

Welcome to Group Care!



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

Head Start and other programs that serve infants and toddlers provide your child a safe environment to learn. We believe you are your child's first teacher. Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers are viewed as partners. We promise to...

- Value individual culture, beliefs, and traditions in raising children
- Listen to your concerns and share ideas on healthy child development
- Support and encourage you through your child's enrollment
- Provide you with daily reports on how your child is doing

Bottle-feeding

Babies should be fed when they shows signs of being hungry. We hold babies during feeding to build the relationship between baby and caregiver. Bottles are never propped.

Breast (human) milk

- We support moms who breastfeed when they return to work or school
- We encourage moms to stop by to breastfeed. A comfortable space is provided
- We store bottled milk in a refrigerator, clearly labeled with your infant's name and date

Formula

- We give the same formula you give at home
- We prepare, heat, and store formula safely

Safe Sleep

At 2 months of age, your infant may not have a regular sleep schedule. Throughout the day, he may sleep only one or two hours at a time. We place your baby on his back to sleep. This is the safest position for your baby until he is able to roll over by himself (usually 4 to 7 months).



- We keep cribs free of toys, stuffed animals, and extra bedding for safety
- We supervise infants while they are sleeping
- Our cribs meet current safety standards

Immunizations (Shots)

Immunizations help your baby stay healthy. Your baby's pediatrician should provide routine immunizations based on the current state schedule.

- We explain how to determine if your infant is up-to-date
- We support you in working with your pediatrician to bring him up-to-date

School readiness begins with health!

Tummy Time

Have fun and play with your baby while he is awake. Depending on the infant, we play with babies while on their tummy two to three times each day for a few minutes. This helps strengthen and develop muscles.

- We have “tummy time” and play with him each day
- Try to find tummy time with your infant at home

Diapering

Diaper changing is part of your infant’s daily routine. We change diapers often and as needed. We diaper him in ways that are clean and healthy.

- We sing songs and teach words such as toes and fingers to engage your baby. Try this at home too
- We maintain physical contact with him (placing our hand on his tummy) to reinforce safety and comfort

Environment

We have a clean, safe, and cheerful space with colorful objects to promote your infant’s development.

- We make sure rooms and toys are clean and safe with daily checks. Check your infant’s room at home to make sure it is also clean and safe
- We meet state regulated child-caregiver ratios and take care of infants in small groups
- We promote brain development by offering age-appropriate toys, materials, and learning experiences

Relationships

The relationship between a caregiver and child is very important. When possible, one main caregiver will take care of your infant. This supports secure attachments and consistency.

- We are friendly and responsive to you and your baby
- We rock, speak, and read to him, building a positive relationship
- We respond to his cues and tell him when we are about to feed or change him
- We update you daily on his eating, sleeping, diapering, and play

Questions to Ask Your Baby’s Pediatrician

“How often should I be feeding my baby?”

“How can I make sure my baby has a safe sleeping environment?”

“Do you have information about programs like WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) that can help me get food/formula?”

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- Assist in helping you locate community resources, such as food, medical care

Guidance

Setting limits and being consistent is key. Guiding your child to follow simple rules will help him understand and follow the rules on his own.

- We prepare him for transitions between activities during the day. For example, "You have 5 minutes before it is time to clean up"
- When possible, we offer him choices. "Do you want to put the toys on the shelf or in the box?"
- We praise his efforts and successes by telling him what he did right and reinforcing positive behavior right away

Learning through Play

Your child is learning as he plays. Two year-olds learn a lot from mixing, sifting, pouring, stirring and shaping sand, mud, and clay. We encourage you to bring extra clothes with your child, in case learning gets messy.

- We plays games like "follow the leader," to reinforce following directions



- We sings songs and listen to stories and rhymes to increase his vocabulary
- You can make time at home for simple games and messy play
- He also enjoys helping with simple tasks around the house

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Toilet Training

Let us know when your child is ready to be toilet trained. Some signs that your child is ready are:

- Remains dry for 2 hours
- Knows if he is wet or dry
- Can pull his pants down and up
- Wants to learn
- Can tell you if he is going to have a bowel movement

Physical Development

As children interact with their environment, they practice decision-making, use their imagination, and grow more confident in their physical abilities.

