



Grow!

A newsletter for parents of
toddlers | issue 6 | 28-30 months

Think About Health and Safety

Accidental poisoning is a very serious health hazard for toddlers. It is estimated that 500,000 children are poisoned every year, causing 500 deaths. Most of these poisonings are to children under 5 years of age, and nearly all are preventable. How can you prevent accidental poisoning in your home? How can you protect your toddler?

Here are some facts to consider:

- Toddlers will eat or drink almost anything, no matter how foul smelling or tasting.
- One bad experience will not necessarily discourage a toddler from trying a poisonous substance again.
- Effective poison prevention is a continuous process. Toddlers notice when medicine caps are left unscrewed, cleaning materials returned to “lower ground,” and varnish put down for “just a few seconds.”
- Warning, punishing, even spanking will not guarantee that your toddler will stay away from poisons.
- Toddlers do not know cause and effect well. They do not know that some funny tasting stuff will hurt or kill them. After all, many nonpoisonous things taste strange to them.



Follow these poison prevention pointers:

- Store harmful products in original containers and away from food.
- Never call medicine candy; store in out-of-reach places.
- Use child-resistant caps.
- Don't store or spray insecticides in spaces accessible to your toddler.
- Store liquor out of a child's reach.
- Throw away out-dated medicines.
- Check with your poison control center or reference librarian to see if your houseplants are poisonous. Keep poisonous plants out of toddler reach.

Be Good to Yourself

Make every problem an opportunity. Problems can help you go forward. Consider them challenges. A certain amount of opposition can be a great help. Remember that kites rise against, not with, the wind. Also, remember that good sailboat skippers can use the wind in front of, beside, or behind them to provide the power to get where they want to go. Life's problems are like that. Used correctly, they can help you reach your goal.

Become a good worrier. Some people feel they must worry. If you're one of those people, try to be a good worrier. Instead of saying, “If only I had been more understanding,” or “I should have done it this way,” turn the worry into problem solving. “If this happens again, how will I handle it differently?” or “What can I do to prevent this kind of problem from happening again?”

If you suspect that your child is poisoned:

- Stay calm.
- Call your doctor, hospital, or one of the following poison control centers IMMEDIATELY:

Iowa 1-800-352-2222

Nebraska 1-800-955-9119

- State age and weight of the victim.
- Identify the product and bring it to the treatment location.
- Estimate how much and when the product was consumed.
- Describe any unusual behavior (headache, coughing, dizziness).
- Ask your doctor whether or not to induce vomiting.
- Save any vomit—it may help to identify the poisonous substance.

What's inside?

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Things Toddlers Treasure

From 28 to 30 months, toddler play is dominated by an increased attention span and a developing awareness of the feelings of others.

Toddlers treasure:

- grouping things together by color, size, and shape;
- practicing a new skill (like rolling a ball) over and over again;
- working five- to eight-piece puzzles.

The increased desire to be with other children means toddlers like:

- playing with another child for a very short time (not just next to);
- making efforts to share (but toddlers often change their minds immediately);
- learning songs and finger plays.

Now is a good time to encourage creative expression. Your county extension office can provide a resource to help you do this. *Child's Play, Finger Plays Plus*, PM 1770B, is available for \$1.00.



Minds of Their Own

Words! Words! Words! Your toddler has begun to realize that words are useful and fun. As language blossoms, 28- to 30-month-old toddlers tell their names and often identify their sex, use complete sentences, and talk to (not just at) other children. Toddlers love to “boss” adults and are beginning to “boss” other children. An increasing ability to talk combined with non-stop imagination can make it difficult to tell fact from fantasy.

Begin to add a few more new words to simple conversation with your toddler. Toddlers need to hear a diversity of speech. Here are some types of speech that can be used successfully.

- **Information** explains what is going on or what you are doing. “See the kitten?” or “I’m going to wash the dishes now.”
- **Reasons** connect what you do with why you do it. “I’m going to lock the car door so you won’t fall out.”
- **Descriptions** expand understanding of objects and relations. “See the baby? You were that little once, but now you are bigger.”
- **Praise** develops self-esteem as it enhances verbal skills. “You picked up the shoes—that’s a good job!”
- **Questions** help your toddler participate in conversation (don’t expect answers to all of your questions). “Are you feeling sad? Do you want to find something special to do together?”

