



# Parents' Guide to Toddlers: Pediatric Health and Wellness Topics

Your toddler's health and wellness needs differ from when he or she was a baby—and there are new needs to consider as well. Here are some common topics of concern for parents of toddlers. Consider discussing any issues with your health care provider.

- [Car Seats & Toddler](#)
- [Dental Health & Toddler](#)
- [Healthy Eating & Toddler](#)
- [Playtime & Toddler](#)
- [Sun Care & Toddler](#)
- [Vaccines & Toddler](#)
- [Well-Child Visits](#)



## Car Seats & Toddler

Car seats are important to help keep your child safe.

Children ages 1 to 3 should travel in a rear-facing car seat for as long as they meet the height and weight limit listed on the car seat. Once your child outgrows the rear-facing seat, it is time for a front-facing seat with a harness.

Here are a few tips for using car seats:

- Pick a car seat based on your child's age and size.
- Choose a seat that fits in your car.
- Use the car seat every time.
- Follow the instructions that come with the car seat.
- See the car manual on how to install the car seat.
- Check the seat's height and weight limits.

Do you need help?

Call the NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236 or visit [NHTSA.gov](https://www.nhtsa.gov).



# Dental Health & Toddler

It is important to take your child to the dentist for regular checkups.

Your dentist can look for and treat gum disease, cavities, and other oral health problems that can be painful.

Here are some ways to help promote good dental health:

- Encourage your child to eat healthy foods.
- Limit sweet or sugary foods and drinks.
- Be sure your child is brushing twice a day with toothpaste that has fluoride.  
Children under age 7 should use only a pea-size amount of toothpaste on the brush.
- Use floss to clean between your toddler's teeth when your baby has 2 teeth that touch.
- Ask your dentist about fluoride, sealants, and other ways to help protect your child's teeth and gums.

Questions? Ask your child's dentist.



# Healthy Eating & Toddler

Healthy eating habits start at an early age.

At age 1–2, your child should be eating a variety of foods. By age 2, your child should have 3 meals and 2 or 3 healthy snacks a day at regular times.

If your child seems to like a food one day but not another, don't worry. That's normal. Offer small bites of new foods for your child to taste.

Be sure your child eats healthy foods, such as:

- Vegetables and fruits
- Meat, poultry, fish, and eggs
- Milk, cheese, and other dairy products
- Cereal grains, rice, potatoes, breads, and pasta

A toddler portion is about one-fourth of an adult portion size.

For drinks, a toddler should have milk or water. Try to limit or avoid sugary drinks and foods.

Questions? Ask your child's health care provider.



# Playtime & Toddler

Help your child be active every day. Regular activity can help your toddler stay healthy.

Not being active can lead to weight and health problems. Here are some tips for helping your little one be active:

- Make time for activities with your child.
- Provide balls and toys that will make exercise fun.
- Choose an activity that is right for your child's age and one that he or she enjoys.
- Running, tumbling, throwing, catching, and walking are fun to do with family.

Be a role model. Play with your child. When you enjoy activities and sports, chances are they will want to do the same.

Questions? Ask your child's health care provider.



## Sun Care & Toddler

Did you know that just 1 blistering sunburn can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life?

Sun can be most harmful midday. Look for a shady area, and try to stay out of direct sun.

Be sure your child wears:

- Lightweight clothes that cover skin
- A hat that shades the face, neck, and head
- Sunglasses to help protect her or his eyes

Apply sunscreen:

- Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and UVA and UVB protection every time your child goes outside.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside.
- Don't forget to protect ears, noses, lips, and the tops of feet.

Questions? Ask your child's health care provider.

SPF=Sun Protection Factor; UVA=Ultraviolet A; UVB=Ultraviolet B



# Vaccines & Toddler

It is important for your child's vaccines to be up to date.

To help avoid certain diseases, talk to your child's health care provider about the vaccines recommended for his or her age. Here are some questions to ask the health care provider about your toddler's vaccines:

- What vaccines will my child get?
- What diseases do the vaccines help prevent?
- What are the possible side effects of the vaccines, and what do I do if any occur?
- What are the risks?
- When does my child need to come back for more vaccines?

Ask the health care provider's office for a record of your child's vaccines. You may need this for day care, camps, and other activities.

Questions? Ask your child's health care provider.



# Well-Child Visits

The well-child visit is a time to catch up on recommended shots and to see how much your child has grown.

You can keep a record of these visits. Ask the health care provider to write down height, weight, and other measurements as well as shots your child may get.

It's also a good time to ask questions you may have about:

- Your child's eating, sleeping, and toilet habits
- Social behaviors
- Attention or learning challenges

Infants need well-baby visits often. By the time a child is 3 or 4 years of age, well-child visits are encouraged yearly.

Ask your child's health care provider how often you should schedule well-child visits.