Gross motor development

- We assist him to walk up and down stairs by himself
- We offer toys and games that promote his desire to push, pull, collect, gather, give, hide, seek, stack, fill and dump
- When you play with your child, find ways to have him push, give, pull, stack, fill and dump

Fine motor development

- We will give him large size crayons and paintbrushes to make colorful artwork
- When we read to him, we allow him to turn the pages

Relationships

Two year-olds are possessive. It is typical development for your child to offer toys to other children and then want them back. During these times, you can remind him how to take turns. We also know that two-year-olds are capable of frequent tantrums. Tantrums

often happen because a child does not know how to share their thoughts or needs. Keep in mind that:

- As he grows in independence, he will use the word “no” quite a bit
- He will begin to show more interest in other children. Soon, he will play simple games with other children
- Provide routines for him each day, this provides order to his world
- Catch your child being good and tell him what you love about him. Your praise is a powerful reward
- Provide him with words for his feelings

Literacy & Language

Children need many opportunities to talk with other children and adults. This helps to develop their language and reading skills. At two years-old, children should be talking in short sentences.

- He likes to carry around a favorite book and pretend to “read” it
- By singing songs, such as “Old MacDonald,” he will learn sequences
- Two-year-olds will confuse words like “yesterday” and “tomorrow”
- He will repeat words that he hears in our program and at home
- We encourage you and your child to talk about events in your lives

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

“How do I handle a picky eater?”

“How many words should my child know by now?”

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- Assist in helping you locate community resources, such as food and medical care

Social and Emotional Development

Your child is learning how to get along with others—how to share and be kind. We use simple games that encourage cooperative play. For example, playing make-believe enables your child to play with others and try out different roles.

- She is developing a sense of humor. She likes to laugh and repeat silly words
- She will seek attention and approval of adults
- She may be influenced by what she watches on TV
- You can spend a few minutes every day doing something together that both of you like. It could be reading, walking, talking, or playing a game together
- You can show her how to handle anger and frustration. Help her take time alone and show respectful actions



Toilet Training

Most children will be toilet trained by this age. However, keep in mind that each child is unique and develops at her own rate. Let us know if you have concerns about toilet training. To be successful with toilet training, your child needs to:

- Sense the urge to go
- Understand what that feeling means
- Communicate the need to go to the toilet

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Oral Health

Tooth decay can develop when your child snacks frequently, does not have her teeth brushed twice each day, and/or is not exposed to fluoride in her drinking water or toothpaste.

- We assist her in brushing her teeth every day, using a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste
- We provide healthy meals and regularly scheduled snacks that are low in sugar
- We encourage her to drink fluoridated water when she is thirsty
- We help you find a dental home for your child, if needed
- You can help her care for her teeth at home too

Physical Development

As children interact with their environment, they practice decision-making, use their imagination, become more independent, and grow more confident in their physical abilities. Allow your child to do as much as she can for herself. She can:

Gross motor development

- Throw and bounce a large ball
- Run, jump, dance, climb, swing, and ride a toy with wheels

Fine motor development

- Start to hold a pencil or crayon better
- Pretend to write
- Learn to button, snap, zip, and put on her shoes
- Practice cutting with age-appropriate scissors

Language and Literacy

Three year-olds seem to talk all the time. They enjoy repeating words and sounds, over and over. Your child may also pretend to read, write,

and enjoy books, particularly those of different sizes, shapes, and textures. At this age:

- She may frequently ask why
- We encourage reading and writing by sharing words in books, on signs, and on packages
- We spend at least five minutes of story time together
- We read books with simple stories about everyday life
- You can let her know why and how things happen
- You can read to your child in a comfortable place. Have your child retell the story

Learning through Play

Your child uses play to learn about math and science concepts.

- She will start to count items that she is playing with, such as blocks, dolls, and cups
- She will find it easier to name similarities and differences in objects
- We provide simple science activities such as magnets, planting seeds, and flying kites
- We reinforce colors, counting, and shapes when we talk
- We will give your child simple tasks, such as carrying her garbage to the garbage can
- You can practice math ideas such as counting and shapes with her at home

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

“How can I make sure my child is getting enough physical activity?”

