



# Healthy Children Ready to Learn

## 29 AND 30 MONTHS

*Dear Parents . . . your toddler is learning new words!*

Isn't it amazing how fast your toddler is learning new words? Language learning may be your child's most important accomplishment this year.

You are helping. Every time you sing her a song, read her a story or repeat a nursery rhyme, your toddler learns about language and learns that you enjoy language. Remember, your child learns by imitating you and by catching your enthusiasm.

In their eagerness to teach their little ones about language, some parents forget that language goes two ways. Children must hear people use language, but they also need adults to listen and respond to their words. Let your little one tell you stories, "read" books to you, describe things she has seen and answer your questions. Help her make up songs; encourage her to play at rhyming words or making up new words.

Show your child that what she says is important to you. Remember, communication means talking and listening.



# Q&A

*My 2 1/2 year old won't go to sleep when I put her to bed. What can I do?*

Bedtime is not always sleep time. Young children need regular bedtimes and special bedtime routines, like teeth cleaning, stories and hugs. Parents need regular bedtimes for their children, so that they can have some relaxation time.

You can expect your child to go to bed

and be quiet at set times. Don't worry if she does not always go to sleep as soon as she goes to bed. When she isn't sleepy, let her have some quiet play time in bed until sleep comes.

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.

## Good Times at Mealtimes

**M**ealtime is not just a time to eat. It can be a time to talk, share and enjoy being with others. Family members can tell each other what has been happening at school, work or home. Even though your toddler may not talk well, let him take part in this sharing. Ask him questions, and let him answer for himself.



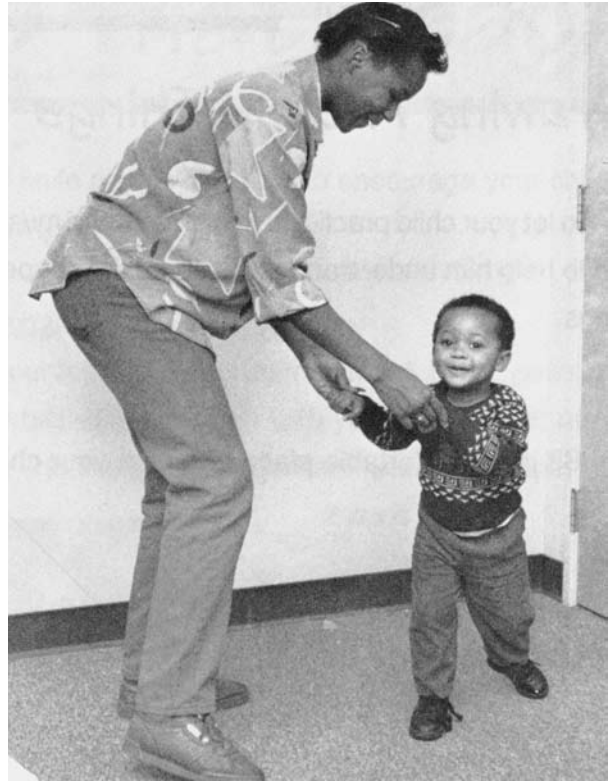
Mealtime is not a good time to discuss family problems about money, misbehavior and the like. No one feels like eating when there is an argument going on. If this happens often, your child will begin to dread meals. He will eat as quickly as possible and then want to leave the table. He may begin to have stomach aches because mealtime is unpleasant.

Talk about problems after the meal is over and everyone has left the table. During meals, think of things to talk about that will help everyone feel good about themselves and others.

If you are eating alone with your child, you can talk about the names of the different foods on his plate and the color and shape of each food. You can count how many different foods or pieces of food there are on his plate. With a little imagination and planning, you can make every meal a happy meal for your toddler.

