

Toddler's First Steps



**A Best Chance Guide to Parenting
Your 6- to 36-Month-Old**



BRITISH
COLUMBIA



Perinatal
Services BC
Provincial Health Services Authority

4th edition

My Circle of Support Information

Personal Support Team

Name/Title

Contact Information

Health Care Support Team

Name/Title

Contact Information

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**A Best Chance Guide to Parenting
Your 6- to 36-Month-Old**

4th Edition
Updated in 2024

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Territorial Acknowledgement and Commitment

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional and ancestral lands and territories of First Nations throughout B.C. in which the contributors to this resource work, live, and play. We also acknowledge the generations of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from elsewhere in “Canada” who call these lands and waters home. We wish to honour the strength and beauty of the diverse Indigenous cultures, practices, beliefs, and values that have thrived on these lands for thousands of years.

Commitment to Eradicating Indigenous-Specific Racism

We are committed to eradicating Indigenous-specific racism and advancing Indigenous cultural safety and humility. We acknowledge the harms resulting from ongoing colonization, systemic discrimination, and Indigenous-specific racism that continues to impact Indigenous health and wellness inequities. We understand that we have a responsibility to identify, interrupt, and redress the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous people’s health and wellness.

With gratitude and humility, we recognize that this update could be more fulsome. In our upcoming edition, we are committed to curating more Indigenous-focused content, incorporating deeper cultural insights and integrating Indigenous wise practices and knowledge into *Toddler’s First Steps*.

Commitment to gender-inclusive language

Throughout this document, the terms “baby,” “child,” “children,” “families,” and “parents and caregivers” are used as broadly inclusive terms embracing people who are Two-Spirit, cisgender, transgender, gender non-binary, and gender non-confirming. These terms are used to acknowledge the diversity of gender identity, individuals, family structures and caregiving relationships.



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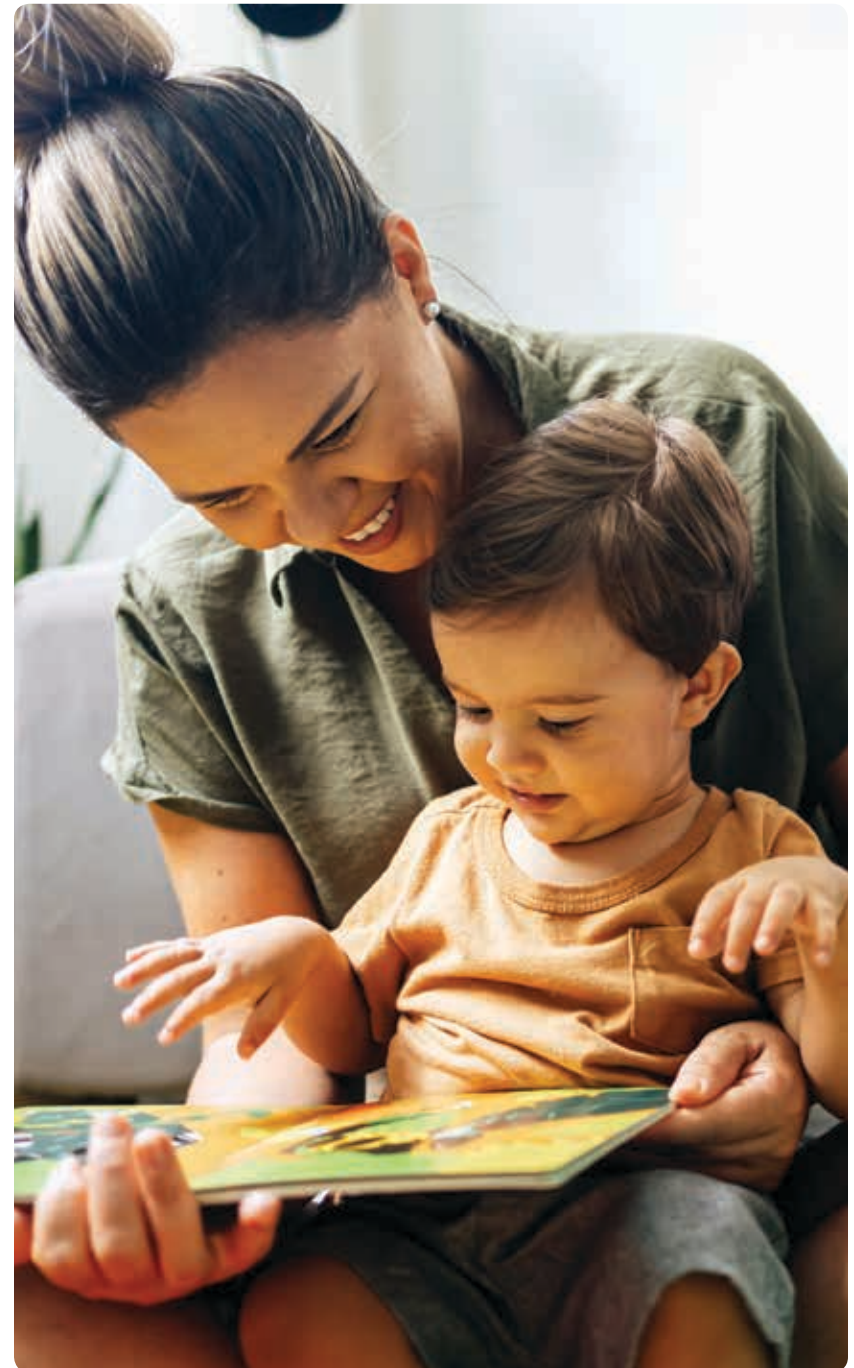
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Introduction

Welcome to the 4th edition of *Toddler's First Steps: A Best Chance Guide to Parenting Your 6- to 36-Month-Old*, published by the Government of British Columbia and Provincial Health Services Authority.

Toddler's First Steps: A Best Chance Guide to Parenting Your 6- to 36-Month-Old is the second of 2 books on pregnancy and early childhood development available from the Government of British Columbia and Provincial Health Services Authority. The first book, *Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care*, covers pregnancy and the first 6 months of a child's life. Both books are available through public health units and online at healthlinkbc.ca.

The 4th edition of *Toddler's First Steps* continues to be evidence-based and aligns with best practices.

In this edition, we provide you with updated information that's based on current evidence and guided by the real-life experiences of parents and caregivers. In addition, we've revised the book to reflect the incredible diversity of families in British Columbia. This edition also contains new information about how to nurture a loving and healthy attachment between you and your child – a bond that will be a lifelong gift to you both.

Your child's early experiences lay the foundation for a life of healthy development and well-being. As a parent or caregiver, you have a beautiful and powerful role to play in giving your child the best start possible. This doesn't mean that you have to be perfect – it's your warm and loving presence that your child needs most.

The joys and challenges of parenthood are influenced by many things, including our childhood experiences, our families, and our culture. At the same time, we each have the opportunity to create our very own parenting journey. We hope this book provides you with the resources that will help you to create the journey you envision for yourself and your family.

This book is updated every 2 years. If you have suggestions for the next edition, please email us at chbcadmin@phsa.ca.

How to Use This Handbook

User-friendly. That's the goal we had in mind when we created *Toddler's First Steps*. So whether you prefer to read a book cover-to-cover or to flip through for specific information, you can find what you need quickly and easily.

Toddler's First Steps is divided into 5 main sections:

Section 1, **Toddler Development**, provides information on typical milestones and how you can support your child's development in all areas – from their brain and language skills to their physical, social and emotional growth.

Section 2, **Feeding Your Toddler**, covers your toddler's nutritional needs, with comprehensive information on everything from breastfeeding or chestfeeding to picky eating.

Section 3, **Your Toddler's Growth, Learning and Health**, details everything from sleep to using the toilet, with a focus on keeping your toddler safe and healthy.

Section 4, **Parenting Your Toddler**, helps you navigate the ins and outs of discipline, challenging behaviours and, of course, staying calm through it all.

Section 5, **Toddler Safety**, offers important information and helpful tips on keeping your child safe at home, at play, in the car and in the community.

Chestfeeding is a term that is becoming more commonly seen and used when discussing infant and toddler nutrition. It's a term that can be used by anyone, but often used by trans-masculine or non-binary parents to describe how they feed and nurture their child from their bodies. Language is constantly changing. Using the term "chestfeeding" is not just about human anatomy. It's about helping all parents and caregivers feel they can find the support and resources they need to feed their child. To learn more about chestfeeding go to: transcarebc.ca/

We've also included a number of additional pieces that can help you navigate the book:

Looking for insight into a particular topic or information on a key word?

Turn to the **Table of Contents** on pages 1 and 2 or the **Index** on page 143.

Need information on the services and supports available to help you and your family thrive?

See the **Resources** section on page 119.

Not sure what a word or concept means?

Check the **What is...?** boxes that appear throughout the book.

Interested in information on healthy eating?

See **Canada's food guide** on page 140.


Want to speak with a health care professional in person?


Phone **HealthLink BC**, an invaluable free service of the Government of British Columbia. **Call 8-1-1** toll-free or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing. Services are available in 130 languages, 24 hours a day. Speak with a registered nurse (anytime), a pharmacist (nightly, from 5 pm to 9 am), a registered dietitian or a qualified exercise professional (9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday).


Want quick info at a glance? Look for the coloured boxes.


Throughout this guide, you'll find boxes in a variety of colours. Look to these for essential bits of information that will help you navigate life as a new parent – everything from ways to support your child's brain development to tried-and-true parenting advice from other parents and caregivers.


Our **What is...?** boxes explain key words and ideas in easy-to-understand terms.


 Our **Try This** boxes suggest simple first steps you can take to help you get comfortable with each new aspect of parenting.


 Our **Key Takeaway** boxes sum up the section's not-to-be-missed information.


 Our **What You Can Do** boxes suggest ways your support team can get involved.


 Our **Did You Know?** boxes offer handy bits of insider information that can help build your understanding.


 Our **Family Story** boxes give you a peek into the experiences of other parents.


 Our **How To** boxes help you master the practical tasks of parenting by breaking them down into easy-to-follow steps.


 Our **Money Sense** boxes share tips on how to save money on everything from child care to vision care.

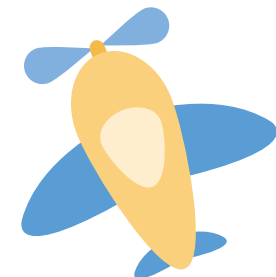
 Our **Brain Builder** boxes offer simple ideas on how to support your child's brain development through everyday activities.

 Our **Be Aware** boxes draw your attention to common things that may be unsafe for your child.

 Our **Danger** boxes alert you to hazards that can pose a serious risk to your child.

 Our **Medical Emergency** boxes help you recognize whether a situation calls for immediate medical help.

 Our **Seek Care** boxes point out things that warrant a call to your health care provider or HealthLink BC.



Learning About Your Toddler

Attachment

What is attachment?

The close relationship between you and your child that gives them a safe place from which to explore the world.

A healthy attachment is one of the key factors in raising a happy and confident child.

When your child is attached well, they feel secure. They can try new things, knowing they can always return to their safe place with you.

Attachment grows over time through day-to-day actions and routines. When you respond to your toddler in a loving and accepting way time after time, they learn that they can rely on you to support and protect them.



KEY TAKEAWAY

A healthy attachment is key to raising a child who's happy and confident. Attachment grows over time through consistent, responsive and loving interactions between you and your toddler.

Building a strong attachment with your child means:

- **Providing comfort every time they're sick, hurt, scared or upset** by reassuring, rocking or holding them.
- **Paying attention and responding to them.** Show your child that they're important to you by spending one-on-one time with them and doing things that interest them. Put aside screens and other distractions to focus on being with them. See [Brain Development](#) to learn more about "serve and return" interactions.



TRY THIS

Find activities that you and your toddler both enjoy. Spend time talking, listening to them and taking them places. Read stories, go for outings and play games together.

- **Following daily routines** so they know what to expect. Try to keep mealtimes and bedtime predictable and make rules that are clear and consistent.
- **Showing them trust** by letting them explore while you supervise. Let them go off a short way when they're learning to crawl or walk, for example, but stay nearby so they can return to you.

- **Talking with them about events that may upset them.** Things like the birth of a new sibling or a friend moving away can cause nightmares and other distress. Even very negative experiences can be made easier by the presence of a positive and caring adult.
- **Preparing them for any time you're apart.** Only leave your child in the care of someone you trust. Then set up a goodbye ritual (a kiss, some special words and a wave from the driveway, for instance) and leave with confidence. Provide them with things to do, a photo of you and a favourite blanket or toy for comfort. Let them know when you'll return, and do your best to come back on time.
- **Building good memories** by telling them family stories, looking at photo albums together, keeping a collection of their crafts and artwork, writing a diary of their achievements and making videos of their special events.
- **Creating a sense of belonging** by honouring family and cultural traditions.

Temperament

What is temperament?

Your child's unique character that makes them "who they are."

Your child's temperament may be obvious right from birth or show up over time.

Temperament includes:

- a child's general mood
- how active they are
- how they react to new situations
- whether they're easily distracted or can focus well

Your toddler's temperament may be similar to yours or very different. Home environment and the people around your child will have some effect, but your child's temperament is mostly just a natural part of who they are.



DID YOU KNOW?

Accepting your child's temperament doesn't mean letting them do whatever they want. It means helping them develop in a way that's comfortable for them.



FAMILY STORY

A nurse suggested I get down on the floor with my son and watch what he was doing while trying to imagine what he was thinking. I learned a lot about him from this simple act of quiet watching.



Support your child's temperament by:

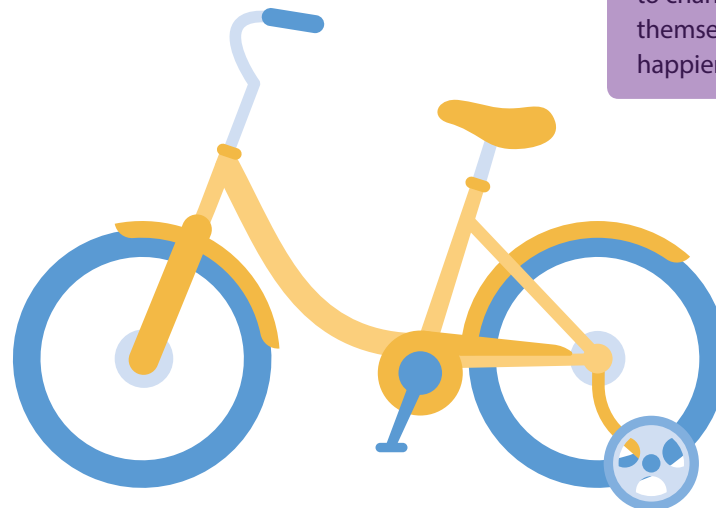
- **Understanding them.** By watching your child in a variety of settings, you'll learn a lot about them, including their likes and dislikes and how they feel most comfortable relating with others.
- **Not labelling them.** A child who grows up hearing that they're shy or that they talk too much, for example, will tend to believe it and live up to those expectations.
- **Being open and accepting who they are,** rather than expecting them to be a certain way. Let your child take the lead in uncovering their talents and preferences.



BRAIN BUILDER

Instead of scolding your toddler, help them understand what's happening and show empathy toward their feelings. Rather than "Stop throwing your toys and calm down!" try "It seems like you're really upset. I'm sorry you feel that way. I get upset sometimes, too."

As your child grows, help them put words to how they're feeling and to handle big emotions in a healthy way: "Can you tell me what you're feeling? Is there a way you could tell me you're angry without throwing your toys?"



- **Finding ways to direct their temperament into positive activities** that feel comfortable for them.
- **If they're shy** in a playgroup, for example, try letting them sit with you and watching until they're ready to join in.
- **If they're full of energy,** try giving them ways to move around – like dancing, running in the yard or helping with chores. If they have to sit still, give them something to hold that they can play with.



DID YOU KNOW?

When your child behaves a certain way, they're communicating something to you. What might look like being "naughty" is really just your toddler's way of telling you they need something. See [Dealing With Common Challenging Behaviours](#) for tips on how to respond.



DID YOU KNOW?

Learning to accept and work with your child's temperament rather than trying to change it will help them feel good about themselves. And it will make both your lives happier and easier.

- **If they're frightened,** let them know you have confidence in them to overcome their fears, and work with them to do so. Check the closet with them for monsters, for example, or hold them on your lap around dogs.
- **If they're sensitive** to noise, light or things that touch their skin, try offering them noise-cancelling headphones, dimming the lights or cutting the tags out of their clothes. By removing these distractions, you'll help them focus on other things.
- **If they don't like new situations,** try breaking them down into simple steps. Say, for example, "This is how you sit on your bike. This is where your feet go." instead of "Jump on and let's ride." And give plenty of warning before any change in routine.

Brain Development



KEY TAKEAWAY

The experiences your child has as a toddler will affect their health, well-being and coping skills for the rest of their life.

When we think about how to support a toddler's development, we usually consider the basics: keeping them comfortable and safe and making sure they sleep well and get enough to eat.

But what about building your toddler's brain?

Early Experiences Build the Brain

During the toddler years, your child's brain is making millions of new connections every day as they learn about the world around them. The way you respond to them can help teach their brain to build and strengthen the connections that will help them feel safe, trust others, be confident and live a healthy life.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Early experiences play a big role in shaping your toddler's brain. And while every child develops at their own pace, a healthy brain supports development in all areas.

How Can You Build Your Toddler's Brain?

You can help build your toddler's brain through what experts call "serve and return" interactions.

What are "serve and return" interactions?

Showing attention and responding with warmth, support and enthusiasm to what your child communicates. Imagine a tennis game between a parent or caregiver and a child. But instead of hitting a ball back and forth across a net, they send and get different types of communication, such as touch, sounds, words, smiles and eye contact.

Serve and return interactions help build a solid foundation for your toddler's brain – and support all future development. Serve and return interactions also build attachment between you and your toddler (see [Attachment](#)).

On their own, these moments may feel short and unimportant. But a lot of serve and return interactions throughout the early years help build new paths in your child's brain and encourage them to learn.

Each positive interaction is another brick in a healthy foundation for all of your toddler's later development. Together, they set your child up for success in everything from learning to read to dealing with stress to forming good relationships.





HOW TO

Use serve and return interactions

- Pay lots of attention to your toddler.
- Take note of what interests them, whether that's a bright colour, a fluffy dog or a spinning wheel.
- Talk to them regularly. Chat about what you're doing, what they see and what gets their attention.
- Cuddle and comfort them when they cry or are upset.
- Sing songs.
- Play simple games.
- Read to them.



See the **Brain Builder** boxes throughout this book for more ideas on how to support your toddler's brain development through everyday activities.

See [Dealing With Common Challenging Behaviours](#) to learn more about how to respond to challenging behaviour in a way that supports your toddler's development.



TRY THIS

Put aside your cell phone when you're playing with your toddler so that you can focus on them.

How Does Stress Affect Your Toddler's Brain?

Stress also shapes your toddler's brain development – in both positive and negative ways.

Good stress vs. bad stress

Everyone feels stress. But while some stress can help your child develop, other stress can harm them.

What is good stress?

Stress that's healthy for a child's development. Experiences like meeting new people, for example, prepare kids to cope with future challenges.

What is tolerable stress?

Stress that – with the support of a loving adult – a child can cope with. Difficult experiences may be painful to a child, but with love and adult care, these experiences don't have to be harmful to their development.

What is toxic stress?

Stress that harms the development of a child's brain and body and can cause lifelong challenges. Toxic stress is the effect of serious, ongoing hardship, abuse or neglect on a child who doesn't have adult support.



DID YOU KNOW?

With your support, your child's ability to cope with tolerable stress will grow over time.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Like adults, all children feel stress. But as parents and caregivers, we can help our children deal with stress in a way that supports their healthy development.

The effect of toxic stress

When a child experiences toxic stress, the basic structures of their developing brain may be damaged. And without a sturdy foundation to support future development, they may be at risk for long-term health problems, developmental issues and even addiction.

What you can do

It's possible to fix some of the damage of childhood toxic stress later in life. But it's easier and more effective to build solid brain structure in the early years.

If you're living through very difficult

circumstances, you can turn toxic stress into tolerable stress and lessen the impact on your toddler by being a safe and loving person for them to turn to. At the same time, find the support you need to help you cope with the challenges you're facing (see [Parenting Issues](#) and [Family Violence/Abuse](#)).

If you or your partner(s) experienced toxic stress when you were a child

, you may benefit from extra support as you adjust to being a parent or caregiver. Try talking to your health care provider and asking about programs that may help.

The 5 Areas of Child Development

During the toddler years, your child will grow in 5 important areas:

1. physical – how they use their body
2. social – how they interact with others
3. emotional – how they recognize, express and manage their feelings
4. cognitive – how they think and reason
5. language – how they communicate

How your child develops depends on many things, including their natural genetic makeup, the support they receive and the things they experience.



BRAIN BUILDER

You can help your child develop in all 5 areas with “serve and return” interactions. Pay attention to them and show an interest in what they’re interested in. By “returning” what they “serve,” you’ll encourage their curiosity and spark their enthusiasm for practising things like speech and social skills (see [Brain Development](#)).



DID YOU KNOW?

By continuing to breastfeed or chestfeed, you’ll support your child’s development in all 5 areas.

Physical Development

Your toddler will improve their **gross motor skills** (controlling the large muscles they need to sit, crawl, walk and run) and their **fine motor skills** (controlling their hands and fingers and getting the hand-eye coordination to reach for things and pick them up).



HOW TO

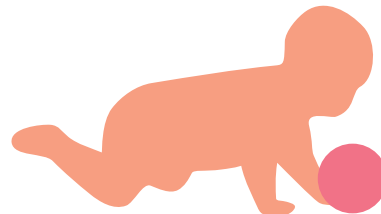
Support your toddler’s physical development

- ✓ Create safe, interesting activities and places for them to explore and be active in.
- ✓ Use screen time in a healthy way. (See [Screen Time](#))
- ✓ Hug and cuddle them.
- ✓ Provide healthy foods. (See [Eating Well](#))



DID YOU KNOW?

When you cuddle your child, their brain releases hormones that they need to grow.



Social Development

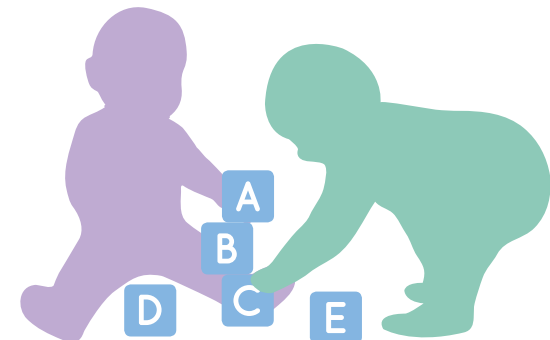
Your toddler will learn to make friends and get along with others.



HOW TO

Support your toddler’s social development

- ✓ Help them learn to cooperate, trust and be confident with others.
- ✓ Respond to their behaviour in warm and consistent ways. (See [Positive Discipline](#))
- ✓ Give them ideas on how to interact with other toddlers.
- ✓ Point out what other children are doing or what others may be thinking or feeling.



Emotional Development

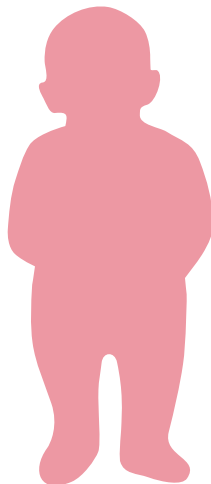
Your toddler will learn to recognize, show and manage their feelings.



HOW TO

Support your toddler's emotional development

- ✓ Help them learn to recognize and name their emotions.
- ✓ Help them learn to show their feelings in a healthy way.
- ✓ Let them know it's okay to have feelings – even big ones.
- ✓ Comfort them and stay present until big feelings have passed.



Cognitive Development

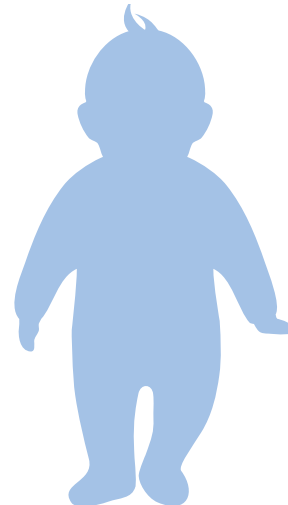
Your toddler will learn to think, remember, imagine, gather and organize information, solve problems and use judgment.



HOW TO

Support your toddler's cognitive development

- ✓ Set up safe and interesting play opportunities.
- ✓ Play with them.
- ✓ Praise them.
- ✓ Talk to them.
- ✓ Speak aloud when you're solving a problem.



Language Development

Your toddler will learn to listen and talk – and can learn multiple languages if you speak more than one at home.



HOW TO

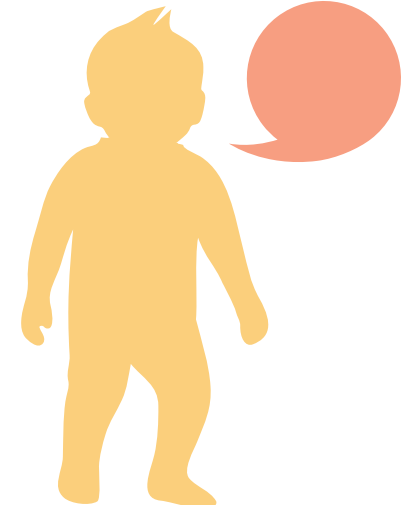
Support your toddler's language development

- ✓ Talk to them.
- ✓ Listen to them.
- ✓ Read to them. (See [Reading to Your Toddler](#))
- ✓ Tell them stories.
- ✓ Sing with them.



BRAIN BUILDER

Talk to your child all the time. By asking them questions, chatting about what you're doing, and sharing rhymes, songs and stories, you'll stimulate their brain and help them learn to speak and read.



Typical Child Development by Age

Most toddlers develop at about the same pace. Sometimes, though, a child will progress more quickly or more slowly than expected, or even have periods where they seem to take a step back.

If you're concerned, see [If You Have Concerns About Your Toddler's Development](#) and talk with your health care provider.

Physical Development

6 to 9 months

- sits steadily without help
- stands firmly when held
- bounces and shuffles around on their bottom
- rakes at tiny objects with their hands; picks up larger objects with their fingers
- grabs, shakes and bangs things together



TRY THIS

Make lots of time for crawling and tummy time. Give them something to hold and shake. And get down on the floor and roll a ball to them.

9 to 12 months

- chews finely minced foods with teeth or gums
- stands by pushing off from a squat
- walks while holding onto furniture or your hands
- crawls well, including up stairs
- feeds themselves small pieces of food
- uses the tip of their index finger and thumb to pick up small things
- puts one block on top of another



TRY THIS

Hold their hand or stand behind them as they climb stairs. Show them how to stack blocks. Let them use activity tables or other toys where they can press buttons and make noises. And offer them foods with different textures.

12 to 18 months

- walks on their own
- crawls or walks up stairs, putting both feet on one step while holding onto a railing or your hand
- climbs on things (like chairs) and out of things (like strollers)
- drinks from a cup
- turns the pages of a book
- stacks 3 or more blocks
- scribbles with a big crayon



TRY THIS

Give them balls to play with. Play music and dance together. Let them stack and nest plastic bowls and match lids to pots. Offer them big crayons and paper. And help them solve simple, large-piece puzzles.



FAMILY STORY

When our daughter was just starting to move around, I would lay on the floor with a toy just out of her reach. She would work hard to get to me. It kept her busy and active, and was a nice way for me to relax at the end of the day.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's physical development at every stage by:

- ✓ being active together
- ✓ spending lots of time playing outdoors and at playgrounds
- ✓ helping them practise walking
- ✓ cheering them on when they try something new
- ✓ limiting screen time (see [Screen Time](#))

18 to 24 months

- kicks a ball
- squats while playing
- backs into a chair to sit down
- rides a small-wheeled toy
- takes off their own shoes, hat and socks
- lifts a cup and drinks, then puts it down

24 to 30 months

- walks backwards and sideways
- walks up and down stairs alone, putting both feet on one step
- jumps in place, lifting both feet off the floor
- moves on a riding toy using both feet at the same time
- holds a crayon in their whole hand and scribbles

30 to 36 months

- walks a few steps on a narrow beam
- climbs a slide's ladder
- pedals a tricycle
- copies circles, dots, lines and swirls
- cuts paper with small safety scissors
- turns handles and doorknobs



TRY THIS

Offer them shape-sorting activities and finger paints. Play with plastic containers in the bath. Run and kick balls together. Let them try a ride-on toy. And encourage them to dress and undress on their own.



TRY THIS

Play movement games where you stop and go, change directions and move fast and slow. Let them dress themselves, helping with buttons and zippers only when needed. Give them markers, crayons and puzzles to play with. And let them help with simple kitchen tasks.



TRY THIS

Play tag and follow the leader. Roll down hills together. Pretend you're animals. Let them turn the pages while you read to them. And offer them dress-up clothes with snaps, buttons and zippers.



BRAIN BUILDER

Tell them what they're doing as they're doing it ("You're climbing the stairs!" "You're drawing with a crayon!")



DID YOU KNOW?

Between ages 2 and 3, some toddlers will learn to walk up and down stairs, one foot after the other, while holding the handrail.

Social Development

6 to 9 months

- plays social games like peekaboo and patty cake
- wants to do things with others
- points to things for a reason
- tries to get attention
- watches others
- notices when people enter a room



TRY THIS

Play seeking games ("Where's Michael?") to teach them they're not part of you. Invite others to join you as you play, or take part in a playgroup. Let them approach new people at their own pace.

9 to 12 months

- knows when you like or dislike their behaviour
- holds out their arms and legs while being dressed
- copies someone when asked
- notices children and what they are doing
- repeats sounds or movements that make you laugh
- takes turns with you in simple games
- notices what others are looking at
- follows where you point, then looks back to you



TRY THIS

Talk to them about what activities will happen next in the day.

12 to 18 months

- likes to be the centre of attention
- starts to show a sense of humour
- plays best by themselves and doesn't share toys
- copies adult activities, like reading and talking on the phone
- separates themselves from you for brief periods
- calls for you



TRY THIS

Make up a goodbye routine (a big kiss, a wave and some special words, for example). Offer them choices, like whether to put on their coat or their shoes first. And let them help with simple chores.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's social development at every stage by:

- ✓ responding when they want help or attention
- ✓ keeping to routines
- ✓ eating together at the family table
- ✓ using "please" and "thank you" to model good manners
- ✓ letting them be around people and play with other children
- ✓ playing games with them

18 to 24 months

- likes playing alone for short periods
- is better at playing beside other children, rather than playing with them
- says “no” and “mine” often and has trouble sharing
- likes to do things without help



TRY THIS

Let them know what to expect in new situations. Talk to them about family and friends. Point out what other children are doing, and introduce your child to a playmate.

What is parallel play?

Playing beside or near other children.

What is cooperative play?

Playing with other children.

Most children prefer parallel play until they're 30 to 36 months old.

24 to 30 months

- has trouble sharing
- likes to do more for themselves
- likes being near other children in parallel play
- is learning to be comfortable around new people



TRY THIS

Give them chances to play one-on-one with another child. Let them do some things without help. Use their toys to model sharing (“Look! Dolly’s sharing their blocks with Teddy.”) Spend quiet time together reading, telling stories and cuddling. And give them lots of praise for positive behaviour.



DID YOU KNOW?

It’s common for toddlers to be afraid of new people and act shy around strangers.

30 to 36 months

- hugs, kisses and shows affection
- uses social language like “thank you” and “bye-bye”
- plays with others and takes turns more easily
- plays make-believe games and creates imaginary characters



TRY THIS

Give your toddler lots of affection and encouragement. Join them in imaginary play. Introduce them to neighbours and let them play with other children, but stay nearby to supervise and help them solve problems.



DID YOU KNOW?

Around age 3, some toddlers will create an imaginary friend.

Emotional Development

6 to 9 months

- shows strong likes and dislikes
- laughs
- wants to stay with you or other trusted adults
- shows when they're scared



TRY THIS

Smile at your them, make lots of eye contact and practise other "serve and return" interactions (see [Brain Development](#)).



