



Healthy Children Ready to Learn

19 AND 20 MONTHS

Dear Parents . . . Your Child is Special!

Isn't it nice that your child is like no other in the whole world? With every issue of HEALTHY CHILDREN, we have included a reminder to parents that perfectly normal children differ in the sequence and speed of their development, because parents often worry that their children are not developing as they should.

Those who study young children agree that the one predictable thing about children's development is its variability. Normally developing children may walk as early as 7 months, but many do not walk before they are 18 months old. Normal children may begin talking at 8 months or at 24 months, and so it is with all learning.

Your child naturally enjoys learning new skills. You can support and encourage this learning, not by pushing or criticizing or comparing your child with other children but by teaching, encouraging and celebrating her own successes.



Remember, HEALTHY CHILDREN describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in HEALTHY CHILDREN. If you are concerned about your child's development, see your doctor.

Mealtime is Mess Time

Toddlers are messy eaters. You can bet that a lot of food will end up on the floor. If you are worried about the carpet or floor, put an old sheet under the high chair. You can shake it out after meals. When it gets really dirty, you can wash it.

Things that make eating easier for your toddler are small, unbreakable items, such as a:

- Spoon with a short handle
- Bowl with sides to push food up against
- Cup that your toddler can circle his hands around and pick up. (This cup shouldn't tip over easily. If you use a training cup with a lid, it can making drinking easier.)

There will be lots of spills. Most of the time they



will be accidental. If it happens three or four times in a row, your toddler might be playing or trying to get your attention. This means it is probably time to end the meal.

Serve your toddler food at the same time everyone else is eating. Your toddler will learn how to eat by watching you and other family members eat. Don't expect good table manners yet. Your child will learn these gradually over the next few years.

A high chair can help. Toddlers are such busy little people they might not want to stop to eat when it's time for a meal or snack. When you put

your child in a high chair, he knows that it's time to stop what he is doing and eat.

Homemade Toys That Teach: Milk Carton Blocks

Block play allows young children to experiment with patterns, shapes and sizes. They learn how to stack things, and they learn what happens when stacks are knocked down. These lightweight building blocks, which cost almost nothing to make, are very popular with children.

Materials

- Milk or cream cartons
- Heavy plastic or duct tape

Making the toy

Take any two cartons of equal size and cut them to the same height. Turn one over and slip it inside the other so that it makes a block. Secure the edges with duct tape or heavy mailing tape — a kind children can't peel off and swallow. You can cover the blocks with adhesive paper or you can paste letters, numbers or pictures on them.



Special Toy or Blanket

Lots of children have special blankets, teddy bears or toys. Some children take up with the strangest things. They claim them and call them their own forever or at least until someone makes fun of them. The most common favorite object is a blanket. Your little one may appear every morning with one thumb in the mouth and the other hand clutching a ratty, tattered blanket.

There are some stories about security blankets that would truly surprise you. Heaven forbid if it should get lost, stolen (who'd want it?) or washed. Yet that blanket or teddy bear or toy represents a friend who has shared your child's life through thick and thin, in sickness and health, in good times and bad. Most of us would welcome such a friend if it could do as much for us.

What do you do about these special comforts and attachments? You leave them alone, because in time your child will realize the blanket or bear or other toy isn't going to solve life's problems. He will come to realize he can solve his problems by himself. For now let him enjoy his comforting "friends."



Be Good to Yourself

Taking care of a toddler can leave you feeling you never have a moment for yourself. If you're feeling stressed out, give yourself a present — some time just for you. Trade babysitting with another parent, or trade a service like cooking a meal in return for a few hours of babysitting. You've earned it, you deserve it and you don't need to be embarrassed to ask for it.

Here are some suggestions for spending time on yourself:

- Take a long bubble bath, a walk or a swim; see a movie or read a book.
- Plan your future — investigate classes you might take, jobs you might like, activities you would enjoy.
- Spend time with a friend — without children.
- Talk to someone about the stress you feel and what you might do to reduce it.

The time you take just for yourself will help you feel refreshed and ready to face parenthood again.

— Happy Dancing —

Toddlers like to do things with their parents. They like music and rhythm and body movement. Happy dancing combines all these things. Turn on some music. Teach your child to do a happy dance. Dance to fast music and to slow music. Hold hands and dance together. Clap your hands to music or use large wooden spoons or beat on something that makes a nice noise. Show your little one how to keep the rhythm and play along with the beat. Children grow up to like the kind of music they hear when they are little. Play different kinds of music and your child will learn to like many kinds.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE 19 AND 20 MONTHS OLD?

How I Grow

- I explore a lot.
- I may be able to kick a large ball.
- I like being independent but sometimes I want to act like a baby.
- I can run without falling too often.
- I can stand on either foot holding on.
- I still like to climb on everything.
- I don't know about safety, so I count on you to keep things safe for me to explore.