# Choosing a Preschool

*Preschools differ. Here are a few questions to consider if you are choosing a preschool:*



- Are you invited to observe in the classroom? Spending one or two hours in a class will show you what the school has to offer.
  - Are the caregivers willing to answer your questions? Would they talk to you on a regular basis about your child's progress? Once your child has enrolled, will you be welcome to visit and observe at any time? You and your child's caregivers need to work together as a team to help your child grow.
  - Do teachers seem to enjoy and respect the children? Is there hugging and holding and warmth between the teachers and the children? Do teachers talk with and listen to the children? Are there enough adults to provide good supervision and attention? Children's relationships with caregivers are important.
  - Do the children seem happily involved in activities? Are there enough play materials for all the children? How long would a child have to wait for a turn? Children can become angry and unhappy if they have to wait too long for a chance to play with toys.
  - Is there a balance of quiet and active play? Is there a balance of indoor and outdoor play? Children need variety in their daily lives.
  - Does indoor play include music, art, water, dress-up, housekeeping, science, block building, books and puzzles? Does it also include toys for imaginative play such as trucks, cars and dolls? Are the rooms clean, safe and attractive? Children need to have lots of different opportunities to learn.
  - Is there a safe outdoor area with enough equipment, like ladders, barrels, low slides, riding toys and swings to encourage activity and muscle development? Is there protection from the sun?
  - Are meals provided by the preschool? Do you approve of the food they serve?
- You will not be happy about your child's preschool unless you feel that your child is in a safe, healthy, nurturing place. The extra time it takes to find the right kind of care for your child will pay off in your own peace of mind and in your child's development.

# GAMES FOR GROWING

## Drawing Around Things

### *Purpose of the Game*

To let your child practice using small hand muscles and to help him understand more about the shapes of things.

### *How to Play*

Sit in a comfortable place and give your child a plastic cup to draw around. Have him trace the edge of the cup with his finger. Then give him a



pencil or crayon to use for drawing around the cup. Talk about the circle he drew. Help him find some other things with simple shapes to trace. He can trace around his hand or yours. He'll enjoy this. You're helping him use his hands and make

pictures of objects so he'll learn more about the ways they are different.

## Follow Me

### *Purpose of the Game*

To encourage your child's imagination and physical development.

### *How to Play*

This is a follow-the-leader game to play indoors or outdoors. Show your little one funny ways you can move and encourage her to imitate, following after you. Run fast, walk slow, gallop like a horse, shuffle like an elephant, flap like a duck. Take turns leading. Use your imagination and encourage her imagination as both of you think of more and more different and funny ways to play.

## What's It For?

### *Purpose of the Game*

To help your child understand how things are used. This game also helps build your child's imagination and language skills.

### *How to Play*

Collect about 10 things that your child uses or has seen used, such as a shoe lace, a fork, a napkin, a comb, a key, eyeglasses, a spool of thread, a hammer, a paint brush, a pencil. Pick up one after the other and ask your child what it is used for. You can also play a silly version of this game by asking a silly question about each thing you pick up. For example, you can pick up a cup and ask if that is what you brush your teeth with. Remember, play the game only as long as it is fun for both of you.

# Homemade Toys That Teach

*Play dough helps your toddler practice using his hands and fingers and learn how to mold different shapes by patting, squeezing and rolling.*

## Ingredients

1 cup flour  
1/2 cup salt  
1 teaspoon cream of tartar  
1 cup water  
1 tablespoon cooking oil  
Food coloring (optional)

## Making the Play Dough

Mix the dry ingredients, add the water and oil. Stir over low heat until the mixture forms a ball. Add food coloring if you want. Knead it and let it cool. Store it in a refrigerator in a covered container.

## Playing

Put the play dough on a plastic place mat and protect the floor from spills. Your toddler will enjoy having you near her when she plays with her play dough. You can give her ideas on how to squeeze, roll and pinch the dough. Add cookie cutters, a dull knife and a rolling pin to encourage your child's creativity.