DID YOU KNOW?

Many infants and toddlers are affected and even scared of loud noises such as vacuum cleaners.



FAMILY STORY

Whenever one of us left for the day, we had a special routine. We would all hug and say, "Let's kiss Daddy," "Let's kiss Mommy," and then, "Let's kiss Taylor." It was fun, took just a minute and made leaving easier for everyone.

9 to 12 months

- shows many emotions
- is upset when they do something wrong
- wants comfort when they're upset
- needs to be within sight and hearing of a parent or caregiver
- shows affection with hugs, kisses, pats and smiles



TRY THIS

Offer them simple choices, like which cup to use. And ask them for lots of hugs and kisses.



BRAIN BUILDER

Starting when your child is about 9 months old, focus on helping them understand and deal with their emotions. Talk to them about how they feel ("I see you're feeling sad"). Tell them how you're feeling, too, ("I'm frustrated") and about how you handle your emotions in a healthy way ("I'm going to take some deep breaths").

12 to 18 months

- likes familiar places
- takes risks if a trusted adult is present
- recognizes themselves in mirrors and photos
- hugs and kisses you and other very familiar people
- likes being the centre of attention



TRY THIS

Let them play on their own. Talk about any upcoming changes to their routine. And find ways to help them feel successful.



HOW TO

Use praise to build your child's self-esteem

- ✓ Save praise for things that take effort, rather than praising every small act.
- ✓ Try not to base praise on your child's appearance.
- ✓ Be specific: "You did a great job cleaning up your toys," for example, rather than simply "good job."
- ✓ Offer encouragement and empathy when they're struggling with something new: "I can see you're trying hard to zip up your jacket. It can be tricky, but if you keep trying I know you'll get it. If you need a break, though, I can help this time."

18 to 24 months

- shows concern for others
- shows fear, but can be settled down
- sometimes wants to do things on their own, sometimes wants help
- is watchful around new adults



TRY THIS

Talk to them about how others feel and how their actions affect them (“I think John feels sad because you took away their toy.”) And offer them choices to help them cope with their own feelings (“You’re feeling sad. Do you want to cuddle or be alone?”).

24 to 30 months

- wants to get their own way
- likes routines
- acts out emotions through play – roaring like an angry lion, for example
- has strong feelings but trouble expressing them



TRY THIS

Encourage them to show and talk about their emotions. Make transitions easier by letting them know what to expect (“In 5 minutes it will be time to pick up your sibling from school”).

30 to 36 months

- gets upset by big changes to routines
- responds to other people’s feelings
- wants to do things for themselves, but may fear new things
- wants approval and needs praise



TRY THIS

Sing songs and read stories about emotions. Talk about how the characters are feeling and why.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many toddlers like to have a security blanket or toy.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your toddler may suddenly be frightened by situations that they were fine with before.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler’s emotional development at every stage by:

- ✓ creating lots of structure and routines
- ✓ holding, cuddling and comforting them – especially when they’re upset, sick, scared or hurt
- ✓ practising “serve and return” interactions (see [Brain Development](#))
- ✓ using positive discipline (see [Positive Discipline](#))
- ✓ offering them choices
- ✓ talking about feelings – yours, theirs and other peoples’

Cognitive Development

6 to 9 months

- notices the size of objects
- knows if things are near or far
- searches briefly for an object that's been taken away
- understands how things can be used – shakes a noisemaker or pushes a button, for example



TRY THIS

Play copying games, like clapping or sticking your tongue out at each other. Hide things from them briefly, then reveal them. And play in-and-out games, like putting blocks in a container and taking them out again.

9 to 12 months

- connects animals with the sounds they make
- has a better memory
- sees you as separate from themselves, and points when asked, "Who's Mommy?"
- recognizes their own name
- starts to understand cause and effect, like that things fall when dropped
- matches shapes, like putting a cube in a square hole



TRY THIS

Take turns doing things, like blowing kisses. Ask them to help you find lost objects. And talk about cause and effect ("You dropped Teddy, so now he's on the floor").

12 to 18 months

- realizes things still exist even when they can't see them
- finds things in pictures
- learns by touching and moving things – fitting things into holes, for example
- expects events to follow routines
- follows simple directions, like "show me the ball"



TRY THIS

Count things together. Talk about events and people they remember. Ask them to point to pictures in books. And give them simple directions ("Put your truck and doll in the toy box, please").



FAMILY STORY

Whenever my friend came over, she would pull things out from her pockets to show our 10-month-old and say the names of the things carefully. My toddler would often try and copy what my friend said. It was a good example of what we needed to be doing every day.



BRAIN BUILDER

It's healthy for your toddler to feel a little bit of frustration when they're trying to do something. By not rushing in to help, you're teaching them problem-solving skills.

18 to 24 months

- uses things the way they're meant to be used, like putting a phone to their ear
- understands the passing of time and the meaning of words like "not now"
- names familiar people in photos
- has a better memory



TRY THIS

Give them crayons, markers and paper to scribble with and 2- to 4-piece puzzles to try. Talk about time ("We're going to Grandma's tomorrow") and about sounds you hear, like car horns or barking dogs. And challenge their skills by, for example, giving them a fourth block once they can stack 3.

24 to 30 months

- pretend-plays with others
- matches and sorts some shapes and colours
- starts to understand the order of numbers
- has a longer attention span
- starts solving problems by trial and error



TRY THIS

Let them fill in the blanks when you're singing or reading together. And play matching and sorting games.

30 to 36 months

- compares sizes of things and uses words like "bigger" and "smaller"
- play-acts, like pretending to be a dinosaur
- counts 3 things
- matches and sorts things
- enjoys creative movement



TRY THIS

Talk to them about number order ("Who's first?"), encourage them to tell stories, and ask them what they think about things. Let them try 3- to 6-piece puzzles. And give them clothes and props to play dress-up.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's cognitive development at every stage by:

- ✓ offering them a variety of toys, puzzles and art supplies
- ✓ reading with them and talking about the pictures (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#))
- ✓ dancing and singing together
- ✓ counting together
- ✓ talking about the shapes and colours of things
- ✓ playing games with rules, like *Simon says*
- ✓ giving them plenty of praise as they learn new skills



See the **Brain Builder** boxes throughout this guide for ideas on boosting your toddler's cognitive development.

Language Development

6 to 9 months

- says several sounds (“ma mu da di ba”) in one breath
- babbles and repeats sounds (“da da da”)
- responds to some words, like “Mommy” or “ball”
- turns to listen to familiar sounds, like a ringing phone
- looks when you say their name
- shakes their head to say “no”



TRY THIS

Have a “conversation” with your baby by responding to their babbling with your own sounds or words.



TRY THIS

Use simple sentences to talk about what you’re doing (“We’re looking at the dog”).



TRY THIS

It’s never too soon to start sharing books with your toddler. They may like flipping the pages, talking about what they see or just looking at the words and pictures (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#)).

9 to 12 months

- babbles in longer strings of sounds like “bababa” or “badagee”
- responds to simple instructions that include familiar words
- takes turns making sounds with you
- copies speech sounds



TRY THIS

Read to them every day (see [Reading to Your Toddler](#)).



TRY THIS

If you speak more than one language, use both from the start. One parent or caregiver can use one language while the other uses another. Read to your child in both languages, too.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many toddlers leave out words like “the” and “in” and endings like “-ing” and “-s” when they’re learning to speak English.

12 to 18 months

- says 5 or more words
- understands many more words than they can say – points, for example, when asked where their belly button is
- uses “no” correctly, often with a shake of their head
- tries to sing songs
- makes animal sounds and other sound effects
- uses gestures like clapping their hands, blowing a kiss or giving a “high 5”
- puts their finger to their lips to say “shhh”



TRY THIS

Read to them using different voices and lots of expression. Sing to them. Give them books to look at and encourage them to point out things in pictures. And keep a diary of the words they say.



DID YOU KNOW?

You don’t need to try to teach your toddler to read and write. By reading, talking and singing to them, you’ll build the language skills that form the basis of their later literacy.

18 to 24 months

- uses 2- or 3-word sentences
- understands about 200 words
- says (clearly or not) about 50 words
- talks to themselves or their stuffed animals
- names pictures in books
- copies new words and phrases
- asks “what” and “where” questions



TRY THIS

Listen to them carefully and ask simple questions about what they're saying. And take them to the library.



FAMILY STORY

I talked to my daughter about anything and everything we were doing. When crossing the street, for example, I'd say, “Is it safe to cross? Let's look for cars. There are no cars. It's safe. Let's go.” All that talking really helped her learn words, and I wasn't surprised when she spoke at an early age.

24 to 30 months

- uses personal pronouns like “I,” “me” and “you”
- says their name, based on what they hear themselves being called
- answers simple questions like “What's your name?”
- likes looking at books and talking about the pictures
- sings parts of songs
- asks lots of questions



TRY THIS

Repeat what they say to show them you're interested. And look at family pictures together, describing them in simple sentences.

30 to 36 months

- can often be understood
- asks lots of questions
- tells stories and sings
- may repeat 5-word sentences
- uses social words like “please,” “thank you” and “hello”
- names most body parts



TRY THIS

Ask about things they're interested in. Use open-ended questions like “What did you see on your walk?” or “What do you think?” Sing number songs, too, and make up silly rhymes together.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Encourage your toddler's language development at every stage by:

- ✓ talking to them about everything from what you're doing (“Let's wash these cups”) to what they see (“What a fluffy cat!”)
- ✓ responding to their babbling with your own words, as though you're having a conversation
- ✓ pointing out the names of things around you
- ✓ reading to them every day
- ✓ building on what they say (If they say “ball,” you can say, “Yes, that's a red ball.”)
- ✓ using nursery rhymes to help them learn language patterns
- ✓ singing while doing daily tasks, like changing their diaper

Sexual Development



KEY TAKEAWAY

The way you touch, care for and talk about your toddler's body sends important messages.

Think about your own values and beliefs and what you want to communicate to your child about sexuality. Consider:

- ✓ using medical or scientific terms for all body parts, from nose to vagina
- ✓ remembering that curiosity about the body is normal
- ✓ thinking ahead about how you'll answer your toddler's questions, so you're less anxious when they come up
- ✓ talking about the difference between what's okay in public and what's meant for private



TRY THIS

Let them decide who they want to hug and kiss. This teaches them that they have control over their body.

Sexual Development by Age

From birth to 24 months, your child may:

- enjoy being naked
- like to touch parts of their body, including genitals
- get erections or vaginal lubrication as a natural reflex

From 24 to 36 months, your child may:

- touch their genitals or masturbate
- notice gender differences
- explore bodies ("play doctor or nurse") with a same-age playmate
- be interested in body functions



DANGER

Although there can be many reasons for changes in your child's behaviour, some changes may signal abuse. Talk with your health care provider if your child:

- develops a strong, constant focus on their own and others' genitals
- doesn't follow your rules around respecting and not touching others' private areas
- has discharge, swelling or bruising in the genital area

Masturbating and Exploring



DID YOU KNOW?

It's as normal for your child to touch their genitals as it is for them to explore their toes or fingers.

Toddlers are naturally curious about their bodies. And once they begin to explore, they quickly learn that touching their genitals feels good.

If your toddler is touching themselves in public, remind them that genitals are personal areas, best explored in private spaces like their own bedroom. Offer a toy or other distraction.

If they're exploring genitals with another child of similar age, calmly tell them their genitals are private and shouldn't be touched or looked at by other people unless they have given them permission. Re-direct them to another activity, and ask them if they have questions.

If your child is exploring genitals with someone else, have a calm conversation about it. Reassure your child that they haven't done anything wrong, but emphasize that no one should touch or see their genitals without their consent. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your health care provider.

Gender Identity

Children usually begin to show interest in their gender early in life. At 2 to 3 years old, they see the differences between male and female bodies. Most children will call themselves either a “boy” or a “girl.” This may or may not match the sex they were assigned at birth, and it may change over time.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Most children will identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Others may realize that their gender identity doesn't match their assigned sex. Some children may switch between calling themselves a “boy” and a “girl,” or avoid being labelled at all. All children may express their identity in creative ways.

This exploration of gender identity is a normal and healthy part of every child's development. And all children do best when they know they're loved and accepted for who they are.



DID YOU KNOW?

You can't tell a child's gender identity from their choice of toys or clothes. How a child expresses themselves (*gender expression*) does not necessarily signal who they know themselves to be (*gender identity*).

What is assigned sex?

The sex assigned to a baby at birth. When a newborn has a penis, the assigned sex is “male.” When a newborn has a vulva, the assigned sex is “female.” In rare cases, a child is born with external sex organs that are not clearly male or female in which the assigned sex is “intersex.”

What is gender identity?

Who a person feels themselves to be. A child may identify as a boy or girl – or they may not identify as either. Or they may be uncertain, and that's OK too.

What is gender expression?

How a person expresses themselves to others. This can include how they act, what they wear, how they do their hair and the name they choose to go by. Gender expression is not necessarily the same as gender identity. A boy may like to dress up in dresses, for example, but not identify as a girl.

What is transgender (*trans*)?

A person whose gender identity doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth.

What is Two-Spirit?

A term used by many Indigenous people who have diverse genders and sexualities. Two-Spirit people were historically revered in most nations, and may have different roles, gifts, language and appearances depending on the nation they're from. Two-Spirit identity is very closely connected to Indigenous culture and spirituality, and this term can't be personally used by someone who is non-Indigenous.



HOW TO

Support healthy gender development in your child

- ✓ Love your child and be proud of them for who they are. Don't pressure them to change.
- ✓ Talk with your child about gender and show them examples of different gender expressions.
- ✓ Allow your child to wear the clothes and play with the toys they like.
- ✓ Show your child that people of all genders exist and live happy lives.
- ✓ Watch out for any bullying your child may face.

Finding Support

Many parents and caregivers have a hard time accepting that their child's gender identity may be different than their assigned sex. At the same time, a child who's worried about their gender may be depressed, anxious or have trouble concentrating. Transgender children may be especially uncomfortable with their assigned sex at the start of puberty, when their bodies begin to change.

For support in parenting your transgender or gender-creative child, contact:

Trans Care BC at 1-866-999-1514 or phsa.ca/transcarebc

Pflag Canada at pflagcanada.ca

Support is also available through:

- mental health professionals who specialize in the care of transgender and gender-creative children
- your family doctor or pediatrician
- Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit Elders or leaders
- other parents and caregivers of transgender and gender-creative children



DID YOU KNOW?

There is nothing physically or psychologically wrong with your child if their gender identity doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth.



Independence

What is independence?

Your child's growing ability to do things for themselves.

Between 12 and 36 months, your toddler will learn that they can control themselves, their body and, sometimes, those around them. This is a healthy and important step in their development.

They'll want to learn new skills, make choices and do things by themselves. And they'll show more willpower to do things "their way" rather than yours.



HOW TO Help your toddler become independent

- ✓ Let them do what they can on their own, from dressing to washing.
- ✓ Let them make simple choices, like choosing which cup to drink from.
- ✓ Encourage them to do things by themselves, even if they need extra time.
- ✓ Encourage new activities that they'll likely do well.
- ✓ Give them time to repeat a skill as they're learning, like letting them master stacking 2 blocks before giving them a third.
- ✓ Be positive about their efforts, whether or not they're successful.



DID YOU KNOW?

It's okay for your toddler to feel frustration. Letting them feel frustrated while they work on simple tasks is part of how they learn to problem solve.



Empathy

What is empathy?

The ability to understand and care about how others feel.

Empathy is a complex part of development that can be a struggle for a child to grasp. But learning to feel and show empathy is an important part of your toddler's growth into a responsible and caring person.

Your toddler can start to learn empathy by watching you. Try:

- ✓ responding to their needs and the needs of others in a caring and fair way
- ✓ helping them name their feelings and understand why these feelings are happening, and talking about what to do about them
- ✓ helping them understand how their actions can affect people in positive or negative ways
- ✓ using positive discipline to help them grow and develop (see [Positive Discipline](#))
- ✓ showing them how to share and be kind
- ✓ showing them how to apologize when it's appropriate



BRAIN BUILDER

Point out when your child has done something kind ("Look how happy you made Jessica by sharing your toy") or not so kind ("When you hit your sibling, it made her sad"). By helping them understand how their actions affect others, you're building their social and emotional skills.



Play

Play is a key way that your toddler develops and learns about the world around them.

What Does Play Teach Your Child?

Play helps your child grow in all 5 major areas of development. It builds:

- **physical skills** like crawling, climbing, walking, running, using their fingers, seeing and hearing
- **social skills** like cooperating, sharing, being polite, taking turns and leading and following others
- **emotional skills** like identifying and dealing with feelings
- **cognitive skills** like problem solving, using their imagination, figuring out how things work, and learning shapes, colours and numbers
- **language skills** like learning the names for things, forming sentences, telling stories and listening



KEY TAKEAWAY

Play is a big part of how your child learns about themselves, others, and the world around them. Giving your toddler lots of time to play is good for their development. And it's also a wonderful chance for you to show interest in the things that they like to do.

Play by Age

6 to 12 months: Explorer

Your baby may:

- grab at things
- search for things you hide
- enjoy dumping, stacking and pouring things

Try giving them:

- balls
- sturdy toys on wheels
- blocks
- nesting toys
- rattles
- bowls of different sizes



TRY THIS

Use supervised bath time to interact with your toddler or child. Playing with water is fun and soothing for a child.



DID YOU KNOW?

Outdoor play helps your child develop in all areas. They'll use their imagination, learn to play with others and build their confidence by trying new things, like going down a big slide for the first time. See appetitetoplay.com and outsideplay.ca for more information.

12 to 24 months: Mover and Shaker

Your toddler may:

- be able to handle smaller toys
- show their personality through play (they may be active or quiet, focused or multi-tasking)
- take part in "parallel play" (playing beside another child but not with them)

Try giving them:

- balls to chase (and when they're a bit older, to kick and throw)
- pop-up toys
- sit-and-ride toys



MONEY SENSE

Let your child play with things you already have around the house, like cardboard boxes or pots and pans. Many libraries have free kits you can borrow, too.

24 to 36 months: Dreamer and Connector

Your toddler may:

- play with another child
- enjoy imaginary play

Try giving them:

- dress-up clothes and props

Importance of unstructured, outdoor play

It's been shown to be important for children to try something without knowing the outcome. Unstructured, outdoor play can help children plan, risk manage, develop social skills, manage stress, build self-esteem and build resilience. Examples: playing on a log or climbing a tree.



BRAIN BUILDER

Expand your child's imaginary play by showing interest, asking questions and playing along.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many toddlers aren't ready to play with other children until they're 3 years or older.



HOW TO

Encourage your toddler to play

- ✓ Provide a variety of toys suited to their age.
- ✓ Offer them choices and let them decide what they play.
- ✓ Set aside time to play with them each day.
- ✓ Encourage both active and quiet activities.
- ✓ Give them praise and proudly show their work.
- ✓ Take a break when they seem tired, hungry, uninterested or over-stimulated.
- ✓ Give them lots of free, unscheduled playtime for them to be creative and see where their imagination leads them.

5 ideas for playing together

1. Pretend to be animals.
2. Show them how to do something you enjoy, like puzzles or dancing.
3. Go outside to crawl over logs, look at bugs or pick stones.
4. Wash the dishes or tear lettuce together.
5. Get out some paper, paint and glue and be creative.



TRY THIS

When time is short, sing or play word or guessing games while you're doing other things.



TRY THIS

If your toddler is in child care, spend some time observing them there to see if you can pick up ideas for play at home.



Toys

The best toys encourage your toddler to learn, explore and use their imagination. The toys don't have to be fancy or expensive, or specific to any gender.

Household items

- plastic bowls for filling and dumping
- pillows for climbing and making caves
- clothes for dress-up
- the bath for supervised water play

Classics

- blocks
- dump trucks
- stuffed animals
- play food
- garages and farms
- books

Nature's toys

- dirt and sand
- water
- stones



TRY THIS

When you put a toy out, put another away. Your toddler may be overwhelmed if they have too many to choose from. And rotating toys can be just as exciting as getting something new.

Safer Toys

Reduce overall injuries by:

- ensuring toys are well-made and fit your child's age
- not using toys with broken, sharp or loose pieces
- ensuring your toy box lid can't trap your toddler inside or slam down on them
- making sure paint is non-toxic and not peeling
- reading the safety information on toy labels
- avoiding toys with small batteries and making sure your toddler doesn't take out any batteries



BE AWARE

Almost half of toy-related deaths are caused by choking.

Reduce choking hazards by:

- avoiding any toy that fits in your toddler's mouth
- making sure all toys are at least 3½ cm (1½ inches) wide and 6 cm (2½ inches) long
- not letting your child play with things that can break into pieces, like styrofoam and egg cartons
- not letting them suck or chew on balloons



TRY THIS

See if the toy fits through a toilet paper roll. If it does, it's too small.

Reduce strangling hazards by:

- not using toys with strings, cords or ribbons more than 15 cm (6 inches) long
- being careful with things like pull toys and skipping ropes

Reduce suffocation hazards by:

- making sure that any toy that your toddler can climb into has a way out and air holes
- taking away all packaging from new toys



DID YOU KNOW?

If you have to shout to be heard above a toy, it's too noisy and can damage your child's hearing.



FAMILY STORY

We worried about how to keep our toddler away from her 7-year-old brother's small toys. He decided to play with them in his own room. We put a gate on the door so his sister wouldn't feel shut out.

Screen Time

What is screen time?

Time spent in front of a computer, smartphone, tablet, television or gaming device.

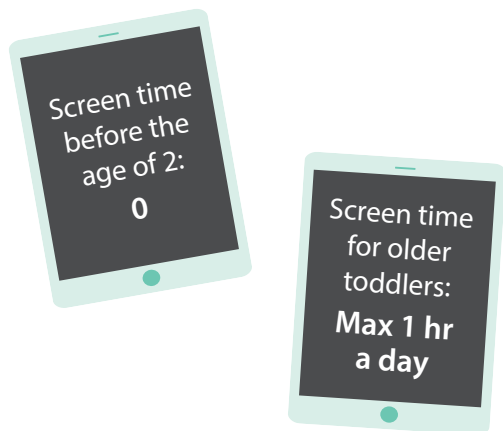


DID YOU KNOW?

When toddlers spend excessive time in front of screens, they may show increased behavioural challenges, have difficulty sleeping, exhibit readiness issues for school, and be more likely to experience unhealthy weight gain.

Less is Better

The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends no screen time for children under the age of 2, and a maximum of 1 hour a day for older toddlers. Overall, the less screen time, the better.



Why?

- Screen time cuts into quality time for you and your toddler.
- It takes time away from active play and social time that can help your child develop and bond with others.
- Screens over-stimulate your toddler with too much colour, movement and sound.
- Although some types of content are better than others, most screen time teaches your toddler little or nothing. (See [Safer Screens](#))
- Screens display ads showing unhealthy foods, violence and stereotypes.



BRAIN BUILDER

Be aware of your own screen use. Are you looking at your phone rather than focusing fully on your child? Remember: when you pay attention to and interact with your toddler, you're helping them build a healthy brain and body. Try turning off your phone notifications – or simply putting your phone away – when you're spending time with them.



TRY THIS

Instead of giving your toddler your phone or tablet, engage them with board books, simple puzzles, or toys focused on sorting shapes and stacking.

Safer Screens

You may not be able to eliminate screens completely. After all, sometimes handing over your phone or turning on the TV may seem like the only way to get a few minutes to start dinner or gather your thoughts. But you can make screen time as healthy as possible by:

- ✓ thinking about when and why screens are in use, and not using them out of habit, for entertainment or for background noise
- ✓ choosing TV shows for children that have familiar characters, use songs and repetition to teach and encourage participation
- ✓ being nearby whenever your child uses screens or – better yet – watching together and talking about what you're seeing
- ✓ making screen time positive time. A video call with out-of-town relatives, for example, can actually benefit your child.



TRY THIS

Make a family screen time plan that you all agree to. Include:

- daily time limits for kids and parents and caregivers
- no screens during mealtimes
- no screens in kids' bedrooms
- no TV on as background noise

Ensure your child care providers know the rules, too.

Reading to Your Toddler

Reading to your toddler helps them learn new words, builds their imagination and develop listening, math and reading skills.

Try:

- ✓ reading to your child each day, from birth on
- ✓ making reading a part of your bedtime routine
- ✓ letting your child turn the pages, if they can
- ✓ keeping a book in your bag to pull out on the bus or in the grocery store line
- ✓ visiting the library together for story time and to pick out books to bring home
- ✓ leaving board books around for them to flip through
- ✓ re-reading favourite books often



BRAIN BUILDER

- Run your finger along the words as you read them.
- Choose books with rhymes and repetition.
- Use different voices for characters.
- Point to the objects in picture books and name them, or ask your toddler to name them. For animals, ask what sound they make.
- Talk about how the things in the book connect to your child's world. If there's a dog in the story, for example, talk about a neighbour's pet.



DID YOU KNOW?

You don't need to read every word. If your child has a favourite page or a favourite picture, let them linger on it or even turn directly there.



If You Have Concerns About Your Toddler's Development



KEY TAKEAWAY

All children develop at their own pace, but most reach milestones by a set time. If you have concerns, help is available.

What You Can Do

If you have concerns:

- 1. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.**
- 2. Find extra support** through your public health nurse, parent-and-child groups or a child care program.
- 3. Ensure your concerns are followed up.** Follow-up might include watching your toddler play, completing a child development screening questionnaire or referring you to another child development or health professional or to a B.C. government support program such as BC Centre for Ability, bc-cfa.org/programs/supported-child-development/



DID YOU KNOW?

When your toddler is about to make a developmental leap, it may seem like they're going backwards in another area. A child learning to walk, for example, may be less talkative for awhile. This is a normal part of child development.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your toddler was born early (preterm) or had serious health problems at birth, they may develop at a slower pace. Your health care provider can help you support their development.



Eating Well

Eating well is key to your toddler's healthy growth and development. Children who eat well from an early age have the best chance of becoming healthy eaters for life.

You can encourage healthy eating by:

- breastfeeding or chestfeeding or giving your child expressed milk for 2 years or longer
- introducing solid foods at about 6 months
- working towards 3 meals and 2 or 3 sit-down snacks at regular times each day
- providing a variety of nutritious foods
- watching for your toddler's cues to see when they're hungry or full
- creating a calm, no-pressure eating environment
- eating together as a family
- offering attention, affection and playtime – not food or drink – as comfort
- modelling healthy eating habits
- ensuring other caregivers know your feeding routines



KEY TAKEAWAY

Your toddler's appetite will vary from day to day. By letting them decide how much to eat, you'll teach them to listen to their body. If you're concerned about your child's eating or growth, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak with a registered dietitian.

Mealtime Roles

You and your toddler each have a role to play in healthy eating.

Your role is to:

- ✓ offer a variety of healthy foods
- ✓ offer meals and snacks at regular times each day
- ✓ respond to your toddler's hunger and fullness cues

Your toddler's role is to:

- ✓ choose whether to eat
- ✓ choose what to eat from what they're offered
- ✓ choose how much to eat



DID YOU KNOW?

By doing your job with feeding and trusting your toddler to do their job with eating, you'll help them become a healthy eater and have less conflict around mealtime.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your toddler is often not hungry at mealtimes, they may be filling up on drinks. More than 3 cups (750 ml) of cow's milk per day leaves little room for food.

Hunger and Fullness Cues

What are hunger and fullness cues?

Signs your young toddler gives you when they know they're hungry or full.

Your toddler is hungry if, when food is offered, they:

- open their mouth
- lean forward excitedly, kick their feet or wave their hands

Your toddler is full if, when food is offered, they:

- push it away
- close their mouth
- turn their head away

When Your Toddler Says No to Food

If your older toddler won't eat, let them leave the table. They may not be hungry, or they may be tired, excited or sick. Wait until the next regular meal or snack time to offer anything more. And resist the urge to use desserts or other treats as bribes for finishing food.



BRAIN BUILDER

By sitting down to eat together, you'll build your toddler's language and social skills while encouraging healthy eating habits.

Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding Your Toddler

Human milk is an important part of your growing toddler's diet, even after they've started solid foods. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding also offers comfort and builds attachment, which helps your toddler grow into a more confident child.

It's Important for Your Toddler

Human milk:

- ✓ is a natural and nutritious food for your toddler
- ✓ is all the food your child needs for the first 6 months, and continues to be important for 2 years or more
- ✓ supports your toddler's immune system
- ✓ protects your toddler from some infections
- ✓ supports your toddler's healthy growth

It's Important for You

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding:

- ✓ may lower your risk of diseases like breast and ovarian cancers
- ✓ is convenient
- ✓ helps you bond with your toddler



DID YOU KNOW?

Toddlers who breastfeed or chestfeed don't need cow's milk or other animal milk. But until they're at least one year old, they need a liquid vitamin D supplement of 400 IU every day. Talk with your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you have questions.

Can I Breastfeed or Chestfeed my Toddler if...?

...I return to work or school

Yes. Try breastfeeding or chestfeeding before you leave and when you return home. Your toddler may want to feed more in the evening or at night to make up for the time away. You can also express your milk at work or school and have your caregiver give it to your toddler the next day. Make a plan for when and where you'll pump and where you can clean your pump and store your milk. B.C. employers must, by law, make it possible for you to do so.

...I take prescribed medication

Most medications are safe to take while breastfeeding or chestfeeding, but talk with your health care provider, public health nurse or pharmacist, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to be sure.

...we're in public

In Canada, there are laws that protect your right to breastfeed or chestfeed anywhere, at any time. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding in public is a normal, healthy and legal activity, and it's illegal for anyone to ask you to stop or cover up.

...I'm pregnant

Yes. Talk with your health care provider to help ensure you're getting enough nutrition for your unborn child, your breastfeeding or chestfeeding toddler and yourself. Take a prenatal supplement. And don't worry if your milk looks a bit different and your supply decreases around your fourth or fifth month.

This is due to the normal hormonal changes of pregnancy. Some toddlers will naturally wean at this point, but may want to breastfeed or chestfeed again once the baby is born and more milk is flowing.



TRY THIS

If you're pregnant, get some extra rest by lying down while you breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler.

... I breastfeed or chestfeed my new baby

Yes. You can "tandem nurse" (breastfeed or chestfeed a new baby as well as your toddler), and your body will adjust to make enough milk for both. This can also be a good way to connect with both children. You can feed them at the same time or separately. In the first few days after giving birth, feed your newborn first to make sure they get lots of practice and all the nutrition and antibodies in your colostrum.

...my child bites or is teething

Yes. If your toddler bites, remove them from your breast or chest and firmly tell them that biting hurts you. Then try again. You may have to repeat this message a few times before the biting stops. Biting may mean that they're teething (see [Looking After Your Toddler's Teeth](#)), sick or finished feeding. They can't bite if they're properly latched and sucking, so remove them from the breast or chest as soon as they're done. To do so, watch for long pauses between sucking. Then break the latch by inserting your index finger into their mouth.

...I smoke and/or vape tobacco

It's best for you and your child if you stop smoking. But breastfeeding or chestfeeding is still important for your child's health, and many nursing parents who smoke breastfeed or chestfeed successfully. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding may even help protect your baby from some of the negative effects of being exposed to tobacco smoke.

