sheet under the regular sheet so neither of you will need to worry about accidents.



Your toddler wants you to know...

Don't expect too much from me, too soon. Follow my lead. Wait until I'm ready to learn to use the toilet.



zzz

Sleep

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Toddlers need lots of sleep

Your toddler needs less sleep than they did as a baby, but they still need lots of sleep!

Most toddlers need between 10 and 13 hours of sleep each day. But every child is different. Your toddler may need more or less sleep than this.

At about 18 months, toddlers usually need only 1 nap a day, rather than 2. Some days they won't need a nap at all. Naps can last from 1 to 3 hours.

Being sleepy or very fussy during the day can be a cue that your toddler isn't getting enough sleep.

“My toddler seems less like a baby every day. How much sleep do they really need? Do they still need a nap every day?”



Sleepiness cues

Toddlers sleep best when their bed and nap times are part of a daily routine. Your toddler has ways of letting you know when they're sleepy. These are called cues. It's important to follow your toddler's cues when deciding on bed and nap times. Your toddler will be more willing to cooperate and go to bed peacefully if they're sleepy.

Your toddler will let you know they're sleepy by:

- Losing interest in what they're doing
- Talking less
- Rubbing their eyes
- Pulling at their ear
- Yawning
- Having droopy or watery eyes
- Sucking their thumb
- Lying down to play
- Wanting to breastfeed

It's important to pay attention to these sleepiness cues, because if your child gets **too** tired, they will have a hard time falling asleep.



Sleep

Your toddler will show you that they're TOO tired by:

- Whining
- Clinging
- Wanting attention
- Becoming very angry, frustrated, or impatient
- Having a tantrum
- Crying
- Running around and being very active

*Sometimes these cues can also signal your child is not feeling well. “**When to see a healthcare provider**” on **page 151** offers guidance if your child is sick.*

Bedtime routines



Did you know?

Illnesses can cause changes in your child's sleeping patterns.

When they're healthy again, you may need to start at the beginning to get them used to their bedtime routine again.

Setting and sticking to a bedtime routine is one of the best ways to help your toddler get a good night's sleep. Each step in the nightly routine is a sign to the child that it's time to sleep.

As your child moves from being a baby to a toddler, you may find that your old bedtime routines don't work as well as they used to. You may need to set new routines.

You and your toddler will figure out what routine works best for you both. The important thing is that the routine be:

- **Consistent**—It should be the same every night and happen at the same time every night.
- **Calming**—It should help your toddler settle down. Some parents find it helpful to get a head start on this by playing quietly with their child for the last half-hour before the bedtime routine begins.
- **Pleasant**—it should give your child something to look forward to. For example, quiet time with you, breastfeeding, lots of cuddles, a gentle massage, or special toys, books, or music.

A bedtime routine could include: a bath and brushing teeth, putting on pajamas, a bedtime story or song, getting tucked in, a goodnight kiss, and lights out.

A bedtime routine works best when everyone who cares for your toddler knows and follows it.

Double check

It's not a good idea to let your child fall asleep while watching TV or videos. This will not help them learn to put themselves to sleep on their own.

For more information about TV and screen time, see “**Screen time and development,**” page 31.



Did you know?

Bedtime routines work best when they are part of a regular daily routine.

A regular daily routine means:

- Getting up at about the same time every day
- Having meals, naps, and playtimes at about the same time every day
- Going to bed at about the same time every night

Toddlers like to know what to expect every day and this kind of routine helps them get used to sleeping and being awake at regular times. Make an effort to stick to your routine even when you have visitors or are away from home.

A daily routine is good for parents, too. Knowing that your child will be in bed at a certain time means you can depend on having some time to yourself.



Morning routines

It may sound strange, but a morning routine is part of helping your child get a good night's sleep.

Getting up at about the same time every day is an important part of a daily routine, just like going to bed at the same time every night. Knowing what to expect helps your toddler to develop healthy sleep habits.

Like a bedtime routine, a morning routine should be consistent—the same things, in the same order, at about the same time every day. For example, get up, get dressed, eat breakfast, and brush teeth. And like a bedtime routine, a morning routine works best if it is pleasant and peaceful for you both.

If you need to get your child ready to leave the house every morning, you may want to plan ahead to make morning routines as easy as possible.

- **Do as much as you can the night before.** You could pack lunches and plan breakfast. Set the table. Put your bags near the door. Pick out clothes your toddler will wear. Older toddlers may want to help pick out their clothes.
- **Get up, dressed, and organized before your toddler wakes up.**
- **Leave lots of time to get ready in the morning.** Toddlers can take quite a while to get up and get dressed, especially when they want to do everything for themselves. The more you try to rush your toddler, the slower they'll get. Set the alarm early enough to allow plenty of time so no one starts the day feeling rushed or stressed. Leave lots of time for breakfast. Eating in a car can cause choking.

TV can slow things down, especially if you have to take a child away from a show or video before it's over. It's best to avoid TV in the morning.



Double check

For more information on screen time and on things children can do instead of watching TV, see **page 32**.

Naps

By about 18 months, many toddlers need only 1 nap each day, but that nap is important to them. It gives them the energy they need to grow and learn all day long. Remember that each child is different. Some may continue to need 2 naps each day.

Naps can last from 1 to 3 hours, depending on your child's age, how much sleep they get during the night, and how active they are that day.

Follow your child's cues when deciding when naptime should be. Make naptime part of your daily routine so they'll know what to expect.

Having a naptime routine can help your child settle down. It can be very simple—for example, breastfeeding and a cuddle, tucking in with a special toy and a kiss. What matters to your toddler is that it is more or less the same every day.

To help your child sleep during the day:

- Offer lunch or a snack about half an hour before naptime
- Keep the room dark

Some toddlers like soft music during naptime. This can be helpful in blocking everyday noises while your toddler is napping.



Double check

You'll find information on sleepiness cues on **page 101**.



Moving your toddler to a bed



Moving into their own bed is a big change for a toddler. The best time to make this move will depend on your toddler—some children are ready sooner than others. You may need to be patient and give them time to get used to the idea.

When your toddler does ANY ONE of these things, think about moving them to a bed:

- **Your toddler asks for a bed.** The move will be easier if it is something they want to do.
- **Your toddler has learned to climb**, or is trying to climb out of the crib.
- **Your toddler is 90 cm (35 in.) tall or the crib rail is level with their nipples.** At this point, it's more likely they could climb—or fall—out.
- **Your toddler can use the toilet.** Even if your toddler uses the toilet during the day, it will be a long time before they can stay dry all night. But if they are starting to ask to go to the toilet during the night, a bed can make this easier.

To prevent injuries, your toddler's first bed can be a mattress on the floor, a toddler bed, or a regular bed with guardrails so they can't fall out. Bunk beds are not safe for toddlers.

Use a firm, toddler-sized pillow and a small blanket on the bed. Adult-sized pillows and heavy blankets or comforters are too much for a toddler to manage.

To help your toddler get used to their new bed:

- **If you are getting new sheets, let your child help pick them out.**
- **If there's room, set up the bed before you take the crib down.** Let your toddler decide where they want to sleep. Some toddlers like to play or nap on the bed for a while before they're ready to sleep in it all night.
- **Help your toddler practice climbing in and out of bed during the daytime.** This makes a fall in the night less likely.

When your toddler makes the move to a bed, you may find that they've outgrown their old bedtime routine too. This may be a good time to work out a new, "big kid" routine.



Double check

Because your toddler will now be able to get out of bed, be sure their bedroom is a safe place.

- Put diaper products out of reach.
- Be sure there is no furniture they can climb.
- Bolt heavy furniture—like bookshelves and dressers—to the wall.

For more information on safety in your home, see **page 167**.

Did you know?

Parents often think about moving a toddler into a bed when they need the crib for a new baby. If you need to do this, plan ahead to be sure that your toddler doesn't feel pushed out by the new baby.

Consider your toddler's feelings. Give them lots of time to get used to the idea. Make the move to a bed gradually. This way, your child will be happy in their new bed long before the baby takes over their old crib.

Common sleep concerns

Not wanting to go to bed

Toddlers often don't want to go to bed. Having a daily routine and a bedtime routine that is soothing and pleasant for your toddler can help. (See **page 102** for information about bedtime routines.)

There are several reasons your toddler may not want to go to bed.

- **They aren't tired.**
 - Follow your toddler's sleepiness cues. This will help you pick a bedtime when they're tired. (See **page 101** for information about sleepiness cues.)
 - Make sure that your child has some active play every day. (See **page 47** for information about active play.)
- **They're too tired to relax and settle down to sleep.** You can avoid overtiredness by:
 - Scheduling regular naptimes during the day.
 - Following sleepiness cues.
- **They're afraid to be alone and worry when they can't see you.** Some extra time and attention at bedtime can help with this. So can a special toy to cuddle for comfort. Some toddlers feel less alone when their door is left open or if there is a night light in their room. Some like soft soothing music to keep them company.



Did you know?

To help your child go to bed peacefully, make their crib, bed, and bedroom happy and comfortable places. Don't punish your child by putting them in their crib or bed.

Getting out of bed

Often, toddlers will get out of bed soon after being tucked in. When this happens:

- Take them back to bed, calmly but firmly. Do this every time they get up. Don't let them stay up even one time.
- Tell them that you're here and you love them, but it's time to sleep now.
- Help them back into bed, and leave.

Don't do anything that rewards your child for getting out of bed. Don't smile, talk or laugh. Just take them back to bed calmly, gently, and firmly.

Do this every time your child gets out of bed. It may take a while for your child to learn that getting up isn't going to be fun.

Waking during the night

All of us wake up during the night, but we've learned to settle ourselves back to sleep. Some toddlers learn the skill of "self settling" sooner than others.

Some toddlers may wake during the night because they are light sleepers or because it's become a habit. If this is the case, when your toddler calls to you or cries during the night:

- Respond quickly so your child doesn't have time to get upset.
- Call back to them so they know that you're there.
- If they continue to call, go to them. Be calm and quiet.
- Soothe them by speaking softly. "It's night now. Time to sleep." You can stroke their forehead or pat their shoulder.

Be consistent. Respond in this way whenever your child calls in the night. You may have to do it often for a while.

Caution!

Keep your child safe if they get up during the night. Be sure there are gates at the top of the stairs. Use gates that attach to the wall with screws.

See "**Safety**," **page 164**, for more information on childproofing.



Sleep

You may find that your toddler wakes more often when they are upset about a change in their life—like a new baby or moving to a new home. Giving them lots of affection during the day and sticking to a familiar schedule will help them feel safe and loved. It will also help them sleep better.

If your child wakes up because they have to pee, or because they've wet the bed, you may need to help them go to the bathroom or change the bed. If they're uncomfortable, they won't be able to go back to sleep. You can also try to give your child less to drink before bed.

If your child wakes up and is thirsty, offer a drink of water from a cup. Don't offer milk or juice, especially in a sippy cup or bottle. The sugar in milk and juice will stay on your child's teeth and cause tooth decay.