## Bread Dough Creations

Your 2-year-old has learned to roll, pinch, poke and mash bits of play dough with you, so why not make some creative snacks together? Use this recipe:

2 cups flour  
3 tablespoons oil  
1/2 cup water  
1/2 teaspoon salt

Measure the flour and salt into a large bowl. Add the oil and rub it in until the mixture resembles coarse oatmeal. Add the water and blend it with your fingers. Add more water if necessary to make a dough you can gather into a ball. Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Your toddler will enjoy punching and rolling the dough. Divide the dough into small balls and let your child create. Show her how to flatten it, cut holes with a table knife



(help her with this so she doesn't cut herself), pinch up peaks and stretch the dough. When she's all done, you can place her creations on a cookie sheet and bake them in a 350° F oven for 10 minutes. When they're cool, enjoy showing off the creations and eating them!

# TODDLER TALK

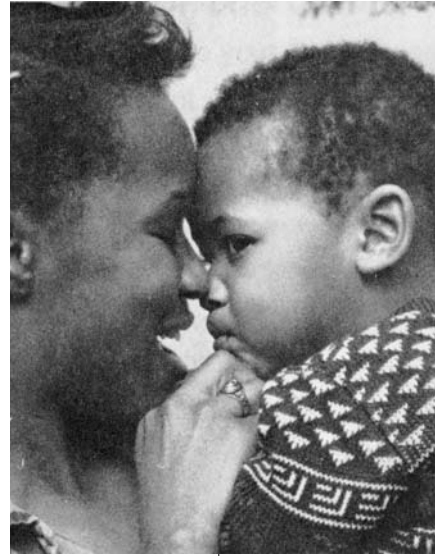
## I Learn in Lots of Ways

- Let me use a sprinkler can or a squeeze bottle to water outdoor plants. Think of other ways I could help outside.
- Give me my own flashlight. I'll enjoy turning it on because I can push the switch forward with my thumb. I probably can't pull it back. Show me how to turn the flashlight around so I can push the switch off.
- Take pictures of special times and write the dates on the backs of the pictures. Even if you don't have a baby book for me, I will like looking at these pictures now and when I'm older.
- Turn off the radio and television. Listen with me to sounds around the house, like running water, the refrigerator motor, a ticking clock or a wind chime. Tell me what they are. Helping me learn to listen will help me learn language.

## Guidance & Discipline

# Avoid Overusing "No"

The fewer times you say "no" to your toddler, the less she'll scream "no" back at you. Keep asking yourself, "How can I help my child do what I want her to do without saying 'No'?" Life can be more pleasant for everyone with fewer 'nos.' Here are some ideas:



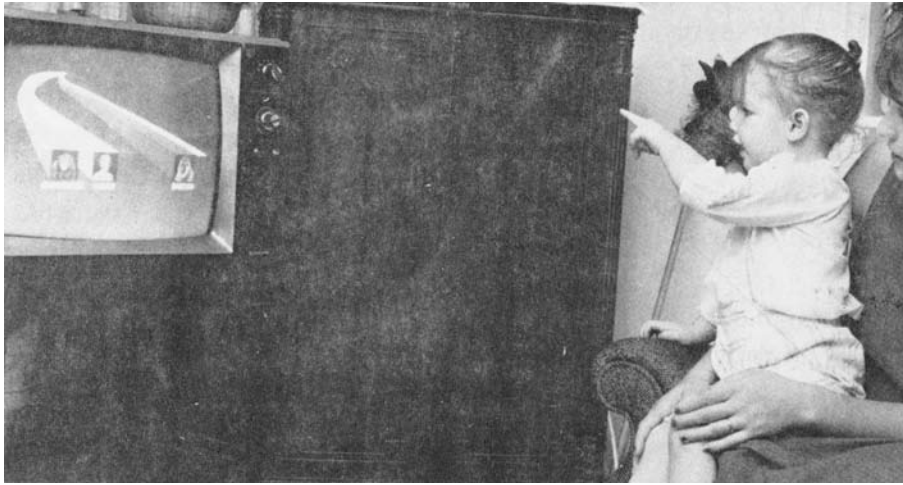
- Look for ways to structure routines and play spaces to reduce the need for restriction and discipline. Remove tempting dangers and breakables. Try to reduce time spent in activities that require your toddler's patience or that might cause conflict. For example, long shopping trips seem to undo nearly all parents and their toddlers; try to keep them short.
- Keep rules reasonable. Your child is growing fast, but her ability to understand is still more limited than you might expect. She will press you to let her do things on her own—and that's important for her learning—but she still may have accidents. She may break, drop or spill