If you smoke, though, you expose your child to second-hand smoke and to the nicotine and other harmful substances that pass through your milk. Smoking can also reduce the amount of milk you produce and lead to earlier weaning. Quitting or cutting down is healthy for you and your toddler. If you can't quit, reduce your child's exposure by breastfeeding or chestfeeding before you smoke, keeping your car and home smoke-free, and washing your hands and changing your clothes after smoking. For information on how to quit or reduce the amount you smoke:

- Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about the BC Smoking Cessation Program, which provides free and low-cost nicotine replacement products and medications to help you quit.
- Try to quit. Contact Quit Now at quitnow.ca or 1-877-455-2233 (toll-free).
- Talk Tobacco: Indigenous quit smoking and vaping support. smokershelpline.ca/talktobacco/home or 1-833-998-8255 (TALK).
- First Nations Health Authority Resources:
 - FNHA Quitting Commercial Tobacco fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Quitting-Commercial-Tobacco-FAQs.pdf
 - FNHA Respecting Tobacco fnha.ca/respectingtobacco

...I drink alcohol

The safest choice is not to drink alcohol while breastfeeding, chestfeeding or expressing milk. It takes about 2 hours for alcohol from 1 standard drink to leave the body and the human milk. Having a standard drink (see next page for what a standard drink looks like) once in a while may be okay, as long as it's planned. By planning ahead, you can lower your risks and risks to your toddler:

- stick to one standard drink
- breastfeed or chestfeed (or pump and store your milk) before having a drink
- wait 2 to 3 hours per drink before breastfeeding, chestfeeding or expressing milk again
- throw away any milk you express within 2 to 3 hours of drinking

See [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) for more information.



BE AWARE

It takes time for your body to get rid of the alcohol in your milk. And pumping, drinking a lot of water, resting, or drinking coffee doesn't make it happen any faster. Any milk that you pump while drinking or in the 2 to 3 hours after drinking should be thrown away.



DID YOU KNOW?

Whether smoked, vaped, applied to the skin, or ingested (as edibles, drinks, oils or pills), no amount of cannabis is known to be safe if you breastfeed or chestfeed.

...I use cannabis (marijuana)

The safest option is to not use cannabis while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. The tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in cannabis is stored in human milk and can be passed on to your child. And because the THC remains for so long in the body, expressing and discarding or throwing your milk away ("pumping and dumping") doesn't make it safe for your child, either. Even cannabidiol (CBD) hasn't been proven safe while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. Cannabis can also make you drowsy and unable to respond to your toddler's needs.

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding has many health benefits for both the toddler and the parent. If you're finding it difficult to stop using cannabis, discuss with your health care provider about steps you can take to help protect you and your toddler.



KEY TAKEAWAY

If you have more than 1 standard alcoholic drink per day, smoke, use cannabis or take non-prescription opioids and stimulants, talk with a trusted health care provider, public health nurse or pharmacist, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. They can help you make the best feeding decision for your child.



KEY TAKEAWAY

To protect your child, avoid exposing them to smoke from cannabis, vaping, e-cigarettes and cigarettes, both during pregnancy and after birth.

...I use non-prescription opioids and stimulants

Non-prescription opioids and stimulants can pass through your milk and affect your toddler. If you use non-prescription opioids and stimulants and would like support and information about how to safely breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler, talk with a trusted health care provider.

Finding Help

To get the support you need to help you breastfeed or chestfeed your toddler with confidence, look to:

- your health care provider
- other parents who have breastfed or chestfed toddlers
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding support groups (see [Resources](#))
- a public health nurse
- a lactation consultant ([bclca.ca](#))
- HealthLink BC (call 8-1-1)
- hospital breastfeeding or chestfeeding clinics
- La Leche League ([lllc.ca](#))
- the Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding section in *Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care*



DANGER

Ensure all alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, medications and non-prescription opioids and stimulants are kept out of your toddler's reach.

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

Guidance to support people in Canada to make informed decisions about alcohol and consider reducing their alcohol use

A standard drink means:



Beer
341 ml (12 oz) of beer
5% alcohol

or



Cooler, cider, ready-to-drink
341 ml (12 oz) of drinks
5% alcohol

or



Wine
142 ml (5 oz) of wine
12% alcohol

or



Spirits
(whisky, vodka, gin, etc.)
43 ml (1.5 oz) of spirits
40% alcohol

To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol, it is recommended that people living in Canada consider reducing their alcohol use.

Alcohol Consumption Per Week

<p>0 drinks per week Not drinking has benefits, such as better health and better sleep.</p>	No risk	0
<p>1 to 2 standard drinks per week You will likely avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself and others.</p>	Low risk	1 2
<p>3 to 6 standard drinks per week Your risk of developing several different types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer, increases.</p>	Moderate risk	3 4 5 6
<p>7 or more standard drinks per week Your risk of heart disease or stroke increases.</p> <p>Each additional standard drink Radically increases the risk of these alcohol-related consequences.</p>	Increasingly high risk	7 8 + ++



Alcohol Consumption Per Day

If you are going to drink, don't exceed 2 drinks on any day. Drinking less benefits you and others. It reduces your risk of injury and violence, and many health problems that can shorten life.



Pregnant, Trying to Get Pregnant or Breastfeeding

During pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant, there is no known safe amount of alcohol use. When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest.



Sex and Gender

Health risks increase more quickly at 7 or more standard drinks per week for females. Overall, far more injuries, violence and deaths result from men's drinking.



The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction was commissioned by Health Canada to produce Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health. This document is a summary for the public of the new guidance. For more information, please visit [www.ccsa.ca](#).

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Healthy Eating During Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding

There is no special diet needed for lactating parents. If you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding, the amount of food you need may or may not change compared to your needs during pregnancy. Trust your intuition: eat when you are hungry and this will guide what and how much you eat. A little extra food each day, such as an additional snack, may help to meet your needs for energy and nutrients during lactation.

Try:

- ✓ eating a variety of foods every day (see [Canada's food guide](#))
- ✓ ensuring you get key nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin B12, vitamin D, omega-3 and calcium (see *Baby's Best Chance* book Key Nutrients During Pregnancy)
- ✓ eating more if you're hungrier than usual
- ✓ drinking water as your main drink choice
- ✓ continuing to take a multivitamin supplement with folic acid



KEY TAKEAWAY

When you breastfeed or chestfeed, your diet doesn't have to be perfect – just do the best you can. Supports are available to address different barriers accessing healthy foods. Visit healthlinkbc.ca or call 8-1-1 to learn more about resources available to you.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many of the foods you may have avoided during pregnancy are no longer a safety concern while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. Unpasteurized cheeses and sushi, for example, are fine while breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Some foods and beverages, though, are still best avoided while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. These include:

- ✗ fish high in mercury
- ✗ foods and drinks high in caffeine
- ✗ alcohol
- ✗ herbal teas, other than those safe during pregnancy (Visit canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/natural-non-prescription.html)



When Your Toddler Stops Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding

Breastfeeding or chestfeeding is recommended for up to 2 years – or longer if you and your child want to continue. Your toddler may naturally stop breastfeeding or chestfeeding (“child-led”), or you may decide to wean them (“parent-led”). In either case, weaning can be emotional for parent and child. Do what works best for you both.

If you choose parent-led weaning:

- ✓ **Start when no other major changes are happening in your family**, like going back to work or school. This way, you won’t add stress to an already difficult situation.
- ✓ **Offer extra comfort and cuddles** to ensure that your toddler is getting as much attention and love as before.
- ✓ **Go slowly.** Weaning gradually – over weeks, months or even longer – allows your milk to reduce slowly, helping you avoid sore breasts or a sore chest. It also lets you and your toddler adjust emotionally, helping you get used to new routines and find new ways of feeling close.
- ✓ **Don’t offer, but don’t refuse.** Keep your toddler busy with other activities. Don’t sit in your usual breastfeeding or chestfeeding spots. But when your toddler does ask to breastfeed or chestfeed, take the time to enjoy it together.

- 1. To start**, replace one of your daily feedings with expressed milk offered in an open cup. If you are not providing your own milk, you can use infant formula. Before 9 months, use store-bought infant formula; after 9 months, you can switch to whole (3.25%) cow’s milk. If they are older than 6 months, you can also replace a feeding with solid food.
- 2. Then, every 5 to 7 days** (or once you and your child are comfortable), replace another feed. Save the feeding that provides the most comfort (usually the first one in the morning or the one at bedtime) for last.
- 3. Finally**, replace the last remaining breastfeeding or chestfeeding.



DID YOU KNOW?

As children learn to feed themselves solid foods, they naturally begin to wean themselves at their own pace.



KEY TAKEAWAY

If it’s not going smoothly or if your child is sick and needs the comfort of breastfeeding or chestfeeding, take a break from weaning.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

When your toddler is down to one breastfeeding or chestfeeding per day, take over that last feeding time. Your child may find it easier to be fed a cup of milk by the non-breastfeeding/chestfeeding parent than by the parent who has been breastfeeding or chestfeeding them.

Supplementing for 6- to 9-Month-Olds

Some families may need or want to supplement their breastfed or chestfed 6- to 9-month-old for medical reasons, while others may choose to supplement for personal reasons. If you use infant formula to feed your baby, it is important to have the information you need to feel comfortable with your plan and feed your baby safely.

What is supplementing?

Giving your 6- to 9-month-old your own expressed milk, donated human milk or baby formula, in addition to breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Supplementing Options

Recommended supplements in order of what to try first, if available:

1st choice: Your own milk, freshly hand-expressed or pumped

2nd choice: Your own frozen milk, thawed just before using

3rd choice: Pasteurized donor milk from a certified human milk bank

4th choice: Store-bought infant formula that is cow's milk-based (see [Formula Feeding for 6- to 9-Month-Olds](#))

Your own milk is best

Your own milk – fresh or frozen (when fresh isn't available) – is the best way to feed your 6- to 9-month-old.

If you need to give your 6- to 9-month-old something other than your own milk

Option 1 – Pasteurized donor human milk from a certified human milk bank

Because certified milk banks have a small supply of milk, it's usually only given by prescription to premature, very ill or high-risk babies.

What is pasteurized donor human milk?

Human milk that has been donated to a certified human milk bank. Donors are carefully screened to make sure they're healthy and their milk is safe. The milk is pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria and viruses.

Option 2 – Store-bought infant formula

If you're not able to get milk from a certified human milk bank, the next best choice is cow's milk-based store-bought infant formula. This can provide your 6- to 9-month-old with complete nutrition. Formula is available in 3 types: ready-to-feed liquid, concentrated liquid and powdered.

If your 6- to 9-month-old has a weakened immune system, use liquid formula – either ready-to-feed or concentrate. Powdered formula isn't sterile and shouldn't be used for children with weakened immune systems who get sick more easily. Specialized formulas should only be used if recommended by your health care provider.

Before Supplementing

Follow your child's hunger and fullness cues, and talk with your health care provider before giving your 6- to 9-month-old anything other than your own milk. This will help you get all the information you need to feed them safely.

Supplementing with other milk or formula when it's not needed can decrease your milk supply, cause engorgement and make breastfeeding or chestfeeding more difficult. It can also affect your child's health.

Sometimes it's medically necessary or chosen by parents to supplement their 6- to 9-month-old's diet for extra food and energy. The most important thing is that your child gets enough food and that they're fed safely – whether with human milk, formula or both.



DANGER

To help ensure your child grows well and stays healthy, always follow the directions on the label when making and storing formula.

If you supplement:

- Give your child as much of your own milk as you can.
- Get support from your health care provider or a lactation consultant to keep up your own milk supply. This may allow you to return fully to breastfeeding or chestfeeding in the future.
- Use a spoon or a small cup without a lid, not a bottle. Or use a specialized feeding device if recommended by your health care professional.



KEY TAKEAWAY

If you're thinking about supplementing, make sure you have all the information you need to make an informed decision. Talk it over with your health care provider or public health nurse, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 for advice.

Donating your extra milk to the BC Women's Provincial Milk Bank

If you have extra milk you'd like to donate, talk to your health care provider or midwife, visit bcwomensmilkbank.ca or call 604-875-3743.

What About Sharing Milk Informally With Other Parents?

What is informal ("peer-to-peer") human milk sharing?

Sharing unscreened, unpasteurized human milk with friends, family members, or through local or online milk-sharing groups.

Parents who want to give their child human milk but aren't able to produce enough themselves sometimes consider informal milk sharing. But before giving your child milk from an informal donor, talk with your health care provider about the risks and benefits.



BE AWARE

Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Human Milk Banking Association of North America do not recommend sharing human milk with friends, family or milk-sharing groups. Milk shared informally is not tested or pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria and viruses.

What are the risks?

Because milk shared informally isn't screened or pasteurized, it may carry risks:

- Viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C can be passed to your child. Donors may not even know that they carry certain viruses and bacteria.
- If donors smoke, drink alcohol, use cannabis, or take prescription or over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements or non-prescription opioids and stimulants, harmful substances can pass into the milk and hurt your child.
- If the milk isn't collected, stored and transported safely, bacteria can grow and make your child sick.
- Unscreened donor milk may be mixed with water, cow's milk, or something else that you don't know about.

Lowering the risks

If you're considering informal milk sharing, lower the risk by:

- not buying milk online
- only using the milk of a close family member or friend
- finding out all you can about your donor's health and lifestyle
- ensuring that the donor has recently tested negative for Hepatitis B and C, HIV, Human T-lymphotropic virus and syphilis, and that they aren't at ongoing risk for exposure
- confirming that the donor doesn't smoke, drink alcohol, or use cannabis or non-prescription opioids and stimulants drugs
- ensuring that the donor doesn't take any medications or supplements, including herbs
- checking that the donor is in good overall health, and not using their milk when they're sick
- limiting the number of donors you use
- having ongoing, face-to-face contact with your donor
- ensuring that the milk is handled, stored and sent to you as safely as possible



DID YOU KNOW?

In-home heat treatment of human milk ("flash heating") has not been proven to remove dangerous bacteria and viruses that could make your child sick.

Formula Feeding for 6- to 9-Month-Olds

Deciding how to feed your 6- to 9-month-old isn't always easy. Breastfeeding or chestfeeding is best for your child's growth and development. But sometimes, for medical or personal reasons, store-bought infant formula is used instead of, or in addition to, human milk.

Make an Informed Choice

Make sure you have all the information you need to make an informed choice. Contact your health care provider or public health nurse, or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. They can talk with you about the benefits, risks and costs of each option. And if you decide to use formula, they can help you choose the type that's best for your child.



DID YOU KNOW?

The World Health Organization, Health Canada, Dietitians of Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the B.C. Ministry of Health all recommend that babies be fed only human milk for the first 6 months. After your baby is eating solid family foods, human milk remains an important source of nutrition. If possible, continue to breastfeed or chestfeed until your child is 2 years or older.

If You Use Formula

Breastfeed or chestfeed, too, if you can

Give your child human milk whenever possible. If you feed your child formula, try to give it *in addition* to your own milk (see [Supplementing for 6- to 9-Month-Olds](#)).

If you're not currently breastfeeding or chestfeeding but hope to breastfeed or chestfeed your child in the future, talk with your health care provider about how to keep up your milk supply. Or find a lactation coach through the British Columbia Lactation Consultants Association (bclca.ca).

Use formula safely

Follow the directions on the formula label to prepare it correctly. Safe preparation and storage of formula are important for your baby's health. If you have questions about safely preparing and storing formula, contact your health care provider or public health nurse. You can also call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or visit www.healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/hfile69b_0.pdf for more information.

Health Canada inspects all store-bought infant formulas for safety and nutrition. But it's possible for formula to come into contact with bacteria or to be missing an ingredient. To check for product recalls, visit recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en.



DANGER

If you use infant formula, choose only store-bought cow's milk-based varieties (or store-bought soy-based formula, if your child can't have cow's milk). Other beverages don't provide the nutrition your 6- to 9-month-old needs.

Never use these in place of infant formula for your 6- to 9-month-old:

- ✗ evaporated or condensed milk
- ✗ regular cow's milk, goat's milk or other animal milks (okay after 9 to 12 months only)
- ✗ nut "milks," like almond, cashew and coconut drinks
- ✗ other "milks," like rice, oat, potato, soy and hemp drinks
- ✗ homemade formula



BE AWARE

Using a home machine to prepare infant formula can be unsafe. The machine may not heat the water enough to kill any bacteria the formula might contain, and it may not dispense the right amount of powder.

The safest way to make powdered formula is to use boiled water cooled to 70°C.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Although human milk is best for your 6- to 9-month-old, sometimes formula is necessary. If you need or want to use formula but feel uncomfortable or guilty about doing so, talk with your health care provider. And remember that no matter how you feed your child, you can use feeding times to build a close and loving bond.

Ensure your water is safe for making formula

In most B.C. communities, drinking water is typically treated at a water treatment plant so that it is safe to drink at the tap. If you have your own water source (i.e. a private well) you should test your drinking water regularly. For more information on well water testing, see: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/well-water-testing.

Some buildings have plumbing that contains lead. In some situations, lead can leach from plumbing and into drinking water at the tap which can cause a health impact for infants and children. For more information on lead in drinking water, see: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/lead-drinking-water

Be sure that your water is safe before using it to make infant formula. When preparing formula, do not use:

- ✗ water from the hot side of the tap
- ✗ discoloured water that hasn't been tested
- ✗ specialty nursery or baby waters
- ✗ carbonated or flavoured waters
- ✗ water known to contain high levels of nitrate, fluoride, sodium, lead, manganese or bluegreen algae (cyanobacteria)

If you don't have access to safe water or are unsure of whether it is safe, use ready-to-feed liquid formula or make powdered formula using bottled water.

If you have questions or concerns about your drinking water contact your local health unit, health authority or your First Nations government office. Visit gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/health-authority-contacts



BE AWARE

Boiling won't get rid of dangerous chemicals in water, and may instead make them more concentrated.



Cleaning and Disinfecting Feeding Equipment

Keeping Everything Clean

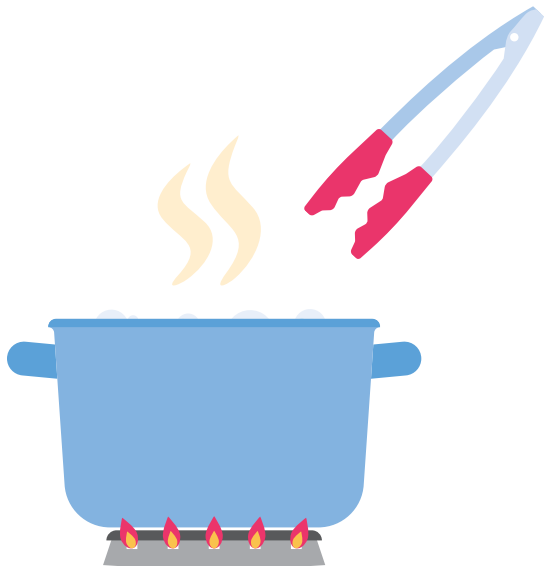
All equipment you use to feed your child needs to be kept clean.

Breast or chest pumps should be cleaned according to the manufacturer's instructions. Everything else – including items you use to make formula, artificial nipples, rings, caps, discs, measuring cups, can openers, storage containers and tongs – can be cleaned and disinfected simply in your kitchen.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dishwashers aren't recommended for disinfecting feeding equipment.



HOW TO

Clean and disinfect feeding equipment

First – clean everything:

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.
2. Wash the sink with a clean dishcloth, soap and warm water.
3. Disinfect the counter by mixing 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of bleach with 2 cups (500 ml) of water in a labelled spray bottle. Spray the counter and wipe it with a clean towel.
4. Fill the sink with hot, soapy water.
5. Wash all infant feeding equipment, including tongs.
6. Scrub the inside of containers and artificial nipples with a clean bottle brush.
7. Rinse everything with hot water and set it on a clean towel.

Then – disinfect everything:

1. Fill a large pot with water. Add the clean items. Make sure everything is covered with water and that there are no air pockets.
2. Bring the water to a boil. Let it boil uncovered for 2 minutes.
3. Take out the tongs. Once cool, use them to remove the other items.
4. Set everything on a clean towel to air dry.
5. Once dry, use the items right away. Or store them in a clean plastic bag or on a clean, dry towel covered with another clean towel.

If you use a store-bought disinfectant or sterilizer, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Introducing Solid Foods

Your toddler may be ready for solid foods when all of these are true:

- ✓ they're about 6 months old
- ✓ they can sit and hold their head up
- ✓ they can turn their head away to show you that they're full
- ✓ they try to pick up food and put it in their mouth



HOW TO Introduce solid food

1. Pick a time when your toddler is wide awake and has an appetite but isn't too hungry. Solids can be offered before or after breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
2. Sit them up in a feeding chair, facing you.
3. Eat with your toddler, so they can learn by watching you.
4. Serve your toddler the same foods as the rest of the family (of an appropriate texture), without added sugar or salt.



DID YOU KNOW?

Gagging is normal when learning to eat. When food slips to the back of your toddler's tongue before they're ready to swallow, they'll gag to prevent choking (see [Reducing Choking Hazards](#)). When this happens, stay calm and reassure them. If you panic, they may become afraid to try new foods.

First Foods

Your baby's first foods should be rich in iron – like meat, fish, chicken, eggs, lentils, tofu and iron-fortified baby cereal. Introduce these alongside other family foods, like grains, vegetables and fruit.

Meat, fish or shellfish will be easier for your toddler to eat if it's moist and in tiny pieces. Try:

- mixing small bits with water, human milk, mashed vegetables or gravy to make an even texture
- braising and stewing to keep meats soft enough for your toddler to chew, or shred it up or serve it ground
- using nutrient-rich dark meat rather than white meat chicken

Be sure to take out any bones and shells from fish.

Fully cook pork to an inside temperature of 71°C; ground beef, lamb and veal to 71°C; and game meats to 74°C. Well-done pieces and whole cuts of beef, lamb and veal should be cooked to 77°C. Eggs should be cooked until the yolks are hard (74°C). For poultry and game birds, cook to 74°C for parts and ground meat, and 82°C for whole birds. Fish should be cooked to 70°C (fully cooked fish should flake with a fork). Oysters should be cooked to 90°C, but other shellfish can be cooked to 71°C.

See [Understanding Food Allergies](#) to learn more about the introduction of solid foods and food allergies.



HOW TO

Keep homemade baby food safe

- Before and after food preparation, wash counters and utensils with soap and water. Disinfect surfaces and equipment by using 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bleach mixed with 3 cups (750 ml) water. This is especially important after handling and preparing raw meat and fish.
- Throw out worn cutting boards, which can hide germs.
- Put leftovers in the fridge and use within 2 days. Or freeze them and use within 2 months.



HOW TO

Use the microwave to safely reheat baby food

- Stir at least once halfway through to ensure even heating.
- Taste the food to ensure it's not too hot before giving it to your child.
- Don't use the microwave to heat bottles. Warm them in hot water instead.
- Only use plastic containers or plastic wrap labelled "microwave safe."
- Don't use damaged, stained or smelly containers.
- Microwaving should only be used for reheating cooked food, not cooking raw food.

Drinking From a Cup

Homemade Baby Food

Your toddler can eat the same foods your family normally eats. Soft foods may be mashed, ground, minced or pureed. Or try finger foods like small pieces of well-cooked vegetables, soft fruits without skins, cooked pasta or grated cheese.

Once your child can sit and hold their head up – usually at about 6 months – they'll likely be ready to start learning to drink from an open cup between breastfeedings or chestfeedings.

Choose a small cup that fits your child's hands and mouth. Start by offering a little bit of water. Help them hold the cup and bring it to their mouth. And be prepared for spills.

Why Not Sip Cups?

Sip cups don't help your toddler learn to drink from a cup because the valve to stop spills makes them suck rather than sip.

Why Not Bottles?

If you're supplementing with expressed human milk or infant formula, your toddler can use a small open cup instead of a bottle. Toddlers can use a bottle until about 12 months. After 12 months, bottles aren't necessary. Using a bottle to drink anything other than water can lead to tooth decay (see [Looking After Your Toddler's Teeth](#)).



TRY THIS

If your child is used to drinking milk from a bottle, try slowly decreasing the amount of milk you put in each time. If they want more to drink, offer a small amount of water in a separate bottle. Use an open cup with meals and snacks.

Making the Switch From Bottle to Cup

If your child is used to using a bottle, start making the switch to an open cup by about 12 months. They might not use bottles anymore by 18 months.



Feeding by Age

6 to 9 Months

Your baby may:

- continue to breastfeed or chestfeed
- pick up food between their fingers and palms and put it in their mouth
- bite off food
- close their lips around a cup held for them
- chew by munching up and down, and by moving food from front to back and to the sides of their mouth



DID YOU KNOW?

Human milk is still your child's most important drink.

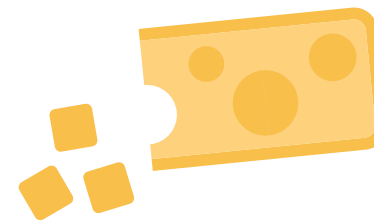


TRY THIS

Instead of jarred baby food, try mashing soft and cooked family foods with a fork. Add water or human milk to moisten, and try mixing different foods together.

Feeding tips:

- ✓ At about 6 months, begin introducing finger foods and foods that are soft, lumpy, mashed, ground, pureed, finely minced and tender-cooked.
- ✓ Start with iron-rich foods, offering them 2 or more times a day. Then add more variety.
- ✓ Feed solid foods before or after breastfeeding or chestfeeding, depending on what works best. This may change over time.
- ✓ Offer family foods made with little or no added salt or sugar.
- ✓ Start with small amounts and offer more based on their hunger and fullness cues.
- ✓ Give sips of clean water from an open cup, but don't let them fill up on water.
- ✓ Give your child lots of practice feeding themselves.
- ✓ Sit down and eat together as often as possible.
- ✓ By the time your baby is 9 months old, offer 2 to 3 meals and 1 to 2 snacks a day, in addition to human milk.
- ✓ Introduce common allergens one at a time. These include milk and milk products, eggs, thinly spread peanut butter and tree-nut butters, soy, seafood (fish, shellfish), wheat and sesame. (See [Understanding Food Allergies](#))
- ✓ Be aware of choking hazards. (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ Don't give your child honey or food made with honey, even if it's cooked or pasteurized. (See [Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks](#))
- ✗ Avoid sugary drinks, including 100% fruit juice.



9 to 12 Months

Your baby may:

- bite and chew up and down
- use their thumb and fingers to pick up small pieces of food
- hold a cup in 2 hands
- try to use a spoon
- drop things from their feeding chair
- want to sit at the family table and try to feed themselves

Feeding tips:

- ✓ Offer 3 meals and 1 or 2 sit-down snacks at regular times each day.
- ✓ Sit and eat with your toddler.
- ✓ Offer solid foods before or after you breastfeed or chestfeed, whichever works better. This may change over time.
- ✓ Offer iron-rich foods 2 or more times a day.
- ✓ Keep offering new family foods with different textures, like chopped, mashed or shredded.
- ✓ Offer family foods that are made without added sugar or salt.
- ✓ Give them small amounts of clean water in an open cup.
- ✓ Encourage them to feed themselves.
- ✓ Let your toddler decide how much to eat.
- ✓ Be aware of choking hazards. (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ Don't give your child honey or food made with honey, even if it's cooked or pasteurized. (See [Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks](#))

12 to 24 Months

Your toddler may:

- feed themselves – messily – with their fingers or a spoon
- bite and chew food more easily
- eat a variety of foods with different textures
- eat very little or a lot, depending on the day
- play with their food
- need to be offered a new food many times before trying it
- eat most foods without coughing or gagging

What are family foods?

Foods that your whole family normally eats at mealtime. Giving your toddler foods from the family table rather than store-bought baby food provides them with a wider range of textures, tastes and nutrients.

Feeding tips:

- ✓ Offer 3 meals and 2 or 3 sit-down snacks at regular times each day.
- ✓ Include your toddler in regular family meals.
- ✓ Give them iron-rich foods 2 or more times a day.



BRAIN BUILDER

Include your toddler at the family table and eat together as often as possible. Sharing meals will help them learn language and social skills and get used to family foods. Use the time to talk to them about what they see, taste and feel.

- ✓ Offer a variety of food textures, including finger foods.
- ✓ Give them family foods made with little or no added salt or sugar.
- ✓ Offer new foods alongside other foods they like.
- ✓ Continue to offer foods your toddler rejects, but don't pressure them.
- ✓ Give them the same foods prepared in different ways.
- ✓ Include healthy higher-fat foods like salmon, avocado, cheese and nut butters.
- ✓ Give them water to drink between meals and snacks.
- ✓ Give your child enough time to eat.
- ✓ Let your toddler decide how much to eat.
- ✓ Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed.
- ✓ Be aware of choking hazards. (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ Limit foods high in salt and sugar like chips, candy and cookies.
- ✗ Limit sugary drinks like fruit juice, pop, sports drinks, energy drinks and fruit-flavoured beverages.
- ✗ Avoid all foods and drinks with caffeine or artificial sweeteners.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Help your toddler get enough iron by offering iron-rich foods 2 or more times a day at meals or snacks. Include meat, poultry, fish, iron-fortified infant cereals, cooked eggs and tofu, and mashed, cooked beans and other legumes.

24 to 36 Months

Your toddler may:

- hold a cup (but spill a lot)
- feed themselves cut-up family foods
- eat very little or a lot, depending on the day
- show strong food likes and dislikes
- need to be offered a new food many times before trying it

Feeding tips:

- ✓ Offer 3 meals and 2 or 3 sit-down snacks at regular times each day.
- ✓ Include your toddler in regular family meals, and eat together as often as possible.
- ✓ Offer a variety of foods from [Canada's food guide](#).
- ✓ Plain, lower fat cow's milk (1% or 2%) or plain, fortified soy beverage can begin to replace whole (3.25%) cow's milk.
- ✓ Include foods high in energy and healthy fats, like avocado, fatty fish, thinly spread nut and seed butters and vegetable oils.
- ✓ Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed for as long as you and your child want.
- ✓ Offer water to drink between meals and snacks.
- ✓ Let your toddler decide how much to eat.
- ✓ Be aware of choking hazards. (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ Limit foods high in salt and sugar like chips, candy and cookies.
- ✗ Limit sugary drinks like fruit juice, pop, sports drinks, energy drinks and fruit-flavoured beverages.
- ✗ Avoid all foods and drinks with caffeine or artificial sweeteners.

Sample 1-day menu for a 24- to 36-month-old

Breakfast:

- oatmeal with sliced blueberries or banana
- plain cow's milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%) or plain fortified soy beverage

Snack 1:

- banana bread thinly spread with peanut or nut butter
- water

Lunch:

- salmon or egg salad sandwich on whole-wheat bread
- finely chopped or very thinly sliced red peppers and cucumbers
- plain cow's milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%) or plain fortified soy beverage
- canned peaches

Snack 2:

- grated cheese
- finely chopped or very thinly sliced apples
- water

Dinner:

- whole-wheat spaghetti with tomato and meat or lentil sauce
- bite-sized pieces of cooked carrot and broccoli florets
- plain cow's milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%) or plain fortified soy beverage



DID YOU KNOW?

Fruit juice is a sugary drink, and children don't need it. If you offer it, limit it to no more than 125 ml (½ cup) a day, and serve it at meal or snack time in an open cup.



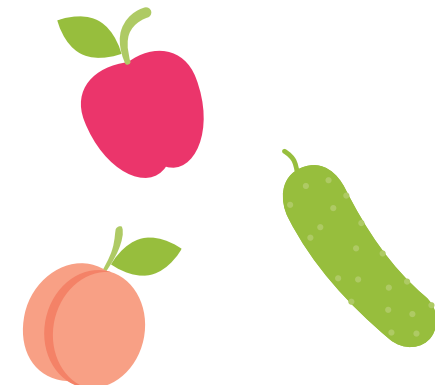
FAMILY STORY

I was amazed at how much better my son ate when we sat together and had the same foods. I made meals we could both eat and cut his up into small pieces he could pick up. It was so cute watching him study – and copy – how I ate.



TRY THIS

Start each feeding with a small amount of food. Give your toddler more based on their hunger and fullness cues (see [Eating Well](#)). It's normal for their appetite to change from day to day. Trust that they'll eat the amount they need.



Daily Food Suggestions

Offer your toddler a variety of healthy family foods plus human milk every day. This table is based on the groupings in [Canada's food guide](#).