“How often should I read to my child?”

“What type of car seat should my child be using?”

“When is my child ready for organized sports?”

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- Listen to any concerns you have as your child gets ready for kindergarten
- Support and encourage you through your child's enrollment
- Provide you with daily reports on how your child is doing

Social and Emotional Development

Now that your child is 4 years of age, he is working on managing his emotions and developing skills such as showing sympathy, problem solving, and smoothly joining group play.

- We help your child use his words to talk about feelings
- He enjoys being helpful
- We allow children to help with meal setting and transitions
- When your son asks, "Why...?" we explain in short and simple ways

Learning through Play

Children with positive experiences in dramatic, pretend play are better able to cope with change later in life.

- We provide activities, toys, and games to encourage him to try new things
- His pretend play is more complex and imaginative, and he can pretend play for longer periods of time
- You can provide time for him to pretend play at home



Physical Development

Your child has better control over muscles in his body. He also has muscle strength to perform challenging activities such as turning somersaults and doing a standing broad jump.

Gross motor development

- He strengthens his gross motor development when he
 - Walks on a line
 - Hops on one foot
 - Pedals and steers a tricycle
 - Balances on one foot
 - Catches, kicks, throws, and bounces a ball

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Fine motor development

- He strengthens his fine motor development when he
 - Copies shapes, letters, and numbers
 - Works on puzzles
 - Plays with toys that have small parts
 - Dresses and undresses without help
- Enjoy time as a family hopping, jumping, and playing catch
- He is ready for simple responsibilities, so give him time to dress and undress by himself

Relationships

By 4 years of age, he is beginning to learn what it means to be a friend. He will have fun times as well as arguments and hurt feelings.

- We will model how to apologize and help him apologize if he hurts someone's feelings
- We will model how your child should treat others
- We will listen to him and treat him with respect
- You can be a great model at home too!

Language and Literacy

Many people believe that children learn to read and write in kindergarten or first grade. However, basics for literacy start well before children enter school.

- Reading and writing skills develop as
 - Your child can sing a song from memory
 - He can communicate his needs clearly
 - He shows interest in words
- We read books every day! We ask questions to find out what your child understands

- Four-year-olds can answer what, why, and who questions about stories that have been read to them. Ask your child what, why, and who questions
- We point out letters, play with sounds, and make rhymes
- Be sure to ask your child about his day

Creative Arts

Your child has more control over his hand and finger movements. Arts and crafts are becoming more exciting for him now. His favorite activities may include writing, drawing, painting, playing card games, and building blocks. He will be exploring music. At this age, he will notice changes in pitch, tempo, loudness, and musical duration.

- We turn on music so he can dance and move
- His art will be more realistic. It may include letters
- You can turn up music and dance with your child
- You can ask your child about his artwork

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

- “Is my child up-to-date with his immunizations?”
- “How do I know if my child is ready for school?”
- “What are appropriate portion sizes for my child?”

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Bottle-feeding

Your baby should be fed when he shows signs of being hungry. We hold babies during feeding to build the relationship between baby and caregiver. We never prop bottles.

- Your infant will be fed breast milk or formula for the first four to six months of life
- We will never put a bottle in the microwave

Solid Foods

Breast milk or formula is all your baby needs until he is 6 months of age. When you know your infant is ready, introduce solid foods one at a time. We will wait to give your infant solid foods until you let us know.

- Signs that show your child is ready
 - Opens mouth for the spoon
 - Sits with support
 - Has good head and neck control
 - Shows interest in foods you eat
- Let us know if you have questions about bottle-feeding or solid foods



Safe Sleep

At 4 months of age, your infant may not have a regular sleep schedule. Throughout the day, he may sleep only one or two hours at a time. We place your baby on his back to sleep. This is the safest position until he is able to roll over by himself (usually 4 to 7 months).

- He may start rolling over at this time. He may choose not to stay on his back
- We keep our cribs free of toys, stuffed animals, and extra bedding for safety
- We supervise infants while they are sleeping
- Our cribs meet current safety standards

Immunizations (Shots)

Immunizations help your baby stay healthy. Your baby's pediatrician should provide routine immunizations based on the current state schedule.