Remember that your child needs loving and patient parenting during the night as well as during the day.



Double check

You'll find more information on protecting your child's teeth in "**Dental health**" on **page 156**.

Double check

See "**Learning to use the toilet**" (**page 88**) for more information about staying dry at night.



Nightmares

Many toddlers have nightmares. They are most likely to happen when your child is upset about something—for example, a change in their life, or a scary story. Nightmares can also happen when your toddler has a fever.

Nightmares are very scary for toddlers because they still have trouble understanding what's real and what isn't.

When your child has a nightmare, go to them right away and comfort them. Tell them it was only a dream and that they're safe.

Your child may or may not remember the dream in the morning. If they talk about the dream they may feel better if you help them change the ending of the dream so it's less frightening. For example, if they dreamed about a monster, you can help them make up a story about how they scared it away by shining a light on it.

Did you know?

Night terrors

Night terrors are different from nightmares.

During a night terror, your child screams or cries. Their eyes may be open and their heart might be beating fast. They may be tossing and turning in their bed. They may look awake, but they're still asleep.

If your child has a night terror, hold them gently so they won't hurt themselves if they're moving around. Talk to them quietly, even if they can't hear you. You don't need to wake them up.

Night terrors are frightening for parents, but children don't usually remember them in the morning.

Talk to your health care provider if you'd like more information about night terrors.

Sleep and the breastfeeding toddler



If you are breastfeeding your toddler, you have most likely worked out a sleeping arrangement that works for your family.

Many parents share their bed with their toddler, as your toddler may get into your bed to seek comfort. Since breastfeeding is an important source of comfort as well as nourishment, bedsharing with your toddler can be a very effective way to meet a breastfeeding toddler's needs.

The risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is a lot lower for babies once they reach one year of age and older.

Bed-sharing with infants younger than one year is not recommended because of the higher risk of SIDS.

When your toddler is ready to move to their own bed, follow the ideas in this section. Set up a new bedtime routine to help ease them into this new sleeping arrangement.

Even after your toddler has moved to their own bed, they may still feel the need to return to your bed when they wake up at night, especially if they are breastfeeding. This is normal. In fact, research shows that bed-sharing with your toddler can help your toddler develop independence. This is because they feel secure and know that their parent is always there day and night, and they have a strong base that allows them to feel safe as they move out into the world.

Every child is different, but in the end, they all sleep in their own bed.

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Your toddler wants you to know...

Follow my cues. Be patient and consistent. Help me get the sleep I need!

Double check

Bed-sharing with babies who are over one year of age has a much lower risk, but you can still take steps to make bed-sharing even more safe. See the “**Safer sleep**” section in **Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months** and the “**Safer sleep**” section in **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months** for information about how to make bed-sharing as safe as possible.





Did you know?

Breastmilk still provides many benefits and good nutrition for your toddler. Breastfeeding is still a source of comfort for your child.

Continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your toddler enjoy it. Nova Scotia Health, Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the World Health Organization all recommend breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond.

For more information about breastfeeding your toddler, and for information on weaning, returning to work, and breastfeeding while pregnant, see **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can ask about getting a copy from your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**).



Food

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“Some days my little one eats everything in sight. Some days they won’t eat anything at all. And last week all they wanted was peanut butter on toast! Is this normal? Is it healthy?”

Did you know?

Along with healthy eating, being active is important for your child’s growth and health. For more information on active play, see “**Play develops physical skills,**” page 47.

A good start to healthy eating

To give your toddler a good start toward a lifetime of healthy eating, you need to know one thing:

You can trust your toddler to know how much they need to eat.

You and your toddler both have a job to do.

It’s your job to decide:

- **What foods you will offer to your child.** It’s your job to offer nutritious foods at meal and snack times.
- **Where to eat.** Sit down together for meals and snacks. Don’t rush. Turn off the TV and phones and enjoy each other’s company.
- **When to eat.** Toddlers do best when they know what to expect. They need 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks at about the same times every day.



It's your toddler's job to decide:

- **How much to eat.** Your child knows how much they need to eat. It's up to them to decide if they'll eat a little bit or a lot.
- **What to eat.** Your toddler's job is to choose what they'll eat from the foods you offer.
- **Whether to eat at all.** It's up to your child to decide whether or not they're hungry.

It may be hard to believe that your toddler knows when they've had enough to eat. This approach may be different from the way you were raised. It may be different from what the people around you are telling you to do. But trusting your toddler is the best way to help them develop healthy eating habits.

Children are born knowing when they're hungry and when they're full. It's not important that your toddler eat a certain number of spoonfuls at each meal. What matters is that you trust your toddler to know how much they need and allow them to listen to their own feelings of hunger and fullness.

As long as your toddler is active and growing, they're getting enough to eat. If you are concerned about their growth or development, talk to your health care provider.



Hunger and fullness cues



Your toddler will show you that they're hungry by:

- Opening their mouth when they see food coming
- Getting excited when offered food—leaning forward, kicking, reaching for the food
- Pointing at food they want
- Using a few words—like “Want that”
- Leading you to the fridge or cupboard



Your toddler will show you they're full by:

- Closing their mouth or turning their head
- Saying something like, “All done” or “Get down”
- Pushing food away

Every child is different. Your child may have cues of their own.

Your toddler's appetite will change from day to day and from meal to meal. Sometimes they'll eat a lot, sometimes very little, sometimes nothing at all. This is perfectly normal.



How much your toddler wants to eat could depend on:

- **How much fluid they're getting.** If your toddler gets more breastmilk than usual, or if they fill up on milk or juice between meals, they may be less interested in solid foods at the next meal.
- **How much they're growing.** Toddlers eat more during growth spurts.
- **How they're feeling.** Toddlers may eat less when they're tired, sick or teething.
- **How active they've been.** Running, playing, and being active can work up an appetite!
- **What's going on while they're eating.** Your toddler may be more interested in the noise from other children, the TV, toys, or the phone than in what they're eating.
- **The time of day.** A toddler's appetite can change from meal to meal. For example, some children like to eat more in the morning and less in the evening.

Watch closely. Follow your toddler's cues. Help them learn to listen to what their body is telling them.

Eating together is important

Eating with their family is just as important to your child's health and development as the food they eat.

Life with small children is busy. But no matter how busy your day is, it's worth the effort to find ways for your family to eat together. Whether it's regular meals sitting around a table at home, a picnic in the park, or a quick meal at the rink, what matters is being together.

Mealtime is a time to share—to talk about the day and to catch up with one another. Making this time together an important part of your life can make mealtime fun for everyone.

Eating together can strengthen family ties and support a toddler's social and speaking skills. Mealtimes are a good time for children to learn their family's values and traditions.

Have consistent mealtime routines so children know what to expect. Set limits to help your child learn your family's rules for good mealtime behaviour. For example, "If you don't want to eat something, you say, no thank you, not yuck!" Or, "We sit down to eat. We don't eat while running or playing." Praise your child when they follow the rules.

Mealtimes are also a chance for your child to see your example of good table manners and healthy eating.

You are still the most important person in your toddler's life. When you have healthy eating habits and healthy attitudes toward food, it's much more likely that your child will have healthy eating habits and attitudes. The kinds of food you eat and enjoy will influence the kinds of food your child likes.



Sharing family meals doesn't just mean eating together. Even small children can share in:

- Deciding what to eat—offer nutritious options for your children to choose from. For example, an apple or a pear, broccoli or cauliflower.
- Shopping
- Preparing or cooking the meal
- Setting the table
- Cleaning up

Bring your toddler to the table with everyone else. They'll learn to enjoy eating and will enjoy this time together. When they're old enough, help your toddler to serve themselves at the table. This will help them learn to take only as much food as they can eat.

Try to make mealtimes a happy time for everyone. When the TV is off and the toys are put away, you can focus on eating and spending time together.

Eating together can have a big payoff as your child grows. Research has shown that children who eat regularly with their families do better in school and have stronger self-esteem.

Did you know?

Families come in many different shapes and sizes.

When we say “family” we mean people who care about one another. They may or may not live together or be related. They are people who are important in each other's lives.

Your family can be you and your toddler or can include whoever you want it to.

Double check

You'll find more information about healthy eating in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Did you know?

Teach your toddler to eat meals and snacks while sitting at a table. This will help develop healthy eating habits, prevent choking, and cut down on the mess!

How toddlers eat

Offer your child a variety of nutritious foods in different shapes and textures. This will help them develop the eating skills they need.

<i>Normal toddler development</i>	<i>How development affects eating</i>	<i>What you can do</i>
Toddlers want to be independent.	<p>Toddlers want to feed themselves even though they aren't very good at it yet.</p> <p>They eat slowly, especially when they are learning to use a spoon or fork.</p>	<p>Be patient! Offer help when needed, but let your toddler take the lead. For example, when your toddler is interested in serving themselves, give them help if they need it. Let them decide for themselves how much they want.</p> <p>Allow time for meals.</p> <p>Don't rush your toddler.</p> <p>Offer family foods in a form that your toddler can handle. For example, cut meat and vegetables into bite-sized pieces.</p> <p>Use a high chair and child-sized spoons and forks to make eating easier.</p>

<i>Normal toddler development</i>	<i>How development affects eating</i>	<i>What you can do</i>
<p>Toddlers are developing a mind of their own. (Continued)</p>	<p>They may take a long time to get used to a new food.</p>	<p>Be patient. Offer the new food to your toddler whenever you serve it to the rest of the family. It may need to be on the table 10 or more times before they'll try it. Let your toddler get used to new foods at their own speed.</p>
<p>Toddlers need to know what to expect.</p>	<p>Toddlers like meals and snacks to be at regular times.</p> <p>Toddlers may want their food the same way every day. For example, they may want to drink from the same cup every day. They may want their food cut in a certain way or a certain shape.</p> <p>They may want the same food every day.</p>	<p>Make a schedule and stick to it as much as you can. Plan snacks and family meals for about the same times every day.</p> <p>Be patient. Let your toddler lead. Allowing them the freedom to choose helps your toddler start to make decisions about food. Keep mealtime pleasant!</p> <p>Continue to offer a variety of foods. And don't worry. Sooner or later they'll eat other foods again.</p>

<i>Normal toddler development</i>	<i>How development affects eating</i>	<i>What you can do</i>
<p>Toddlers pay attention to—and copy—the people around them.</p>	<p>Toddlers can learn to like many kinds of food when they see others enjoying it.</p> <p>Toddlers want to eat what their family eats, the way their family eats it. For example, if you drink from a mug, toddlers will want to have their milk the same way.</p>	<p>Including your toddler in family meals and snacks will help them learn to enjoy the foods your family eats. It will also help them develop social and speaking skills.</p> <p>Eat a variety of nutritious foods yourself. Let your child see that you enjoy many kinds of food.</p>
<p>Toddlers need to be active.</p>	<p>Some toddlers can sit still for a while. Some can't. This means that your toddler may not be able to sit at the table for long periods of time.</p>	<p>You may have to let your toddler leave the table before other family members have finished eating.</p> <p>Encourage them to stay as long as possible, but let them leave when they need to.</p> <p>As your child continues to develop, they'll be able to sit at the table for longer periods of time.</p>

Did you know?