	Meals and Snacks per day	Vegetables and Fruit	Whole Grain Foods	Protein Foods
6 to 9 months	<p>2-3 solid food feedings and 1-2 snacks.</p> <p>Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed.</p> <p>If your child isn't breastfeeding or chestfeeding, give store-bought infant formula.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soft-cooked vegetables soft fruits like banana and kiwi canned fruit peeled, pitted and cooked hard fruits like apple and pear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iron-fortified infant cereal cooked rice and pasta oat ring cereal crackers, roti, pita 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tender-cooked, finely minced or shredded pieces of meat, poultry, fish or shellfish mashed or diced cooked egg, tofu or legumes peanut butter or nut butter spread thinly on toast or crackers yogurt, cottage cheese, grated cheese
9 to 12 months	<p>3 solid food feedings and 1-2 snacks.</p> <p>Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed.</p> <p>If your child isn't breastfeeding or chestfeeding, you can start to offer small amounts of whole (3.25%) cow's milk. (See Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> soft-cooked vegetables grated raw vegetables cooked or grated hard fruits soft fruits like banana and kiwi canned fruit peeled, pitted and cooked hard fruits like apple and pear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iron-fortified infant cereal whole grain toast, pasta, rice, crackers small pieces of bannock, tortillas, roti and other breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small, tender-cooked pieces of meat, poultry, fish or shellfish mashed or diced cooked egg, tofu, legumes peanut butter or nut butter spread thinly on toast or crackers yogurt, cottage cheese, grated cheese, whole (3.25%) cow's milk
12 to 24 months	<p>3 meals and 2-3 snacks.</p> <p>Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed.</p> <p>If your toddler isn't breastfeeding or chestfeeding, offer 2 cups (500 ml) whole (3.25%) cow's milk or soy-based infant formula with meals. (See Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small pieces of soft fruits and vegetables cooked or grated vegetables cooked or grated hard fruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whole grain hot and cold cereal brown rice, whole grain pasta, congee whole grain crackers and toast whole grain bannock, tortillas, roti and other breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tender-cooked ground, chopped or cubed lean meat, poultry, fish or shellfish mashed legumes whole cooked egg cooked tofu peanut butter or nut butter spread thinly on toast or crackers yogurt, cottage cheese, grated cheese, whole (3.25%) cow's milk or soy-based infant formula
24 to 36 months	<p>3 meals and 2-3 snacks.</p> <p>Continue to breastfeed or chestfeed if you wish.</p> <p>If your child isn't breastfeeding or chestfeeding, offer 2 cups (500 ml) plain cow's milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%) or plain fortified soy beverage each day with meals. (See Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small pieces of soft fruits and vegetables cooked or grated vegetables cooked or grated hard fruits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whole grain hot and cold cereal brown rice, whole grain pasta, congee whole grain crackers and toast whole grain bannock, tortillas, roti and other breads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tender-cooked ground, chopped or cubed lean meat, poultry, fish or shellfish mashed legumes whole cooked egg cooked tofu peanut butter or nut butter spread thinly on toast or crackers yogurt, cottage cheese, grated cheese, plain cow's milk (1%, 2% or 3.25%), or plain fortified soy beverage

Healthy Meal and Snack Ideas

What is Canada's food guide?

Information to help you plan nutritious meals and snacks. Find it in the [appendix](#).



TRY THIS

Offer your toddler the same healthy foods that the rest of the family enjoys. Eat vegetables, fruit, whole grains and protein foods regularly. Offer foods with different flavours and textures.

- ✓ baked beans on whole grain toast
- ✓ carrot or pumpkin bread with cream cheese
- ✓ chili, dahl or lentils with rice and vegetables
- ✓ congee or rice porridge with small pieces of meat
- ✓ dessert tofu with fresh fruit
- ✓ fish in a whole wheat bun or bannock
- ✓ soft fresh fruit in pieces – with seeds and tough skins removed – and yogurt for dipping
- ✓ grated cheese with whole grain crackers
- ✓ macaroni and cheese
- ✓ meatballs with pasta
- ✓ milk or yogurt blended with fruit
- ✓ oatmeal or cream of wheat with milk
- ✓ pancakes or waffles with applesauce
- ✓ rice or pasta with tender-cooked meat and small bits of vegetables

- ✓ rice pudding made with milk
- ✓ scrambled eggs or mini omelette made with diced vegetables
- ✓ small muffin thinly spread with peanut or nut butter
- ✓ soft tortillas filled with beans or ground meat
- ✓ sandwich triangles made with egg, canned tuna or salmon, or easy-to-chew meat
- ✓ fish chowder and strips of toast
- ✓ spaghetti with tomato or meat sauce
- ✓ vegetable, split pea or bean soup with whole-wheat crackers, bannock or roti
- ✓ vegetables (cooked and cooled) with yogurt dip, hummus or dahl
- ✓ whole grain cold cereal with milk and fruit pieces or berries
- ✓ whole grain crackers or rice cakes with cottage cheese or mashed avocado
- ✓ whole-wheat pita or roti with hummus or dahl
- ✓ yogurt with pieces of soft fruit or applesauce
- ✓ yogurt with crackers or roti



Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks

Drinks

Water

Water is the best drink for your child, but it shouldn't replace human milk or infant formula for the first 12 months.

Starting at 6 months, give your child small amounts of water in an open cup. Offer it between meals and breastfeedings or chestfeedings so they learn to enjoy water while still getting the human milk or formula they need.

- ✓ If your home was built before 1989, you may have lead pipes. Flush them each morning by running your water for 1 to 5 minutes or until it turns cold.
- ✓ If you have your own private water supply, have your water tested according to provincial guidelines. Learn more at healthlinkbc.ca.
- ✓ Always follow "boil water" advisories in your area.



HOW TO Check drinking-water advisories online

- For provincial advisories, visit gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-quality/drinking-water-quality/notices-boil-water-advisories.
- For First Nations Health Authority advisories, visit fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/drinking-water-advisories.

Milk

Between 9 and 12 months, you can start offering your baby pasteurized whole (3.25%) cow's milk or fortified goat's milk, as long as they also eat a variety of iron-rich foods like meat, fish, poultry, eggs, tofu, iron-fortified cereals, beans, peas and lentils. Offer them 2 cups (500 ml) of milk every day if they no longer breastfeed or chestfeed.

At 24 months, you might choose to switch to lower-fat cow's milk (1% or 2%). If your child is over 24 months and doesn't drink cow's milk or fortified goat's milk, offer them unsweetened soy beverage fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

- ✓ Limit milk to no more than 3 cups (750 ml) per day, so your toddler has room for other healthy foods.
- ✗ Avoid letting your toddler sip milk between meals or snacks, which can lead to tooth decay.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your toddler can continue to breastfeed or chestfeed or drink expressed human milk until they're 24 months or older.



TRY THIS

With meals, offer milk. Between meals, offer water. And continue to breastfeed or chestfeed for as long as you choose.

Fruit Juice

Sugary drinks like 100% fruit juice are not recommended for infants or toddlers. Avoid offering juice to your toddler but if you do:

- ✓ limit to ½ cup (125 ml) a day
- ✓ serve only at meal or snack time and in an open cup
- ✗ avoid serving fruit juice in a bottle which can cause tooth decay

Drinks to avoid

- ✗ **Sugary drinks** like fruit juice, fruit and fruit-flavoured drinks made from powders or crystals, pop, sports drinks, and slush drinks. These have too much sugar and not enough of the nutrients toddlers need.
- ✗ **Drinks with caffeine** like soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, coffee, coffee-slush drinks, tea and hot chocolate. These can make your toddler excited and anxious and make sleep more difficult.
- ✗ **Unpasteurized drinks**, including unpasteurized cow's milk, goat's milk, fruit juice and cider may contain dangerous bacteria.
- ✗ **Toddler nutritional supplement drinks** aren't needed.
- ✗ **Drinks containing sugar substitutes** (artificial sweeteners) offer no nutritional value.

If you're concerned about your child's food intake or growth, talk with your health care provider.



DID YOU KNOW?

Other than those made with soy, plant-based drinks – like rice, almond, cashew and oat milks – don't have enough energy or protein for your growing toddler. Don't let these drinks replace human milk, cow's milk or formula, and don't offer them until your child is at least 2 and getting plenty of nutrition from their diet.

Foods

Vegetables and fruit

All vegetables and fruit – fresh, frozen, canned and dried – are healthy choices when they're prepared and stored safely.

Meat, fish, poultry, seafood and eggs

Reduce the risk of food poisoning by fully cooking all pork to an inside temperature of 71°C; ground beef, lamb and veal to 71°C; and game meats to 74°C. Well-done pieces and whole cuts of beef, lamb and veal should be cooked to 77°C. Eggs should be cooked until the yolks are hard (74°C). For poultry and game birds, cook to 74°C for parts and ground meat, and 82°C for whole birds. Fish should be cooked to 70°C (fully cooked fish should flake with a fork). Oysters should be cooked to 90°C, but other shellfish can be cooked to 71°C. Use a food thermometer to check the inside temperature of meat.

Liver

Liver offers iron and other key nutrients, but eating too much can provide too much vitamin A. Give only small amounts to your toddler.

Oysters

B.C. oysters are high in cadmium, so only give them to your toddler in limited amounts. Oysters should be full cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 90°C for a minimum of 90 seconds.

Fish

Fish provides many nutrients including protein and omega-3 fats, which are important for brain and eye development. Offer it to your child regularly. Some fish, though, is high in mercury, and should be limited.

High-mercury fish – serve in limited amounts only:

	Children 6-12 months	Children 12-36 months
Fresh and frozen tuna, shark, marlin, swordfish, escolar, orange roughy	No more than 40 grams (1¼ oz) per month	No more than 75 grams (2½ oz) per month
Canned albacore tuna	No more than 40 grams (1¼ oz) per week	No more than 75 grams (2½ oz) per week

Fish not high in mercury – serve regularly:

- all other fish sold in Canada
- canned light tuna including skipjack, yellowfin and tongol



BE AWARE

Fish high in mercury can damage your toddler's growing brain.

Foods to avoid

- ✗ **Honey** can give your baby botulism, a food-borne illness. Never give honey or foods containing honey to a child less than 1 year old.
- ✗ **Sprouts** (like alfalfa and mung bean) can contain harmful bacteria. Only give them to your toddler if they're thoroughly cooked.
- ✗ **Unpasteurized cheese and yogurt** made from raw milk may contain harmful bacteria that can cause toddlers to become very sick or even die. Check the label, and choose only those made from pasteurized milk.
- ✗ **Foods that can cause choking.** (See [Reducing Choking Hazards](#))
- ✗ **Foods containing artificial sweeteners.**

Highly processed foods

Highly processed foods – store-bought and from restaurants – are high in salt, sugar and saturated fats. Offer them less often and in smaller amounts. Try:

- stocking your kitchen with healthy snacks, like fruit, carrots and hard-boiled eggs
- planning your meals and snacks in advance
- offering water instead of sugary drinks
- limiting processed meats like ham, bacon, sausage, hot dogs and luncheon meats
- reducing store-bought cookies, cakes, candy, chocolate, chips and salty snacks
- offering fewer frozen packaged foods like pizza and pasta
- choosing healthier menu options when eating out
- making homemade versions of favourite restaurant foods like fries, chicken strips and pizza

Vitamin and Mineral Supplements

If your toddler eats a variety of foods and is growing well, they probably don't need extra vitamins or minerals, with 2 possible exceptions:

Vitamin D

Why your toddler needs it

To build healthy bones and teeth.

How much your toddler needs

600 IU each day from Vitamin D supplement as well as food sources for children 12 months and over.



BE AWARE

- Talk with your health care provider before giving your toddler any supplement.
- Only give supplements approved for your child's age.
- Don't tell your child that supplements are candy. Keep them out of their reach.
- Don't give your toddler cod liver oil or other fish liver oils, which contain dangerous amounts of vitamin A.
- To prevent choking, only give your toddler gummies or chewable tablets after crushing or chopping them into small bits.

How to get it

Some vitamin D comes from sunshine, but it's not enough for our bodies. The rest comes from eating certain foods.

- egg: 1 yolk = 32 IU
- soft margarine: 1 teaspoon (5 ml) = 35 IU
- salmon: 30 grams (1 oz) = 82 to 257 IU
- formula: 1 cup (250 ml) = 100 IU
- cow's milk (not recommended before 9 months): 1 cup (250 ml) = 100 IU

When a supplement is needed

Until they're 24 months old, give your toddler 400 IU of liquid vitamin D each day if they:

- breastfeed or chestfeed, or drink both human milk and formula
- breastfeed or chestfeed and drink some cow's milk or vitamin D-fortified goat's milk
- don't drink 2 cups of cow's milk and eat a variety of other vitamin D-rich foods every day
- drink goat's milk that isn't fortified with vitamin D

After they're 24 months old, your toddler may need a supplement to reach the recommended 600 IU per day. Give them 400 IU of vitamin D each day if they don't have 2 cups of cow's milk or fortified soy beverage and a variety of other vitamin D-rich foods every day.

Iron

Why your toddler needs it

For growth and brain development.

How much your toddler needs

2 or more servings of iron-rich foods per day.

How to get it

From foods high in iron, including meat, poultry, fish, iron-fortified infant cereals, eggs, tofu, beans and other legumes.

When a supplement may be needed

Talk with your health care provider if your toddler:

- was premature
- doesn't eat enough iron-rich foods
- drinks more than 3 cups (750 ml) of milk each day
- is vegetarian or vegan (see [Vegetarian and Vegan Toddlers](#))

For more information about vitamin and mineral supplements, call a HealthLink BC dietitian at 8-1-1.

Reducing Choking Hazards

Toddlers are at greater risk for choking because their mouth muscles can't yet control hard or slippery foods and their airways are narrow.

Reduce the risk by:

- staying with your toddler while they eat
- offering your child foods with textures that they can safely eat
- not letting them eat while they're walking or riding in a stroller or a vehicle
- knowing what to do if your child chokes



TRY THIS

Consider taking a first aid course – either online or in person. See First Aid | HealthLink BC at healthlinkbc.ca/tests-treatments-medications/first-aid



BE AWARE

Some foods are more likely to cause choking: whole nuts, whole peanuts, whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes, seeds, dried fruit, olives with pits, fish with bones, popcorn, gum, cough drops, marshmallows, hard candy, and foods on toothpicks and skewers. Don't give them to children under 4 years old.

If food is:	Like:	Make it safer by:
Round	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grapes, small tomatoes, large berries, hot dogs, sausages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chopping, dicing or cutting lengthwise
Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit with pits or seeds • Raw vegetables like carrots that can break into chunks • Whole nuts, whole peanuts, seeds • Olives with pits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing pits and seeds • Removing fruit skins • Grating or chopping finely, or cooking and slicing into thin sticks • Chopping finely
Sticky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peanut butter • Dried fruit, raisins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading thinly or mixing with human milk or water to thin it out • Cutting into small pieces
Stringy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celery, oranges, pineapple • Leafy vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing large, stringy sections and finely chopping
Chunky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lumps of peanut butter, nut butter, or seed butter on a spoon • Chunks of cheese and cheese strings • Chunks of meat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing smooth varieties and spreading thinly • Shredding or grating • Cooking until tender and cutting into small pieces
Bony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing bones • Flaking and rubbing between fingers to feel for bones

Good Mealtime Habits



DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that children who have meals with family members eat healthier and feel better about themselves.

- ✓ **Eat together.** By sitting down together, you'll build your toddler's language and social skills while encouraging healthy eating habits.
- ✓ **Have meals and snacks at about the same times each day.** Having a routine lets your toddler focus on trying a variety of foods and learning the skills to feed themselves. "Grazing" between meals and snacks can become an unhealthy habit that's also harmful to teeth.
- ✓ **Make mealtimes learning times.** Mealtimes can help your toddler develop fine motor skills (like picking up pieces of food with their fingers), language skills (like talking and listening), and social skills (like saying "please" and "thank you").
- ✓ **Reduce distractions.** Turn off the TV and keep toys and phones away from the table. This puts the focus on eating and conversation and helps you follow your toddler's fullness cues. (See Eating Well)
- ✓ **Don't worry about the mess.** Exploring food with their eyes, hands and mouth is an important – and often messy! – part of your child's learning. They may also drop food on the floor, by mistake or on purpose. Be patient, and have a wet cloth nearby for post-meal cleanup.



TRY THIS

When you'll be away from home for meals or snack times, pack nutritious foods like dry cereal, sliced boiled egg, cheese and crackers, cut-up soft fruits, and soft vegetables with hummus. You'll save money and eat better.



BRAIN BUILDER

Build language skills by turning off the TV and putting away other screens during meals. Use the time to talk as a family instead.



Picky Eating

Toddlers are “eaters in training,” so it’s normal for them to go through periods of picky eating. With time and practice, your child will learn to enjoy a variety of foods. Be patient, and encourage them by:

- ✓ letting them smell, touch and taste new foods
- ✓ offering a new food along with at least one food they already like
- ✓ letting them eat at their own pace, whether that’s fast or slow
- ✓ offering foods with a variety of textures
- ✓ eating together, and offering them foods from the family meal
- ✓ being a good role model by eating a balanced, healthy diet
- ✓ not pressuring your child, and instead trusting them to decide whether to eat and how much to eat



TRY THIS

Let your toddler pick out a new vegetable or fruit each time you visit the grocery store. Or try growing a few vegetables together. When children help choose and prepare meals, they often enjoy them more.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your toddler may need to be given a new food lots of times before they’re willing to try it. Keep offering new foods, and include ones they’ve refused in the past.



Vegetarian and Vegan Toddlers

With careful planning, feeding your toddler a vegetarian diet can be a healthy choice. Vegan diets are more restrictive so they require even greater care. Talk with a registered dietitian at HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you're thinking about feeding your child a diet free of animal products.

Help your child get the nutrition they need by:

- ✓ breastfeeding or chestfeeding up to 24 months and beyond
- ✓ introducing iron-rich foods at about 6 months (see [Introducing Solid Foods](#))
- ✓ giving them 400 IU of liquid vitamin D supplement every day (see [Vitamin and Mineral Supplements](#))
- ✓ offering iron-rich protein foods at each meal and snack, like eggs (for vegetarians), cooked tofu, soy and veggie "meats," beans, peas, lentils, nut and seed butters and iron-fortified infant cereals

See [Feeding By Age](#) for more feeding tips.



DID YOU KNOW?

Until your toddler is 2 years old or older, continue to offer human milk. If they're under 2 and not breastfed or chestfed, give them 2 cups (500 ml) of whole (3.25%) milk each day. Limit cow's milk to no more than 3 cups (750 ml) per day. If your child isn't breastfed or chestfed and doesn't drink cow's milk, try a soy-based infant formula.

Nutrients to Pay Special Attention to

If your child doesn't eat meat or other animal products, they could be missing some key nutrients. Choose alternate foods carefully to ensure they're getting all the nutrition they need.

Iron

Why it's needed: for red blood cells, growth and brain development

Where it's found: iron-fortified infant cereal, enriched cereals, quinoa, beans, peas, lentils, tofu, blackstrap molasses



DID YOU KNOW?

Talk with a dietitian. Iron is best absorbed when eaten with foods high in vitamin C like oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, sweet potato, sweet peppers and broccoli.

Omega-3 fats

Why they're needed: for brain development and vision

Where they're found: human milk, store-bought infant formula with DHA and ARA, ground flax, chia, hemp seeds, ground walnuts, omega-3 enriched eggs and soft margarine, flaxseed oil, canola oil, soybeans

Protein

Why it's needed: to build and repair cells and make enzymes and hormones

Where it's found: human milk, store-bought infant formula, tofu, lentils, beans, peas, nut and seed butters, soy based "meats," homogenized whole cow's milk (3.25%), unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months), cheese, yogurt, soy yogurt



DID YOU KNOW?

If your child is over 2 years old and doesn't drink cow's milk or vitamin D-fortified goat's milk, give them plain soy beverage fortified with calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12. Other plant-based beverages – like rice, almond and oat milk – don't have enough nutrients for toddlers. If you offer these drinks, be sure to provide plenty of other sources of energy and protein.

Fat

Why it's needed: for energy and brain and nerve function

Where it's found: human milk, store-bought infant formula, ground nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, tofu, avocado, cow's milk, vegetable oils, soft margarine

Vitamin B12

Why it's needed: for healthy nerve and blood cells and to make DNA, the genetic material in cells

Where it's found: eggs, fortified foods like veggie "meats," fortified nutritional yeast, store-bought infant formula, unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months)

Calcium

Why it's needed: to build strong bones and teeth

Where it's found: human milk, store-bought infant formula, unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months), calcium-fortified tofu, cheese, yogurt, baked beans, blackstrap molasses and smaller amounts in almond butter, sesame butter, oranges



DID YOU KNOW?

Toddlers who drink soy-based formula may need more calcium-rich foods in their diet.

Zinc

Why it's needed: to heal wounds and keep the immune system strong

Where it's found: nuts, pumpkin seeds, squash seeds, tempeh, tofu, unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months), soy based "meats," lentils, dried peas, eggs, milk, soy yogurt

For more information, talk with a registered dietitian at HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and see [Canada's food guide](#).



BRAIN BUILDER

If you're vegan, your milk may be low in vitamin B12. Help your toddler get enough of this brain-building nutrient by eating B12-fortified foods or taking a daily supplement.



Understanding Food Allergies

What is a food allergy?

The body mistaking a food as harmful.

Common Food Allergens

Foods that most commonly cause food allergy are:

- milk and milk products
- eggs
- peanuts
- tree nuts – like almonds, cashews and walnuts
- soy
- seafood – like fish, shellfish and crustaceans such as crab and lobster
- wheat
- sesame
- mustard and sulphites



DID YOU KNOW?

Food allergy and other allergic conditions – such as eczema, asthma and hay fever – tend to run in families. Talk about your family history with your health care provider to find out if your child is at risk.



TRY THIS

See Reducing Risk of Food Allergy in Your Baby at healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/age-and-stage/infants-children-and-youth/reducing-risk-food to learn more.

Introducing Common Food Allergens

To reduce the risk of a food allergy developing, introduce common food allergens when your baby has shown that they are ready for solid foods – usually around 6 months.

Start by offering them common food allergens one at a time, at separate meals. Begin with the common allergens your family eats most often. Try, for example:

- peanut and tree nut butters blended into infant cereal or spread thinly on strips of toast
- well-cooked egg or seafood
- milk products like yogurt or grated cheese

Wait until 9 to 12 months to offer whole (3.25%) milk.

If your baby has no reaction, keep offering the food allergen regularly (for example, a few times a week) to help them maintain tolerance to these foods.



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number right away if your child is showing signs of a severe allergic reaction.

Signs of Food Allergy

Feeding common allergens for the first time is safe, and rarely causes a serious reaction.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction usually appear within a few minutes of being exposed to a food, but can happen up to 2 hours later. The most common signs include:

- hives, swelling, redness or rash
- stuffy or runny nose with itchy, watery eyes
- vomiting
- coughing

If you think a food may have caused an allergic reaction, stop offering it and speak to your health care provider. You can continue to introduce other new foods, including other common food allergens.

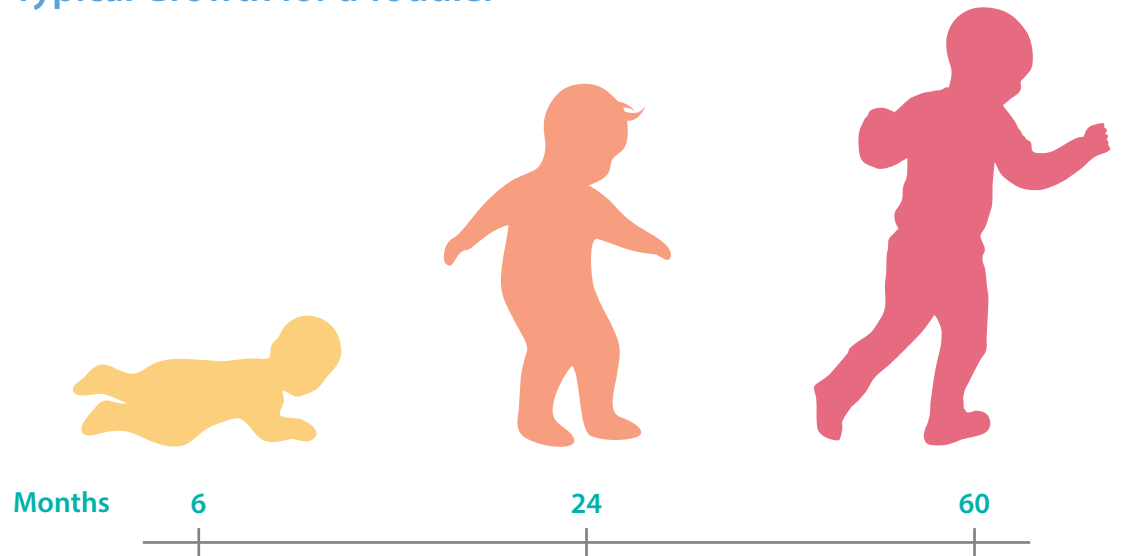
Severe symptoms require immediate attention. These include:

- swelling of the mouth, tongue or throat
- hives that are spreading
- trouble breathing, repetitive coughing or wheezing
- difficulty swallowing or a hoarse voice or cry
- pale or bluish face or lips
- faintness, weakness or passing out

Your Toddler's Growth

Children come in different shapes and sizes. Your toddler may be shorter or taller, lighter or heavier than other children their age. But changes in their height and weight will generally follow a regular pattern that's right for them.

Typical Growth for a Toddler



6 months

- weighs twice as much as at birth
- 55 to 57 cm (21½ to 22½ inches) long

12 months

- weighs 2½ to 3 times as much as at birth
- 25 cm (10 inches) longer than at birth

12 to 24 months

- gains 1½ to 2½ kg (3 to 5 lb)
- grows 7 to 12 cm (3 to 5 inches)
- has more muscle in their arms and legs
- has less fat around their face and tummy
- starts to look like a young child

24 months to 5 years

- gains 1½ to 2½ kg (3 to 5 lb) per year
- grows about 8 cm (3 inches) per year

What You Can Do

Growing too fast or too slowly can be a sign of problems with feeding, stress or health.

You can help your toddler grow well by:

- ✓ breastfeeding or chestfeeding until they're 2 years or older
- ✓ giving them opportunities to be physically active every day
- ✓ having regular family mealtimes and regular snack times instead of "grazing" all day
- ✓ providing healthy food choices, then letting your toddler decide how much they want to eat
- ✓ setting a good example by eating well and being active
- ✓ having them weighed and measured whenever they visit a health care provider
- ✗ limiting sugary drinks and other highly processed foods
- ✗ not pressuring your toddler to eat
- ✗ not using food as a reward
- ✗ limiting screen time

Physical Activity

Benefits of Being Active

Regular physical activity is key to your toddler's growth and good health. It:

- ✓ builds strong muscles and bones
- ✓ strengthens their heart and lungs
- ✓ teaches them new skills like throwing and kicking
- ✓ builds their confidence in walking, climbing and balancing
- ✓ gives them energy
- ✓ improves their posture
- ✓ lowers their stress



HOW TO Encourage physical activity

- ✓ Try different activities together.
- ✓ Create safe spaces indoors and outdoors for them to crawl, roll and explore. (See [Childproofing Your Home](#))
- ✓ Praise their efforts.
- ✓ Plan activities with other families.
- ✓ Limit their screen time. (See [Screen Time](#))
- ✓ Spend time outdoors.
- ✓ Be physically active yourself.

Activities to Try

From 6 to 12 months, play with your child on the floor several times a day. Try:

- continuing regular tummy times
- putting toys just out of your child's reach so they have to work to get them
- playing physical games, like peekaboo and patty cake
- choosing toys that get your child to move

From 12 to 36 months, help your child get at least 3 hours of various activities throughout the day. Try:

- going outside to explore
- throwing a ball
- jumping
- chasing bubbles
- using the slide, swings and climbing gear at the park
- including them in active tasks like walking to the store, cleaning the house, washing the car and gardening
- having them walk rather than ride in a stroller
- swimming and doing other activities at your recreation centre

From age 3 on, give your child at least 3 hours of activity each day. Have them spend at least 1 of the 3 hours in energetic play.



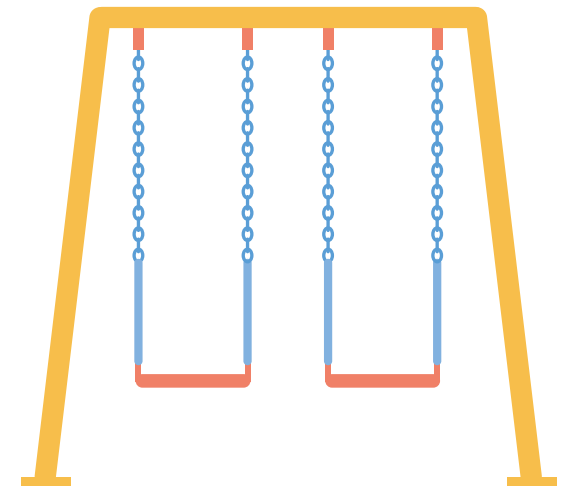
FAMILY STORY

My partner and I knew our daughter would copy what we did. So we started going for an outing every night after work. When she was small, we would put her in the stroller. As she got older, she would walk with us. It was a great time to reconnect while getting fresh air and exercise.



FAMILY STORY

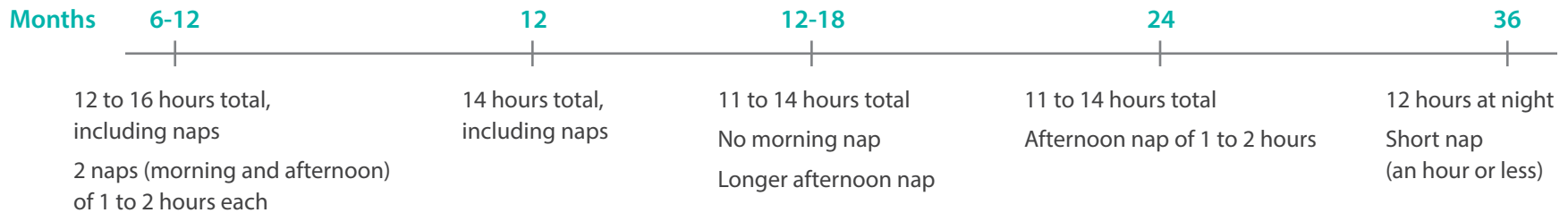
We lived in a small condo. By evening we were just too tired to take our son to the park again, but he needed more activity. So we set up a small slide in the living room. He loved it!



Sleep and Your Toddler

Healthy sleep habits are as important as healthy food when it comes to your child's development.

Typical Sleep Patterns for Babies and Toddlers



DID YOU KNOW?

Many children continue to have a morning nap (as well as an afternoon nap) until 18 months or older.



TRY THIS

If your toddler has trouble going to sleep or isn't sleeping well, keep a sleep diary. Over a couple of weeks, write down when they sleep and for how long. Note any patterns, then experiment with changes in nap times and routines. Make any changes gradually – just 5 to 10 minutes every second day.



HOW TO

Develop good sleep habits

Babies and toddlers thrive on routine – and routines around sleep are especially important.

- ✓ Follow routines in the daytime, including regular meal and snack times.
- ✓ Keep a regular night-time and nap-time sleep schedule, even on weekends.
- ✓ Ensure your child gets lots of physical activity during the day, but not right before bed.
- ✓ Set a before-bed routine including a bath, a book and a quiet cuddle of 20 minutes or less.
- ✓ Keep the sleep area quiet.
- ✗ Don't give your toddler food or drinks with caffeine, like chocolate or pop.
- ✗ Be careful about too much screen time during the day (see [Screen Time](#)), and turn off screens well before bedtime.

Falling Asleep on Their Own

Your child may have gotten used to being breastfed or chestfed or rocked to sleep when they were a baby. But by learning to fall asleep on their own, they'll be able to settle themselves when they partially wake during the night.

Try:

- ✓ feeding them earlier in the bedtime routine (about 15 minutes before putting them into bed) so they don't associate feeding with sleep
- ✓ setting a bedtime routine that includes singing a song or reading a story
- ✓ putting them into bed awake, patting them gently until they settle, then saying goodnight and leaving
- ✓ sitting in a chair close by the bed with your hand on them if they have a hard time settling, and moving the chair further away each night
- ✓ using a nightlight in the corner or having a light on just outside their room if they don't like the dark



FAMILY STORY

We started reading to our daughter right before bed when she was a baby. It helped her slow down and understand it was time to sleep. When she was a toddler, she always wanted a story, so it got her into bed. Now, at 12, she likes to read herself. But she still loves this close, quiet time with one of us.