How I Talk

- I'm very good at saying "no."
- I love to name things.
- I can follow simple directions.
- I like to be read to.
- I can say about 15 words.
- I like to listen to nursery rhymes.
- I ask a lot of questions, mostly saying "why?" or "what's that?" Be patient with me, I am just trying to learn.

What I Have Learned

- I can pull the toilet paper wa-a-a-y out.
- I can put two pieces together to form a simple figure.
- I'm beginning to know what things are for, like a hammer is for banging.
- I can draw an up and down line pretty well.

How I Get Along with Others

- I love cuddling.
- I like to help you do simple things.
- I'm still not much interested in other children.
- I may treat other children like they were things; I may hurt them.
- Even when I'm with other children, I like to play alone.
- I want to keep my toys to myself and I may hide them so others can't play with them.



- I need time to get to know people; I'm afraid of some people.
- I like to do things without adult help.
- I may be less friendly to adults but this is just temporary.

What I Can Do for Myself

- I can brush my own teeth.
- Sometimes I will let you know when I'm going to have a bowel movement.
- I can let you know when I need dry clothing.
- I go to bed without complaining.
- I can feed myself pretty well.

Play I Enjoy

- I like to play alone but I like adults to be near me.
- I like picture books and I love looking at pictures of myself.
- I enjoy swinging on a swing.
- I like dressing up in adult's clothes and pretending I am an adult.
- I like to have you sing to me.
- I like making mud pies and pretending to eat them.
- I like to take toys apart.
- I like rides and walks.
- I like to look at myself in the mirror.

Games for Growing

Big and Little

Purpose of the Game

To teach your child about opposites and sizes.

How to Play

- Sit in any relaxed position.
- Place three big and three little blocks on the floor.
- Pile the blocks up in different patterns and describe what you are doing. For example, "Now I'll take the big block. Now I'll put the little block on it," and so on.
- Now say something like, "We need a big block. Give me a big block," or ask for the little blocks so that your child learns the difference between big and little. Encourage your child to make up other block games or big and little games you can play together.



Touch a Word

Purpose of the Game

To help your child point to objects named and learn the words for these objects.

How to Play

- Sit with your child.
- Turn pages in a baby's picture book and say to your child, "Where's the car? Touch the horse."
- Then say, "Now look at this. This is the word for car." Point to the word and then say, "point to the car. Touch the word for car."

Remember, play this and any game only if it is fun for both you and your child.

Toddler Talk

Let me play in sand, dirt and mud even if I get dirty. A pile of sand or dirt in the corner of the yard will be great. You can make a sandbox by filling an old tire with clean sand. Keep the sandbox covered when it's not in use to keep out cats and dogs.

Let me play with water. Bathing, filling and emptying containers and washing dishes are great fun. Give me a plastic bucket or can filled with clean water and an old paintbrush. I will paint the sidewalk, the house and everything I can reach. Put a small dishpan of water on the kitchen floor or outdoors. Add a funnel, sponge, measuring spoons and cups, a washcloth and plastic squeeze bottle. I'll enjoy pouring, squeezing, washing and squirting. Remember, don't leave me alone with water; I can drown in less than 2 inches of water.

All of this is teaching me about the world and it's lots of fun.

WATCH OUT!

Avoiding burns

Burns are among the most serious and painful injuries to children. The problems, pain and disfigurement from a burn could last the rest of your child's life. Most burns to children occur between birth and 4 years of age.

Most burns are caused by:

- Scalds from hot liquids and foods such as coffee, tea and grease.



- Contact with hot surfaces such as stoves, irons, curling irons and heaters.

These burns occur most often in the kitchen when hot liquids are spilled while you are cooking and serving and when appliances are hot.

During this early age children grow so fast parents are often not prepared for what a baby can do. Toddlers can pull hot food off a table or touch a hot stove while they are trying to walk. A 2-year-old will get underfoot in the kitchen and you can spill hot food on him.

Parents often change their habits and household after the burn to their child has happened rather than before. Remember that your child will surprise you with his ability. Expect him to change overnight. Be prepared:

- Never eat, drink or carry anything hot when you are carrying your child; you can't handle both!
- Never leave anything hot on the edge of a table or counter.
- Be especially careful when your child is with you in the kitchen. Don't let him play in the kitchen when you are not there.

GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE

Temper Tantrums

Sometimes children between the ages of 1 and 3 have temper tantrums. They may cry, shout, hit, bite, throw themselves on the floor and kick. Some hold their breath. You may not know what started the tantrum. You certainly know you want to stop it!

Some children have tantrums because they have learned it is a way to get attention or to get something else they want. Others imitate parents who have quick tempers. Tantrums probably mean that the child is overcome by anger or frustration. Maybe she has been told too often what she cannot do. Children seem to have temper tantrums most often when they are overtired, hungry or very excited. Although temper tantrums are normal for children this age, they don't happen as

often if the child feels loved and important.