Offer protein that comes from plants more often. Getting your child used to eating plant-based proteins will be easier if they are exposed to these foods from an early age.

Here are some ways to add plant-based protein to your meals:

- Buy dried beans, peas and lentils to soak and cook at home
- Buy low-sodium canned beans, peas and lentils — rinse and drain them to reduce the amount of sodium
- Add beans, peas and lentils to dishes made with lean meats, to increase the fibre

Every child is different and your own child's appetite will vary day to day. They might eat lots one day and very little another day. How much your child eats will depend on their age, body size, how quickly they're growing and how active they are. They may eat less when they're excited, tired, or not feeling well.

Your child has a built-in ability to know how much food they need. Follow their cues! Offer them food when they're hungry and allow them to stop eating when they're full. You can trust that they are eating the right amount that they need to grow and develop without having to coax, bribe or force them to eat more than they want to.

Food

Your toddler is a busy little person. They need nutritious foods to give them the nourishment and energy they need every day. Offer your toddler a variety of foods that include vegetables and fruit, protein and whole-grain foods. Offer at least 2 different foods at snack time and at least 3 different foods at meal time.

Toddlers have small tummies, so they don't eat much at one time. This means that to get the energy they need, they have to eat often. Most toddlers need 3 meals every day, and 2 or 3 snacks every day.

Offer plenty of vegetables and fruit. They are an important part of healthy eating. They can be fresh, frozen or canned. Choose different colours, textures and shapes. Offer water instead of juice. Offer fruit instead of fruit juice, which can be high in sugar.

Help your toddler learn about food by talking about it in a neutral way.

- Describe its colour, shape, texture, smell, and taste. You can also explain how the food is made or where it grows. This way, your child can learn more about food without judgment, and they can understand food better.
- Food is just food. Avoid calling foods “healthy” or “unhealthy”. This can make children less interested in eating certain foods.
- Call foods by their correct names.

Be neutral when your child dislikes a food or a certain texture.



Include a variety of protein foods daily to meet your toddler's nutritional needs. These can include:

- Eggs
- Lean meats and poultry
- Nut and seed butters
- Fish and shellfish
- Dairy products
- Beans, peas and lentils
- Unsweetened fortified soy beverages, tofu, soybeans and other soy products

Include a variety of whole grains daily. These could include:

- Oats
- Rice
- Quinoa
- Pasta
- Bread
- Whole-grain crackers

Look for the words “whole grain” in the ingredient list.

For more information and tips, see the **Canada's Food Guide** section in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Did you know?

Canada's Food Guide is the main source of healthy eating information for your toddler and your whole family. The food guide is for ages 2 and up. Children begin eating regular meals at around 1 year of age and most of the advice in **Canada's Food Guide** will apply to your child at that time.

You can find **Canada's Food Guide** online, along with many tips and resources to help you and your family eat healthy. The Nutrition Facts label on most packaged foods is another tool to help you choose nutritious foods for your family.

You'll find more information about **Canada's Food Guide** and how to read Nutrition Facts labels in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Drinks

When you give your baby a drink with meals and snacks, use a regular cup, not a sippy cup. You will need to help your baby drink from the cup for a while, but they'll learn. Giving milk or juice in between meals and snacks can cause cavities. The transition from bottle feeding to fluids being offered in a cup can happen by 12 months. By the time your toddler is 18 months of age, all fluids can be offered in a cup.

Milk

Offer pasteurized whole cow milk (Homogenized 3.25%) or pasteurized full-fat goat milk with added folic acid and vitamin D until your toddler is at least 24 months old. Toddlers need the fat in milk to help them grow and develop. After 24 months, you can offer a lower-fat milk option.

Your child doesn't need **more** than 500 mL (2 cups) per day. If your toddler fills up on milk, they'll eat less and they won't get the nourishment they need from other foods. Offer milk in a cup with meals and snacks. Offer tap water at other times.

Toddler milks (sometimes called "follow-up formulas", "growing up milks", or "Step or Staged formulas") are products that are often heavily marketed as alternatives or complements to breastmilk or animal milks for children 12 months of age and older. These products are not recommended or necessary for your child's nutrition. They can contain added sugars and can be expensive.

Did you know?

Breastmilk: Continue to breastfeed. Breastmilk continues to give your baby the nourishment they need to grow and develop.

Formula: Once your baby is eating a variety of iron-rich foods, you can replace formula with whole cow milk or pasteurized full-fat goat milk with added folic acid and vitamin D.

Your baby may need extra vitamin D. For more information, see **Breastfeeding Basics**, talk with your health care provider, or contact your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**).

These products do not have additional benefits when compared to breastmilk or whole pasteurized cow or goat milk. It is recommended that children eat a variety of foods to meet their nutritional needs instead of drinking toddler milks. If you have questions about toddler milks, talk with a registered dietitian or health care provider for more information before giving these to your child.

Did you know?

Plant-based beverages such as soy, oat, almond, rice and coconut beverages are not recommended as a main milk source for children under 24 months of age as they do not provide the same kind of nourishment that whole cow or full-fat goat milk do. These beverages do not contain enough fat, calories, protein or nutrients to help your child's brain and body to grow and develop.

After 24 months of age, you can offer plain unsweetened fortified plant-based beverages. Fortified unsweetened soy beverage is recommended as it meets the protein, energy, calcium and vitamin D needs of children 24 months and older.

For more information, talk with a registered dietitian or health care provider before you give these to your toddler.



Caution!

After 12 months, your toddler no longer needs a bottle.

Sipping from a bottle throughout the day or taking a bottle to bed can lead to tooth decay.



Water

Offer tap water when your child is thirsty. Water is the best drink for your toddler between meals and snacks.

Water should replace sugary drinks

Canada's Food Guide recommends water as the best drink for children and adults. It is important to avoid giving your toddler sugary drinks (see **page 135**). Even 100% juice is high in sugar and can lead to tooth decay. Water and milk are the healthiest drinks for your toddler.

Drinking water is:

- Important for your toddler's health
- A great way to quench their thirst
- A way to keep them hydrated without extra sugar



Did you know?

Make sure your water is safe for your toddler to drink.

If you get your water from a well be sure to have it tested before your toddler drinks it. If you are not sure that your water is safe, give your toddler bottled water.

For more information about safe drinking water and to find out how to contact the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change, see **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Double check

Juice and tooth decay

Tooth decay can be painful and affect your child's development.

Allowing your child to sip juice between meals from a bottle or sippy cup can lead to cavities in baby teeth.

For more information on taking care of your toddler's teeth, see **page 156**.

See **Canada's Food Guide** for tips on how to make water a regular option, such as making your own flavoured waters. Information about **Canada's Food Guide** is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Double check

You'll find information on cooking and handling food safely in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Snacks are little meals

By their first birthday, your toddler will be eating meals with the family and sharing the foods your family enjoys.

Many parents wonder about the kinds of snacks they should offer their child. It's helpful to think of snacks as little meals, not as treats. Try to offer 2 foods at snack time.

In this section you'll find suggestions for snacks. **These are only ideas.** Your family may enjoy different kinds of food from your own and other cultures.

Feel free to tailor these snack ideas to suit your family. For example, when we suggest “cheese,” you can use whatever kind of cheese your family enjoys. No matter what kind of bread we suggest, you can replace it with any kind of bread you like.

Ideas for snacks

- Apple or banana slices spread with peanut butter
- Pita with cheese, cucumber, and tomato
- Diced grape tomatoes and cheese
- Chunks of cheese and pieces of fruit
- Pita or tortilla rolled with hummus or bean dip, and cooked peas
- Peanut butter and bread
- Sliced bell peppers and hummus
- Hard-boiled egg and pieces of tomato
- Sweet potatoes, apple, milk
- Muffin and milk
- Watermelon and cheese
- Hot or cold cereal with fruit and milk
- Raw or cooked vegetables with hummus or yogurt dip
- Cottage cheese and crushed pineapple
- Baked beans and toast
- Milk or yogurt shakes blended with fruit
- Toast and applesauce
- Pita with pizza sauce and grated cheese
- Blueberries and unsweetened yogurt
- Low-sodium soup and whole-grain crackers
- Rice crackers, yogurt, fruit



Foods and drinks to limit

Limit serving foods that are high in sugar, salt, and less nutritious fats. Many families enjoy these kinds of foods once in a while or on special occasions. However, if they are offered too often your toddler may learn to like them and prefer them to other, more nutritious foods.

There are several reasons to limit these kinds of foods and drinks. They will take the place of other more nutritious foods. They won't give your toddler the nourishment they need to grow and develop.



Double check

Check **Canada's Food Guide** for information on healthy eating. You'll find information in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Limit the amount of these kinds of foods and drinks that you give to your toddler

Limit foods with lots of sugar and avoid artificial sweeteners—for example:

- Candy and chocolate
- Ice cream and frozen desserts
- Sweet desserts
- Cakes, cookies, pastry, granola bars, donuts, storebought muffins
- Jello-style desserts
- Sugar-coated cereals
- Jams, jellies, and syrup
- Chewy fruit snacks—like gummies, roll-ups, and leathers

Limit foods with lots of salt—for example:

- Pickles and olives
- Processed meats—like hot dogs, bologna, salami
- Chips, nachos, cheese puffs, pretzels, french fries
- Dry or canned soups (Look for soups labeled “low sodium.”)
- Canned pasta

Limit drinks with added sugar and avoid artificial sweeteners—for example:

- Pop, diet pop
- Fruit juice, fruit drinks, fruit punch, fruit beverages, fruit-flavoured drinks, lemonade, freezie/slushy-type drinks.
- Hot chocolate, chocolate milk
- All other sweetened or flavoured waters, milk or plant-based beverages, such as flavoured soy milk

Limit foods with saturated fat—for example:

- Fatty meats
- High-fat sauces
- Highly processed foods
- Tropical cooking oils, such as palm oil and coconut oil
- Gravy
- Butter, hard margarine, lard, shortening

Double check

Toddlers need nutritious fats to grow and develop. These include:

- Fatty fish, like salmon
- Avocado
- Nut or seed butters
- Vegetable oils (olive, canola, peanut, sesame, soybean, flaxseed and sunflower)
- Soft, non-hydrogenated margarine



Caution!

You should NEVER give a toddler:

- Alcohol
- Sport or energy drinks
- Caffeine—coffee, tea, iced tea, pop with caffeine



Common concerns

Refusing to eat

Most toddlers go through a period when they just don't want to eat. There can be many reasons for this. Your child could:

- Be sick, tired, or teething
- Be full or just not hungry
- Be filling up on juice or milk
- Need less food than you think they do
- Be more interested in what's going on around them than eating
- Not like the way the food looks, smells, tastes, or feels
- Be upset by changes in their life or routine



When your toddler says “NO” to food:

- **Try not to worry.** Your toddler won't starve. It's your child's job to decide what to eat. They have the right to say, “No, thank you.”
- **Keep offering a choice of nutritious foods at each regular meal and snack time.** Don't make a fuss about it. Don't force, beg, bribe, or coax your child to eat. If your child asks for food between meals, offer a variety of snack foods. Check the “Ideas for snacks” section on **page 133**.
- **Keep mealtimes calm.** If your child doesn't want to eat, let them leave the table. Offer food again at the next meal or snack time.