Waking in the Night

Your child may wake up during the night if they're too hot or cold, if they're wet, hungry, teething or sick – or for no reason at all. You can help them learn to go back to sleep on their own by:

- keeping the lights off when you feed or change them during the night
- not making nighttime a time for chatting or playing
- gradually shortening any nighttime feedings so they don't fully wake up

If they cry for no particular reason, you can help them learn to settle themselves by:

1. going to them, but not picking them up
2. calmly tucking them back into bed and telling them it's time to sleep
3. leaving the room
4. repeating as needed until they fall asleep

You may choose to wait a short time – 2 or 3 minutes – after they start crying before going to them. If so, over several days you can slowly increase the amount of time you let them cry before going in. But always check on them right away if they sound very upset and may be sick or injured.



DID YOU KNOW?

If your child falls asleep somewhere other than their own bed, they're more likely to wake during the night.



TRY THIS

If you have concerns, talk with your health care provider or a public health nurse. They can screen for any issues that may make it difficult for your toddler to sleep well.



BRAIN BUILDER

Give your toddler some choices at bedtime, like which story to read or which pajamas to wear.



DANGER

If your toddler is under 12 months old, always put them to sleep on their back to lower the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Safer Cribs

Ensure:

- the crib is approved by Health Canada (ask a health care provider if you're not sure)
- the mattress is in the lowest position if your toddler is able to sit up
- there are no items they could climb on to fall out of the crib
- there are no mobiles or other hanging objects that could strangle them

See *Baby's Best Chance* for more information on safer sleep for your 6-month-old.

Safer Beds

If your toddler is trying to climb out of the crib – or once they’re almost 3 feet tall – it’s time to move them to a bed. Ensure your toddler’s bed:

- has a simple design
- has no spaces between the mattress and the headboard or walls
- has its headboard (not the side of the bed) against the wall
- is low to the floor
- has a carpet or quilt on the floor in case they fall out of bed
- has safety rails on all sides
- is the lower bunk if using a bunk bed set
- isn’t by a window, if possible, and that all windows in the room have safety locks



DANGER

Portable bed rails can trap a child. Don’t use them if your child is under 2.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you have more than one baby, it’s safest to have them in their own sleep spaces. If they share the same crib, put them head to head, not side by side.

Bedsharing

What is bedsharing?

Sleeping in the same bed with your child.

When your child is between 6 months and a year old, the safest place for them to sleep is in their own Health Canada-approved crib. But many families prefer to bedshare for cultural or personal reasons. And some find that they end up bedsharing, even if they hadn’t planned to.

Talk with your health care provider about how to balance your family’s wishes with the risks of bedsharing. And if you do choose to share a bed, do so as safely as possible. Ensure:

- Your baby is far away from pillows, blankets and duvets.
- Your baby is on their back.
- They aren’t swaddled.
- The mattress is on the floor to reduce the risk of a fall.
- The mattress is firm. (No waterbeds, pillowtops, air mattresses or feather beds.)
- The child is on the outside of the bed, not between adults.
- There’s space around the bed so the child can’t get trapped between the mattress and the wall or a side table.
- The adults in the bed both know that the child is in the bed and are comfortable with it.
- Any long hair is tied back so it can’t get wrapped around your child’s neck.
- No older children or pets are in the bed.



DANGER

Never share a bed if:

- your baby was born prematurely or weighed less than 2½ kg (5½ lb) at birth, or
- you or your partner(s):
 - smoke, or if you smoked while pregnant
 - have taken any substances that might make you sleep more heavily, like alcohol, medicine, cannabis or other drugs

Have another adult available to look after your child if you’re drinking alcohol or using any substances.

Sleep-Related Infant Death

Sleep-related infant death can happen by accident (usually when a child is smothered or suffocated) or by **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** (SIDS or “crib death”) – the unexplained death of a healthy child while sleeping. Lessen the risks by:

- putting your baby down to sleep on their back on a firm surface in their own safe sleep space
- making your home smoke-free
- keeping your child warm, but not hot
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- keeping pillows, toys, heavy blankets and pets out of your child’s bed
- carefully considering the risks of bedsharing

Learning to Use the Toilet

Is Your Toddler Ready?

Usually, children learn to use the toilet between ages 2 and 4.

Your toddler is likely ready if they:

- stay dry for a few hours at a time
- sometimes wake up dry from a nap
- can follow simple directions
- know when they're peeing or pooping
- can let you know when they need to use the toilet
- are able to pull down their pants and underwear by themselves



KEY TAKEAWAY

Rushing toilet learning can make it frustrating for you and your child. By waiting until they're ready, you'll make it easier and they'll feel more successful.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many children are scared by the flushing of a toilet, so be sensitive when you empty the potty. Toilets that flush automatically and any toilet that's unfamiliar can be scary, too. Try bringing the potty along when travelling or going out until your child is comfortable using the bathroom away from home.

Keys to Toileting Success

- ✓ **Choose the right time.** Wait until your toddler seems ready, and start when there are no other big changes going on in your family.
- ✓ **Try not to pressure them.** Most children take between 2 weeks and 6 months to learn. Be patient and try not to be upset over accidents.
- ✓ **Make potty time a regular part of your routine.** Have them sit on it as soon as they wake up and regularly throughout the day.
- ✓ **Praise their attempts.** Try "Yay! You went pee on the potty!" rather than "Good for you!" This tells them that whether they succeed or not doesn't make them good or bad in your eyes.
- ✓ **Talk about the benefits** of using the toilet, like getting "big kid" underwear.
- ✓ **Be ready when you're away from home.** Know where you can find public bathrooms. And bring along the potty chair if you're going on a trip.
- ✓ **Use the right words.** Talk to your toddler about toileting so they'll have the words to express their needs. Use the correct terms for body parts and functions, and cut down on embarrassment by not using negative words like "stinky."



TRY THIS

Encourage your toddler to teach their stuffed animals to use the potty chair.

What You'll Need

- A potty chair. Place it next to the main toilet. Or use a special seat that fits over the toilet's seat, along with a solid step stool.
- Clothes with elastic waists that can be pulled down quickly. You may even choose to let your toddler go without pants while at home.

Steps Along the Way

Learning to use the toilet is a skill that takes time to learn. Staying dry all night often doesn't happen until a child is 6 years old or older. Sometimes your toddler may even take a step backward. And even older children have accidents, especially when they're sick, cold or very involved in play.

Using diapers

If your child is dealing with a big change or just won't use the potty chair, you may need to go back to diapers for a while.

If your toddler doesn't want to poop in a potty chair or toilet, let them continue to use diapers for part of the day so they don't get constipated.

Using training pants

Pull-on training pants look like underwear but are made from diaper material. You may find them useful at night or when you're away from home with your toddler.



BRAIN BUILDER

Give your child a book to look at while they sit on the potty chair. Check the library for books about toilet learning.



TRY THIS

If you're comfortable, let your toddler watch you or another same-sex parent or caregiver or sibling use the toilet. Seeing what you're doing can help them figure it out for themselves.



FAMILY STORY

Right from birth, I said things to my son like, "Doesn't it feel good to be dry?" So when it came time to start toilet learning, he already understood the idea of "wet" versus "dry."

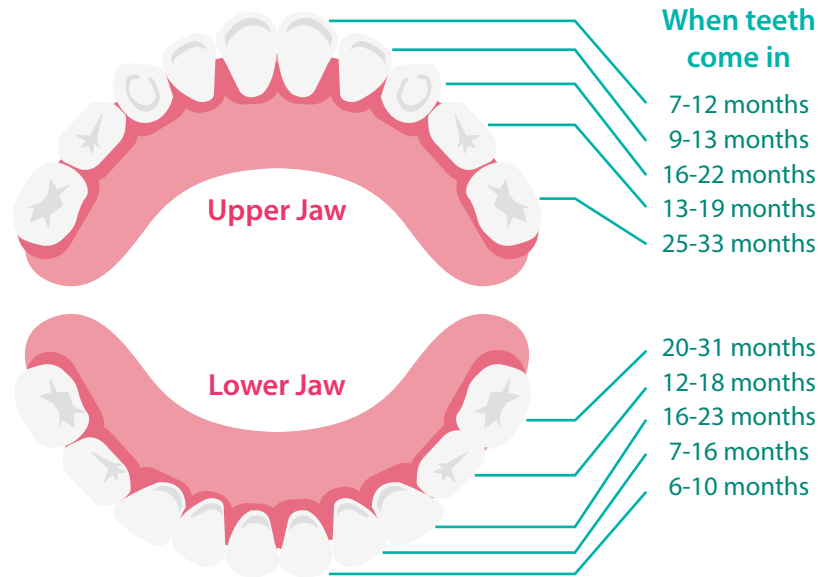


Looking After Your Toddler's Teeth

Taking good care of your toddler's first teeth means better health overall. "Baby teeth" are important for:

- eating
- learning to speak
- jaw growth
- helping adult teeth grow in properly

In addition, untreated tooth decay in baby teeth can be painful, spread to adult teeth and cause serious infection in the rest of the body. It can interfere with your child's ability to play, learn, sleep and eat, and lead to poor growth and development. Tooth decay is the main reason young children need to go to the hospital for day surgery.



When teeth fall out

- 6-8 years
- 7-8 years
- 10-12 years
- 9-11 years
- 10-12 years

- 10-12 years
- 9-11 years
- 9-12 years
- 7-8 years
- 6-8 years



DID YOU KNOW?

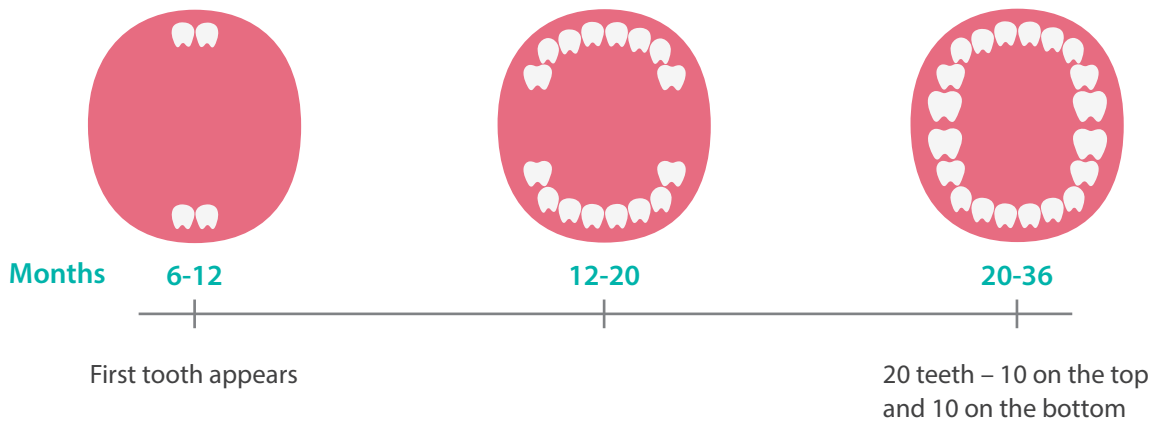
Tooth decay is a preventable disease.



DID YOU KNOW?

"Baby teeth" aren't just for babies. The molars at the back of a child's mouth usually fall out between ages 11 and 13.

How Teeth Usually Grow



Teething

Some toddlers aren't bothered by teething while others are uncomfortable and fussy. Most children will drool.

You can help ease your toddler's discomfort by:

- ✓ letting them chew on a clean, solid teething ring or wet cloth that's been chilled in the fridge (not the freezer)
- ✓ wiping and massaging their gums with a clean finger, cloth or toothbrush
- ✓ using a bib to catch drool and wiping their face

Don't use:

- ✗ teething gels or ointments, which can numb your baby's throat so they are unable to gag and protect themselves from choking
- ✗ teething necklaces – these can be unsafe. If the beads break and your baby swallows them, or if the necklace gets tangled, it could choke or hurt your baby
- ✗ food like teething biscuits or frozen fruit, which can lead to tooth decay
- ✗ liquid or gel-filled teething rings, which can grow bacteria inside and can crack and break open



DID YOU KNOW?

Although teething may be uncomfortable for your toddler, it doesn't cause fever. If they have a fever, treat it as you normally would (see [When Your Toddler is Sick](#)).

Keeping Teeth Healthy

Brush

Once the first tooth comes in, it's time to start brushing your toddler's teeth. Use a soft brush with nylon bristles. (Silicone and rubber bristles don't remove plaque as well.) And replace the brush often – about every 3 months or after the bristles lose shape, and after your child has been sick.



HOW TO Brush your toddler's teeth

1. Squeeze children's fluoride toothpaste (amount the size of a grain of rice) on a child-sized toothbrush. Increase to a pea-sized amount at age 3.
2. Have your child lie in your lap, on the change table or on the floor.
3. Brush gently. Sing or chat while brushing.
4. If your child is able (likely by about age 3), let them spit as needed.
5. Put the toothpaste away out of reach.
6. Repeat twice a day – once in the morning and again after the last evening feeding.

Continue to help your child brush their teeth until they're about 8 years old.

Use fluoride

Fluoride makes enamel stronger and better able to fight tooth decay. Check with your health department or First Nations Government office to see if there's fluoride in your local water. If not, be sure that your child's toothpaste includes it. Teach your child to spit the toothpaste out, but don't worry if they're

not always successful. Even children under 3 can use (and swallow) small amounts of fluoride toothpaste safely.

Floss

Once your toddler's teeth grow enough that they touch each other, floss them once a day. Don't let your child floss their own teeth, because they could damage their gums.

Protect teeth from damage

- ✓ Use the right size car seat, booster seat and seat belt.
- ✗ Don't let your toddler chew on hard things.
- ✗ Don't let your toddler walk around with anything in their mouth.
- ✗ Limit how often your toddler drinks grow , pop or other sugary drinks.
- ✗ If your little one drinks from a bottle at bedtime, it's time to give fewer bottles or just use water in the bottle.

Offer a variety of healthy food and drinks

- ✓ Offer your child meals and snacks at regular times.
- ✓ At 6 months, start helping your child drink from an open cup instead of using a bottle or sip cup.
- ✓ Offer milk with meals, and water for between-meal thirst.
- ✓ If you offer fruit juice use it as part of a meal or snack and put it in an open cup to avoid the tooth decay that constant sipping can cause.

See [Safe, Healthy Foods and Drinks](#) to learn more.

See the dentist

Your toddler should see a dentist by the time they're 12 months old or within 6 months after their first tooth appears. During this first visit, the dentist will look in your toddler's mouth. It's also a good time to talk about dental care and discuss how often your child should visit.



MONEY SENSE

If you've been approved for Medical Services Plan (MSP) Supplementary Benefits, your child may be eligible for the Healthy Kids program or Canadian Dental Care Plan. This can help with the cost of their dental care. See Dental Care, Vision and Hearing in the [Resources](#) section for more information.

Don't share germs

Germs from your mouth can lead to tooth decay in your toddler's mouth. Don't put their soother in your mouth, share toothbrushes or spoons, pre-chew their food, or use your teeth to bite pieces in half for them. And keep your own teeth clean and healthy by brushing and flossing daily and visiting the dentist regularly.



BE AWARE

If there are chalky white spots or crescents on your toddler's teeth along the gums that don't brush off, they may have the beginnings of tooth decay. Fluoride can help stop these spots from turning into cavities that need filling. See your dentist, or contact your local public health unit to ask about public health dental services.

What About Soothers and Thumb-Sucking?

Do not use soothers or pacifiers once all baby teeth have grown in, usually when your child is about 3 years old. After this age, regular use of a soother may affect the child's speech development and teeth positioning. Using a soother can cause ear infections, too.



HOW TO Help your toddler use a soother less

- Start when no other big changes are going on in your family.
- Slowly limit soother time until you get it down to 1 use per day – probably naptime or bedtime.
- Once they're asleep, gently remove the soother from their mouth.
- If they want the soother when they're awake, check if they're hungry, bored, tired or if they need comfort. Offer a cuddle, a blanket, a toy, breastfeeding or chestfeeding or a story instead.
- Praise them for using the soother less, but don't punish them for using it.

Safer soothers

Look for:

- one-piece design
- firmly attached nipple
- no cord (use a clip with a short ribbon instead – but only when your toddler isn't sleeping)
- no toy or stuffed animal attached

Keep it safe by:

- boiling it in water for 5 minutes, then cooling it completely before the first use
- cleaning it regularly in warm, soapy water
- replacing it every 2 months, or sooner if it's sticky, cracked or torn



BE AWARE

Don't let your toddler chew on a soother for teething. It can break and choke them.



DID YOU KNOW?

Cleaning a soother in your own mouth or dipping it in honey or syrup can lead to tooth decay.

Looking After Your Toddler's Vision

How Vision Typically Develops

Remember – all children develop at their own pace.

Months

6-8

- Sees in full colour
- Can see and pick up dropped objects
- Sees things of interest and moves toward them
- Eyes appear straight and work together

8-12

- Can stare at small objects
- Uses vision to help move between things
- Can watch things that are moving fast

Over 12

- Interested in books and stacking toys
- Can climb and throw

Keeping Eyes Healthy

Protect eyes from injury

- Don't let your toddler play with anything sharp, or walk or run while carrying pencils, popsicle sticks or other pointy things.
- Childproof your home. (See [Childproofing Your Home](#))
- Limit screen time to a maximum of 1 hour per day. (See [Screen Time](#))
- Keep your child at least 3 metres (10 feet) from the TV.

Protect eyes from the sun

Give your toddler a hat and sunglasses. Lenses should fully cover the eyes and offer 99 to 100% UVA and UVB protection. Any cords or strings should come off easily when pulled to avoid strangulation.

Offer healthy food

A healthy diet helps your child develop in many ways, including vision (see [Eating Well](#)).

Help develop their vision

Show your toddler colourful pictures, patterns and mobiles. Encourage them to look at books, climb and run, and play with balls, puzzles and blocks.

Have their eyes checked

Children's vision continues to develop as they grow, but issues become more difficult to fix when they're older. BC Doctors of Optometry (see bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca/) recommends children have their first eye exam between 6 and 9 months. It's important for your toddler to have a full eye exam by the time they start kindergarten (or by age 3 if there's a family history of vision problems). If a full exam isn't possible, your health care provider can help detect lazy eye.



FAMILY STORY

I thought my daughter might be having problems seeing because when something was handed to her, she would move her hand around until she hit it. Since she got glasses, she's so much happier and more active.



MONEY SENSE

B.C. health coverage pays all or part of the cost of children's eye exams. If you have a modest income, you may also qualify for MSP Supplementary Benefits, which can help pay for glasses. Contact the Healthy Kids program at 1-866-866-0800.

If you're First Nations, the First Nations Health Authority Health Benefits program may pay for medical and dental costs not covered by other insurance. Email healthbenefits@fnha.ca or call 1-855-550-5454 toll free.

If you're a refugee, call Health Insurance BC at 1-800-663-7100 to find out if you qualify for MSP coverage. If not, you may be able to get help through the Interim Federal Health Program. Call 1-888-242-2100 to learn more.



WARNING SIGNS

Your toddler may have vision problems if they:

- have trouble following things with their eyes or making eye contact
- bring things very close to their eyes to see them
- squint, frown, blink or rub their eyes often
- have headaches
- close 1 eye or tilt their head when looking at something
- have trouble finding small objects on the floor (after 12 months)
- have red or watery eyes or discharge
- have crossed or turned eyes after 6 months

Talk with an eye doctor ("optometrist"), your health care provider or a public health nurse if you have concerns.



Looking After Your Toddler's Hearing

Hearing plays a key role in your toddler's speech and language development and social and emotional growth.

How Hearing Typically Develops

Remember – all children develop at their own pace.

Months	9	12	18	24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Copies sounds and changes in voice pitch• Babbles (repeats “mama” and “dada,” for example)• Shouts out to get attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognizes their own name• Says 2 or 3 words besides “mama” or “dada”• Understands simple instructions• Recognizes words as symbols for objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands 50 or more words and many phrases• Uses 30 or more words, and may put some together• Asks for some foods by name• Enjoys being read to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses 100 or more words, and understands even more• Understands 2-part directions, like “find teddy and put him on your bed”• Joins 2 to 4 words into phrases, like “daddy go bye-bye”

Keeping Hearing Healthy

Check hearing early

Your baby's hearing will be checked at birth, following hospital discharge or at a public health hearing clinic through the BC Early Hearing Program.

Most children with permanent hearing loss are born healthy and have no family history of the problem. But hearing can change at any age, and children who develop hearing loss are at risk of speech and language delays. Have your child re-checked anytime you have concerns.

Protect your toddler's ears

- Clean only the outer ear with a clean cloth. Don't use cotton swabs like Q-Tips or put anything inside the ear.
- Avoid long exposure to loud noises, like fireworks and loud music.

- Have your child immunized. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))

Reduce ear infections

- Breastfeed or chestfeed. (See [Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding Your Toddler](#))
- Don't put your child to bed with a bottle.
- Keep your child away from second-hand smoke.



MONEY SENSE

Through the BC Early Hearing Program, all children under 5 with permanent hearing loss are eligible for free hearing aids. See [Hearing in the Resources](#) section for more information.



WARNING SIGNS

See your health care provider if your toddler has:

- fluid or a bad smell coming from their ear
- pain in the ear
- redness around the ear

Contact your local public health hearing clinic if your toddler:

- is responding to sound differently
- often says “what?”
- misunderstands simple directions
- isn't meeting the typical milestones shown above

Preventing Sickness

You can help your toddler stay as healthy as possible by doing 3 simple things:

1. getting them immunized
2. washing their hands
3. keeping surfaces clean

Immunization

What is immunization (“vaccination”)?

Protecting your child from a disease before it has a chance to make them sick.

How it works

Immunizations help your child's body make antibodies to fight diseases caused by germs, like bacteria and viruses.

Immunizations are usually given by needle (injection), by nose (“intrasally”), or by mouth (“orally”).



DID YOU KNOW?

When you immunize your child, you're also protecting the wider community. When more people are vaccinated, diseases can't spread as easily and those most at risk – the elderly and babies too young for vaccination, for example – are safer.

Why immunize?

Immunization is the best way to prevent your child from getting serious diseases including:

- chicken pox (“varicella”)
- COVID-19
- diphtheria
- flu (“influenza”)
- German measles (“rubella”)
- Haemophilus influenzae
- hepatitis B
- Hib (“Haemophilus influenzae type b”)
- measles
- meningococcal disease
- mumps
- pneumococcal disease
- polio
- tetanus
- whooping cough (“pertussis”)

Your child may be eligible for other vaccines, such as hepatitis A. Talk to your health care provider for more information.

Thanks to immunization, some of these diseases are now rare in Canada. But the germs that cause them still exist and can make a child very sick, especially if they're not immunized.



DID YOU KNOW?

Vaccines included in the routine immunization schedule are free for B.C. children.

When to immunize

Different vaccinations are given at different ages. Children in British Columbia usually receive vaccinations at:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12 months
- 18 months
- 4 to 6 years
- Grade 6
- Grade 9

The flu shot is given each year.

If your child has missed any of their immunizations or if they are going outside Canada and may need extra immunizations, talk with your health care provider.

If you have questions or concerns, call your health care provider before your visit.

For more information about immunization, visit [ImmunizeBC.ca](https://www.immunizebc.ca).



TRY THIS

Use the Child Health Passport (available through your public health or primary care nurse or see healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/child-health-passport-eng.pdf) to keep track of your child's immunizations. Contact your public health unit or check immunizebc.ca/children/immunization-schedules#Schedule%20for%20infants%20and%20young%20children for updates to the immunization schedule, too.



HOW TO Prepare your toddler for an immunization

1. Just before you leave, calmly tell them they're getting an immunization that will help them stay healthy. Answer their questions honestly but soothingly. Use words like "poke" or "squeeze" instead of "pain" or "hurt."
2. Try not to let them sense any anxiety you're feeling.
3. Consider putting on a numbing cream or patch before your appointment. If your child is over 12 months old, ask your health care provider in advance where the immunization will be given so you'll know where to apply it and how long before the appointment it should be put on the skin.
4. Dress them in clothes that let you easily uncover their arms and legs.
5. Bring a comforting toy or blanket.
6. Hold them on your lap while they're getting the immunization. Comfort them by cuddling or breastfeeding or chestfeeding them.
7. Try distracting them with a toy or by helping them do deep breathing.

Is it safe?

Immunization is very safe. Some vaccines may cause soreness where the needle was given or a slight fever, but these side effects are minor and usually last only 1 or 2 days.



DID YOU KNOW?

Serious side effects to immunizations are very rare. Choosing not to immunize is much more dangerous, since the risks of the disease are far greater than the risk of side effects.

The flu shot (influenza vaccine)

Young children are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill if they get the flu. The influenza vaccine protects against the viruses expected to cause flu in the next cold and flu season. It doesn't protect against the germs that cause colds.

Flu shots are given every year. It's free in B.C., and recommended for all children 6 months and older. Parents, babysitters and other caregivers of young children should also get the vaccine.

If your toddler is getting a flu shot for the first time, they'll need 2 doses, given 4 weeks apart.

COVID-19 Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccines are authorized by Health Canada for children over the age of 6 months. Your child can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other childhood vaccines. For more information please go to: bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/vaccines-children.

Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best and easiest way to help prevent your toddler from getting sick.

Wash your hands and your child's often, especially:

- after changing a diaper or using the toilet
- after blowing your nose or your child's
- after touching animals, tidying up after them or cleaning the litter box
- when caring for a sick child
- when preparing food
- before eating
- after being in a public place
- after touching frequently touched surfaces



HOW TO Wash hands properly

1. Use plain soap and warm water.
2. Wash for 20 seconds – about the time it takes to sing *Happy Birthday* or a favourite song of the same length.
3. Rinse.
4. Dry well with a clean towel.



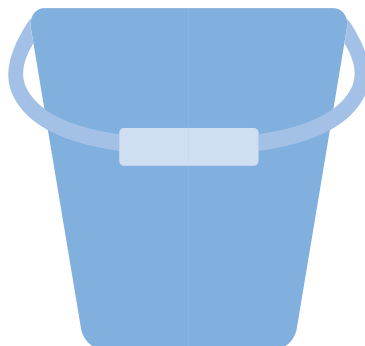
TRY THIS

If you can't wash your hands, rub alcohol-based hand sanitizer between your hands (and your toddler's) until the gel dries. Check the label. Some hand sanitizers shouldn't be used by children or by adults who are pregnant or breastfeeding or chestfeeding.



DID YOU KNOW?

Antibacterial soap and cleaners help grow "superbugs" – germs that are too strong to treat with antibiotics. Use plain soap instead.



Keeping Surfaces Clean

You can help keep your toddler healthy by regularly cleaning surfaces including:

- kitchen counters, cutting boards and utensils
- high chairs, bibs and dishes
- strollers, cribs, changing tables and toys
- garbage bins
- pet toys, beds and litter boxes



HOW TO Make cleaning easier

1. Keep cleaning supplies handy, but locked away from your toddler.
2. Clean the most important areas first.
3. Use plain soap and water. To save time, try paper towels or disposable wipes.
4. Clean up vomit, diarrhea, blood and pet waste using 1 part bleach in 9 parts water. Wear rubber gloves.
5. Wash cleaning cloths often, and don't use them to wipe your child's face.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Split up the household cleaning tasks with your partner. Have older children help, too.

When Your Toddler is Sick

Toddlers can get sick very quickly. You may suddenly notice glassy eyes or pale skin. Or your child might cry more, be extra clingy, not play as much or be more quiet than usual. If you're unsure of what to do, you can get advice through:

- your health care provider or pharmacist
- a public health or primary care nurse
- HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. Free information from registered nurses in 130 languages anytime – day or night. You can also speak to a pharmacist about medications from 5 pm to 9 am nightly.

Fever

What is a fever?

A temperature of **38°C (100.4°F) or higher** when measured in the armpit. Fever is a way for the body to fight infection. It's not usually dangerous, especially if there are no other symptoms and if it goes away in 3 or 4 days. But it can make your toddler uncomfortable and dehydrated.



DID YOU KNOW?

Your child's temperature changes throughout the day. It's lowest in the early morning and highest in the early evening.

Method	Normal temperature range
Armpit	36.5°C to 37.5°C (97.8°F to 99.5°F)
Mouth (not recommended for toddlers)	35.5°C to 37.5°C (95.9°F to 99.5°F)
Ear (2 years and older)	35.8°C to 38°C (96.4°F to 100.4°F)
Rectum (bum)	36.6°C to 38°C (97.9°F to 100.4°F)



HOW TO

Check your toddler's temperature in the armpit

1. Put the tip of a digital thermometer high up in the centre of your toddler's armpit. Make sure it's touching bare skin on all sides.
2. Tuck their arm snugly against their body.
3. Comfort and distract them.
4. Wait at least 3 minutes, or until the thermometer beeps.
5. Gently remove.

Don't use mercury (glass) thermometers (which can be dangerous), forehead strips or pacifier thermometers (which are less accurate), or mouth thermometers (which are hard for toddlers to keep under the tongue).

Temperatures taken in the rectum (bum) are very accurate. But only use this method if you have a rectal thermometer, if you've been taught how to use it safely by a health care provider, and if you feel comfortable doing so.

What you can do

- ✓ Let them rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed or chestfeed more, and offer them more to drink between feedings.
- ✓ Take off any extra clothes they're wearing.
- ✓ Give them a lukewarm bath.
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.
- ✓ Indigenous parents or caregivers can check with FNHA for what over-the-counter medications are covered for free (like Tylenol, saline solution).



DID YOU KNOW?

Fever doesn't necessarily tell you how sick your child is. A simple cold may cause a high fever of 39°C (102°F), while a serious infection may cause a mild fever or none at all.

Cough and Cold

What is a cold?

A cold is a virus that can cause runny nose, cough, fever, sore throat and fussiness. Most children get several mild colds every year. These usually improve within a week and go away within 2 weeks.

What you can do

- ✓ Let them rest.
- ✓ Give them plenty of fluids like water or your milk, if you're still breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Use a cool air humidifier, if you have one.
- ✓ Put saline drops in their nose.
- ✓ Use an extra pillow to raise their head by 2½ to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches).
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.



DANGER

Never give your toddler Aspirin or anything else containing acetylsalicylic acid (ASA), which can damage their brain and liver. Don't give them decongestants or antihistamines unless recommended by your health care provider. And avoid cough and cold medicines, which don't usually work for young children and can be harmful. **Always check with your health care provider before giving your toddler any new medication.**

Flu

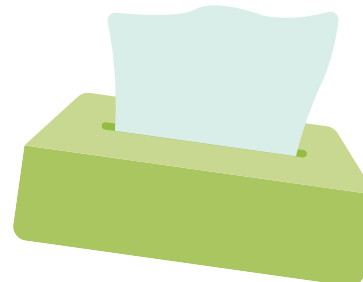
What is the flu ("influenza") and COVID-19?

The flu is a virus that can cause more serious fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, tiredness, cough, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Flu can be life-threatening to very young children and those with other illnesses.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. It is spread mostly from person to person.

What you can do

- ✓ **Call your health care provider or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you think your toddler has the flu.**
- ✓ Let them rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed or chestfeed often and give them plenty of water and other fluids.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.



