

# Caring for your child: 2 years

## Feeding your child

- There are still advantages to breastfeeding for you and your toddler as long as you continue.
- You and your child can decide when it's time to wean from breastfeeding. Gradual weaning is best.
- Give your child low-fat or nonfat cow's milk (about 2 cups a day). Give soy milk if your child is allergic to cow's milk.
- If your toddler is not yet weaned from a bottle, start to encourage liquids in a cup.
- Talk to the doctor about whether your child needs vitamins or other supplements.
- Include your child at family meals.
- You decide when and what your child eats. Your child decides whether and how much to eat. Offer healthy food. Don't bribe or reward with food.
- Avoid foods that may cause choking (nuts, gum, seeds, hard candies, popcorn, and whole hot dogs).

## Practicing healthy habits

- Help your toddler brush their teeth after meals and at bedtime every day. It's okay to use a tiny "pea-size" amount of toothpaste when your child is able to spit it out.
- Make sure the doctor or dentist checks your toddler's mouth regularly.
- If your drinking water is not fluoridated, ask your child's doctor about added fluoride. Fluoride supplements may be recommended to prevent tooth decay.
- Don't use the TV as a babysitter. Limit TV time to one hour a day. Avoid TV and video programs that include violence.
- Protect your child's skin from sun exposure with protective clothing. Apply sunscreen (SPF 15 or more) to your child's skin before going out in the sun. Repeat every 2 hours. Buy new sunscreen once a year. It loses its effectiveness after 12 months.
- Don't let anyone smoke in your home or car. Smoking around children increases their risk for ear infections and asthma.

## Keeping your child safe

- Prevent falls, which are the leading cause of injury hospitalization for children. Put locks or guards on all windows above the first floor. Watch your child at all times around play equipment.
- Prevent drowning. Watch your child at all times near water (pool, hot tub, bucket, bathtub, lake, etc.) Swimming pools should be fenced on all sides and have a self-latching gate. Make sure your child is always wearing a life jacket around water.
- Remember that drivers can't see small children. Check carefully before backing your car out of the driveway. Watch your child at all times near the street or in a parking lot.
- If you think your child has been poisoned, call Poison Control toll-free at **1-800-222-1222** (voice and TDD). Keep the number near your phone.

## Using "time outs"

- Time outs are the preferred method of discipline. They involve immediately putting your child in a quiet place for a few minutes after they have misbehaved. Try not to yell. Use an even, neutral tone of voice.
- Use a time out in response to aggressive behavior (hitting, pinching, biting, kicking), disruptive tantrums, and dangerous behaviors.
- When you are at home, choose a quiet place (no toys or TV) for the time out. It should be safe (child-proofed) and not dark or scary. Don't use bathrooms, closets, or basements. A spot on the floor, playpen, or a chair is often used.
- When away from home, have your child sit quietly with you in the car, or near you on the floor or on a bench.
- Time outs should be one minute for every year of age (10 minute maximum). Use a timer.

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- If your child won't stay in a time out, take them back to the spot quickly and reset the timer. Some children will need to be held in time outs (hold shoulders from behind). Tell your child that you will stop holding them when they stop trying to escape. Then avoid eye contact and stop talking. If this doesn't work, use a bedroom with a gate blocking the door. If you don't have a gate, hold the door closed.

### Other parenting tips

- Praise and reward good behavior. Don't yell or spank. Use time outs instead (see previous page for details).
- Distract child with a toy or hug to move attention from behavior you don't like.
- Talk and read stories to your child every day.
- Never leave your child alone in a house or car.

### Potty training your toddler

#### Things to remember

- Many children are ready for potty training by 2 years old, and most are potty trained by 3½ years old.
- Patience is the key to success. It can take anywhere from 2 weeks to 2 months.
- Staying dry at night usually does not occur until a child is between 3 and 6 years old.

#### Potty training readiness

Children are ready to start potty training when they:

- Can follow simple directions.
- Understand what "pee, poop, dry, wet, clean, messy, and potty" mean.
- Show interest when others use the toilet.
- Are aware of bowel movements (BMs) and urine in the diaper and prefer dry, clean diapers.
- Understand that using the potty means having a dry diaper.
- Recognize the sensation of a full bladder and the urge to have a BM (holds pants, squats).

### Helping your child potty train

- Get a potty chair (your child can help pick it out), rewards (such as stickers, small toys), and a storybook for your child about potty training.
- Have your child sit on the potty with clothes on for the first few days. Read stories to your child while on the potty. Sitting on the potty should be limited to 5 minutes.
- Watch for signs that your child has a full bladder, then have practice runs to the potty.
- Show your child where the BMs go by placing one of your child's BMs in the potty chair.
- Never force or pressure your child to sit on the potty. Don't scold or punish your child for accidents.
- Praise or reward your child for any cooperation or success.
- Use training pants (heavy cloth underwear or diaper "pull-ups") after child is using the potty most of the time.

### WEBSITES

- Kaiser Permanente: [kp.org/wa](http://kp.org/wa)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: [aap.org](http://aap.org)
- Bright Futures: [brightfutures.org](http://brightfutures.org)

### SUGGESTED READING

- *Your Child's Health*, Schmitt
- *What to Expect the Toddler Years*, Eisenberg
- *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*, American Academy of Pediatrics

### Next well-child visit at 3 years old

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