If you become upset when your toddler refuses to eat, they'll see that this is a good way to get your attention and to feel in control. Be patient. This will pass.

Mealtime battles

Your toddler is learning to know when they're hungry and when they're full. Sometimes they'll eat a lot. Sometimes they won't want to eat at all. They're learning to listen to their body.

Parents and caregivers sometimes coax, bribe, pressure, or force children to eat without really knowing that they're doing it.

- Telling your toddler that if they don't finish their food, they won't get a treat is pressure.
- Playing games like airplane to get them to eat is coaxing.
- Following them around giving them spoonfuls of food while they're playing is coaxing.
- Offering food as a reward is bribing.
- Making them eat until their plate is clean is forcing.

None of these things will help your child develop a positive relationship with food. All of these can cause mealtime battles and teach them to ignore their own hunger and fullness cues. Avoiding doing these things can help your child learn to be aware of their hunger and fullness cues and feelings about food, and to make their own decisions about eating.



Caution!

Even though you may have been sent to bed without your supper as a child, it's not safe or healthy to punish your child by depriving them of food.

You'll find more information on helping your child learn in the "**Behaviour**" section, **page 62**.



Eating only a certain kind of food

Toddlers sometimes ask for the same food every day, at every meal. They refuse to eat any other food. This is common enough to have a name. It's called a "food jag."

Offer your child the food your family is eating. It's not your job to be a short-order cook. Don't get upset or make a fuss. Left to themselves, your child will eat the foods they need. Sooner or later, they'll eat other foods again.

Giving your toddler time to get used to new foods may help to avoid food jags. Serve familiar foods that you know your child likes along with new foods.

Did you know?

Learn what to do if your toddler chokes.

You'll find contact information for first aid classes in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Keep emergency phone numbers in your cell phone.

Some parents find that food jags are less likely to happen when their child is involved in choosing and preparing food. Even young toddlers enjoy helping. Let them do whatever is safe for their age. You can:

- **Let your toddler help with grocery shopping.** Talk about the foods you are buying. Talk about where they come from and why they're good to eat.
- **Let your toddler help with preparing meals—** getting food out of the cupboard, stirring, and cutting with a plastic knife are all interesting and fun for toddlers.
- **Let your toddler serve themselves at meals and snack times.** Toddlers are more likely to eat food they have chosen for themselves.
- **Let your toddler make simple choices about food.** For example: "Shall we cook peas or carrots for dinner?" "Do you want plain bread or toast for your sandwich?"

Choking on food

Any food can cause choking. Someone should always be with your toddler while they're eating or drinking.

To prevent choking:

- Don't rush while eating. Allow your toddler to take their time chewing and swallowing.
- Eat while sitting down, not while running and playing.
- Don't eat in a moving car.

These foods are NOT SAFE for children under age 4:

- Nuts, seeds, popcorn
- Hard candy, cough drops, gum
- Whole grapes
- Carrots cut into rounds
- Marshmallows
- Whole hot dogs
- Fish with bones
- Snacks with toothpicks or skewers

Some kinds of foods can be served in a way that makes them safer for toddlers to eat.

<i>Foods that can cause choking</i>	<i>How to make these foods safer</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth, sticky foods—like peanut butter, tahini, and almond butter • Hard foods—like some raw vegetables and fruits • Small, round, smooth foods—like grapes and cherries • Tube-shaped foods—like baby carrots and hot dogs • Stringy or chewy foods—like meat, long thin pasta, melted cheese, marshmallows and fresh pineapple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread them thinly on whole-grain breads or crackers. • Don't give blobs or spoonfuls of these foods. • Cook hard foods to soften them. • Grate them into small pieces. • Cut each one into 4 small pieces. • Remove seeds or pits. • Cut them lengthwise into strips. • Cut the strips into small pieces. • Cut these foods into small pieces.

Vitamin supplements

If you think that your toddler isn't getting the nourishment they need, talk with your health care provider before you give them a multivitamin. Vitamin and mineral supplements can't replace a nutritious and diverse diet.

Double check

You'll find more information on preparing and storing food safely in the "**Families**" section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

To find out more about food safety, check the websites listed under "**Food safety**" (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Food allergies

A food allergy is the reaction a person's body has when it mistakes a food that was just eaten as being harmful.

Food allergies are not as common as you might think. Few babies have food allergies in their first year of life. Even fewer have food allergies as they get older.

You may have heard that to prevent allergies you should wait until your baby is a certain age to introduce a particular food—like peanut butter. Research has shown that this is not necessary, and delaying the introduction of common food allergens may actually increase the risk of developing a food allergy. Most allergic reactions happen soon after eating, but some may happen within several hours.

If you think your baby might be at a higher risk of developing food allergies, talk to a health care provider for guidance on how to introduce foods safely. Your baby may be at a higher risk if severe food allergies are common in your family or if your baby has eczema.

Some signs of food allergy are:

- New skin rash
- Hives, swelling, or redness around the mouth or face
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Itchy/watery eyes
- Vomiting (sometimes with diarrhea)

Talk to your health care provider if your toddler has any of these symptoms. They may be caused by a food allergy. However, there could be other reasons for the symptoms that are unrelated to food.



Double check

You'll find more information on food allergies in the "**Food allergies**" section of **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months**.



Caution!

Call 911 if your toddler has a severe allergic reaction. You need help quickly. Signs of a severe allergic reaction are:

- swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat
- widespread hives (welts) over the body
- difficulty swallowing, hoarse voice or cry
- difficulty breathing, persistent cough or wheezing
- change in skin colour (skin looks pale or blue)
- sudden tiredness/faintness/seeming limp

Marketing food to children



It is very difficult for a child to make healthy food choices based on the foods advertised on television, online or in other places. Your child will want the foods they see advertised. And they'll pressure you to buy them. This is how marketing to children works.

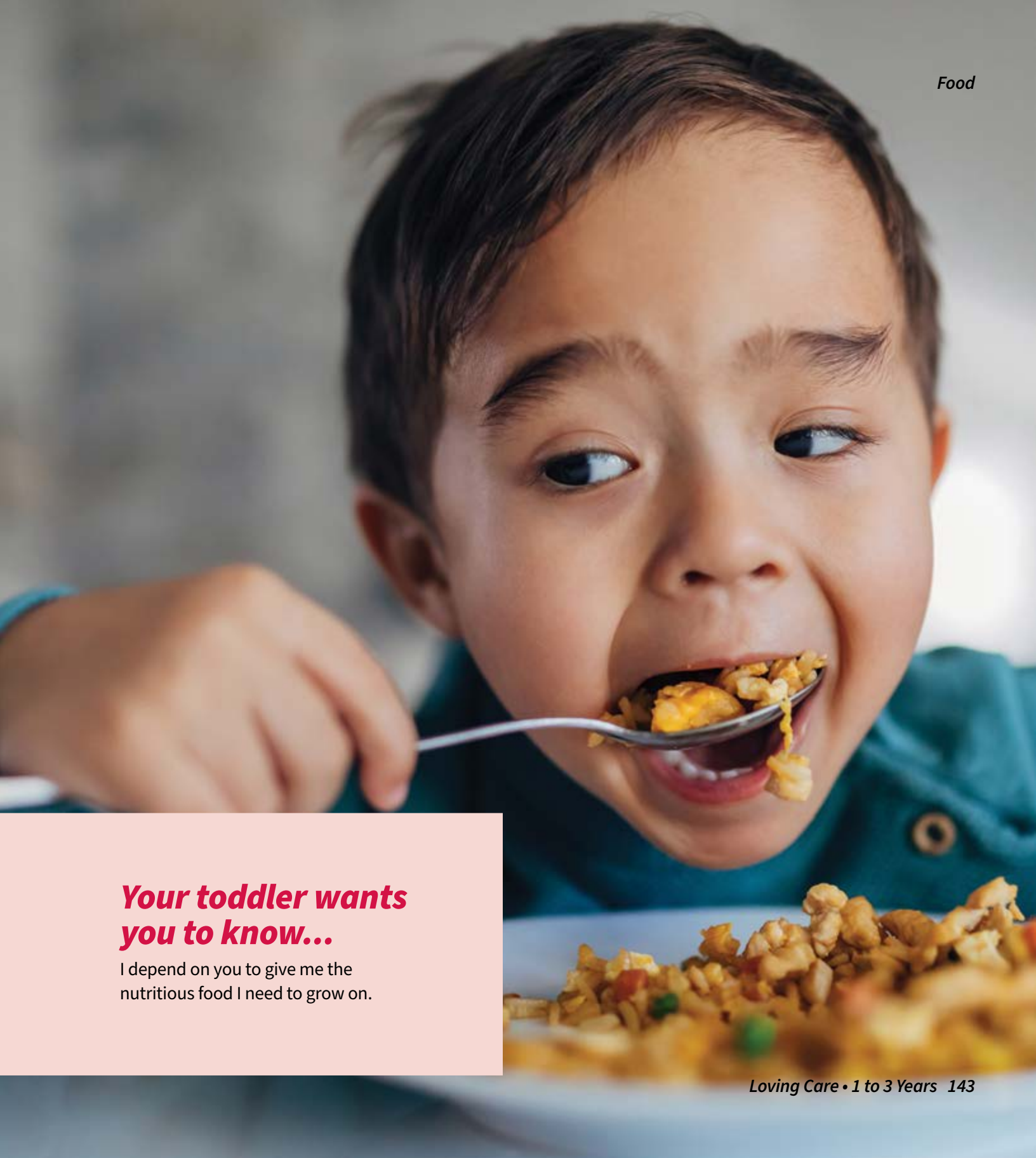
Marketing has a strong influence on the kinds of food children want. For example, children see characters from movies and TV on cereal, canned foods, and many other things. Marketing helps to create brand loyalty, which means that children will continue to want these things as they get older.

Sadly, the foods that are most heavily marketed to small children are usually highly processed and less nutritious.

The most widely advertised foods are highly processed foods like sweet cereals, candy, gum, pop, and fruit-flavoured drinks.

It is very difficult to protect your child from all marketing. What you can do is to start while they're young to help them resist it. You'll find more information about marketing to children in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Teach your child about healthy eating. Explain why nutritious foods will help them grow and be strong.



***Your toddler wants
you to know...***

I depend on you to give me the
nutritious food I need to grow on.



Did you know?

Breastfeeding helps to protect your child from illness and allergies. Your breastmilk will continue to support your child's health for as long as they breastfeed.

The YourHealthNS App



YourHealthNS provides safe and quick access to healthcare information, resources and services. You can use it to look for health services near you, find your health records, book vaccines and blood collection appointments, get appointment reminders and more.