SEEK CARE

Call your health care provider if your toddler has signs of dehydration:

- peeing less (fewer than 4 wet diapers in 24 hours in infants and fewer than 3 wet diapers in 24 hours in older children)
- extra thirsty
- no tears when crying
- dry skin, mouth and tongue
- faster heartbeat
- sunken eyes
- greyish skin
- sunken soft spot on the head (if 18 months or younger)



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Call 9-1-1 if your child has:

- trouble breathing
- a lot of blood in their vomit or diarrhea, or if their vomit is bright green
- a fever that lasts more than 5 days
- is very sleepy and difficult to wake



HOW TO Help prevent the spread of colds, flu and COVID-19

- ✓ Get the flu vaccine each fall.
(See Preventing Sickness)
- ✓ Get the COVID-19 vaccine.
(See Preventing Sickness)
- ✓ Wash hands regularly.
(See Preventing Sickness)
- ✓ Throw away tissues right after use.
- ✓ Cough and sneeze into shirt sleeves,
not hands.
- ✓ Avoid touching the face.
- ✓ Disinfect doorknobs, light switches,
keyboards and other shared items.
- ✓ Eat well and stay active.
- ✓ Avoid public places (schools/daycares)
if your child is unwell.

Visiting a Health Care Provider



HOW TO Make health care visits easier

Before you go:

- ✓ Try to visit when your toddler is well-rested and fed.
- ✓ Show them what the health care worker might do, like look in their ears.
- ✓ Encourage them to pretend to be a health care worker with a toy.
- ✓ Read them books about doctor or dentist visits.
- ✓ Pack a favourite blanket or toy.

At the visit:

- ✓ Talk to them about what's happening and why. "The nurse is going to give you a vaccine/medicine in the arm to keep you healthy. I'll hold you the whole time."
- ✓ Answer their questions simply and directly.
- ✓ Find ways to praise their efforts, even if they cry the whole time.



FAMILY STORY

My toddlers played with their doctor kit a lot. They used the stethoscope and pretend needles to make each other "feel better." I think that's why they were never scared of the doctor.



DID YOU KNOW?

Antibiotics (which attack bacteria) can't cure colds or flu (which are caused by viruses). And taking antibiotics when not needed means risking side effects, killing good bacteria, and adding to the growth of superbugs.



Growing as a Parent

Being a parent is one of the most important and rewarding things you can do. It's also hard work.

How you parent will be affected by the way you were brought up. Some people want to parent the way they were parented. Others want to do the opposite, while some want to do a bit of both. Your style will also be guided by what you read and what you see others do. And, of course, you'll learn as you go, adjusting your parenting style as your child grows.

To help you along the way, try:

- learning new parenting skills – like using positive discipline (see [Positive Discipline](#)) – by taking online or in-person classes, talking with other parents, joining parenting groups and reading books
- finding the extra support you need – from child care to help for support needs – by talking to your health care provider and seeing the [Resources](#) section
- staying healthy by being physically active, eating well and seeking help if you're anxious, depressed or overwhelmed (see [Parenting Issues](#))
- thinking about how you were parented and how that affects the way you care for your toddler
- connecting with others and building a support team of family and friends. Remember, it takes a village to raise a child.

There are many places to go for help. See the [Resources](#) section for information.



Why Does Your Toddler “Act Out”?

Your toddler will often do things you don't like. But there's usually a reason for why they're behaving the way they are:

- **Do they have the ability to do what you expect?** Or are you expecting too much? (See [Temperament](#))
- **Is the way they're acting a normal stage in their development?** It's natural for your toddler to see themselves as the centre of the world.
- **Are they trying to communicate how they feel?** Toddlers also have very big emotions, which they haven't yet figured out how to deal with or communicate. This can feel overwhelming. And often a toddler's behaviour is simply a way for them to assert their independence.
- **Are they feeling okay, or do they need something?** They may be hungry, tired or over-stimulated by too many activities.
- **Has something changed in their life?** Toddlers do best with routine. Knowing what to expect gives them a feeling of control and security.

- **Are they getting the connection they need?** You'll help them feel secure by responding to them warmly and consistently.
- **Is the setting suitable for them?** Some things – like a long sit-down meal or a crowded event – may require more control than they have.

Remember that all of us – parents, caregivers and children – feel all kinds of emotions, including anger, frustration, sadness and excitement. The key is to learn to handle our emotions in healthy ways.



KEY TAKEAWAY

When your toddler acts a certain way, they may be trying to tell you that they need something, like rest, food, comfort or connection with you. By watching them closely, you'll start to learn what each behaviour means, and how to respond in a way that builds your bond and helps them learn and grow.



Positive Discipline

Learning to be independent is an important part of your toddler's development. Sometimes this means they'll do things that you don't like. Rather than punishing them, though, you can use positive discipline to guide and teach them.



DID YOU KNOW?

Discipline doesn't need to be negative to be effective. By **showing rather than training** your child, you can help them learn to understand their feelings and act in healthy ways. At the same time, you'll build a strong and loving bond between you and your child.



Positive Discipline vs. Punishment

What is positive discipline?

A focus on **showing** your child how to act in positive ways.

Positive discipline:

- is built on love and trust
- shows respect for your child and their feelings
- is fair
- suits your child's age
- is consistent
- occurs right when the problem behaviour happens
- is explained in a way the child can understand

What is punishment?

A focus on **training** that uses harsh consequences to make a child obey. It may be physical (like spanking), verbal (like shouting) or emotional (like shaming). Punishment isn't effective and doesn't help your child develop healthy life skills.



Set the stage for positive behaviour

You can help set your child up to behave their best – and avoid problems before they start.

Communicate with your toddler:

- Get their attention before you speak.
- Get down to their level and make eye contact. Offer a gentle touch or nod.
- Make reasonable, clear rules, and tell your child why you have these rules. Keep them the same from day to day.
- Use simple words to tell them what you want them to do.
- Make only 1 request at a time.
- Listen to what they're saying.
- Help them name their feelings ("happy," "sad," "angry") and learn to express them.
- Tell them what to do instead of what not to do: "Please ride on the sidewalk," for example, instead of "don't ride on the street."



BRAIN BUILDER

By responding to your toddler's behaviour in a warm and consistent way, you'll help build their brain to handle big emotions and make healthy decisions (see [Brain Development](#)).

Provide a safe and stimulating environment:

- Spend lots of time with your toddler doing things they like.
- Offer interesting toys and activities. Remember – children learn when they play. (See [Play, Toys](#))
- Childproof your home so you can say “no” less often and your toddler will be more free to explore. (See [Childproofing Your Home](#))
- Give your child room to explore while supervising them closely.



TRY THIS

Set up play areas in the kitchen, living room and yard so you're always close by. Provide tools and toys for play cooking, office work and gardening. You don't need to buy fancy toys. Just use items that you have around the house.

Focus on routines:

- Keep to a schedule for naps and mealtimes.
- Follow a bedtime routine.
- Tell your toddler about any upcoming changes to the routine.
- Set limits and stick to them so they know what's expected.
- Put healthy limits on screen time. (See [Screen Time](#))

Set a good example:

- Model sharing, taking turns and using good manners, like saying “please” and “thank you.”
- Be calm and patient in dealing with your child and others. When you're upset, it can make your child more upset.
- Name your own feelings so that your toddler learns what to call them and sees how you handle them in a healthy way: “I'm feeling very frustrated. I'm going to take some deep breaths so I can calm down and think about what to do.”

Praise good behaviour:

- Focus on what they did, not on whether they're “good” or “bad”: “How wonderful that you went to pee in the potty!” for example, instead of “good for you.”
- Tell them right away when you see them behaving well: “Wow! You shared your toy with that child so nicely. That's hard to do and you did it!”

Use cooperation instead of control:

- Let them make simple choices, like which colour shirt to wear. Limit choices to 2, so you don't confuse them.
- When you say no, offer alternatives: “No, that paper is for Daddy, but you can play with this book.”
- Negotiate with them: “I'll read you a story after you've picked up the blocks.”
- Talk about conflicts so they can learn empathy and problem-solving skills (“I can see you're angry at Tim for taking the ball”), let them know that other children have needs, too (“Tim also wants to have a turn”), and offer solutions (“Maybe you can let them have a turn and then they'll give you a turn”).



BRAIN BUILDER

Allowing your toddler to make simple choices gives them some control and will help them learn to think for themselves.



FAMILY STORY

Once I started letting my toddler make some decisions (“Do you want to eat your carrots first or your tomatoes first?”), he was happier. And I knew I was helping him learn to be independent.



Deal positively with problem behaviour

When your child does misbehave, try using the positive discipline strategy that best suits the situation:

Strategy 1

Connect with them through a gentle nod or touch or a kind word or look. Let them see that you're calm, loving and there to help them.

Strategy 2

Help them name their emotions. When your toddler learns to understand their feelings, they'll be able to deal with them better. Instead of “What's wrong with you?” try, “I can see you're angry. It's normal to feel angry when we can't do what we want. But Mommy is trying to keep you safe.”

Strategy 3

Use a “time-in” to calmly comfort your toddler in a quiet space. Remove them from the situation, listen to them and help them name their emotions and figure out another way to react. When they’re ready to return, remind them of what you just talked about.

Strategy 4

Redirect them when they’re doing something that’s okay, but the way they’re doing it isn’t. If they’re throwing a ball in the kitchen, for example, offer them some safe utensils to play with, or give them a job to do.

Strategy 5

Distract them – with a toy or a book, for example – when they’re doing something you don’t want them to do.

Strategy 6

Explain the consequences of what they’re doing. If they’re pouring out their bubble-making soap, for example, tell them, “There won’t be any bubbles left if you pour that out.” If they decide to pour it out anyway, say, “That’s too bad – the bubbles are all gone now.” They may be upset (and it’s okay to comfort them), but they’ll have learned that choices have consequences.

Strategy 7

Find a compromise that works for both of you. Of course, some things – like playing with matches – are unsafe and aren’t open for compromise. Use those times to teach, too – “I can see you’re angry. But I can’t let you do that because I love you and I want to keep you safe.”

Positive Discipline by Age

As your child grows, you’ll need to adapt the way you discipline them.

6 to 12 months

At this age, your toddler isn’t trying to be naughty, and they’re not able to understand the consequences of their actions.

What works?

- routine – a regular schedule of rest, feeding and play
- connecting and redirecting
- distracting
- lots of quiet time spent together
- a comfort toy

What doesn’t?

- consequences

12 to 24 months

As they grow, your toddler will want to test limits, explore and have more control. They may seem demanding and be more easily frustrated, but they aren’t trying to misbehave. Safety is key. Toddlers at this age should be given space to explore, but shouldn’t be left alone.

What works?

- childproofing, so you won’t need to say no as often
- supervision
- offering choices
- connecting and redirecting
- distracting
- consequences: “If you throw your food off the table, then no more food.”

- communication and empathy – helping them name their emotions and understand how their actions affect others

What doesn’t?

- time-outs – which can increase separation anxiety or fear of being abandoned

24 to 36 months

At this age, your toddler is going between independence and dependence. They may be possessive and demanding and have outbursts and temper tantrums.

What works?

- connection and empathy – helping them name their emotions and understand how their actions affect others
- patience
- childproofing
- routine
- supervision
- setting limits
- offering choices
- connecting and redirecting
- consequences
- distracting
- time-ins that are short, boring and start right away



TRY THIS

Don’t try to reason with your toddler when they’re still very upset. Wait until they’ve calmed down enough to listen.

Dealing With Common Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviours can be stressful to deal with. As a parent or caregiver, you may feel that you've done something wrong. Or you may be reminded of a difficult situation you faced as a child.

But as your toddler grows and seeks more independence, it's normal for them to act out. They're learning about the world and what they can and can't do. Their behaviour is also their way of telling you that they need something, like rest, food, comfort or connection.

When your toddler's behaviour is difficult, your role is to assist them in recognizing their emotions and learning to manage them in a positive manner. This is an opportunity for you to respond in a way that shows understanding and strengthens a strong, respectful bond with them.



TRY THIS

You don't need to do something every time your child "acts out." If they're doing something minor that isn't putting them in danger or hurting anyone, you may want to overlook it. Don't overlook their good behaviour, though. Praising them regularly helps them learn how to express their feelings in a healthy way.

Biting

- ✓ State the limit clearly and simply: "No, please don't bite. It hurts." Then move on.
- ✓ If they bite while breastfeeding or chestfeeding, firmly say no, tell them it hurt and remove them from the breast or chest. Then try again. (See [Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding Your Toddler](#))
- ✗ Don't bite them back. It may frighten and confuse them, and it will tell them that biting is okay.
- ✗ Don't laugh.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most young children bite someone at least once, usually when they have a sore mouth or when they're excited, scared or frustrated.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Your toddler learns how to behave by watching you. If you're acting stressed, your child will, too. But if you deal respectfully with them and with others, they'll learn to do the same.

Tantrums

Before a tantrum happens:

- ✓ Keep to routines around rest, activity and meal and snack times. Take healthy snacks and water with you when you go out.
- ✓ Let them know ahead of time what's going to happen and what you want them to do: "We're going to the store for milk and fruit. You can help me choose the bananas."
- ✓ Find ways to help them deal with their feelings, like running fast or using words.
- ✓ Try not to say no to every request. Give them control over little things, like which shirt to wear.

If you see a tantrum coming on:

- ✓ Redirect them to an activity they're familiar with, try to change what's bothering them or distract them. If they don't want to go to bed, for example, tell them about something fun they'll enjoy the next day.
- ✓ Give them quiet time if they're tired.
- ✓ Give them food if they're hungry.

If they're having a tantrum:

- ✓ Take some deep breaths and stay calm. Don't scream or spank them.
- ✓ Try to comfort them: "I'm here and I love you." But don't try to talk about their feelings until later, when everyone is calm.

- ✓ Try holding them firmly but lovingly, but stop if it seems to make the tantrum worse.
- ✓ If you're in public, remember that most people will understand.
- ✓ Make sure that they won't get hurt, hurt others or damage anything.

When the tantrum is over:

- ✓ Cuddle and comfort them.
- ✓ Praise them for regaining control.
- ✓ Help them name the feelings they had before, during and after the tantrum.
- ✓ Let them know it's normal to feel upset, and talk about what they can do next time they feel bad – like telling you before the feelings get too big for them to handle.
- ✓ Talk to your health care provider if you have concerns.

What is a tantrum?

An explosion of anger and frustration. Your child may cry, scream, kick, fall down, run away, thrash around, arch their back, stiffen their arms and legs, hold their breath, break things or even vomit.



DID YOU KNOW?

Like many parents and caregivers, you may be uncomfortable when your child shows big emotions like anger or sadness. It might remind you of hard times in your life, or you may just be less comfortable sharing feelings. Understanding why you feel uncomfortable can help you respond to your child in a healthy and helpful way, instead of reacting out of your own sadness, anger or frustration.



BRAIN BUILDER

By staying calm when your child is having a tantrum, you're showing them how to respond to stressful situations.

Fighting With Other Children

- ✓ If you're worried about safety, step in right away.
- ✓ If safety's not an issue, stay back for a minute to see if they can solve the problem themselves.
- ✓ Suggest fair solutions, like sharing: "Amy really likes the truck you're playing with. When you're done with it, can you give them a turn?"
- ✓ Try to understand what led to the fight to help prevent it from happening again.



DID YOU KNOW?

Fighting is very common between siblings.

Whining

- ✓ Check if they're hungry, tired or uncomfortable.
- ✓ Offer a hug.
- ✓ Let them know you can't understand them when they whine, and help them find the words to express what's bothering them.
- ✓ Praise them when they're not whining.

Dawdling (Moving Slowly)

- ✓ Give them plenty of notice before changing activities.
- ✓ Build in extra time to do things, especially when you know that switching activities will be hard, like putting toys away to get ready for bed.
- ✓ Tell them what you need them to do clearly and simply: "Put on your coat now, please."
- ✓ Put away toys, turn off the TV and get rid of other distractions when you're in a hurry. And give them some control over the situation by giving them a job to do.



Staying Calm

Parenting is challenging, and staying calm can be hard for anyone. Remember that your toddler can sense when you're upset, and will learn how to handle stress by watching you. Learning to stay calm will be good for you and help your toddler develop in a healthy way.



DID YOU KNOW?

Staying calm as a parent or caregiver can be even harder if you grew up with a caregiver who had a temper or who was easily upset. Think about how your toddler's behaviour makes you feel and about how your parents and caregivers responded to you when you were little. This can help you understand your reactions and make it easier to stay calm and respond to your child in healthy ways.

What is Shaken Baby Syndrome?

The possible effects – brain damage, blindness or even death – of shaking a young child, even for a few seconds.



DANGER

Never shake your toddler. If you're feeling overwhelmed and afraid you might hurt your child, put them in a safe place and get help immediately. Call a family member, a friend, a public health or primary care nurse, your health care provider or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

What you can do:

- ✓ Stick to routines to help your toddler feel and act their best.
- ✓ Learn about what kinds of behaviour are typical at different ages. (See [Typical Child Development by Age](#))
- ✓ Get as much rest as you can.
- ✓ Eat well.
- ✓ Make time for yourself, even a moment here and there.
- ✓ Spend time outdoors.
- ✓ Accept that you may not always be able to soothe your child, and that letting them cry for a few minutes won't harm them.
- ✓ Talk with someone about your feelings, and to other parents and caregivers about your experiences.
- ✓ See the [Resources](#) section for services and supports.



HOW TO React if you feel you're losing control

1. Gently put your toddler down in a safe place, like the crib.
2. Leave the room for a few minutes.
3. Take some deep breaths and count to 10, repeat calming phrases to yourself, cry into a pillow or run on the spot. Or call a friend or relative to ask for help.
4. Wait until you're calm to try comforting your child again.



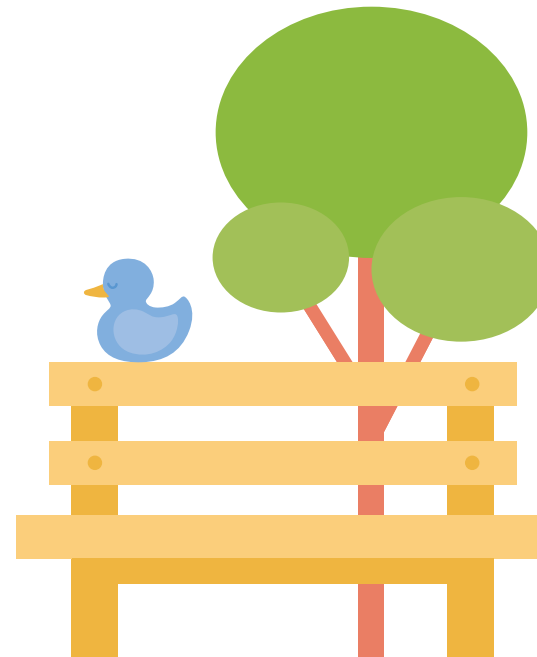
TRY THIS

No parent or caregiver stays calm all the time. If you lose your temper, apologize to your toddler. This will model the kind of behaviour you expect from them.



DID YOU KNOW?

Spanking is not a good option. It can hurt your toddler, cause them to be afraid of you and teach them that hitting others is okay.



Helping Your Toddler Through Change

Toddlers like routine. So when change happens, it can be hard on them.

Signs Your Toddler is Upset

Your toddler may not be able to tell you in words how they're feeling. Instead, they may:

- not want to eat
- cry
- have nightmares or problems sleeping
- have temper tantrums
- be clingy
- be very quiet
- go back to old habits like sucking their thumb



KEY TAKEAWAY

When change happens, tell your toddler that they're loved, that they'll always be taken care of and that the change isn't their fault. With positive support, children are resilient.

Dealing With Planned Changes

With some changes – like a new baby or moving house – you can prepare your toddler in advance. Try:

- ✓ using positive words to talk about the upcoming change
- ✓ listening to their worries
- ✓ answering their questions simply and honestly
- ✓ telling them everything will be okay
- ✓ reading them books on the subject
- ✓ giving them toys that let them act out the change – a toy truck if you're moving, for example
- ✓ not taking on more than one big change at a time
- ✓ making extra time to connect, and giving lots of love and attention
- ✓ making time for their usual routines and favourite activities



DID YOU KNOW?

When faced with big changes, it's normal for toddlers to temporarily return to old habits (like using diapers) or challenging behaviours (like throwing tantrums). Be patient and provide extra love and support.

A new baby

While a new baby brings joy and excitement, it also changes routines and takes time and attention away from your toddler. So it's normal for them to be upset.

Help your toddler prepare by:

- ✓ letting them feel the baby kick
- ✓ reading them books about babies and big siblings
- ✓ showing your toddler their own baby pictures and talking about what they were like as a baby
- ✓ giving them a baby doll to care for
- ✓ making any big changes – like toilet learning – as early as possible before the birth, or waiting until after the birth, when your toddler has had time to adjust
- ✓ talking to them about what babies do or visiting friends with babies, so they know what to expect
- ✓ planning for their care during the birth. If you want them to be at the birth, arrange for someone other than your partner(s) to take care of them. And tell them about the medical equipment they might see.



TRY THIS

Try not to pressure your child to be in love with the new baby. A positive bond between siblings takes time and space.

On the day of the birth, try:

- ✓ keeping your toddler's day as normal as possible
- ✓ having them visit the baby when no other visitors are there
- ✓ letting them hold and talk to the baby
- ✓ talking about how much the baby looks like them or how much the baby seems to like them

At home after the birth, try:

- ✓ keeping up your previous routines
- ✓ making time to do the special things you used to do together
- ✓ being extra patient with your toddler, even if they return to old habits
- ✓ including them in your time with the baby, like having them sit with you while you breastfeed or chestfeed
- ✓ taking a photo of them each time you take one of the baby
- ✓ not using the baby as a reason for not doing something. Instead of "I can't play with you because I have to feed the baby," for instance, try, "When I've finished feeding the baby, let's play!"

As your children grow, try:

- ✓ valuing their differences, instead of comparing them
- ✓ encouraging them to play together and also giving them time apart
- ✓ letting each one know they're special
- ✓ not giving them labels like "the baby"
- ✓ setting clear rules for how they treat each other



BE AWARE

If you're feeling guilty about the changes the new baby brings (or simply exhausted by the added responsibilities), you may be tempted to loosen your rules or buy extra gifts for your toddler. But this can make them think that you don't think they can handle the change, or lead them to be more demanding.



Dealing With Loss and Grief

Death

Your toddler doesn't understand that some things are final, so they may have little or no reaction to someone's death. Or they may cry, be angry, or worry that someone else will die.

Before facing a loss, prepare your toddler by:

- ✓ teaching them that death is a part of life by talking about things like the changing of the seasons
- ✓ answering questions truthfully without creating new fears. If they ask, "Will you and I die?" you can say, "Yes, we all die, but Mommy won't die for a very long time and neither will you."

When a loved one or a pet dies, try:

- ✓ using simple words
- ✓ giving details only if they ask
- ✓ talking about your cultural and religious beliefs about death
- ✓ letting them express their feelings
- ✓ showing them that grief is normal and will change over time
- ✓ keeping daily routines so they feel secure
- ✓ giving them extra love and attention
- ✓ talking about the person or pet, looking at photos or drawing pictures



DID YOU KNOW?

Your toddler is very tuned in to your feelings. Even if you don't tell them about a serious loss, they'll sense that something is different. And not telling them may make them more afraid.



TRY THIS

When a loved one dies, don't say they've "gone to sleep" or "gone away" or your toddler may get scared of sleeping or travelling.



FAMILY STORY

When my brother died unexpectedly, I gently explained to our 2-year-old that his uncle had died and wouldn't be back again. He just said "OK" and that was it. A few weeks later, though, he asked when my brother was coming to visit. He didn't understand that it was final.

Finding emotional support

When you're going through difficult times, it's okay for your child to see that you're upset. Tell them what they need to know in a way that they can understand. But remember that your child is not the right person to go to for emotional support or to discuss grown-up problems. Find another adult – a friend, health care provider or counsellor – to talk to.

Family breakup

If your family breaks up, your toddler needs to feel safe and secure.

Help your toddler by:

- ✓ being calm and patient, despite your feelings
- ✓ giving them lots of love and attention, and telling them you won't leave them
- ✓ keeping to your usual routines and rules
- ✓ letting them ask questions, even if they ask the same ones over and over
- ✓ giving direct and simple answers
- ✓ telling them it's not their fault
- ✓ letting them talk happily about their other parent or caregiver, and not speaking negatively about the other parent or caregiver to your child
- ✓ making sure any new home they'll be spending time at is comfortable and welcoming

See Family Resources in the [Resources](#) section for more information.



TRY THIS

After a separation, think of yourself and your ex-partner(s) or caregiver(s) as co-workers with the shared job of caring for your toddler. If you're not ready to talk to each other calmly, use email or texts, or write information in a book that you send back and forth. And ask a friend or relative to help with pickup and drop-off.

Parenting Issues

Emotional Upset

As a parent or caregiver, it's normal to experience emotional ups and downs. But it's important for you and your loved ones to be able to recognize when you might need some extra support.



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or your toddler, get help right away. Call your health care provider, the B.C. Mental Health Support Line at 310-6789 or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), or go to the nearest emergency department.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness. After all, taking care of yourself is good for both you and your child.



DID YOU KNOW?

Perinatal depression can affect anyone regardless of gender identity, and can occur during pregnancy or at any time in the year after giving birth, adopting, miscarrying or having a stillbirth.

Perinatal depression

What is perinatal depression?

A serious, long-lasting depression that can happen during pregnancy or after the birth.

While many people experience the “baby blues” right after giving birth, some experience more serious, longer-lasting distress. You may feel like you can't cope or that you might harm yourself or your child.

Signs and symptoms:

Do you:

- cry uncontrollably?
- feel guilty, worthless or unfit to care for your child?
- think about harming yourself or your child?
- have severe mood swings?
- feel sad or hopeless?
- feel unable to enjoy your child?
- feel uninterested in your usual activities?
- feel extremely fatigued or have trouble sleeping because you're sad?

People who have had depression or anxiety before are more likely to experience them again. Those with added stress in their lives – health or money problems, unstable or unsupportive relationships or a sick child, for example – are also at higher risk.

Perinatal anxiety

What is perinatal anxiety?

Recurring, persistent, intense or disabling worry or fear that can happen during pregnancy or after the birth.

Some parents and caregivers worry more than usual that something bad will happen, or have uncontrollable thoughts about harming their child, either accidentally or on purpose. Anxiety disorders may also cause you to feel physically unwell.

Signs and symptoms:

Do you:

- feel dizzy, sweaty or shaky?
- have gas, constipation or diarrhea?
- feel short of breath, panicky or like your heart is racing?
- get easily startled?
- feel restless or moody?
- avoid family, friends and activities?
- have trouble sleeping because you're worried or fearful?

Anxiety may cause you to check on your toddler all the time or to avoid doing day-to-day things with them, like driving.

If you've had anxiety or depression or have gone through trauma in the past, or if there's someone in your family who has had mental health issues, you may be at greater risk. Lack of sleep and not enough support may worsen anxiety and depression.

Postpartum psychosis

What is postpartum psychosis?

A very rare and severe – but treatable – mental illness that can occur after giving birth.

Some new parents and caregivers start to behave in ways that are very unusual for them, and to have thoughts that aren't based in reality. You may feel thrilled and full of energy or paranoid and suspicious. You might have thoughts of harming yourself or your child.

Signs and symptoms:

Do you:

- feel elated, with racing thoughts?
- feel restless or moody?
- feel very confused and unable to organize and communicate your thoughts?
- feel like doing things that aren't normal for you?
- talk constantly or want to avoid family, friends and activities?
- feel like you don't need to sleep?
- feel like you're in dream?
- hear, see, feel, smell or taste things that aren't there or don't make sense?
- worry that people can't be trusted or want to harm you or your child?
- have unusual thoughts – that your child is possessed by the devil, for example, or that you have special powers?

If you or someone in your family has bipolar disorder or a psychotic disorder, you're more at risk of postpartum psychosis. Lack of sleep also increases the risk.

Getting help

Depression and anxiety are common and treatable. You're not alone, and there are many ways to find support. Getting help early can mean feeling better sooner.

Health care providers – Talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner. Or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 anytime, day or night, to speak confidentially with a registered nurse.

Friends, family and community – Tell the people close to you how you're feeling, and listen to their concerns. Sometimes it's our friends and family who first see that we need help.

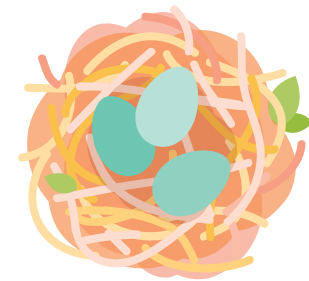


WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Encourage your partner to talk about their feelings. Listen and take them seriously.
- Let your partner know they're loved and valued. Give them extra physical space if they need it.
- Take on more household chores and child care.
- Prepare nutritious food for your partner, and suggest going on outings together.
- Protect your partner's sleep by taking on more of your child's nighttime needs.
- Offer to go with them to see their health care provider.
- Don't expect that you can fix everything yourself.
- Take care of yourself and talk to someone about your feelings, too. Remember that you can also be affected by perinatal depression and anxiety.

The “NESTS” approach to self-care

- Try to eat **Nutritious** food.
- Get some daily **Exercise**, even just a quick walk around the block.
- Try to protect your **Sleep**. Ask your partner(s) to get up if your toddler needs you at night, for example.
- Find a bit of **Time** for yourself. Hire a babysitter or ask family to help with child care.
- Seek out **Support**. Tell your partner(s), friends and family what you need. Contact the Pacific Post Partum Support Society (postpartum.org) or join a postpartum support group.



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Postpartum psychosis is a medical emergency. Seek care right away at the nearest emergency department.

Taking Care of Your Relationship With Your Partner(s)

Toddlers need so much focus that it can be easy for partners to neglect each other. But it's important that you take care of your relationship.

Try:

- ✓ going on dates and leaving your toddler with a babysitter or family member
- ✓ making time for intimate relations with your partner(s)
- ✓ travelling to and from work or school together
- ✓ making meals together
- ✓ finding a few minutes to connect before your toddler wakes up or after they're in bed



TRY THIS

If your child is in child care, make a mid-week date to meet for an outing or coffee and reconnect with your partner(s).



DID YOU KNOW?

It's normal for a toddler to prefer one parent or caregiver over another at different stages. Try not to take it personally or let it cause bad feelings between you and your partner(s).

Differences in Parenting Style

Most parents and caregivers follow 1 of 3 basic styles:

Authoritative

The most successful style. The parent or caregiver is gentle but firm and consistent. They explain the reasons for decisions and model good behaviour. The child will likely feel secure, have self-respect and grow into a responsible, thoughtful adult.

Permissive

The parent or caregiver has a relaxed attitude and usually lets the child do what they want. The child will likely feel loved, but may not learn consequences.

Authoritarian

The parent or caregiver is strict and expects the child to obey. The child behaves to avoid punishment, but may not learn to understand their emotions and act in a healthy way.

Sometimes your parenting style may not match your partner(s)'. But your toddler will do best when you and your partner(s) work together by:

- ✓ respecting the differences in your parenting styles
- ✓ giving consistent messages
- ✓ talking about your disagreements in private
- ✓ making compromises and negotiating
- ✓ getting help when you need it from friends, family, a counsellor, community members, parenting courses or books

Remember – your parenting style and your partner(s)' will change and grow as you learn about yourselves and your child.



DID YOU KNOW?

When your toddler sees you and your partner(s) disagree in a healthy, respectful way, they can learn how to work through differences. But if you never agree or if you argue in front of them, they can get confused and feel torn between you.

Cultural Differences in Parenting

Cultural beliefs and traditions can enrich a toddler's life. But when you and your partner(s) have different cultural backgrounds, conflicts may come up.

Talk with your partner(s) about what cultural values are most important to them. Tell your partner(s) what's important to you. Then find the core values that you share. Use these to create your own family traditions.

What you can do

- Combine the best of your two backgrounds. Celebrate the holidays, speak the languages and cook the traditional foods from both cultures.
- Make new family traditions that focus on your shared core values.



DID YOU KNOW?

In some cultures, grandparents and other family members discipline a child. In other cultures, only parents do. It's important that you and your partner(s) agree on how you want to discipline your child and that you can support one another in explaining your wishes to others in your family.



FAMILY STORY

My mother couldn't read English and didn't know any of the English nursery rhymes. So I took her to the library to pick out picture books. She used them to tell her own stories to my son in Mandarin.



FAMILY STORY

It was important to us that our toddler was exposed to Hindi. I sang her a traditional nursery rhyme about 10 birds sitting on a tree. Soon, she could count to 10 in my native language and knew the Hindi names of birds and trees.