Try to use several different types of speech in conversations with your toddler. Note how your child reacts to each. Taking the time to talk with your toddler shows that you value other ideas and share in your child’s excitement about learning language.

What’s Happening to Your Toddler

Just when you thought things had begun to smooth out, another siege of opposing, demanding behavior occurs. It is not unusual for the 28- to 30-month-old toddler to display Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde behavior—content and compliant one minute and contrary and cranky the next. Extreme behaviors are usual, especially at bedtime.

Your toddler may no longer go to bed with ease and may demand that elaborate bedtime rituals be observed. Happy five minutes before bedtime and hysterical (for no apparent reason) only three minutes later, toddlers have little skill in pacing themselves. They often play until they “run out of gas.” In addi-

tion, they have begun to realize that life goes on (without them) after they go to bed.

No longer a baby, your toddler is now beginning to develop socially acceptable ways to get and hold your attention. Instead of screaming when a cookie can’t be reached, toddlers may lead (or drag) you to the jar and point. This is a sophisticated behavior and toddlers are often quite proud of it.

When your toddler drags you to do something, he or she is practicing this new skill of getting adults to cooperate. Using adults and working together to accomplish a goal is a big deal for your young child.



Focus on Feelings

It takes a continued effort for relationships within your family to flourish. A good relationship between you and your toddler fosters feelings of interest, closeness, fairness, and warmth.

Toddlers express interest in non-verbal actions that include watching, trying to help, and just "hanging around."

Toddlers demonstrate closeness by being sad when you leave and delighted when you return. They also show closeness when they get angry with you. It takes a fair amount of trust for a little child to show anger to a big adult.

Toddlers show fairness in subtle ways such as trying to share and to take turns. They are unable to be exceptionally fair because they are still very egocentric—they feel the world revolves around them.

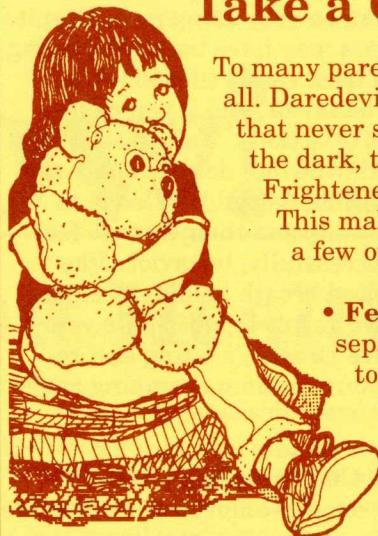
Toddlers exhibit warmth when they hug, smile, and show concern for others. However, they aren't always warm when adults want them to be. It often concerns adults when young children reject physical expressions of affection. But consider that toddlers are often hugged and kissed against their wills by well-meaning adults. Your toddler has the right to refuse a hug from an unfamiliar person. How would you feel if someone you didn't know well came up and squeezed you?

Reach Out to Another Generation

Great-grandmother eagerly awaits your visit to the nursing home. Upon arrival, your cranky toddler demands to be held. After one look at great-grandmother, a toddler howl fills the room. Embarrassed, you explain about the long trip and try to ignore that your toddler is trying to climb up your arm to get away. It is not unusual for young children to react this way to older people.

Here are some ways to prepare your toddler for visits.

- Share pictures of the person to be



Take a Closer Look at Fears

To many parents, their toddler's fears make no sense at all. Daredevil children may become frightened by things that never scared them before—the neighbor's poodle, the dark, the splashy bath, ladybugs, loud noises. Frightened toddlers are often whiny and demanding. This makes them difficult to deal with. Let's look at a few of the most common fears of toddlers.