Visit yourhealthns.ca or download the app.



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Google Play



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Hand washing

Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best and easiest things you can do to keep your toddler—and your whole family—healthy.

Everyone should wash their hands:

- Before eating and before feeding children
- Before cooking or preparing food
- Before brushing your toddler’s teeth
- After changing a diaper
- After using the toilet
- After handling anything dirty
- After petting an animal
- After wiping their nose—or anyone else’s nose—
or sneezing or coughing into their hand

Teach your toddler to wash their hands.

As well as keeping your toddler’s hands clean, teach them how to wash their own hands.

When your child washes their hands in a public place, show them how to dry their hands on a paper towel and then use the paper towel to turn off the tap.

Give your toddler a sturdy stool to stand on so they can reach the sink.

Teach your child to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, and after petting animals.

“My baby is healthy and strong. What can I do to help them stay that way?”

Did you know?

If you are away from home or there is no soap and water available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to wash your child’s hands.

However, you should be the one to put it on their hands and rub it in. Small children can easily swallow the sanitizer or get it in their mouths.



Washing toddlers' hands

- 1 Wet** hands with warm running water.
- 2 Scrub** with soap for 20 seconds. You can teach them to scrub while they sing a short song, like “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” or the “ABCs.”
- 3 Rinse** under running water.
- 4 Dry** hands with a towel.

Immunization

Immunizations protect your toddler from serious illnesses. Your child's vaccines are an important part of keeping them healthy.

Your toddler should have had vaccines at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. These vaccines protect them from diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, haemophilus influenzae type b, pneumonia, rotavirus and some ear infections.

At 12 months or soon after, your toddler should get vaccines to protect them from measles, mumps, and rubella; chickenpox; meningitis; pneumonia; and some ear infections. It's important that your toddler not get these vaccines too early. If they get them **before** their first birthday, the vaccines might not work.

At 18 months, your toddler should get vaccines to protect them from diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, haemophilus influenzae type b, mumps, measles, rubella and chickenpox. If you miss any of these vaccines, contact your health care provider to arrange for your baby to catch up.

You can check the **Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults** on **page 189** to find out what immunizations your baby and other family members need, and when to get them.

For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website (novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf) or scan this code:



If you do not have a health care provider, such as a family doctor, to provide childhood immunizations, contact 811.

Did you know?

Most vaccines are given with a needle. This can be scary and painful for children.

Putting off or stopping your child's vaccines because you don't want them to feel pain can mean they will not get protection from some serious diseases.

For more information on ways to reduce your child's pain during vaccinations, please call your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**).



Did you know?

It's your responsibility to keep a record of your child's vaccines. As they get older, your child will need this record for child care and school.

You can use the yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card to keep this record. This card also has a chart with all the vaccines your child will need up to age 6. If you don't have one, you can get one from your local Public Health office (contact information, [page 188](#)).

You can also use VaxRecordNS to track your child's vaccination records **online** at vaxrecordns.nshealth.ca.

RECORD. Take it to all doctor or clinic visits. Keep it safe and up to date.

VACCINE	DATE	DOSE	DATE NEXT VACCINE
MMRV			
MMRV			
Rotavirus			
Rotavirus			
Other			
Other			
Other			
Other			

PERSONAL IMMUNIZATION RECORD

NAME _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

HEALTH CARD NO. _____

Do Not Discard
Keep this record forever.
 Update it at each immunization.
 Proof of immunization may be needed for study, travel, and some professions.

Disclaimer: Each province has its own immunization schedule. The Nova Scotia schedule may differ slightly from the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

NS Health Services Authority

ENH/AND/ REV2-23

Did you know?

You can find out more about flu and the flu vaccine from your health care provider or local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**).

Did you know?

Remember to take your toddler's yellow **Personal Immunization Record** card when you go for flu vaccine or visit **vaxrecords.nshealth.ca** to track your child's vaccination records **online**.

Flu vaccine

The flu—also called influenza—is an infection caused by a virus. It affects the nose, throat, and lungs, and can cause fever, tiredness, and aches and pains. Flu can make your toddler very sick, very quickly.

Flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce the risk that your toddler will get this illness. If your child does get the flu, it will be much less serious if they've had the flu vaccine.

When your toddler gets flu vaccine for the first time, they'll need to get 2 doses. These are given at least 4 weeks apart.

In Nova Scotia, flu vaccine is **free of charge**.

Getting the flu vaccine yourself will help protect your toddler. It's also a good idea for anyone who lives with or takes care of your child to get the flu vaccine. This includes adults, older children, and caregivers.

The best time to get the flu vaccine is between mid-October and December. The flu vaccine protects for only 6 months, so you need to get one every year.

You can get the flu vaccine from your health care provider, Public Health or community clinics.



When to see a health care provider

Trust your instincts. You know your child best. If you are concerned about any change in your toddler—either physical or in the way they behave—see your health care provider or call 811. Don't worry about taking your child to your health care provider too often.

Talk with a health care provider if your toddler has any of these symptoms:

- Fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- A hard time breathing
- Keeps rubbing or pulling on their ear
- Fewer wet diapers than usual or dark yellow, smelly pee
- Poop is different from usual—it could be very runny or liquid, or very hard and dry
- A cough that lasts for several days
- Diaper rash that is red and peeling or has sores in it
- Cries a lot more than usual, or sounds different when crying
- Sleepy all the time. You have a hard time waking them up.
- No interest in eating, drinking, or playing
- Not alert



Double check

You'll find information on some things to do when looking for medical care in the “**Welcome**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Did you know?

If you speak a different language than your health care provider, ask your health care provider if a language interpreter is available. A language interpreter is trained to help you understand and communicate with health care providers when your language is different from theirs.



Double check

You can also talk to your health care provider if you are concerned about your child's development. See “**When to wonder about your toddler's development**” on page 29.



Did you know?

Use a plastic digital thermometer when you take your toddler's temperature.

Place the tip of the thermometer in the centre of your child's armpit. Keep the thermometer in place by gently pressing your child's elbow against their side.

Wait 2 minutes or until you hear the beep. Check the temperature.

Questions that your health care provider may ask

When your toddler is sick, your health care provider will ask questions about the illness when you call or visit.

Before you talk to the health care provider, think about what's wrong and why you think your child is sick. This will help you to explain your concerns clearly.

Write down your toddler's symptoms as you notice them. If you can, write down the time you noticed them. Write down anything you think you might forget to tell the health care provider.

When you visit or talk to the health care provider, make sure you understand everything they tell you to do. If you're not sure, ask them to explain.

Did you know?

All of us are entitled to health care that responds to our individual needs and allows us to feel safe and respected.

Talk to your health care provider about what you want and need for yourself and your child. You have a right to health care that respects your race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, identity, and ability.

The health care provider will ask about how your toddler is feeling and what they've been doing:

- Fever? How high? How long have they had it?
- Chills or shaking?
- Throwing up? How often? What does it look like?
- Diarrhea? How often? How much? What does it look like?
- Cough or runny nose? Are they having trouble breathing?
- Not eating? Have they lost weight?
- Hard, dry poop? When was their last poop?
- Do they have a rash?
- Is your toddler acting differently than usual? Are they very sleepy or fussy?
- Have you given your child any medicine?
- Has your toddler been around someone who's recently been sick?



Did you know?

If you do not have a doctor or health care provider, check the Nova Scotia Health website for the “Need a Family Practice Registry” (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Did you know?

Nova Scotia has a Family Pharmacare Program to help with the cost of prescription drugs (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Some families are also eligible for a pharmacare program for low-income children (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Common concerns

Dehydration

Dehydration means the loss of body fluids. It can happen very quickly when a toddler has diarrhea or is vomiting.

Some signs of dehydration are:

- Not peeing—less than 4 wet diapers in a day or more than 8 hours without peeing
- Drowsiness
- Weakness
- Dry mouth and lips
- Thirstiness
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes

Dehydration is serious. See a health care provider right away if you think your toddler is dehydrated.

Giving medicine

Check with your health care provider or pharmacist **before** you give your child any kind of medicine. This includes over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen.

When giving your toddler medicine, be careful to keep track of the amount you give. It's easy to give too much. To be safe:

- Have only one person give the medicine.
- Write down *when* you give the medicine.
- Write down *how much* you give.

If you are worried that your child has had too much medicine, contact your health care provider or the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Caution!

It's **NEVER** safe to give your toddler cough syrup.

Dental health

Oral health is essential to overall health at every age and stage of life. For children, good oral health supports growth and development, behaviour and their ability to learn, socialize and play.

Tooth decay is one of the most common, yet preventable, childhood diseases. Tooth decay happens when sugar in food and drinks is broken down by bacteria in the mouth. This makes acid that hurts the tooth enamel (the outer layer of the tooth). Pain and infection from tooth decay can make it hard for your toddler to sleep, talk and grow. It can also affect their ability to concentrate and learn.

Supporting good oral health starts early

Baby teeth are worth taking care of! Healthy baby teeth are important for your toddler's overall health. Baby teeth help shape your child's face and guide adult teeth into place.



Caution!

Keep toothpaste out of children's reach.

Did you know?

In addition to regular visits, it is important to talk to a health care provider or oral health provider if:

- Your child has white or brown spots on their front teeth.
- Your child injures a tooth.
- Your tap water does not have enough fluoride to prevent tooth decay. This could be the case if you're using well water or municipal water that doesn't have added fluoride.
- Your child has visible plaque on their teeth. Plaque looks like white or yellow deposits on the teeth.
- Your child was premature.
- You or other caregivers have tooth decay.
- You have any other concerns about your child's oral health.

Here are three steps to help prevent tooth decay:

1 Keep your child's mouth and teeth clean.

- **Make cleaning your child's mouth and teeth fun!**
Sing a song. Make up stories about cleaning away the bacteria that can cause tooth decay.
- **The Canadian Dental Association recommends brushing twice a day** with a child-sized toothbrush and water for children under the age of 3 years old.
- **Children under the age of 3 who are at risk of developing tooth decay may benefit from using a small amount of fluoride toothpaste** (the size of a grain of rice) when brushing. You use this tiny amount because small children tend to swallow toothpaste while brushing. You should consult a dentist or other oral health professional to determine if your child is at risk of developing tooth decay.
- **Brush every morning and every evening before bed.**
Always wash your hands before checking your toddler's mouth. When you brush, you need to support your toddler's head so you can see their teeth clearly. Sit or lay your young toddler in a safe position. An older toddler will be able to stand while you brush their teeth. Your hands should be clean and free to open their mouth and do the brushing.
- **Lift the lip to check your toddler's teeth for cavities.**
Look at the front and back teeth. If you notice brown or white spots on your toddler's teeth, call an oral health professional, such as a dentist or dental hygienist, right away. This may be the first sign of decay.
- **You can begin daily flossing of your toddler's teeth once the teeth touch each other.** Flossing cleans between the teeth where a toothbrush does not reach.



Did you know?

Your child can learn how to brush their teeth at about age 3. Until you're sure that they're doing it right every time, you'll need to help them while they brush. Check afterward to be sure they've done a good job.