- We explain how to determine if your infant is up-to-date

School readiness begins with health!

- We support families in working with the pediatrician to bring infants up-to-date
- Let us know if you have questions about your infant's immunizations

Environment

We set up our environment to encourage active play. Active play is a great way for your baby to practice movement, manipulate objects, and imitate sounds.

- We have “tummy time” and play with him each day two to three times a day for three to five minutes
- We use colorful toys, brightly colored books, and floor gyms to engage him in active play
- We encourage you to sit and play with him at home too
- Infants are comforted by predictability. Our spaces and daily routines are set up to meet your infant's needs

Development

We interact with your infant to make new connections in his brain. He explores with his five senses (seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, and tasting). We make sure the environment your infant explores is safe and clean. A 4-month-old can typically:

- Hold his head up
- Lay on his stomach and raise his body on his hands
- Babble, smile, and laugh

Relationships

As your infant learns to sit up, use his hands, and move about, he's likely to become more aware of objects and people around him.

- He may show a clear preference for parents and his caregivers
- We will be friendly and respond to his cues
- We enhance our relationship with him by reading books, singing songs, and rocking him, and you can too

Getting Sick

It happens to everyone. Catching a cold is an easy thing to do, even for a tiny person. We help protect him from illness.

- We wash his hands and ours
- We keep all of the toys clean—especially bottles and pacifiers
- At home, you can make sure to wash your hands and your infant's hands

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

“Is my baby ready to start solid foods?”

“What should I start with?” “How much and how often?”

“Do you have information about programs such as WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) that can help me get food/formula?”

“How do I know if my baby is developing normally?”

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- Provide you with daily reports on how your child is doing

Solid Foods

Introduce solid foods when you know your baby is ready, one at a time, waiting a few days between each new food. We will wait to give your infant solid foods until you let us know.

- Signs that show your infant is ready
 - Opens mouth for the spoon
 - Sits with support
 - Has good head and neck control
 - Shows interest in foods you eat
- Starting new foods
 - Introduce new foods at home for the first time.
 - Let us know if certain foods cause allergies (eg, peanuts and fish). We will avoid giving these to your infant
 - Finger foods will be offered only after you give permission
- Avoid overfeeding, and watch for signs that your infant is full
 - Leaning back
 - Turning away
 - Pushing away the spoon



Physical Health

Immunizations help your baby stay healthy. Your baby's pediatrician should provide routine immunizations based on the current state schedule.

- We support you in working with your pediatrician to bring your infant up-to-date
- Let us know if you have questions about your infant's immunizations

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Healthy Gums

Tooth decay can develop when your infant's gums (or teeth) are exposed to liquids or foods other than water for long periods.

- To prevent decay, we gently wipe your infant's gums at least once during the day
- You, too, can use a clean cloth to gently wipe your infant's gums at home

Development

Your baby is increasingly able to use his senses and muscles. We make sure the environment he explores helps strengthen these abilities. When at home, engage in your infant's development through play!

A 6-month-old infant will:

- Turn toward a noise
- Reach for toys
- Hold a toy in one hand and transfer it to the other
- Play with his toes
- Recognize his own name and faces of familiar people
- Make sounds
- Relax when you read him a bedtime story

A 6-month-old child may:

- Roll over
- Help hold his bottle during feeding
- Play games with people he knows
- Be afraid of adults he does not know

Relationships

As your infant becomes more aware of objects and people around him, he will want to play with you and other familiar adults. Talking with your

child helps him to learn words and understand the world around him.

- Your infant really wants your attention
- Encourage positive things he does
- Each day, set aside special time with him to do something together

Separation Anxiety

Your infant may appear anxious when you leave him at our center. To help you and your infant:

- Allow yourself extra time when saying good-bye during drop-off
- Do not sneak out. Sneaking out will cause your infant confusion when he discovers you are gone. It can also break his trust in you
- Talk with us so we can better support you and your infant. Together we can...
 - Establish a routine to make drop-off predictable for him
 - Reassure your infant that you will be back to pick him up

Getting Sick

It happens to everyone. Catching a cold is an easy thing to do, even for a tiny person. We help protect your infant from illness.