things. She can understand some rules, but not all.

- Give your toddler independence practice. As part of their growing independence, toddlers are often defiant and non-cooperative. You need to be firm but patient in enforcing rules. Look for safe and reasonable opportunities to let your toddler make her own decisions so she can practice her growing independence.
- Play detective. If your little one does something over and over that you have told her not to do, try to figure out the reason. Don't assume that she is just trying to annoy you. Chances are she's got her own very good reasons for doing what she's doing. See if you can help her get what she wants in a way that is okay with both of you.

Sure, all this takes more time and patience and energy than saying "no," but the long-term benefits are likely to be a toddler who is happier and easier to live with.

# Children and TV



**W**e don't know the effects of television viewing on very young children. Research on older children and TV suggests the following:

- Children who are aggressive tend to watch a lot of violence on television.
- Children are attracted to and influenced by television commercials. They may pressure parents to buy toys and food advertised on television. Many of these toys may not be right for your child. The foods may not be good for him, since many of those advertised are high in sugar, fat and salt.
- Children who are heavy television viewers use less imagination in their play and school activities than children who see less television.

- Very young children enjoy the catchy tunes and repeated phrases used in cartoons, children's shows and commercials. These jingles give them a chance to practice their listening and talking skills.
- Very young children don't understand the meaning of television programs. However, they may be developing a television viewing habit that will keep them from other healthier activities. If your child shows a great interest in television, then talking and listening may be important to him right now. Read to him and talk with him about pictures in a book. Play some story tapes or records. Substitute these things for some of his television viewing time.

You might think about these questions when you decide how much television your child should watch:

- Do you know how many hours a day your child watches? Do you know which programs he watches and do you know what he's learning from them? It is important for you to know these things.
- Do you watch television with your child and discuss what you are seeing? Doing this will help your child understand his world.
- Do you want your child to see violence on television? Violent situations are shown even in cartoons and music videos, and they can be scary.
- Does television keep you from reading, talking and playing with your child? Does it keep him from creative, active or imaginative play?

Television can be a very powerful influence in children's lives. It can entertain and educate. It can take children away from other important activities. Begin deciding now how much television you want your child to see and what programs you want him to watch. If you set up some clear guidelines now, it will be easier to handle television later.

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

## Child Care Centers Require Immunizations

If you are considering enrolling your child in a child care center, her immunizations must be up-to-date. You will need an immunization record that lists the dates of each immunization your child received.

The law says that child care centers must make sure all children enrolled have their immunizations. The child care center staff must see your record so that they can complete official records for their files.

The immunizations required by child care centers are the same ones every child needs for protection. Remember an “ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”



*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 Janie Burney, Associate Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences and others. 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

Childhood Lead Poisoning Series, SP605 and SP605-A through L, by Martha Keel and Janice McCoy, University of Tennessee Extension, 2003

What You Should Know About Lead and Children, SP421, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2004.

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

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

### From the Internet

[www.utextension.utk.edu](http://www.utextension.utk.edu)

<http://fcs.tennessee.edu>

[www.cyfernet.org](http://www.cyfernet.org)

[www.parentsaction.org](http://www.parentsaction.org)

[www.civitas.org](http://www.civitas.org)

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)