Parenting on Your Own

No matter how small your family, you can make it strong by:

- ✓ spending quality, loving time together
- ✓ focusing on routines
- ✓ building a team of friends and family that can provide emotional support, companionship, emergency help and child care
- ✓ using positive discipline (see [Positive Discipline](#))
- ✓ taking care of yourself by eating well, exercising and getting enough sleep
- ✓ finding ways to spend more time with your toddler, like asking for flexible hours at work or school

See the [Resources](#) section for more information on supports and services.



TRY THIS

Trade babysitting time with other single parents and caregivers. And when you're feeling like you have too much to do, focus on the "musts" (like feeding your child), and try to let go of some of the "shoulds" (like making the bed).



BE AWARE

Try not to treat your toddler as an adult. Talk over serious issues with other adults. And when you feel overwhelmed, ask for help from friends, family members or professionals.



DID YOU KNOW?

About 20% of B.C. children live in single-parent or caregiver families. About 80% of these families are headed by females. campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BC-Report-Card-First-Call-2022_Feb_14_web.pdf

Parenting a Toddler with Support Needs

Parenting a toddler with support needs brings both joys and challenges. It may not be what you expected, but it can still be an amazing and wonderful journey.

You can help make the challenges easier by:

- ✓ joining a support group
- ✓ talking with your health care provider about your toddler's needs and about services available to help you
- ✓ talking openly with your family and setting boundaries if you need to
- ✓ asking for help from professionals, family, friends and organizations
- ✓ taking care of yourself by exercising, eating well, getting enough sleep and taking breaks from child care
- ✓ enjoying your toddler and celebrating their strengths and abilities, rather than just focusing on difficulties and tasks
- ✓ knowing that it's normal to feel emotional about your child's needs



DID YOU KNOW?

Like all children, toddlers with support needs want to play, try out new skills and get love, attention and praise. And they go through many of the same stages of development as other children, just at different rates.

Building a supportive team

Parenting a toddler with support needs usually means working with a team of specialists, professionals and family/community members.



HOW TO Build a strong health care team

- ✓ Work with your health care provider to get support as soon as possible.
- ✓ Make sure all members of your team know what others are doing.
- ✓ Ask a lot of questions.
- ✓ Take notes during meetings.
- ✓ Bring a friend or family member to meetings.
- ✓ Get support from a case coordinator or social worker to keep things organized.
- ✓ Keep a journal about your toddler's progress.
- ✓ Trust your instincts. Speak up if you think something is being overlooked.



KEY TAKEAWAY

You're the expert in your toddler's needs. You understand them better than anyone else. Use this knowledge to help the professionals develop the best treatment plan for your toddler.



TRY THIS

Your health care providers will give you a lot of suggestions about how to help your toddler. Instead of trying to do it all, ask them to tell you which are most important. Think, too, about what's most important to you and your family.



FAMILY STORY

When our son was diagnosed with Down syndrome, we were devastated. As we moved through the process of grieving our loss of a "normal child," we began the process of learning about our "special child." With the help of our health care team, support group and family, we've developed a loving and nurturing home for our little guy. He's the light of our lives and we can't imagine life without him.



Balancing Work and Child Care

It can be challenging to balance parenting with the demands of paid work or school.

You can make it easier by:

- ✓ choosing the best child care you can
- ✓ making mornings run smoothly by following routines, preparing things the night before and taking time for yourself before your toddler wakes up
- ✓ taking a few minutes for yourself after work or school before re-joining your toddler
- ✓ sharing household chores and spreading them out over the week
- ✓ having a child care plan for when your toddler is sick



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Work with your partner(s) to share child care and household tasks.



FAMILY STORY

We make things easier by having simple dinners during the week. And I get up 20 minutes early each day to do yoga and have some time to myself.

Choosing Child Care

When you're looking for child care, think about what hours and days you need and whether your toddler likes large groups, small groups or one-on-one attention.

Whatever type of child care you use, ensure:

- your toddler will be safe
- you're comfortable with the caregiver's qualifications
- you agree with their approach
- they'll encourage your child's development
- you trust them with your toddler



TRY THIS

Child care spaces fill up quickly, so start looking early. Talk with other parents, contact your public health unit or community centre, look at newspapers, bulletin boards and online and contact the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) program in your area (see Child Care in the [Resources](#) section).

Health authorities all conduct regular inspections of licensed child care centres. Parents can also visit their health authority's website and look over investigation summaries and substantiated complaints: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/reporting-on-child-care-facilities/licensed-day-care-inspection-reports

Types of Child Care

Outside your home: licensed vs. licence-not-required child care

What is licensed child care?

Programs that are monitored and regularly inspected by regional health authorities. Licensed child care programs must meet specific requirements for health and safety, staffing qualifications, record-keeping, space, equipment, child-to-staff ratios and programming.

What is licence-not-required child care?

Providers that aren't monitored or inspected. Licence-not-required providers can care for up to 2 children (or 2 groups of siblings) who aren't related to them. Parents are responsible for overseeing the care and safety of their own children.

In your home

In-home care can range from having the help of a grandparent to hiring a live-in nanny. With in-home care, your toddler is able to stay in the place they know best. There's no travel and no special arrangements to be made if they get sick. And if your in-home caregiver is from your own cultural group, holidays and traditions can be honoured and family languages can be taught.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you hire in-home care, you're considered an employer, and you must make Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan payments. Contact the Canada Revenue Agency and WorkSafeBC for more information.



HOW TO Find an in-home caregiver

- Ask family and friends.
- Call a placement or nanny agency.
- Look online.
- Check newspapers and bulletin boards for ads.
- Contact the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) program in your area. (See Child Care in the [Resources](#) section)



FAMILY STORY

My mother, who grew up in Iran, took care of my child. She and my daughter regularly attended a drop-in held in Farsi. My mother was able to meet with mothers and grandmothers and speak her native language, and my daughter was able to play with other children.

Babysitters

When you need a casual babysitter, remember – the younger your child, the older the babysitter should be. Most children under 12 aren't old enough to deal with problems and emergencies.

Before you leave your child with a new caregiver – whether a friend, family member or babysitter – prepare by:

- watching them hold and play with your child
- asking how they would deal with crying or fussiness
- watching as they feed and diaper your child
- explaining your safer sleep routines (see [Sleep and Your Toddler](#))
- asking if they've taken a babysitting course
- being sure they have a way to contact you and to call for help in an emergency
- being clear about your Dos and Don'ts:
 - ✓ Follow your bedtime and safer sleep routines.
 - ✓ Check your child often while they're sleeping.
 - ✓ Contact you if there are problems.
 - ✗ Never hit or shake a child.
 - ✗ Don't heat their bottle in the microwave or on the stove. Use a container of warm tap water instead.

When the babysitter arrives, show them where things are kept – including the list of emergency numbers. Tell them where you're going, when you'll return and how you can be reached.

Helping Your Toddler Adjust to Child Care

Before leaving your child with a child care provider, try:

- talking to your toddler about it
- reading books together about child care
- letting them spend time with the caregivers and the other children with you there

Make their first days easier by:

- staying as long as you need to
- asking the caregiver to give them extra attention
- letting them bring a blanket or toy
- telling them when you're leaving and assuring them that you'll return at a certain time
- creating a routine in which you say and do the same things each time you leave

Make every day easier by:

- letting the caregiver know if you'll be late
- giving your child lots of extra attention when you return
- talking to them about what they did while you were away and telling them what you did
- asking the caregiver about your child's day



DID YOU KNOW?

Routines can help your child feel safer as they adjust to child care. And when your child feels safe, they're better able to play, explore and learn.

Dealing With Unhappiness



DID YOU KNOW?

Many toddlers go through a “honeymoon phase” in which they’re happy with their child care for several weeks, then unhappy.

If your toddler seems unhappy, try:

- talking to their caregivers and asking if they’ve noticed anything, like not eating or not napping
- calling to check how they’re doing or dropping in to see for yourself
- finding out if they stay upset after you leave
- listening to them about what they like and what they don’t like

If their unhappiness continues, think about other child care options.

Learn more about choosing child care in the *Guide to Selecting and Monitoring Child Care in BC* (see Child Care in the [Resources](#) section).



DID YOU KNOW?

B.C. has many \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres. Learn more information here: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/running-daycare-preschool/10-a-day-childcarebc-centres

Helping Pay for Child Care



MONEY SENSE

The Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB) provides up to \$1,250 per month (\$1,500 if the parent or caregiver is under the age 25) toward the cost of child care. You can estimate your funding amount with the online estimator at myfamilyservices.gov.bc.ca/s/estimator. Visit the ACCB website for information on how to apply. Or call the Child Care Service Centre 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday toll-free: 1 888 338-6622. Translation services are available in more than 140 languages.

In addition, you may be able to reduce your child care fees by up to \$900 per month per child through the **Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI)**. You don’t need to apply to access CCFRI, you’ll automatically get the discount if your child is enrolled in a participating school.

If you have a toddler with support needs, you can apply for extra financial help through the Supported Child Development Program (see Children with Support Needs in the [Resources](#) section).



Key Safety Messages

During their toddler years, your child will begin to crawl, walk, run and jump. They will use these new skills to explore, climb, touch, and taste just about anything.

But you can reduce the chance of injury by making their world safer and by continuing to do so as they grow. Always ensure that you're:

- ✓ supervising them closely
- ✓ childproofing your home (see [Childproofing Your Home](#))
- ✓ following the manufacturer's instructions on equipment (see [Equipment Safety](#))
- ✓ using a properly installed car seat (see [Car Safety](#))
- ✓ staying within arm's reach when they're near water (see [Water Safety](#))



KEY TAKEAWAY

As parents and caregivers, we want to protect our children from everything. But toddlers also need the chance to run, play and test their personal limits. You can find balance by providing a safe environment and keeping a close eye on your child while still giving them the freedom to explore and have fun. Try stepping back while they play in the sandbox at the park or make a mess with their toys on the living room floor.



Childproofing Your Home

What is childproofing?

Creating a safer place for your child to explore by removing dangers from your home.

Your toddler is learning so quickly. One day, they're not able to get onto the couch. The next, they've found their way up on the couch and are climbing the bookcase beside it. As parents and caregivers all this change is exciting but it can also feel scary.

You can create a safer environment for your child to explore by thinking ahead and childproofing your home.



TRY THIS

Get down on the floor and crawl around to see things how your toddler sees them. Are there small objects they could choke on? Cords they could get caught in? Heavy items they could pull down?

Everyday Objects to Watch Out For

Batteries can be found in a variety of toys and household items and are choking hazards. Avoid having objects with batteries near your toddler. Button batteries that can be found in watches and other objects can cause significant harm when ingested compared to regular batteries.

Cords, ribbons and strings longer than 15 cm (6 inches) can get wrapped around your child's neck. Remove drawstrings from their clothing.

Take cords off blinds and drapes, or tie them up to where your toddler can't reach them, even if they climb on the furniture.

Never put a crib, bed, high chair or playpen near a window or a patio door where a child can reach a blind or curtain cord.

Purses can contain coins, mints or medications that don't belong in your toddler's mouth.

Recycling bins can contain sharp lids and inky newspapers and magazines that your child might suck on.



HOW TO Be prepared for an emergency

- Keep emergency numbers by every phone. You may know these numbers, but other caregivers may not. Include 9-1-1, poison control and your health care provider number in the list.
- Learn basic first aid. Contact your local St. John Ambulance, Red Cross or community centre to sign up for classes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Disposable lighters sold in Canada must be "child-resistant" but this does not mean they are "child-proof." Child-resistant lighters are made so that children have a harder time making them work. Child-resistant lighters may slow children down but they will not stop them.

Preventing Fires and Burns

- Press the test buttons on your smoke detectors or alarms monthly. Replace the batteries in the spring and fall.
- Install a home fire extinguisher and learn how to use it.
- Set up screens or barriers around fireplaces and inserts. Remember glass on fireplace doors gets very hot and takes a long time to cool down. Keep remote controls for gas or electric fireplaces out of your child's reach.
- Child-resistant lighters are not child proof.
- Set the water temperature in your hot water tank to 49°C (120°F). If you live in an apartment, attach an anti-scald guard to your faucets. Test the temperature of bath water before your child gets in, and make sure they can't turn the taps.
- Create a smoke-free home. Visit quitnow.ca.
- Don't hold your child while eating hot food or having a hot drink. And when you put your drink down, make sure it has a tight-fitting lid and is out of your toddler's reach.
- Don't hold your toddler while cooking, and keep them at least a metre (3 feet) from the cooking area.



DID YOU KNOW?

A young child's thin skin puts them at greater risk of serious burns.

Preventing Falls and Bumps

- Keep stairs clear and install gates at the top and bottom. (See [Equipment Safety](#))
- Use corner guards or cushioned strips to soften corners and edges on furniture, counters and fireplaces.
- Don't allow your toddler to move around with anything breakable or with a sucker or Popsicle in their mouth.
- Make glass doors visible by adding decals or your toddler's artwork.
- Secure bookcases, TV cabinets and other furniture to the wall with safety screws.
- Move your child into a toddler bed once they try to climb out of their crib or they are 90 cm (35 inches) tall. (See [Equipment Safety](#))
- Consider having changing tables with safety straps.



DID YOU KNOW?

Because young children have a higher centre of gravity, they're more likely to hit their head when they fall.

Preventing Window Falls

- Install window guards to prevent your child from falling out.
- Put in window stops so that windows can't be opened more than 10 cm (4 inches).
- Keep furniture away from windows.
- Remember that window screens won't prevent a child from falling out.

Preventing Poisonings

Most homes contain about 250 substances that can poison a child. Keep these and all dangerous products out of reach:

- alcohol
- cannabis (marijuana), including edibles
- non-prescription opioids and stimulants
- medications and vitamins
- certain houseplants
- pesticides
- moth balls
- diaper pail deodorant disks
- lead (from paints, mini-blinds)
- cleaning products including laundry pods
- personal care products including mouthwash and nail polish
- batteries, especially small, round "button" batteries (like those in watches)

In addition, be sure to:

- Keep all cleaning and personal care products, alcohol, medication, drugs and vitamins in original containers.
- Don't tell your toddler that medicine or vitamins are candy, and don't take it in front of them to avoid confusion.
- Lock liquor cabinets and clear away leftover drinks promptly.

- Store visitors' purses and bags where your child can't get them.
- Use child-resistant packaging, but remember that it's not foolproof.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors.
- Safely dispose of needles and sharp items.
- Safely dispose expired items.

Get more information from the Drug and Poison Information Centre. (See [Poison Control Centre](#) under [Safety](#) in the [Resources](#) section.)



DID YOU KNOW?

At least one child is poisoned every hour in B.C.



BE AWARE

Carbon monoxide has no smell or colour but it is very dangerous. Help protect your family by installing a carbon monoxide detector, making sure that appliances, chimneys and vents are regularly maintained, only using charcoal grills outdoors and not using kerosene or propane heaters in enclosed areas.



DANGER

Teach your toddler that these warning symbols mean "Danger! Don't touch." But don't expect them to remember. Keep all poisons locked up and out of reach.



If you think your toddler has been poisoned:

1. Call the BC Poison Control Centre immediately at 1-800-567-8911.
2. Tell them what your child took, the amount they took and when they took it.
3. Follow the first aid instructions on the label of the product taken.
4. Call 9-1-1 or go to your hospital Emergency. Take the container with you.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most child poisonings occur just before lunch and dinner, when children are hungry and less supervised.



Preventing Bathroom Injuries

- Turn your water heater down to 49°C (120°F) to help prevent burns.
- Check bathwater temperature on the inside of your wrist before putting your child in. The water should feel warm, not hot.
- Never leave your toddler alone in the bathroom.
- Supervise your toddler every moment they're near or in water. Have everything you need for bathtime on hand before you put your child in the tub.
- Don't use a bath ring or bath seat as a substitute for supervision.
- Teach your child to sit, not stand, in the tub.
- Drain the tub as soon as bathtime is done. If you use a portable tub, turn it upside down so it doesn't collect water.
- Don't let your toddler play with the taps.
- Keep all medications, cosmetics, cleansers, hair appliances and personal care products out of your child's reach.
- Lock low cupboards.
- Use non-slip bath mats in the bathtub and shower.
- Use a toilet seat lock and keep the lid closed.

Preventing Kitchen Injuries

- Store knives, forks, scissors and other sharp items out of reach.
- Make the area near the stove an off-limits zone.
- Turn pot handles inward and use back burners rather than front.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- Be careful when cooking with hot oil.
- Unplug small appliances.
- Place beans, nuts and other choking hazards out of reach.
- Secure tablecloths.
- Keep the dishwasher locked and the soap container empty until ready for use.
- Lock your chest freezer.
- Don't use small fridge magnets that your child could swallow or choke on.



FAMILY STORY

After watching me plug in things that make noise, my 18-month-old tried to poke a paper clip into an outlet. I put outlet covers on all the electrical outlets that same day!



KEY TAKEAWAY

Nothing is completely childproof.

Safety latches and child-resistant caps make it more difficult for children to open cupboards and bottles, but they don't make it impossible. Keep harmful items locked up, out of sight and out of reach.

Car Safety

Child Car Seats

Your child must be in a car seat every time they travel in a car, no matter how short the trip.

Ensure your car seat has:

- a CMVSS label
- at least 2 sets of slots for shoulder harness straps and 2 sets for crotch straps



Child seat or booster seat?

Stage 1: Rear-facing child seat (“infant seat”) – Use from birth until your child is at least 1 year old **and** weighs at least 9 kg (20 lb).

Stage 2: Forward-facing child seat – Use until your child weighs at least 18 kg (40 lb).

Stage 3: Booster seat – Use until your child is 9 years old or 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.

Rear-facing or front-facing?

A rear-facing infant seat is safest for your toddler, and **must be used until they are at least 1 year old and weighs at least 9 kg (20 lb)**. Continue to keep your child facing the back of the car even if they have to fold their legs a bit, until they reach the rear-facing weight or height limit of the seat. At that point, it’s time to either find another model that they can use rear-facing, or switch your current seat to face the front of the car. By starting with a convertible seat, you can continue to use the same seat, adjusting it from rear-facing to forward-facing as your child grows.

New or used?

Second-hand seats aren’t recommended. If you do use a used seat, inspect it carefully, check for recalls and visit Health Canada’s second-hand car seat safety page at canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/road-safety/second-hand-car-seats.html. Don’t use a seat that’s been in a crash. Always check expiry dates on used car seats.

3-point or 5-point harness?

If possible, use a 50-point harness, which is more secure and holds your child at their shoulders and hips.



DANGER

If an airbag inflates and hits your child’s seat, they could be seriously hurt or killed.

- Never place a rear-facing car seat where there’s an airbag.
- If you have to put your toddler in the front seat, turn off the airbag and put the seat as far back as it will go.
- Keep your toddler’s seat away from side airbags.



HOW TO Install a rear-facing car seat

1. Place it facing the back window in the back seat following the manufacturer’s instructions.
2. Tilt it back a maximum of 45°. If your child’s head falls forward, the seat needs to be tilted back more.
3. Secure the seat with its universal anchorage system or with the car’s seat belt. Check your car’s owner’s manual to see if you need to use a locking clip.



HOW TO Put your child in the car seat

1. Fasten the harness snugly so that only 1 finger fits between it and your child’s collarbone.
2. Raise the chest clip to your child’s underarms.
3. Ensure the harness straps are at their shoulders or slightly below. Raise the harness straps when their shoulders are level with the next highest slot.
4. Dress them in clothes that have sleeves and legs and aren’t too heavy.
5. If they need a blanket, put it on after they’re strapped in.

General Car Safety



DID YOU KNOW?

The safest place for your child in the car is the centre position of the back seat.

- ✓ Hold hands in the street and in parking lots.
- ✓ Use the appropriate car seat for your child, and wear your seat belt.
- ✓ Pull over and stop if you need to focus on your toddler.
- ✓ Remove any loose objects that can fly around and small objects that can roll under the brake pedal.
- ✓ Put pets in carriers or behind screens.
- ✓ Lock power windows.
- ✓ Before raising or lowering windows, check that your toddler's fingers, head and arms are inside.
- ✓ Put your phone or purse in the back seat to help ensure you don't forget to take your child with you, or use some other strategy so you do not forget your child.
- ✗ Never leave your toddler alone in a car, even for a few minutes. Your child can quickly get too hot if left in a parked car, and this can cause serious injury or even death.
- ✗ Never leave your child alone when they're sleeping in a car seat. Their head can fall forward, making it hard to breathe. Once you reach your destination, move them out of the seat and onto a safe sleep surface.
- ✗ Don't place your child in their car seat on a counter, on the car or on any raised surface.
- ✗ Don't drive while texting or talking on your phone.



Equipment Safety

Toddlers may be small but they often use a lot of equipment. You can keep it all safe by:

- ✓ choosing equipment that's right for your toddler's height, weight and age
- ✓ supervising your toddler whenever they're using it
- ✓ ensuring it's in good condition by checking often for sharp edges, loose wheels, broken brakes and upholstery tears
- ✓ using safety straps and a helmet as appropriate
- ✓ following manufacturers' instructions for assembly, care and use



BE AWARE

Before using any second-hand equipment, check for safety recalls at recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en.

Safer Chairs

High chairs

Look for:

- wide base
- strong tray locks
- proper locking device on folding chairs
- no moving parts for your child to get caught in when you're changing the position of the chair or tray

Ensure:

- safety straps are done up
- your child is not left unattended
- chair is placed away from appliances, windows, blind cords, mirrors and sharp corners

Booster chairs

Ensure:

- booster is safely strapped to a chair, and your child is securely strapped in
- no shoulder straps are tangled around your child's neck



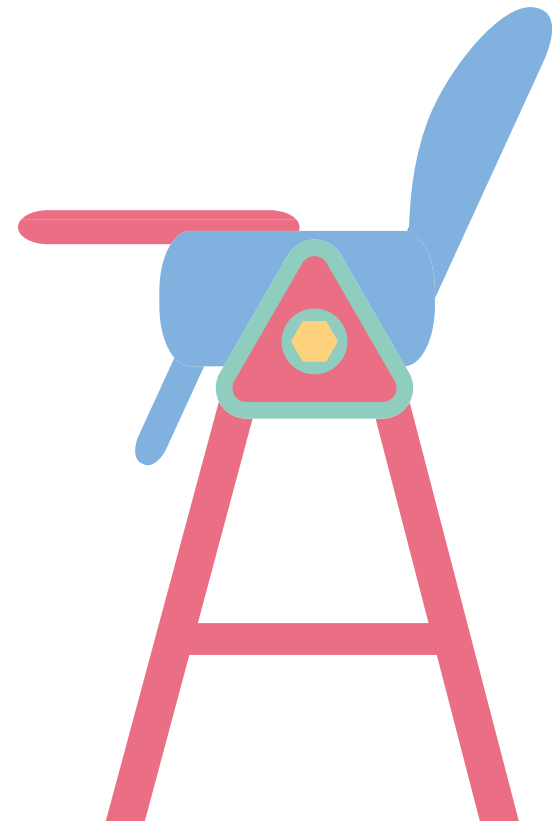
BE AWARE

Keep the chair away from walls and counters. Your child might be strong enough to push against them and tip over the chair.



BE AWARE

Chairs that hook onto a table can fall off. If you need to use one, be sure to attach it to a strong table away from table legs. Before putting your child in, pull on it to check that it's solidly attached. If your child is over 13½ kg (30 lb) or is very active, don't use a hook-on chair.



Safer Gates

Look for:

- gates manufactured after 1990
- safety-approved label
- right size for the space being blocked
- smooth finish, with no splinters, cracks or snags

Ensure:

- gate is mounted close to the floor so it can't be crawled under
- gate is installed early so you're ready when your child starts moving around on their own

For stairs, use swing gates that screw into the wall. Use one gate at the top of the stairs and another at the bottom. Don't remove them until your toddler can climb stairs without help.



BE AWARE

Accordion-style or expandable gates can trap your toddler in their openings. Pressure gates (gates that press against the wall but don't screw in) can be pushed over, so shouldn't be used for stairs.



DID YOU KNOW?

It's best for your child's development to let them walk whenever possible.



BE AWARE

Don't jog with your child in a stroller until they're at least a year old and their neck muscles have strengthened. And always use the 5-point harness.

Safer Beds and Cribs

See [Sleep and Your Toddler](#).

Safer Playpens

Look for:

- fine mesh that you can't fit your little finger through
- no more than 2 wheels
- at least 48 cm (19 inches) high
- no rough or sharp edges or loose parts
- no drilled holes between 3 and 10 mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch)
- no hinges that can pinch or accidentally collapse
- no tears in rails or mattress pad
- no scarves, necklaces or cords
- no toys strung across the top
- all sides fully raised and firmly fixed

Safer Strollers

Look for:

- 5-point harness
- easy-to-use good brakes
- secure wheels
- sun shade
- no sharp edges or loose folding parts
- suitable to your child's age, height and weight

Ensure:

- no purse or heavy packages on handle

Safer Child Carriers

Front carriers

Look for:

- firm, padded head support
- leg holes your child can't slip through
- right size for your child (check the weight limit)



Back carriers

Look for:

- wide, solid base
- padding near your child's face

Ensure:

- straps and buckles are done up
- carrier isn't used as a car seat
- carrier is used only for a child who can sit up by themselves (5 months or older)
- carrier is never placed on a table or counter with your child in it
- your coat is not done up around the carrier



BE AWARE

Don't use a carrier while skiing, jogging, biking, cooking or doing any other risky activity. Your child could be bumped, burned, thrown out or crushed under you.

Safer Cycling

Only ride with your child if you're a skilled cyclist. Ride in safe areas like parks, bike paths and quiet streets when road conditions are good. And help prevent choking by not giving your child drinks or snacks during the ride.



BE AWARE

Children under 12 months shouldn't ride with you on a bicycle or in a trailer. Their back and neck muscles can't support the weight of a helmet and can be damaged by the bumping.



TRY THIS

Before riding your bike with your toddler in a carrier or trailer, practise turning, stopping and climbing hills with a bag of flour.



DID YOU KNOW?

Bicycle trailers are more stable than child seats mounted on a bike. In either case, you can be thrown off balance if your child moves suddenly.

Bicycle-mounted child seats

Ensure:

- your child weighs 18 kg (40 lb) or less
- harness is buckled snugly
- your toddler's feet, hands and clothes aren't near spokes or other moving parts
- your toddler is never left alone in the seat
- bike isn't leaned up against anything and kickstand isn't used when your toddler is in the seat

Bicycle trailers

Look for:

- bike flag, tail light and reflector
- solid connection between trailer and bike
- secure harness

Ensure:

- used only with 1 or 2 children weighing no more than 45 kg (100 lb) total
- your toddler can't reach the wheels
- your toddler is protected from dirt thrown by tires

Tricycles, scooters and push/run bikes

Ensure all are:

- sized so your toddler can pedal while sitting comfortably
- used only with supervision
- never ridden near cars, swimming pools or stairs

Helmets

Look for:

- child-sized
- covers the upper forehead
- adjustable strap with quick-release buckle
- bright colour so they're easily seen
- not purchased second-hand
- never been in a crash, dropped or damaged
- approved by CSA, Snell, ANSI, ASTM, BSI or SAA

Ensure:

- sits straight – not tilted – on their head
- expiration date is checked regularly, and helmet is replaced at least every 5 years



HOW TO Properly fit a helmet

1. Ensure the helmet covers the top of your child's forehead and rests about two fingers above their eyebrows.
2. Fit the side straps snugly around each ear in a V shape.
3. Buckle the chin strap, tightening it until you can fit only one finger between the strap and your child's chin.
4. Re-check the helmet's fit each time your child uses it.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Your child must wear a helmet whenever they're playing on a riding toy, bike, scooter or tricycle, or when they're riding in a trailer or bike seat. Helmets reduce serious head injuries by 60% and traumatic brain injuries by 53%.



TRY THIS

Store your child's helmet on the handlebars, ready for the next ride. Don't leave it in the sun or in the back window of the car, where it can be damaged by heat.

Safer Toys

See Toys.



DID YOU KNOW?

Baby walkers are banned in Canada. They move too quickly and can cause head injuries. Try an activity centre instead.

Playing Safely Outside



BRAIN BUILDER

Find safe places outside where your child can play. Exploring the outdoors, playing on playgrounds and being around other children will help them build their imagination and learn new physical and social skills.

In the Heat and Sun

Safer sun

- ✓ If your child is 12 months or younger, keep them out of direct sun.
- ✓ Once they're older, keep them out of the sun in the middle of the day, when rays are the strongest.
- ✓ Offer them plenty of water to drink.
- ✓ Remember that snow, water and sand all reflect sun, even in the winter.

What to wear

- ✓ loose clothes with close weave for protection, and that are breathable for comfort
- ✓ sunglasses
- ✓ hat with a large brim, a neck cover and no ties
- ✓ sunscreen, even on cloudy days



DANGER

Never leave your child alone in a car. The inside of a car heats up quickly, even on a day that's not very hot. Children overheat more easily than adults. They can be seriously hurt or even die.



DID YOU KNOW?

Children burn more easily than adults, and sunburns put your child at risk for skin cancer later in life. Even children with darker skin need sunscreen. Don't wait until your child is red to get them out of the sun. Burns don't usually show up until hours later.



HOW TO

Apply sunscreen

1. Use water-resistant sunscreen approved by the Canadian Dermatology Association with SPF 30 or higher.



2. Use 1 tablespoon (15 ml) or more.
3. Apply to all uncovered skin.
4. Use lip balm with sunscreen.
5. Repeat every 2 hours.



MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Heat Exhaustion

If your toddler is fatigued, weak, confused, nauseous or has a headache, muscle cramps or cool, damp, pale skin, they may have heat exhaustion. Bring them indoors or into the shade. Take off their clothes and give them a cool bath and a drink of water. If they don't improve or if they vomit, contact your health care provider.

In the Cold

Safer cold

- ✓ Let your child warm up every 30 minutes.
- ✓ Spend less time outdoors when the temperature falls to -15°C (5°F).
- ✓ Keep your child indoors if the temperature or the wind chill is below -27°C (-16°F).
- ✓ If you take your toddler sledding, tobogganing, skating or skiing, be sure that they wear the right helmet for the sport (not a bike helmet) and that they wear it correctly (see [Safer Cycling](#)). Always have an adult go down the hill with your toddler.

What to wear

- ✓ layers of loose clothes
- ✓ warm coat that will stay dry, with sleeves that are snug at the wrist
- ✓ warm, non-slip shoes or boots that will stay dry, with room for extra socks
- ✓ mittens
- ✓ warm hat that covers the ears (but doesn't have ties)
- ✓ the right helmet for the sport



BE AWARE

If your toddler's cheeks, nose, ears, fingers or toes are white or numb, they may have frostbite. Bring them indoors right away. Take off any wet clothes, then put their frostbitten areas into warm water until feeling returns. Or use your hands to slowly warm up the areas, but don't rub or massage them. Call your health care provider or 8-1-1 if your child's skin is still waxy, white or numb.

On the Playground

Safer playgrounds

- ✓ Ensure equipment, surfaces and sandpits are free of garbage, needles and broken glass and plastic.
- ✓ Ensure equipment has guardrails and barriers, is in good condition and well-anchored, and has no sharp edges.
- ✓ Make sure the surface under the equipment is sand, wood chips, rubber or pea gravel (instead of dirt or grass), and that the fill is deep enough.



TRY THIS

Offer your child challenges and activities that fit their ability while allowing them to push their boundaries and be adventurous. Remember – playing outside in all kinds of weather will build their confidence and resilience.

