

# Healthy Child Development and Behavior



Below are milestones most children will reach between now and 3 years of age. Talk with your doctor at your child's next well-visit if your child is not yet reaching these milestones or there are skills your child no longer shows each day.

## Social and Emotional Milestones

- Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave them, like at childcare drop off
- Notices other children and joins them to play

## Language and Communication Milestones

- Talks with you in conversation using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- Asks "who," "what," "where" or "why" questions, like "Where is the dog?"
- Says what action is happening in a picture or book when asked, like "running," "eating" or "playing"
- Says first name, when asked
- Speaks clearly enough for others to understand, most of the time

## Thinking and Learning Milestones

- Draws a circle, when you show them how
- Avoids touching hot objects, like a stove, when you warn them

## Physical Development Milestones

- Strings items together, like large beads or macaroni
- Puts on some clothes by themselves, like loose pants or a jacket
- Uses a fork to feed themselves

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## Healthy Ways to Help Your Child Learn and Grow

### Development

- Consider a preschool program for your child to help promote social and emotional development. All children can benefit from early childhood education.
- Look for ways to be active together as a family. Visit parks, zoos, museums and other places that help your child learn.
- Listen carefully when your child speaks. Repeat what is said using correct grammar.
- Read books together every day and talk about the pictures. Sing to your child often.
- Play with puzzles and blocks to encourage sorting and problem-solving. Name the shapes and colors as you

play. Encourage "pretend play" by providing dress-up clothes and toys like dolls, cars or play telephones.

### Behavior

- Offer your child a choice between 2 simple options, when possible, to avoid power struggles. (For example, "Time to get dressed. Do you want to wear the blue shirt or the red shirt?")
- Teach your child to help with simple chores, such as putting laundry in a basket or picking up toys. Praise your child for helping.
- Give your child time to play with other children. Help your child learn to take turns and use their words to solve problems when playing with others. Children at

this age usually play well next to each other, but often need practice learning to share toys.

- Use positive words and give your child more attention and praise for good behavior. Limit attention or ignore unwanted behavior.
- Teach your child how to talk about feelings.

## Feeding

- Give water and 16–24 ounces of whole milk each day. Avoid sugary drinks like juice.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods at mealtimes. Let your child decide how much to eat. Children of this age may not eat the same amount each day.

## Toilet Training

- Around 2 or 3 years old, look for signs your child is ready for toilet training, such as being able to stay dry for 2 hours, knows if they are wet or dry, can help pull pants down and up, can say when a bowel movement (poop) is coming, and is excited to learn.
- Offer praise for sitting on the potty every 1–2 hours. Read books about toilet training.

## Digital Media Use

- Children learn best by talking and playing. Limit screen time to 1 hour of high-quality, educational programs each day. It's best if you watch together with your child so you can talk about what they're seeing and use it as an opportunity to teach.
- Avoid putting any type of screen, such as a TV or iPad, in your child's bedroom.

## Water Safety

- Drowning is the leading cause of death among children ages 1–4 years old. Drowning is silent and can happen quickly. Do NOT leave your child alone near any water (including bathtubs, toilets, pools, ponds, whirlpools). Install a 4-foot-tall fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate around home pools. Empty buckets, play pools and tubs when you're finished using them. Learn more about water safety. *Scan the QR code*

## Vehicle Safety

- Keep your child's car seat rear-facing in the back seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer. When one of those limits is reached, install the seat in the forward-facing position in the back seat. Learn more about car seat safety and installation. *Scan the QR code*

## Home Safety

- Have your child wear a fitted helmet while riding a bike or trike.
- Never leave your child alone inside or outside your home. Keep your child away from moving cars or machinery.
- Encourage your child to sit when eating and to chew food very well to prevent choking.
- Keep cords, latex balloons, plastic bags and small objects—like coins, marbles and batteries—away from your child. Be aware of small electronics that use button batteries and keep them out of reach (for example, remote controls, key fobs, calculators, musical greeting cards, flashing holiday jewelry). Learn more about swallowing hazards. *Scan the QR code*

Find more useful, healthy tips for your family:

### Cincinnati Children's Blog

Visit: [blog.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://blog.cincinnatichildrens.org)

### Young & Healthy Podcast

Listen on:



*This information is meant to support your visit with your child's doctor. It should not take the place of the advice of your pediatrician.*

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents, 4th Edition* | American Academy of Pediatrics

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