Did you know?

What causes cavities?

Sugar in food and drinks plus plaque in the mouth can lead to tooth decay.

Plaque is a thin, hard-to-see layer of bacteria that covers the teeth and gums. These bacteria use the sugars in food and drink to make acid. This acid eats away the hard outer layer of the teeth—called enamel—and causes tooth decay.

The longer food and sugary drinks stay on the teeth, the greater the risk of tooth decay.

Bacteria that cause cavities can pass from your mouth to your child. To protect your child, take care of your own dental health.

You will set a good example for your child and there will be fewer cavity-causing bacteria in your mouth to pass along.

2

Help protect your child's teeth and gums. Offer your child a variety of nutritious foods and drinks.

Offering a variety of nutritious foods is important for healthy teeth. For more information about food, see the “**Food**” section of this book on **page 114**.

When food and drinks are left on your child's teeth too long, they can contribute to tooth decay. Consider the following when offering your child foods and drinks:

- Offer children milk or water to drink at mealtimes. Offer water in between meals or when they are thirsty.
- Drinks other than water should be finished in one sitting instead of sipping them throughout the day. Each time children sip on juice (even 100% juice), milk, or formula, their teeth come in contact with the sugars that are in the drinks. This may contribute to tooth decay.
- Putting children to bed with a bottle or sippy cup with anything other than water is not recommended. Liquids that come in contact with the teeth stay on them overnight.
- Brushing at bedtime helps to remove the sugars in foods and drinks from children's teeth. After brushing teeth, you can offer water to drink if your child is thirsty.
- Avoid propping up a bottle or sippy cup as this can cause early childhood tooth decay.

3 See an oral health professional, such as a dentist or dental hygienist, regularly.

Take your toddler for their first dental check-up within 6 months of their first tooth's appearance or by their first birthday, whichever comes first. The oral health professional will check your child's risk for cavities and answer your questions. A regular dental exam will help to catch small problems early.

If you do not have a dentist or oral health professional, you can ask a family member or friend for suggestions.

Or you can check the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia website for "Find a Dentist in Nova Scotia" (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Dental coverage

MSI covers basic dental care for children, starting from birth up until the end of the month of their 15th birthday.

For children covered by a co-pay dental plan, MSI will pay the portion that you would normally pay for these basic dental services and treatments.

You'll find contact information for the MSI Children's Oral Health Program in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**, or you can talk to your oral health professional.



Double check

Some foods may stick to teeth or may be hard to remove when brushing, such as dried fruits and fruit gummies, bars and leathers. This can contribute to tooth decay.



Teething

Most children have a full set of baby teeth by the time they are about 2½ or 3 years old. But every child is different. Yours may get their teeth sooner or later than other children.

Teething can make your child restless and fussy. To help them feel better:

- **Give your toddler a clean, cold facecloth to suck or chew.**
- **Give your child a teething ring.** Teething rings should be cold but not frozen. Wash them often. Use warm, soapy water and rinse well before giving them to your toddler.
- **Massage your child's gums using a clean finger.**
- **Don't use teething biscuits.** Teething biscuits are high in sugar and may cause cavities.
- **Don't use teething gels.** They can affect your toddler's health or cause choking by making the throat numb.

Fever or diarrhea is **not** a normal part of teething. If your toddler has a fever or diarrhea for more than 24 hours, call your health care provider.

If your toddler continues to be restless or fussy, check with your oral health professional or health care provider.



Caution!

Check with your oral health professional, health care provider, or pharmacist if you think your toddler might need medicine for teething pain. Ask which kind to use and how much is best for your toddler.



Caution!

Not every teething product is safe. Teething products, like teething necklaces and amber necklaces, that can tie around a baby's neck can cause serious injury or death and should not be used. They can put your baby at risk of strangulation and can be a choking hazard.

Thumb sucking and soothers (pacifiers)

Thumb sucking and using soothers are not likely to cause problems as long as your child stops by the time their permanent teeth start to come in at about age 5.

If you give your child a soother:

- Don't dip a soother in **anything** before giving it to your toddler.
- Make sure it can't come apart.
- Keep it clean. Use warm, soapy water, and rinse it well before giving it to your toddler.
- Get a new one when the soother becomes sticky or has cracks or tears.
- Don't put a soother on a string around the child's neck. Strings can choke.
- Don't pin soothers to clothes. Pins can hurt or be swallowed.

If you are concerned about thumb sucking or soothers, talk to your oral health professional or health care provider, or contact your local Public Health office (contact information, **page 188**).



A smoke-free home and car

One of the best things you can do for your toddler's health is to give them a smoke-free home and car.

There is no level of tobacco smoke that is safe for your child. Tobacco smoke hurts children in several ways.

- **Second-hand smoke** is smoke that children breathe in. It's smoke that you can see in the air. Second-hand smoke is even more dangerous for small children than for adults. Toddlers have smaller lungs and they breathe more quickly. This means they breathe in more smoke.
- **Third-hand smoke** is smoke that children pick up through their skin and mouths. The poisons in tobacco smoke stick to everything they touch—for example, toys, clothes, sheets, towels, carpets, furniture, and dishes. Children are exposed to third-hand smoke just by living in a house where people smoke. They crawl on floors, climb on furniture, play with—or chew on—toys, and touch clothes, sheets, and towels that are all covered with third-hand smoke. These poisons stay around for a long time. When someone smokes in a house or car, the third-hand smoke they leave behind can affect children months later.

There is a link between children who live with tobacco smoke and several serious illnesses.

These include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Childhood cancer
- Leukemia
- Brain cancer
- Ear and lung infections
- Asthma

In Nova Scotia, it is illegal to smoke in a car with children present. Second- and third-hand smoke in cars is even more dangerous than smoke indoors. The smoke in a car builds up quickly, even with the window down. Smoking in the small space inside a car is 23 times more toxic than smoking in a home. Even if you only smoke in your car when your child isn't present, they will be exposed to the third-hand smoke on the car seats and upholstery.

Your child can't control the amount of second- and third-hand smoke they're exposed to. Only you can do that. Air exchangers and open windows will not protect your toddler. The only way to protect your child is to make sure no one smokes in your home or your car.

Ask others who care about your toddler not to smoke in their home when your child is there. Remind them that it's illegal to smoke in their car when a child is present.

Did you know?

For information about stopping smoking, see the “**Parents**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**. You can also contact Tobacco Free Nova Scotia (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Your toddler wants you to know...

Give me the love and care I need to grow up healthy and strong!





Double check



For information on emergency preparedness visit Nova Scotia Health's Parenting Supports web page and the Government of Nova Scotia Emergency Preparedness web page. Websites are only available when you have power, so be sure to check out this information in advance of storms so you can prepare.



Safety

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“My little one never stops. They’re on the go from morning to night. They’re into everything! What can I do to keep them safe?”

Caution!

Your toddler is always safest when someone is watching them. It takes only a second for a child to get hurt.



As your baby grows into a busy and active toddler, they’re developing new skills almost every day. They can move faster and reach higher than you might think. And tomorrow they’ll be able to do even more! Be alert for these new skills.

Your toddler depends on you to keep them safe—indoors and out. They also depend on you to show them how to be safe in the world.

You won’t always be with your toddler. Help them learn how to keep themselves safe.

- Give your toddler a good example to follow. Follow safety rules yourself.
- Teach them safety rules.
- Show them how to do things safely.

It will be a long time before your toddler will be able to remember and follow safety rules, but it’s important to start early to help them learn to be safe.

Safety at home

Continue to toddler-proof your home to prevent injuries as your child develops new skills. Check your home for safety risks on a regular basis. As your toddler starts spending more time with other children, you may need to childproof your home for children of different ages and abilities.

Your toddler depends on you to make their world safe.

Toddler-proofing checklist

Check every room in your home and every place where your toddler plays or visits.

Pulling down

LOOK FOR: Things your toddler could pull down on themselves



Check for dangling cords on lamps and appliances. If your toddler can reach the cord, they can pull down a lamp, teakettle, hair dryer, or toaster. Tape cords to the wall or use a twist tie to keep them out of reach.



Make sure TVs, TV stands, bookcases, and other heavy furniture are attached to something so your toddler can't pull them over onto themselves. For example, some can be bolted to the wall. Don't store toys on the top of high heavy furniture—like dressers. Toddlers will try to climb up to get to them.



Remove tablecloths and placemats. Your toddler could pull these down and spill hot food or drinks.

Suffocating

LOOK FOR: Things that could suffocate your toddler



Use a toy box without a lid. If your toy box has a lid that you can't remove, make sure it has large air holes so that if your toddler gets trapped inside, they can still breathe.



Keep plastic bags out of reach. Tie a knot in the middle of the bag so a toddler couldn't put it over their head.

Falling

LOOK FOR: Things that could cause a fall



Use safety straps and harnesses.

Wagons, swings, strollers, bike carriers, and bike trailers must have safety straps.



Make sure that there is nothing near windows or balcony rails that your toddler could climb on—for example, no furniture or flowerpots.



Be sure that balcony doors are always locked.



Put window guards on windows above the ground floor. Or fix the windows so they can't open more than 10 cm (4 in.) Screens in windows are not enough to keep your toddler safe.



Keep drawers closed so your toddler can't climb up or into them.



Put gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Make sure that the gates at the top of the stairs are screwed into the wall. Never use a pressure gate at the top of the stairs.



Clean up spills and puddles quickly. Toddlers can slip and fall on a wet floor.



Use a non-slip mat in the bathtub. Be sure your toddler sits down for their bath. Use a non-slip mat on the bathroom floor.



Keep stairs and high-traffic areas in your home free from clutter and tripping hazards, such as toys.



Keep large toys and stuffed animals out of cribs and playpens. Your toddler could climb up on them and fall out.



Move your child to a toddler bed or a mattress on the floor as soon as they begin to climb out of their crib.



Never place a child who is under 2 years old on a bed fitted with portable bed rails. Adding portable bed rails on a standard adult bed can cause your child to become trapped. Consider using a toddler bed or a mattress on the floor instead. It is not safe for children under age 6 to sleep in the top bunk of a bunkbed.

Caution!

Take extra care in toddler-proofing the bedroom.



When your child has started sleeping in a bed, they'll be able to get out of bed on their own. This means that they'll be alone in their bedroom.

Falling

LOOK FOR: Things that could cause a fall



Use high chairs and booster seats safely. Be sure your high chair or feeding chair has a safety strap. Use it whenever your toddler sits in the chair. Don't let your toddler stand up in the high chair. Don't let them climb the sides of the chair. When using a booster seat, follow the manufacturer's instructions for attaching it to a chair and for using the tray. Never leave your toddler alone in a high chair, feeding chair, or booster seat.



Be sure the crib mattress is at its lowest level so your toddler can't climb or fall out. Your toddler needs to move from their crib to a bed when they try to climb out of their crib, when they are 90 cm (35 in.) tall, or when the crib rails come up to their nipples.



Caution!