- We wash our hands—and your infant's
- We keep all of the toys clean—especially bottles and pacifiers
- At home, you can make sure to wash your hands and your infant's hands

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

"How do I know if my baby is eating enough?"
"What do I need to do to safety proof my house?"

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- Provide you with daily reports on how your child is doing
- Contact you in case of an emergency, so remember to update your child's emergency contact list if numbers change

Nutrition

We encourage family meals whenever possible. Eating together on a regular basis will have a positive effect on you and your child.

- Everyone sits together during meals to promote social, emotional, and motor development
- She will be encouraged to feed herself
- Healthy foods are given for meals and snacks evenly throughout the day
- She is allowed to decide what and how much to eat
- She may need 10 to 15 exposures of a new food before she decides if she likes it
- We do not use food as a reward or punishment

Healthy Teeth

Tooth decay can develop when your child snacks frequently, does not have her teeth brushed twice each day, and/or is not exposed to fluoride in her drinking water or toothpaste.



- To prevent decay, we will help her to brush her teeth at least once during the day
- We provide healthy meals and regularly scheduled snacks that are low in sugar
- We give her fluoridated water when she is thirsty
- We help you find a dental home for your child, if needed
- We offer education and support so you can care for her teeth at home
- At home, you can use a smear of fluoride toothpaste twice a day when helping to brush your child's teeth

Physical Development

Your baby is becoming more mobile. Most children are now cruising and will be walking without support by 14 months of age. Being able to move from place to place gives your child a sense of power and control—her first real taste of physical independence.

- We have a safe space for her to start cruising, pulling up to standing, and trying to walk
- She is improving her ability to grasp objects with her thumb and forefinger

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- Let us know if you have questions about making your home safe for your 12-month-old, mobile child

Establishing Routines

Every family needs a routine. Routines help keep life from becoming too chaotic. Your child benefits when routines are regular, predictable, and consistent.

- She needs a nap during the day as part of her daily schedule
- Having a routine when you drop her off and pick her up will make this transition go more smoothly
- Let us know if you need help establishing routines at home

Relationships

Separation anxiety and fear of strangers are common at this age. You may notice your baby is clingier around new people or when you leave. Respect your child's fears; ask strangers to approach slowly.

- Your child will most likely play by herself or alongside other children
- At this age, it is hard for children to take turns playing with toys

Guidance

Your child needs to know she can depend on adults to set limits. This is so your child can learn self-control. This also keeps your child safe. Providing a safe place for your child to explore lessens time spent making and enforcing rules.

- We keep rules short, simple, and enforced consistently. We encourage you do that too
- We will redirect her to positive behavior when she misbehaves

Learning through Play

Your child uses play to learn about people and things around her. At this age, she may show specific preferences for certain people and toys.

- She will watch other children to see how they play with toys
- She will imitate older children and their caregivers
- We will not allow her to watch TV, videos, or DVDs while in our care
- At home, you can set aside time every day to play with your child instead of watching TV

Language and Literacy

Language progresses from “mama” and “dada” to include sounds that imitate adult speech. Your child understands more and is making her wants known.

- We name objects and people and encourage her to “use her words”
- She may start to sing, mimicking songs and music
- She will use gestures to help you understand words she cannot say well
- We reinforce words she uses to help her language grow
- She may like to hold books, trying to grab or taste them or turn several pages at once
- When reading to your child, let her turn the pages

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

“Do you have any concerns about my child's weight or height?”

“What foods should/shouldn't my child be eating?”

“How can I help my child learn?”

“What should I be doing to take care of my baby's teeth?”