- **Fear of separation.** Toddler anxiety about separation is an indication of growth. You used to be forgotten when you left. Now, your toddler worries about and puzzles over your departure. Always tell your child that you are leaving. Sneaking out decreases trust. For a better separation, get your child absorbed in an interesting activity before you leave.
- **Fear of baths.** Many toddlers worry about going down the drain with the water. No amount of logical talk will change this. You can help by letting your toddler play with a pan of water, then in the sink, and finally over the edge of the tub (don't leave a toddler alone in the bathroom).
- **Fear of dogs.** Dogs are often loud, fast-moving, and unpredictable. Many toddlers fear them. First share pictures of dogs with your child, then watch one from a distance, and finally approach a gentle dog.
- **Fear of loud noises.** Though your toddler may love pounding on a toy drum, the loud noise from a vacuum cleaner or a hair dryer may be very frightening. Try letting your toddler look at and eventually touch things in your home before you turn them on. If the fear seems intense, save "loud noise jobs" for times when your child is not tired and in a good mood, or better yet, when he or she is not around.
- **Fear of the dark.** Parents often sheepishly admit that their toddler sleeps with a night light (or the room light) on. Children can sleep with lights on without damaging their health. Gradually reducing the amount of light works for many families. Some children decide on their own to turn lights off. It is important not to rush your toddler.

Your toddler's fears depend on his or her level of anxiety, past experiences, and imagination. If any fears persist, make an effort to avoid things which trigger them. In a relatively few months your toddler will be better equipped emotionally to deal with his or her feelings.

Accept your child's fears as valid. Support your child any time he or she is frightened. Eventually most fears will be overcome or at least brought under control; this is a sophisticated task for a little child. For more on this topic, ask for PM 1529D, Understanding Children--Fears, at your county extension office.

visited and describe the place you will be visiting.

- Don't force your toddler to be hugged, kissed, or held.
- Respect your child's fear or apprehension.
- Verbalize to your toddler what you think he or she is feeling.
- Explain to the person being visited that apprehension or fear is normal and acceptable behavior.
- Encourage any step your child

takes toward making contact.

- Don't automatically expect the worst—toddlers are unpredictable.
- Give your toddler the chance to see how you act toward this new person.

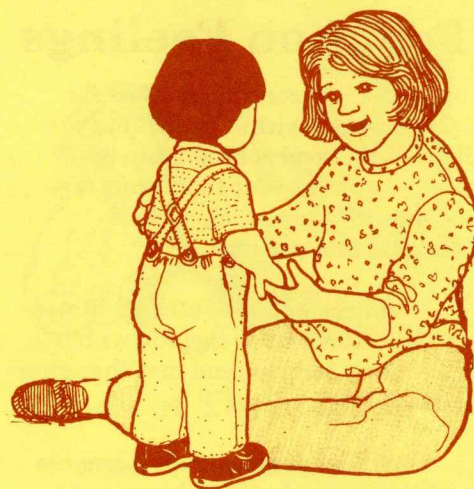
Building bridges between generations is a rewarding (but often trying) task. Nowhere else will your child be able to get the unique perspective and affection that comes from loving older relatives.

And So Forth . . .

If your toddler bites, this can cause much anxiety. Most children who bite do so when they are feeling frustrated. Toddlers often lack the verbal skills they need to deal with difficult situations and may try to solve the problem by chomping on you or a playmate. If your toddler bites another child, remove him or her from the play situation. If you get bitten, tell your toddler biting hurts and physically separate yourself from him or her.

Never bite a child back. Human bites can be very dangerous. Despite what you may have been told, biting a child back rarely (if ever) stops biting behavior, and it can cause serious infections. Take heart! Most toddlers who bite do so for only a short while. As children learn to verbally express their intense feelings successfully, behaviors like biting and breath holding decrease. Meanwhile, try to anticipate your pint-size Dracula's biting and remove yourself from chomping range.

For more on this topic, ask for PM 1529A, Understanding Children--Biting, at your county extension office.



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This newsletter series was prepared by ISU Extension specialists and faculty in child development. Reviewed by Lesia Oesterreich, ISU Extension specialist in family life. Edited by Carol Ouverson, ISU Extension communication specialist.

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