Watch your child's developing skills!

Once your child is able to climb a gate, it will no longer protect them from falls. In fact, a gate at the top of the stairs can be a hazard if a child climbs over it and falls down the stairs.

To keep your toddler safe:

- Be a good example. Don't let them see you step over a gate.
- Help them learn to walk up and down stairs safely.

Did you know?

Check for things that could hurt your toddler if they should fall. For example:

- Look for sharp edges on furniture. Tape foam over the edges or remove the furniture from the room.
- Use a padded spout cover over the bathtub spout.


Did you know?

Toys that children ride on can cause falls if your child is not old enough for them.

Read the directions and warnings that come with a ride-on toy to be sure it is safe for your child.

Poisoning


LOOK FOR: Things that could poison your toddler


 **Keep dangerous products out of sight and up high.** Toddlers can't tell the difference between things that are safe and things that are poisonous. For example, a bottle of cleaner can look like a bottle of apple juice to a toddler. Put childproof latches or locks on all cupboards your child could reach.

Remember: Locks and latches will only slow your toddler down. Many children figure out how to open them. The best way to protect your child is to keep a close watch, use locks, and store poisons up high.

Things that can poison your toddler include:

- Cleaning products
- Drugs—medicine, vitamins, legal and illegal drugs of any kind
- Alcohol—beer, wine, any kind of alcohol
- Baby oil
- Cigarettes and cigarette butts
- Cosmetics and personal care products—like perfume, shampoo, mouthwash, aftershave, and nail polish remover
- Bug or weed killer
- Paint and paint thinner
- Gasoline and antifreeze
- Button batteries

 **Keep plants out of your toddler's reach.** Some are poisonous and your toddler could choke even if the plant isn't poisonous. Label your pots with the name of the plant. That way, if your child eats part of the plant, you'll know what they ate. Teach your child not to put any outdoor plants in their mouth. Contact the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**) and ask about any plant your child eats.

 **Keep anything that could poison your child in its original container.** This way you will always know what it is and won't confuse it with another product.

Caution!

Be very careful with medicine.

- Never tell your child that medicine is candy or that it tastes good.
- When your child needs to take medicine, be careful that you give the right amount. Have only one person give the medicine. Keep a written record of when you give it.

Caution!

Put products away **immediately** after every use. Never leave medication or harmful products out, not even for a few minutes.



Caution!

Cannabis, including edibles, is a poisoning risk for children. Edibles often look like candy, and if a child eats them, they can get very sick. You can find more information on storing cannabis safely at Child Safety Link. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).

Did you know?

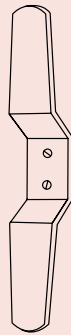
Keep the number of the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre in your cell phone: 1-800-565-8161 (Toll free).

In an emergency, call 911.

Choking

LOOK FOR: Things that could choke your toddler

Keep cords from curtains and blinds up high, out of your toddler's reach. Attach a cleat to the wall and wrap the cord around it. Or use a clip, clothespin, or twist tie to wrap them up out of reach. If your cord has a loop at the bottom, cut it open and knot the ends of the two cords. Be sure there are no cords within reach of your toddler's crib or bed.



Make sure there are no long strings, belts, or ties on your toddler's clothing. For example, remove strings from hoods. Soothers and mittens should not have long strings or cords. Never hang a soother—or anything else—around your toddler's neck.

Check all toys for small pieces that might come off. Check for broken toys and remove them.

Keep balloons out of reach. Balloons and pieces of popped balloons can choke your toddler. Don't let your toddler put balloons or balloon pieces in their mouth. Long strings on balloons are also a choking hazard.

Store older children's toys—especially small toys and toys with small parts—where your toddler can't get at them. Teach your other children to keep these kinds of toys away from your toddler.

Store all small objects out of your toddler's reach. This includes things like coins, buttons, small batteries, keys, and earrings. Store purses and backpacks out of reach. There are lots of things in a purse or backpack that your toddler could choke on.

Remember: Anything your toddler can pick up could go in their mouth.



Double check

See **page 139** for information on choking on food.

Burning or scalding

LOOK FOR: Things that could burn or scald your toddler



Make sure the water from your taps is not hotter than 49° C (120° F). You can buy faucets that have a built-in scald protector. This slows the water to a trickle if it gets too hot. You can find out how to adjust your water temperature by contacting Parachute Canada (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Cooked or heated food should be room temperature or warm—not hot. Do not heat your toddler’s food or drink in a microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and there can be parts hot enough to burn your toddler.



Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove when cooking. Use the back burners whenever you can. Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.



Keep your toddler away from all heat sources. This includes: wood stoves, fireplaces, space heaters, and radiators. Put a non-flammable barrier around fireplaces and wood stoves to stop children from getting too close.



Be sure that there is a working smoke detector on every floor of your home.



Cover all electrical outlets with plastic outlet covers.



Caution!

Your toddler’s skin is very sensitive. It burns very quickly and easily.



Double check

You’ll find information about fire safety in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Toys

LOOK FOR: Toys that could hurt your toddler

- Check your toddler's toys to be sure:**
 - They are safe for your child's age.
 - They are clean.
 - There are no loose, sharp, or broken parts.
 - There are no small parts that could come off.
- Be sure that toys are not so loud that they could damage your toddler's hearing.** If it sounds loud to you, it's too loud for your toddler.
- Check with Consumer Product Safety (contact information is in Loving Care: Parents and Families) to see if any of your child's toys have been recalled.**
- Throw away broken or damaged toys.**
- Be sure that toys have no strings or cords that are long enough to wrap around your toddler's neck.**
- Be sure toys are too big to swallow.** Anything that can fit through a toilet paper roll is too small.
- If a toy has batteries, be sure that the battery covers are screwed in** so that your toddler can't get at the batteries.



Did you know?

Store your toddler's toys safely. Use a toy box without a lid. If the box does have a lid, be sure it has many holes so that if your toddler gets inside, they'll be able to breathe.

Safety outdoors

As your child gets older, their world will get bigger. They'll be spending more time outdoors in all seasons and all weather. Mud puddles, sandy beaches, leaf piles, snowmen, parks, and playgrounds are all part of learning, growing, and having fun!

Summer safety

In the summer, it's important to protect your child from:

- **Sunburn:** Use sunscreen, cover up with hats and sunglasses, and stay in the shade as much as you can.
- **Insect bites:** Use an insect repellent with 10% DEET or less.
- **Overheating:** On hot days, stay out of the sun as much as possible. Take breaks in the shade.
- **Dehydration:** Be sure your child drinks lots of water when playing outdoors in hot weather. Take water with you when you go out in hot weather.

You'll find more details about these issues, as well as information about safety around animals in the “**Families**” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Caution!

Bike helmets are **not** designed for winter activities. They are good for only one hit and then must be replaced.

Hockey helmets are designed to be good for more than one hit. This makes them safe for sledding and skating.

The parts and materials in a helmet can break down with age. It is important to check the expiry dates located inside the helmet and replace the helmet when it expires.

For more information on helmets, see the “**Safety**” section under “**Support and Information Contacts**” in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

Did you know?

Your child needs sunscreen in the winter as well as in the summer—even on cloudy days!

Winter safety

- Have your child play indoors if temperatures go below -25°C or if the wind chill is below -28°C .
- Dress warmly for outdoor play. This means a hat, mittens, socks, boots, and layers of clothing—like a shirt, sweater, and coat.
- If your child gets wet outdoors, go indoors as soon as you can. Remove the wet clothes and help your child warm up.
- When sledding, children should wear a properly fitted ski or hockey helmet.
- When skating, children should always wear a properly fitted hockey helmet.
- Never let your toddler sled alone. An adult should always go on the sled with a child under age 5. Use a sled made for more than one person that is easy for you to steer and stop.



Water safety

In Atlantic Canada, drowning is the third highest cause of injury-related death in children.

To protect your toddler:

- **Stay close when your toddler is around water.** An adult should be within arm's length of a child under 5 years old. This includes small wading pools. A child can drown in just a few inches of water.
- **Be very careful around backyard pools, both in-ground or above ground.** Almost half of all child drownings happen in backyard pools. To keep toddlers away, pools should have fencing on all sides with a self-closing, self-latching gate. Have safety equipment near the pool. This includes a poolside phone, rescue aids, and a first aid kit.
- **Take first aid or CPR training.** Having someone with these skills present when your child is in the water could save your child's life! (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)
- **Be sure your toddler wears a properly fitted life jacket** when in or near water or when on a boat.

Toddlers are too young to learn to swim on their own. At this age, parent-child swim classes focus more on having fun and being comfortable in the pool.

Playground safety

- Always watch your child carefully at the playground. Stay close by to help prevent injuries.
- Don't allow your child to play on equipment higher than 1.5 m (5 ft). If your child can't get on or reach the equipment by themselves, it's probably too big for them to use.
- Check the ground under play equipment and remove sharp or dangerous objects.
- Look for playgrounds with safe, soft surfaces—like soft sand, pea gravel, wood chips, or rubber.
- Never attach things like skipping ropes or pet leashes to playground equipment. Children can get tangled in them and may choke.
- Keep away from moving swings and the bottoms of slides.
- Teach your child to sit down when using swings and slides.



Caution!

Going down the slide with your child on your lap can be unsafe. It can put your child at risk for injury, such as a broken bone, if they get stuck in the slide.

Caution!

Dress your child for safety on the playground.

- **No** loose clothing, drawstrings, or long scarves. These could get caught on equipment and choke your child.
- **No** helmets. These can cause your child's head to get stuck in a space it would normally fit through.



Did you know?

You'll find more information about playground safety in **Playground Safety: Top 5 Tips**, available on the Child Safety Link website. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.)

Trikes and ride-on toys

Trikes and ride-on toys should be right for your child's age, ability, and development. Read the directions and warnings that come with a trike or ride-on toy to be sure it is safe for your child.

Watch your toddler carefully when they're using a trike or ride-on toy. A toddler on a trike or ride-on toy should **NEVER** be allowed on the street.

It's important that your child wear a properly fitted, toddler-sized helmet whenever they are on a trike. Buy a helmet that fits your child now, not one that they'll grow into later.

Did you know?

Check to be sure the helmet fits your child before you buy it. Use the **2V1** rule.

When the helmet is buckled on your child's head:

- The edge of the helmet should be **2 finger widths** above their eyebrows.
- The strap should form a "**V**" **below their ears**.
- **1 finger** should fit between their chin and the chin strap.

You can find more information on how to properly fit a helmet at Child Safety Link (contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**).



Caution!

The parts and materials in a helmet can break down with age. It is important to check the expiry dates located inside the helmet and replace the helmet when it expires.



Caution!

Buy your car seat in Canada.

Car seats purchased outside of Canada—or online from non-Canadian sources—do not meet Canada’s safety standards.

Look for this safety mark



Did you know?

Safety on the road is about more than cars.