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Guidance

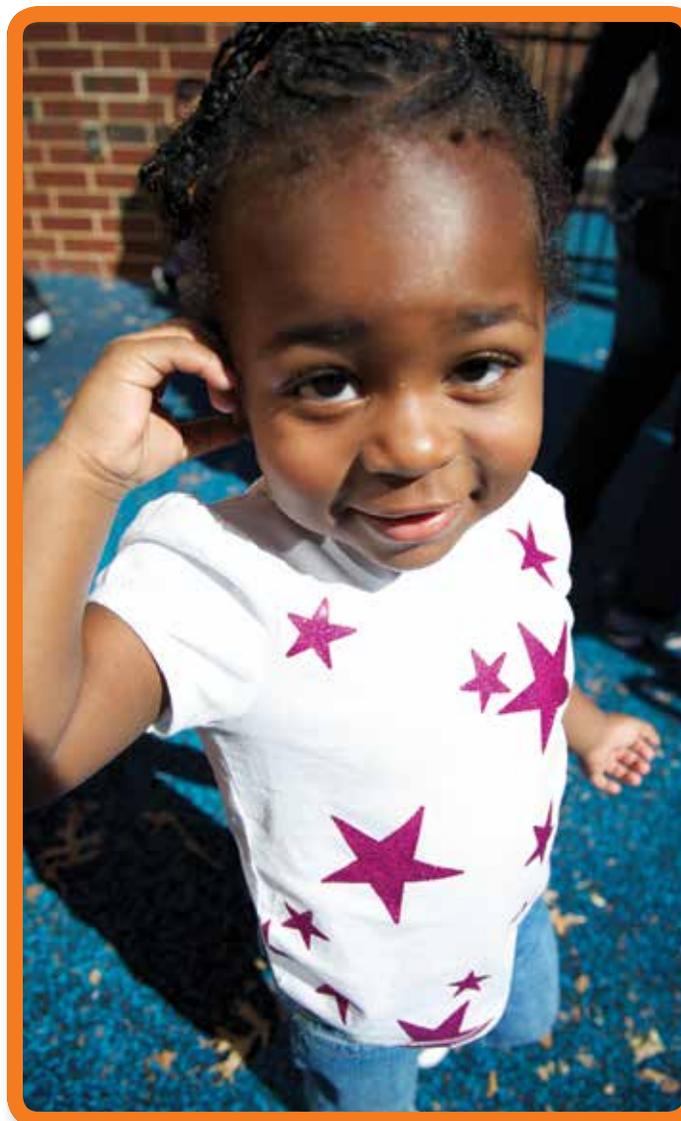
Setting limits and being consistent is key. Guiding your child to follow simple rules will help her understand and follow rules on her own.

- We focus on what she should do instead of what she should not do. For example, "Use walking feet"
- We offer her choices: "Do you want to put the toys on the shelf or in the box?"
- We praise her efforts and successes by speaking about what she did right and reinforcing positive behavior right after it happens
- Let us know if you have concerns or questions about how to guide your child

Learning through Play

Your child is learning as she plays. We help her build language skills by participating in age-appropriate games and activities.

- She understands more words than she says
- We talk with her about everyday things
- We teach her correct names of objects and body parts



- We expand on what she says. When she says, "Book," we may ask, "Do you want to read a book?"
- We enjoy reading and singing to her every day
- You can do the same at home
 - Ask your child to point to pictures that you name in a book
 - Talk to your child about everyday things
 - Play games with simple rules
 - Pretend play with your child

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Toilet Training

We support you in toilet training your child. Let us know if you have concerns. To be successful, your child needs to:

- Sense the urge to go
- Understand what that feeling means
- Communicate the need to go to the toilet

You can watch for these signs that show your child is ready.

- Remains dry for two hours
- Knows if she is wet or dry
- Can pull her pants down and up
- Wants to learn
- Can tell you if she is going to have a bowel movement

Hand Washing

We practice good hand washing throughout the day, especially around mealtimes and toileting. Proper hand washing reduces the spread of infections.

- She is able to help wash her hands and may be able to turn on the faucet
- She will begin to show a preference for using one hand more than the other
- You can allow her to wash her hands by herself

Relationships

At this age, your child is most concerned about where things are in relation to herself. She knows that other people exist, but she is vaguely interested in them.

- As she shows signs of independence, she will start using the word no quite a bit
- We reinforce relationships in her life by talking about familiar people
- We praise her for treating others in kind ways. We reinforce no hitting, biting, or hurting other people
- Many toddlers are not ready to share. We use multiple toys to help your child learn how to take turns
- You can also applaud your child when she does kind things

Questions to Ask Your Baby's Pediatrician

“Is my child developing normally?”

“How do I know when my child is ready for toilet training?”