There is no magic way to handle tantrums, but here are some suggestions:

- Try to remain calm, although it's often hard to do.
 - Keep your child from hurting herself or others.
 - Separate her from other children or from the place where she's having her tantrum or just hold her in your arms.
 - When your child has calmed down, comfort her and try to understand the reason for the tantrum.
 - If you give the child what she wants when she has a tantrum, she might learn to use tantrums to get her own way.
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Happy, Healthy Smiles

Your child's teeth are important for:

- Helping your child chew and talk.
- Saving space for permanent teeth to grow in straight.
- Helping your child feel good about her smile.

By following a few easy steps you can avoid dental problems in your child's future:

- Gently clean your baby's teeth and gums daily with a damp cloth, gauze or toothbrush.

- Feed your baby from a cup instead of a bottle.
- If you use a pacifier to comfort your baby, never dip it in any sweet substance.
- If your drinking water is fluoridated, make a habit of encouraging your child to drink it. If your child's drinking water is not fluoridated, ask your doctor about fluoride supplements.
- Take your child for a dental checkup within six months of the first tooth coming in or no later than his first birthday.

Security

There has been a lot of research on the relationship between parents and their young children. For some, this relationship is close and loving, but for others the relationship is tense and uncomfortable. In a close relationship, the child feels secure. She feels she can count on her parents for affection, care and protection. Dr. Alice Sterling Honig reviewed studies of parent-child relationships. She concluded that a close, secure relationship between parent and child occurred when the parents were aware of the child's distress and were able to quickly and successfully comfort the child. She writes, "...children are more likely to obey parental signals if they have a positive, harmonious affectional relationship with their parents."

Sometimes they demand things they shouldn't have, and sometimes they demand things they don't even want just to show how powerful they are.

Remember, when your toddler reaches this stage, he is not being deliberately nasty. He's just showing that he is growing up. Be patient. Use the guidance ideas we have discussed in this series. In a few months, your toddler should be moving out of this difficult period.

Q&A

I've heard about the terrible twos. What are they and how do I cope with them?

Terrible twos may not be terrible, but they can be difficult. Most toddlers go through a period at about 2 and a half years — some as early as 18 months, some much later — when they seem to delight in doing just what you do not want them to do. This happens because toddlers are learning independence at this age. They have the physical ability to do things on their own and are learning that they can have some power over others. They have learned to say "no" and "I want." To practice all these new abilities, they want what they want right now, and they let you know this very clearly.

HEALTHY CHILDREN gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." When we use gender, we're including ALL children.

If you have questions or comments, please contact your Extension Family and Consumer Sciences agent at your county Agricultural Extension office.

C • H • A • N • G • E • S

Does it sometimes seem that your child changes almost too fast, while at other times he learns important things so-o-o slowly? Believe it or not, your little one wants to learn and is doing his best. Some things are just hard for him to get the hang of. You can help by being patient and calm and by encouraging and praising each tiny accomplishment. That way, he won't get upset and have trouble learning.

If your messy eater gets two spoonfuls of applesauce in his mouth without spilling much, let him know you are pleased. If he plays just 5 minutes without squabbling, compliment him.

Let him know you appreciate what he can do. Try not to criticize what he cannot do. He'll learn faster and you'll both feel better.



HEALTHY CHILDREN READY TO LEARN was originally developed as the **Parent Express** series by the University of California Cooperative Extension Service. The material was adapted for use in Tennessee by Ron Daly, Professor Emeritus, Home Economics - Family Life, and Janie Burney, Associate Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences. Contact Denise Brandon, Associate Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences, for information about this publication.

RESOURCES

From a Bookstore or Library

Raising a Happy Unspoiled Child by Burton L. White, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1994.

Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development by T. Berry Brazelton, Perseus Publishing, New York, 1992.

What to Expect; The Toddler Years by Arlene Eisenberg, et al., Workman Publishing Co., New York, 1996.

Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense (3rd Edition) by Elyn Satter, Bull Publishing Co., Palo Alto, CA, 2000.

How to Get Your Kids to Eat . . . But Not Too Much by Elyn Satter, Bull Publishing Co., Palo Alto, CA, 1987.

From the Extension Office

What You Should Know About Lead and Children, SP421, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1994.

Learning About Young Children, PB1412, by Anna Mae Kobbe, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1993.

Child Guidance Techniques, PB1161, by Denise J. Brandon and Clint E. Cummings, The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 2002.

Babysitters: When You Are Not at Home, SP305, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1990.

Selecting a Quality Child Care Center, SP455, by Ron Daly and Eliza Dean, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1995.

Selecting a Quality Family Child Care Home, SP456, by Ron Daly and Eliza Dean, University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, 1995.

From the Internet

www.utextension.utk.edu

www.cyfernet.org

www.iamyourchild.org

www.civitas.org

www.zerotothree.org

www.k-12.state.tn.us/smart/

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The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
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Agricultural Extension Service Charles L. Norman, Dean