It’s not too soon to begin helping your toddler learn to be safe while walking and crossing streets. Some basic safety rules to teach your toddler are:

- “We cross the street in the crosswalks.”
- “We look both ways before we cross the street.”
- “We never go into the street from between parked cars.”
- “You always hold a grown-up’s hand when you cross the street.”
- “Look at the driver to be sure they see you before you cross the street.”

Even while your toddler is still in a stroller, you can talk about how cars belong in the street and people belong on the sidewalk. At every corner, you can say, “We look both ways before we cross the street to be sure there are no cars coming.”

It will be a while before your child is old enough to understand and follow these safety rules. But your good example will help them learn.

Safety on the road

Car seats

Car seats save lives. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can lower the risk that your child will be hurt or killed in a crash by 70%.

In Nova Scotia, it is the law that children must be in car seats whenever they are in a car or truck. Protect your child by using a car seat on every ride including when travelling with grandparents, caregivers or in taxis.

A rear-facing seat provides the best protection for your child’s head, neck and spine in a sudden stop or crash. Keep your child rear facing for as long as they still fit their larger rear-facing seat.

Once your child outgrows their larger rear-facing seat, they will need a forward-facing seat with a 5-point harness to keep them safe.

You’ll find information on how to choose and install car seats in **Keep Kids Safe: A Caregiver’s Guide to Car Seats**. You’ll find a copy in the back of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Caution!

Never leave your toddler alone in a car, not even for a few minutes.

Bike carriers and bike trailers

Once a child reaches 1 year old you can use a bike carrier or bike trailer. A specialty bike shop can help you choose a safe carrier or trailer. If you're buying second-hand, check with the manufacturer to make sure the trailer or carrier hasn't been recalled for safety reasons. You can find out more about bike trailers and carriers from Parachute Canada. (Contact information is in **Loving Care: Parents and Families.**)

Bike trailers may be a little safer than bike carriers because they are lower to the ground. Also, a child moving around in a carrier can throw off the adult rider's balance. This can make a fall more likely.

Make sure your child is always strapped into the safety harness and is wearing a properly fitting bike helmet. Only bike helmets are safe for travelling in a bike carrier or trailer. Other kinds of helmets won't protect your child. Make it a family rule that everyone on a bike or in a bike carrier or trailer has to wear a helmet.

Did you know?

Wondering how a bike carrier would feel? Ride your bike with a sack of potatoes equal to the weight of your child in the carrier.

And remember: Potatoes will not kick and squirm like your toddler!



Caution!

To be safe, a carrier must be securely attached to the bike. Consider having a professional install it onto your bike.

Bike carriers should have:

- A sturdy plastic frame
- High back and sides to stop your child from swaying in the seat
- Side protection to keep feet from catching in the wheels
- A three-point or five-point harness system with a crotch strap—the same as in your child's car seat.

Bike trailers should have:

- A harness for each child
- Head space for helmets
- A hitching arm that will stop the trailer from tipping over or coming loose
- A sturdy metal frame and padded seats
- Wheel guards to stop children from getting their fingers caught in the spokes
- A shield or canopy to protect children from rain, wind, and sun. Make sure there is ventilation. On a warm day, a trailer can be as hot as 40°C or greater.



Your toddler wants you to know...

I want to see, feel, and do everything! I want to run, jump, and climb! I need to explore my world. Watch over me to keep me safe.





A few last words

A few last words

People often say that “our children are our future.”

But we often forget that the kind of future our children will make for themselves depends on the love and care they receive right now.

As a parent, your loving care helps your children to:

- Be healthy and active, happy and secure
- Respect and love their family and their friends
- Feel pride in themselves and their culture
- Be part of their community
- Enjoy and succeed at learning

Being a good parent isn’t always easy. Parenting can be rewarding, exciting, difficult, and frustrating—sometimes all at once. But it is always important. You are helping your children to build the strengths, self-confidence, and skills they need on their journey through life. Good parenting can lead to a better future for all our children.

The **Loving Care** books stop at age 3, but being a parent lasts a lifetime. We hope that these books have helped you learn and grow with your children. We hope that they have helped you discover your strengths and skills as a parent. We hope that they have helped you and your family through the first years of a long and happy life together.







Resources

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Public Health

You'll find contact information for all the resources and supports referred to in this book in **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.

- Amherst..... 1-800-767-3319 or 902-667-3319
- Antigonish902-867-4500 ext. 4800
- Baddeck 902-295-2178
- Barrington Passage 902-742-7141
- Berwick 902-542-6310
- Bridgewater 902-543-0850
- Cheticamp..... 902-224-2410
- Digby 902-742-7141
- Elmsdale 902-883-3500
- Glace Bay..... 902-842-4050
- Guysborough 902-533-3502
- Halifax Regional Municipality, West Hants and Eastern Shore 902-481-5800
- Inverness..... 902-258-1920
- Liverpool 902-543-0850
- Lunenburg..... 902-543-0850
- Meteghan Centre 902-742-7141
- Middleton..... 902-542-6310
- Neil's Harbour 902-336-2295
- New Glasgow 902-752-5151
- New Waterford..... 902-862-2204
- North Sydney 902-794-2009
- Port Hawkesbury..... 902-625-1693
- Shelburne..... 902-742-7141
- Sydney..... 902-563-2400
- Truro 902-893-5820
- Wolfville 902-542-6310
- Yarmouth..... 902-742-7141





Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults

The vaccines listed on these schedules are given free of charge.

Children, youth and adults with high-risk conditions may require additional doses and be eligible for additional/different vaccines. For more information, talk to your health care provider or call your [Public Health office](#).

Childhood Immunizations	Schedule						
	Birth	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	18 months	4-7 yrs
RSV Respiratory syncytial virus monoclonal antibody	✓ ¹						
Influenza				✓ ²			
DTaP-IPV-Hib Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), polio, and Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine		✓	✓	✓		✓	
RV Rotavirus		✓	✓	✓			
Pneumo Conj. Pneumococcal 15-valent conjugate vaccine		✓	✓		✓		
Men C Conj. Meningococcal group C conjugate vaccine					✓		
MMRV Measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine					✓	✓	
Tdap-IPV Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), and polio vaccine							✓

¹RSV is offered to all babies younger than 8 months born during or entering their first RSV season.
²Every flu season for all children 6 months of age and older. Children under 9 years old getting their first flu vaccine need 2 doses.

School Immunizations	Grade 7	
HPV Human papillomavirus vaccine	✓	
Hepatitis B Hepatitis B vaccine (2 doses)	✓	✓
Tdap Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine	✓	
Meningococcal Quadrivalent Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine (Groups A, C, W, and Y)	✓	

Adult Immunizations	Schedule			
	Pregnant People	All Adults	Adults 65 & older	Adults 75 & older
Influenza Every influenza season	✓	✓		
Enhanced Influenza Every influenza season			✓	
Tdap Tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine (One dose in adulthood, 10 years after previous receipt of tetanus containing vaccine.)	✓	✓		
Td Tetanus, diphtheria vaccine (Every 10 years)		✓		
Pneumococcal Conj. Pneumococcal 20-valent conjugate vaccine			✓	
Shingles Shingles vaccine (2 doses)			✓	
RSV Respiratory syncytial virus vaccine				✓
MMR Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (2 doses for those born in 1970 or later) See the NS Vaccine Publicly Funded Eligibility Policy for additional eligibility		✓		

¹Regardless of trimester, influenza vaccine should be offered with every pregnancy during the flu season.
²Regardless of age and previous vaccination status, Tdap should be offered with every pregnancy.
You may be eligible for COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your healthcare provider or visit www.nshealth.ca/coronavirusvaccine to learn more.

For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website (novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf) or scan this code:



Health appointments for your child covered by MSI

Dental

MSI covers basic dental care for children from birth up to the end of the month of their 15th birthday.

Once a year, the MSI Children's Oral Health Program covers:

- One dental recall exam
- One fluoride treatment
- Two routine x-rays
- Fillings, necessary extractions and nutritional counselling. Additional fluoride treatments are sometimes covered, as determined by your dentist.
- Scaling (1 unit for children 10 and younger; 2 units for children 11 to 14)

- One other preventive service— includes, but may not be limited to, brushing and flossing instruction, and/or cleaning.

Check with your dental office about current services covered by MSI, as coverage options may change, or check the Department of Health and Wellness website for the Children's Oral Health Program.

As well, MSI covers sealant application on permanent molars. In some cases, MSI also covers a second fluoride treatment. Check with your dental office to see if your child qualifies for a second fluoride treatment paid for by MSI.

Vision

Routine Vision Exam

The Canadian Association of Optometrists recommends children receive their first eye exams between 6 and 9 months old. MSI covers a routine comprehensive eye examination **once in a 2-year period** for children who have not yet reached their 10th birthday. You can take your child to any optometrist in the province for this appointment.

A comprehensive eye exam looks at all aspects of a child's vision function, including how well the eyes focus up close, how the eyes work together and the overall health of the eyes. Even if your child has 20/20 vision, they still need to have an eye exam.

Hearing and Speech- Language Pathologists

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia is a provincially funded resource for testing and treating hearing, language, and speech-related issues in Nova Scotians of all ages. The audiologists and speech-language pathologists can help with any hearing, language, and speech-related challenges you or your child may have, from prevention to diagnosis to treatment.

These services are free with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card (MSI). You can refer yourself or your child. You do not need a referral from a doctor or other professional.

Most newborns in Nova Scotia have their hearing tested before leaving the hospital. If your baby did not have their hearing tested as a newborn, contact Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia to make an appointment as soon as possible. Even if your newborn had their hearing tested, consider getting their hearing tested again if you have any concerns or questions. You may also want to have your child's hearing tested if they have:

- a close family history of hearing loss
- frequent middle ear fluid and/or ear infections
- certain illnesses that may cause hearing loss, such as meningitis
- certain medical conditions, or if they take certain medications that can cause hearing damage
- facial or skull differences, such as cleft lip and palate

Speech and language skills develop over time. Every child will develop at their own rate. For more information on what to expect from your child at different ages, visit hearingandspeech.ca. If you have **any** concerns about your child's communication skills, contact **Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia** by calling the toll-free number **1-888-780-3330** or by email at info@nshsc.nshealth.ca





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Thanks

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Parent Health Education Resource Working Group (2008-2011)

- **Jennifer Macdonald**, (Co-chair), Provincial Health Educator, Department of Health and Wellness
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- **Sue Arsenault**, Public Health Nurse, Public Health Services, Colchester, East Hants, Cumberland, and Pictou Health Authorities
- **Kim Arcon**, Community Home Visitor, South West Nova, Annapolis Valley, and South Shore District Health Authorities
- **Susan DeWolf**, Family Support Worker, Extra Support for Parents Volunteer Service, IWK Health Centre
- **Shelley Thompson**, Coordinator, Child Care Centres Policy & Program Development, Nova Scotia Community Services
- **Amy MacAulay**, Early Childhood Coordinator, Public Health, Capital Health

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Loving Care

1 to 3
Years
2026



All four Loving Care books can be downloaded at:
nshealth.ca/parenting-supports

Loving Care is given free of charge to all new
parents in Nova Scotia.