What not to wear

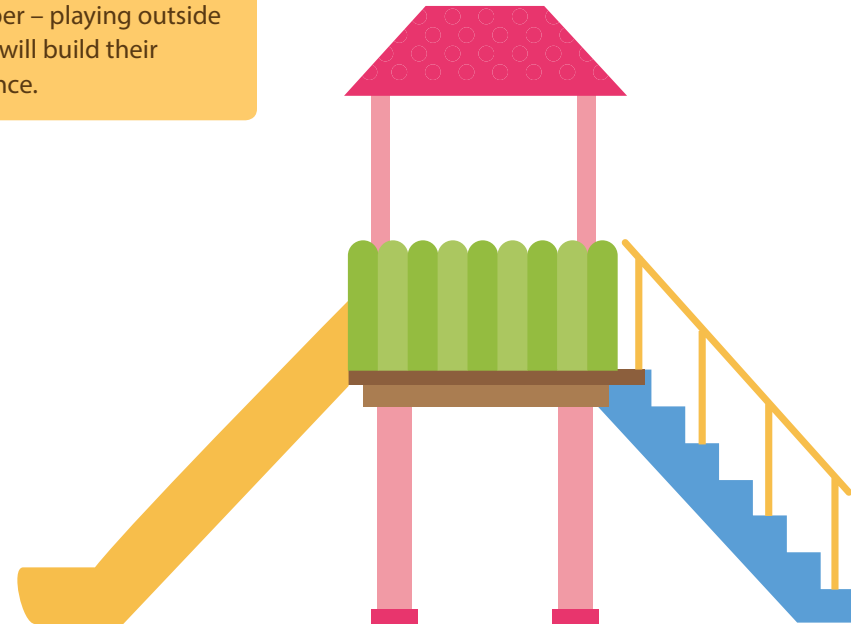
Avoid any clothing that can get caught on playground equipment and choke your child, like:

- ✗ very loose or clothing that is too big
- ✗ drawstrings
- ✗ dangling scarves or bike helmet straps



BE AWARE

Always ensure that a trusted adult stays with your child and watches while they play. They can fall or get caught – or even strangled – in playground equipment.



Water Safety

Playing in and around water is fun, soothing and good for your toddler's development. But it also poses a danger. Toddlers are attracted to water but don't understand the risks. They lack balance and can easily fall in. And because their lungs are small, they can drown in as little as an inch (2½ cm) of water.

You can make it safer by:

- supervising and staying within arm's reach whenever your child is around water
- holding hands when you're at the beach or near a pool or pond
- having your child wear a well-fitting, government-approved life-jacket when they're around water or in a boat



DANGER

It only takes seconds for a toddler to drown, so stay within arm's reach – even if they're wearing a life-jacket.



DID YOU KNOW?

A life-jacket is safer than a personal flotation device (PFD). Life-jackets float better and will keep your toddler's mouth out of the water.

Safer Pools and Garden Ponds

- ✓ Empty your toddler pool when you're not using it. Turn it upside down so it won't collect rain.
- ✓ Cover and lock a hot tub that's not being used.
- ✓ Ensure any nearby pool is fenced and covered, and that pool chemicals are locked away. Be sure there's nothing your child could climb on to get into the pool area.
- ✓ Teach your child to play safely around water – no running, pushing, diving or unsupervised swimming.
- ✗ Don't let your child use a hot tub, which can overheat them.
- ✗ Don't rely on toys like water wings or air mattresses to keep your toddler safe.
- ✗ Don't rely on a pool cover to keep a child out.



DID YOU KNOW?

Taking swimming lessons doesn't mean your toddler will always be safe in the water. Always supervise them and stay within arm's reach.

Safer Baths and Bathrooms

See Preventing Bathroom Injuries.



Safety in the Community

Your toddler needs fresh air and outdoor space where they can run and play, get dirty and make noise. Being with them means you can share their fun and help keep them safe.



KEY TAKEAWAY

You can help your toddler learn to be cautious, but they're too young to protect themselves. You must take responsibility for their safety:

- ✓ Always know where they are.
- ✓ Only leave them with people you trust.
- ✓ Be aware of the dangers in your community.

Developing Your Toddler's Skills

Use the "check with me first" approach

When young children are harmed, it's usually by people they know. So it's not enough just to tell your toddler not to talk to strangers.

Help your child learn trust while staying safe by teaching them to check with you or another caregiver before:

- going anywhere with anyone
- taking a gift or treat

Streetproof your toddler

What is streetproofing?

Helping your toddler learn and practise the skills they'll need if they're in traffic, around strangers or lost.

You can help streetproof your toddler by teaching them:

- their first and last names
- your first and last names
- the name of your street
- your phone number
- the proper names for genitals (see [Sexual Development](#))
- how to use their "big voice" when they need help

What is your child's "big voice"?

The loud, powerful voice your child can use to express important boundaries (like "Don't touch me!") and get help when they need it ("I've lost my mom!").



TRY THIS

Sing your phone number as a little song to make it easier for your child to remember.

Keep instructions simple

Be as clear as possible by:

- stating your rules and the reasons in simple words
- using the same words and ideas over and over
- being specific – "look up the driveway when you ride," for example, instead of "be careful on the tricycle"
- reminding them of the instructions often

Show your toddler what to do

Don't just use words. Clearly show your toddler what they need to know. Try:

- showing them around the neighbourhood, showing them neighbours' houses and landmarks
- pointing out who to ask for help if they need it (like another parent with a child, police officers, or firefighters)
- acting out situations and letting them practise using their "big voice"
- physically pointing out the limits. In the yard, for example, say, "You can play anywhere in front of this big tree, but you can't go past it."

Set a good example

Your toddler learns by copying you. Teach them by:

- acting how you want them to act – always using a crosswalk, for example
- talking to them as you do things together – "we're carefully looking both ways before we cross," for example

Child Sexual Abuse

What is child sexual abuse?

Abuse that may include intercourse, fondling, touching, exposing genitals, inappropriate watching of a naked child or showing pornography to a child. Child sexual abuse is a crime. Normal experimenting between children of the same age is not sexual abuse (see [Sexual Development](#)).

You can help keep your toddler safe by:

- ✓ always knowing where they are
- ✓ carefully screening all caregivers
- ✓ being aware of any other people who may be around your child when they're in someone else's care
- ✓ teaching your child the correct names for body parts, and that some body parts are private
- ✓ telling them to talk to you if someone has touched their private parts
- ✓ encouraging your child to trust their feelings and to tell you if they're not comfortable with someone
- ✓ teaching your child healthy boundaries
- ✓ letting your child know that some secrets aren't good, and that they won't be in trouble for telling them to you



DID YOU KNOW?

Most sexual abuse of children is by someone they know.



TRY THIS

Help your toddler develop personal boundaries by letting them refuse kisses, hugs, tickling and other physical contact. This will give them the confidence to say no to inappropriate touching.



EMERGENCY

If you believe your child has been sexually abused, contact the police and call Child Protection Services at 1-800-663-9122.



Safety With Animals

Getting a Pet

A pet can be a good friend to your toddler and teach them valuable social and emotional skills.

Prepare your child by:

- showing them how to be gentle and speak quietly to animals
- teaching them how animals look when they're irritated
- teaching them to wash well after touching animals
- keeping dry pet food out of your child's reach

Prepare your pet by:

- getting it immunized
- training it not to bite or scratch
- not keeping wild animals, including ferrets, as pets



TRY THIS

Wait until your child is 5 or 6 to get a pet so they'll be old enough to be gentle with it.



BE AWARE

Children under 5 shouldn't touch turtles, snakes or other reptiles. These animals carry germs that can make your toddler very sick.

Being Around Other Animals

Teach your child to stay away from animals they don't know, and to ask if it's okay before going near someone else's pet. Stay close by, even if you trust the animal. And don't be afraid to ask dog owners to use a leash.



VISITORS

What You Can Do

Start with your dog on a leash when you're visiting a home with a toddler.



HOW TO

Deal with animal bites and scratches

1. Clean the wound well with soap and water.
2. See your health care provider or call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if:
 - the animal isn't yours and it could be sick
 - the wound is serious
 - the wound doesn't heal well
 - your child's immunizations (especially tetanus) aren't up to date



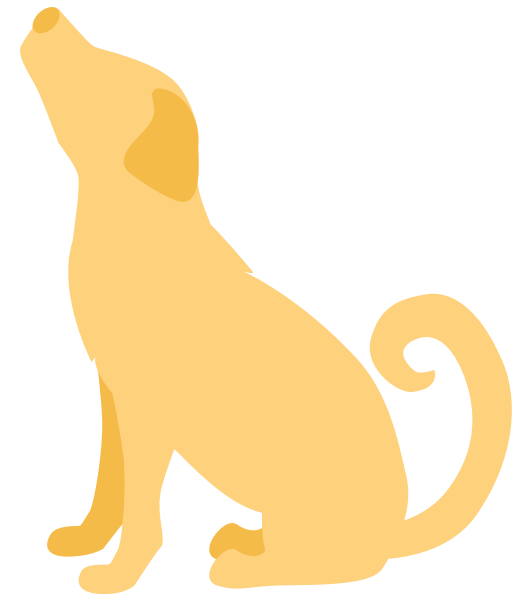
MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Call your health care provider or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if your child has **contact with a bat**, even if there's no bite. Although it's rare in B.C., some bats can carry rabies.



FAMILY STORY

My 11-month-old was scared of dogs after a big one knocked him down. I asked a friend to bring over his small, quiet dog while I kept my son on my lap. Over time, his fear went away.



Family Violence / Abuse

What is abuse?

Physical, emotional, mental, verbal or sexual mistreatment. Abuse can take many forms, including violence, neglect, isolation, financial control and threats. It can be directed at a partner(s) (of any gender) or a child.



DID YOU KNOW?

Abuse happens in all kinds of relationships. It occurs in all cultures and communities. It's carried out by people of all genders and sexual orientations. **If you've experienced violence or abuse, it's not your fault.**



DANGER

Shaking a young child, even for a few seconds, can lead to brain injury, blindness or even death.

Never shake your child. Ensure that everyone who cares for them learns to care for them calmly.

How Does Abuse Affect Children?

Abuse, including violence and neglect, has a strong negative effect on children.

Children may be injured themselves, or they may be affected by hearing fighting, seeing a parent or caregiver's injuries or being blamed. Even if a child doesn't actually see the abuse, they will feel the tension and fear.

A child may not show they're upset. But violence *does* affect them. They may:

- have behavioural and mental health issues, like aggression, learning problems, depression, anxiety and, later in life, addiction
- not trust their parents and caregivers to keep them safe and be fearful of the world
- learn unhealthy ways of solving problems and treating others
- be more likely as an adult to be abused or become abusive
- be at greater risk for chronic illness like diabetes and heart disease

What is toxic stress?

The effect of serious, ongoing hardship, abuse or neglect on a child who doesn't have adult support. Toxic stress harms the development of a child's brain and body, and can cause lifelong challenges (see [Brain Development](#)).

What You Can Do

If you're living in an abusive relationship:

- ✓ Keep your wallet, keys, identification and phone easily accessible.
- ✓ Teach your child to call 9-1-1, or let them know other ways to get help, like running to a neighbour's house. Remind them never to get between you and your abuser.
- ✓ Keep a packed bag in a safe but easy-to-access place. Include identification, a credit card, legal documents like your immigration papers or court order, medications, a favourite toy or stuffed animal, and personal treasures.
- ✓ Plan where you'll go if you leave, how you'll manage children and pets, and how you'll be able to access money.
- ✓ Tell trusted neighbours to call 9-1-1 if they hear something concerning.
- ✓ Think about which rooms in your home are the safest – rooms with a door or window to the outside, for example, and without anything that could be used as a weapon.
- ✓ Practise getting out of your home safely and quickly.
- ✓ Create a code word with your child that means to leave the house because of an emergency.
- ✓ Teach older toddlers how to use a telephone and call 9-1-1.

- ✓ Tell other caregivers of your child, such as school teachers or daycare workers about the situation, and let them know who can pick up the child from care. If there are protection orders, give these to the staff at daycare or the child's school.

If you've left an abusive relationship:

- ✓ Let people you trust know that you've left.
- ✓ Turn off any location trackers on your phone or, if possible, get a new phone.
- ✓ Change your emergency contacts if they include your ex-partner(s).
- ✓ Make all of your social media accounts private.
- ✓ Set up a new email address.
- ✓ Change important online passwords.
- ✓ Change your day-to-day routines.
- ✓ Keep a recent picture of your child and your ex-partner(s) along with other information that may be needed in an emergency.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you need help, contact VictimLinkBC at 1-800-563-0808 or VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca.

Getting Help

Help is available if you're living with violence or other abuse.

Contact:

- VictimLinkBC toll-free at 1-800-563-0808 or VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca for confidential help in 240 languages 24 hours a day
- crisis lines
- women's shelters (usually called transition houses or safe homes in B.C.)
- child protection social workers
- your health care provider
- the public health or primary care nurse
- the police

See Abuse and Neglect in the [Resources](#) section for more information.



EMERGENCY

If you think you're in immediate danger, take your toddler with you to a safe place and call 9-1-1.



FAMILY AND FRIENDS

What You Can Do

If you think a child might be being abused or neglected, you must report it to a child welfare worker. Phone **1-800-663-9122** anytime, day or night. Call the police, too. And if you think the child is in immediate danger, call **9-1-1**.



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Key Resources for Parents and Caregivers

9-1-1 Emergency

9-1-1 or 1-1-2 if unable to get 9-1-1

3-1-1 Non emergency

Baby's Best Chance: Parents' Handbook of Pregnancy and Baby Care (8th edition) offers general information about pregnancy and parenting, with a focus on ensuring the health and well-being of you and your baby.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/babys-best-chance

To purchase a copy, go to: crownpub.bc.ca and search for *Baby's Best Chance*.

BC Poison Control Centre The BC Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC) is a specialized centre in British Columbia, Canada, that provides poison control and drug information services to both the public and health care professionals.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-567-8911

Website: dpic.org

HealthLink BC gives you 24-hour access to non-emergency health information and services in more than 130 languages – just a phone call or click away.

Call 8-1-1 to:

- speak with a nurse about your symptoms
- talk to a pharmacist about your medication questions
- get healthy eating advice from a dietitian
- find nearby health services and resources
- get information about physical activity from a qualified exercise professional

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca

Public Health Offices or Community Health Centres offer a wide range of services to promote physical, emotional, social, communication and cognitive development for infants and children. Their services include breastfeeding or chestfeeding clinics, nutrition information and consultation, parent and caregiver and infant drop-in, child health clinics and family and infant follow-up. Contact your local health authority for more information. (See page 128.)

Abuse and Neglect

Helpline for Children offers help for anyone under the age of 19 suffering from physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including abandonment, desertion, neglect, ill treatment or failure to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child. Anyone can call, 24 hours a day, including parents and caregivers who are afraid they might hurt their child or anyone who knows a child is being abused. You can call anonymously.

Phone: 310-1234 (no area code needed)

Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use

To learn more about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, the impacts of using substances, as well as available resources and supports if you are struggling, talk with your health care provider or contact any of the following resources.

Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Line offers confidential, free information.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-663-1441

BC Centre on Substance Use provides a centre of expertise to help those who are impacted by substance use.

Website: bccsu.ca/

BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services provide health care services and specialized treatment for people across the province with complex needs, including severe and persistent mental health and substance use/addiction issues.

Website: bcmhsus.ca/

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health provides ways to make the most informed decisions about drinking alcohol based on up-to-date research.

Website: drinklesslivemore.ca/

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction provides evidence-based information and resources on substance use and addiction

Website: ccsa.ca/

Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research informs a broad range of projects and initiatives with the goal of preventing and reducing community-wide harms from substance use among diverse populations

Website: uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/index.php

Families in Recovery (FIR) Program provides specialized support to pregnant individuals and new parents and caregivers navigating substance use and mental health concerns. FIR offers customized services through a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, social workers and other support services.

Website: bcwomens.ca/our-services/mental-health-substance-use/fir

Government of Canada - Get help with substance use has resources and information for people who need help with substance use, including overdose prevention resources and quit smoking services.

Website: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/get-help-with-substance-use.html

HealthLink BC offers information and support 24 hours a day in more than 130 languages.

Phone: 8-1-1

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca

Heartwood Centre for Women is a 30-bed residential facility located in Vancouver that provides integrated treatment for women (age 19+), including trans women, across British Columbia who struggle with severe substance use and mental health challenges.

Phone: 1-888-300-3088 ext.2032

Email: heartwood@cw.bc.ca

Website: bcmhsus.ca/our-services/provincial-integrated-mental-health-addiction-programs/heartwood-treatment-centre

Help Starts Here offers support for addiction, anxiety, substance use and mental health. The website features more than 2,600 listings for mental health and substance use services available across British Columbia.

Website: wellbeing.gov.bc.ca

Here to Help BC offers mental health and substance use information. It offers strategies to help you take care of your mental health and use substances in healthier ways, find the information you need to manage mental health and substance use problems, and learn how you can support a loved one.

Website: heretohelp.bc.ca/

Herway Home operates in Victoria and provides primary health care and social supports to pregnant and/or parenting individuals who have a history of substance use and may also be affected by mental health issues, violence and trauma. Services include drug and alcohol counselling, parenting support, pregnancy and post-natal information, nutrition, infant and child services, advocacy, housing and income assistance information, and outreach.

Phone: 250-519-3681

Email: herwayhome@islandhealth.ca

Website: islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/pregnancy-birth-babies/herway-home-hwh

National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP)

currently funds 10 residential treatment centres. Services are offered to adults, youth and families. Services offered at treatment facilities vary, but they include clients with physical disabilities or concurrent disorders, and those on OAT (opioid agonist therapy) or psychoactive medications. Family treatment, couples counselling and services for pregnant individuals are also available.

Phone: 1-866-913-0033

Website: fnha.ca/what-we-do/mental-wellness-and-substance-use/treatment-centres

Provincial Substance Use Treatment Program offers residential substance use treatment programs that provide structured, supportive residential treatment services for individuals. Clients are 19 years of age or older and have a primary concern of substance use and show patterns of substance use that have not been successfully addressed at the community level. The program is 90 days, with 6 to 12 months of aftercare support.

Website: bcmhsus.ca/our-services/provincial-substance-use-treatment-program

QuitNow provides a wide range of free smoking cessation services 24/7. Trained care coaches will help develop a quit plan, deal with cravings and provide ongoing support.

Phone: HealthLink BC at 8-1-1

Website: quitnow.ca

Talk Tobacco is a free confidential program offering culturally appropriate support and information about quitting smoking, vaping and commercial tobacco.

Website: smokershelpline.ca/talktobacco/home

Breastfeeding or Chestfeeding

British Columbia Lactation Consultants Association is an organization of international board-certified lactation consultants (IBCLCs) and others who wish to protect, support and promote breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Website: bclca.wildapricot.org

Centre of Excellence for Women's Health Taking Care is a short guide to breastfeeding or chestfeeding and substance use.

Website: cewh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Taking-Care_Dec-6-2021-FINAL-WEB.pdf

Dietitian Services, HealthLink BC is a helpline staffed by registered dietitians who can answer general and medical nutrition questions. Translation services available in 130 languages.

Phone: 8-1-1

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/health-services/registered-dietitians

La Leche League Canada encourages, promotes and provides peer-to-peer breastfeeding or chestfeeding support and information.

Website: lllc.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada offers resources to help you breastfeed or chestfeed successfully, including:

10 Great Reasons to Breastfeed Your Baby

Website: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/10-great-reasons-to-breastfeed-your-baby.html

10 Valuable Tips for Successful Breastfeeding

Website: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/valuable-tips-successful-breastfeeding.html

Public Health Offices and Hospitals may offer additional breastfeeding or chestfeeding services such as lactation consultants, support groups and phone consultation. Contact your local health authority for more information.

Child Care

Affordable Child Care Benefit helps families with the cost of child care. Factors like family size, type of care, and household income determine how much support families can get.

Phone toll-free: 1-888-338-6622

In Victoria: 250-356-6501

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/childcarebc-programs/child-care-benefit

Canada Revenue Agency administers tax laws for the Government of Canada and for most provinces and territories, as well as various social and economic benefit and incentive programs delivered through the tax system.

Website: canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview

ChildCareBC delivers quality and affordable child care to B.C. families.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children

Child Care Licensing Regulations describe what's required of child care operators in British Columbia.

Website: bcfcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Child-Care-Licensing-Regulation-Information-Package-PDF-File.pdf

Child Care Resource and Referral Centres (CCRR) make it easier for families to find and access responsive and inclusive quality licensed and registered child care by providing information, support, resources and referral services to parents, caregivers and child care providers across the province.

Phone toll-free in B.C.: 1-888-338-6622

In Victoria: 250-356-6501

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/childcarebc-programs/child-care-resource-referral

Find Child Care allows you to check to see if your child care provider participates in the fee reduction initiative. Also access additional early years support or use the Child Care Map to search licensed providers in your community.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/childcarebc-programs/child-care-fee-reduction-initiative-provider-opt-in-status

HealthLink BC provides an overview of what parents and caregivers should look for when choosing childcare.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/choosing-child-care

Parents' Guide to Selecting and Monitoring Child Care is a brochure from the Government of British Columbia that can help you make decisions about child care.

Website: gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/child-day-care/parents_guide_to_selecting_and_monitoring_child_care_in_bc_dec_2019.pdf

Child Development

ABCs of Language Development: Discover Language with Your Child is a book written for parents and caregivers that provides “how to” practical strategies to support the communication and language development of all children, organized in an A-B-C format.

Website: languagesciences.ubc.ca/abcs-book

Appetite to Play supports parents, caregivers and early years providers to promote healthy eating and physical activity for children (birth to 5 years old). The resource includes information, games, activities and recipes.

Website: appetitetoplay.com/

DECODA provides children from birth to age 5 with a strong foundation in literacy, physical activity and healthy eating through fun activities and play. This program values the learning and bonding that happen when children and caregivers play together.

Phone: 604-681-4199

Email: info@decoda.ca

Website: decoda.ca/

Feelings First provides information to parents and caregivers on important concepts around social and emotional development for children (birth to 5 years old).

Website: feelingsfirst.ca/

Infant Development Program of the Infant and Child Development Association of BC offers home-based prevention and early intervention services to infants and children up to 3 years old. Consultants assess children and help families get the tools, skills and community connections they need to promote optimal child development and support developmental challenges. To find a program in your area, ask your public health or primary care nurse or health care provider.

Email: info@icdabc.ca

Website: icdabc.ca/programs/infant-development-program

KidCareCanada provides a variety of videos and books for new parents and caregivers on social and emotional development.

Website: kidcarecanada.org/

Ready, Set, Learn is a British Columbia government initiative that helps families with children aged 3-5 years old connect with the school system and community agencies.

Email: EDUC.EarlyLearning@gov.bc.ca

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/support/programs/ready-set-learn

StrongStart BC programs provide rich learning environments designed for early learning development for children 0-5 years old. Learn more about this free program and find a StrongStart BC Centre near you.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/support/programs/strongstart-bc

Child Support

Family Justice Services has information about government support for families.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/divorce/family-justice

Ministry of Attorney General: Family Maintenance Enforcement Program has information on government financial support for families.

Website: bcfma.ca/about-bcfma/

Children with Support Needs

If you think your child has a developmental problem or a disability, your public health or primary care nurse can help. Most communities have a child development program that can help you find support services and activities for your child that will encourage development.

Ministry of Children and Family Development Early Childhood Intervention Programs are provided to infants and young children who show signs of – or who are at risk of having – a developmental delay or disability. These services are tailored to the specific needs of each child and family. Visit the website or contact your local public health or primary care nurse or physician, or local service provider.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/child-behaviour-development/early-childhood-intervention

Supported Child Development of the Infant and Child

Development Association of BC is a community-based program that offers a range of consulting and support services to children, families and child care centres so that children with extra support needs can participate in fully inclusive child care settings. To find a Supported Child Development Program in your area, ask your public health or primary care nurse or health care provider, or contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office.

Website: icdabc.ca/programs/supported-child-development

Dental Care

BC Dental Hygienists' Association is committed to ensuring that all British Columbians have access to high-quality oral health services.

Phone: 604-415-4559

Website: bcdha.bc.ca

BC Healthy Kids Program provides coverage for basic dental treatment, optical care and hearing assistance to children in low-income families, who do not receive income assistance, disability assistance or hardship assistance.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-866-0800

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/family/child-teen-health/dental-eyeglasses

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/healthy-kids

British Columbia Dental Association (BCDA) website is a comprehensive resource for dental professionals and the public. It provides information on a wide range of topics related to oral health, an online tool to help find a dentist, and patient resources.

Phone toll-free: 1-888-396-9888

Lower Mainland: 604-736-7202

Email: info@bcdental.org

Website: bcdental.org

Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) helps ease financial barriers to accessing oral health care for eligible Canadian residents.

Website: canada.ca/en/services/benefits/dental.html

Dental Benefits provide some financial support to help eligible families access dental care.

Provincial Dental Benefit

Website: gov.bc.ca//gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/on-assistance/supplements/dental

Smiles 4 Canada is a program run by the Canadian Foundation for the Advancement of Orthodontics (CFAO) in conjunction with the Canadian Association of Orthodontists (CAO). The program provides orthodontic treatment to young Canadians who would otherwise not be able to afford treatment.

Website: smiles4canada.ca

Emergency Preparedness

HealthLink BC provides resources on heat and heat-related illness in infants and young children.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/heat-related-illness-infants-and-young-children

healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/safety-perinatal-population-during-extreme-heat

La Leche League Canada provides guidance on breastfeeding and chestfeeding emergencies and information.

Website: lllc.ca/breastfeeding-emergencies

Safely Fed Canada is a national not-for-profit dedicated to improving emergency preparedness and response and improving food security for babies, young children and their families.

Website: safelyfed.ca/

Family Resources

Support programs and family resource centres offer programs and services to support families and single parents. Contact your local public health office or public health or primary care nurse for more information.

BC Council for Families provides educational resources on parenting, co-parenting, childhood development, parent- and caregiver-teen relationships, work-life balance, suicide awareness and more. Information about involved parenting as well as customized programs and training are available on the website.

Website: bccf.ca

British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth

supports children, youth and families who need help in dealing with the child-serving system and pushes for changes to the system itself. The Representative is responsible for advocating for children and youth and for protecting the rights of those who are most vulnerable, including those who are:

- in care and live in foster or group homes
- in the home of a relative under a government program
- in youth custody

The Representative for Children and Youth is an independent officer of the legislature and does not report through a provincial ministry.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-476-3933

Website: rcybc.ca

Family Resource Programs of BC is a not-for-profit provincial organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of community-based family resource programs (FRPs). FRP provide services in communities across the province, and act as community hubs that enhance and support development of healthy families with children prenatal to 6 years old.

Phone: 250-590-5706
Email: admin@frpbc.ca
Website: frpbc.ca

Vanier Institute of the Family is a national charitable organization dedicated to promoting the well-being of Canadian families. Its website offers resources on many family-related issues.

Website: vanierinstitute.ca

Family Violence

When violence happens, there is help.

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1 and ask for the police. If your community does not have 9-1-1 service, look for the local police emergency phone number on the first page of your phone book under "Emergency."

BC Government – Gender-Based violence, sexual assault, and domestic violence offers support and assistance for those affected by domestic violence, including information on recognizing the signs of abuse, finding help and support services, and understanding legal options and rights.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/public-safety/domestic-violence

BC Housing has a complete list of transition houses for families fleeing violence, along with the houses contact information.

Phone: 604-433-2218 or call/text 1-800-563-0808
Website: bchousing.org/housing-assistance/women-fleeing-violence/transition-houses-safe-homes

BC Society of Transition Houses is a member-based provincial umbrella organization that provides leadership, support and collaboration to enhance B.C.'s range of services focused on responding to, preventing and ending violence against women, children and youth.

Phone: 604-669-6943 or toll-free 1-800-661-1040
Website: bcsth.ca

Ending Violence Association of British Columbia provides resources, training, and support to address gender-based violence and their services are aimed at supporting survivors and promoting safer communities.

Website: endingviolence.org

Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre is an information and resource hub on gender-based violence.

Website: cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/index-en.html

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only toll-free, 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous phone counselling, information and referral for young people.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-668-6868
Text HOME to: 686868
Website: kidshelpphone.ca

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence is a resource centre for information on violence within relationships of kinship, intimacy, dependency or trust.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-267-1291
Email: sfv-avf@phac-aspc.gc.ca

Stop Family Violence is a one-stop source for information on family violence.

Website: phac-aspc.gc.ca/sfv-avf/index-eng.php

VictimLinkBC is a province-wide telephone help-line for victims of family and sexual violence and all other crimes. VictimLinkBC operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides service in 240 languages. A victim service worker will help you find information on the victim services closest to you.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-563-0808

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY): 604-875-0885

Text: 604-836-6381

Email: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca

Website: victimlinkbc.ca

HealthLink BC

British Columbians can get trusted health information by phone or online from HealthLink BC. HealthLink BC combines the BC HealthGuide, BC HealthFiles, BC NurseLine, and pharmacist and dietitian services to help B.C. residents find the publicly funded health services they need, closest to where they live.

HealthLink BC provides a confidential telephone nursing service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It includes a pharmacist service for medication inquiries, available from 5 pm to 9 am nightly. It also includes dietitian services. Registered dietitians are available Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm. You can get answers to your health care questions and concerns, including when to see a doctor or visit Emergency. Translation services are available in 150 languages.

Anywhere in B.C., phone toll-free: 8-1-1

TTY (Deaf and hearing impaired) phone toll-free: 7-1-1

Website: healthlinkbc.ca

HealthLink BC Files are a series of easy-to-read fact sheets on a variety of environmental, public health and safety topics. Several HealthLink BC Files are available on topics related to parenting your toddler. You can access the HealthLink BC Files online or request a copy from your local provincial health unit/department and various other offices, including employee health and wellness services, native health centres and physicians' offices and clinics.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/services-and-resources/healthlinkbc-files

Health Authorities

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)

Phone toll-free: 1-866-913-0033

Website: fnha.ca

Fraser Health

Phone: 1-877-935-5669 toll-free or 604-587-4600

Website: fraserhealth.ca

Website: fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Services/Public-Health-Services/public-health-unit (list of health units)

Website: fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/children-and-youth#Children%20and%20youth

Interior Health

Phone: 250-469-7070

Website: interiorhealth.ca

Website: interiorhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/infant-child-and-youth-health/infant-and-children-health-0-5-years

Island Health

Phone: 250-370-8699

Phone toll-free 1-877-370-8699

Toll-free: 1-877-370-8699

Switchboard: 250-370-8699

Website: islandhealth.ca

Northern Health

Phone: 250-565-2649

Website: northernhealth.ca

Website: northernhealth.ca/health-information/pregnancy-and-baby

Vancouver Coastal Health

Phone toll-free: 1-866-884-0888

Lower Mainland: 604-736-2033

Referred to the pregnant support line 1-855-550-2229

Website: vch.ca

Website: vch.ca/en/service/prenatal-early-years-program

Hearing

BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP) is the province-wide screening program to check hearing for babies born in B.C. The program provides integrated services from hearing screening to hearing testing, as well as early language support following identification of hearing loss.

Website: phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/bc-early-hearing-program

BC Family Hearing Resource Society is a non-profit organization that provides intervention, support, education, sign language instruction and peer-to-peer mentoring to families throughout B.C.

Website: bcfamilyhearing.com

BC Healthy Kids Program provides coverage for hearing assistance. For more information, visit the website or talk with your public health unit.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-866-0800

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/family/child-teen-health/dental-eyeglasses

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/healthy-kids

Children's Hearing and Speech Centre of BC is a family-focused clinical and educational centre that teaches children with hearing loss to listen and talk, giving them the skills and confidence they need to achieve their fullest potential.

Website: childrenshearing.ca

Deaf Children Society of BC is a not-for-profit agency that provides resources, programs, support and information to families with deaf and hard-of-hearing children from birth to age five.

Website: deafchildren.bc.ca

Provincial Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services provide deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind children, and their families with a safe place to explore and achieve personal goals in an American Sign Language (ASL) and English environment.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/youth-and-family-services/deaf-hard-of-hearing

Housing

BC Housing develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options, community shelters, women's shelters and Rental Assistance Programs across the province.

Website: bchousing.org/

Co-op Housing offers a tool to assist individuals in finding cooperative housing in British Columbia. Cooperative housing provides affordable, community-oriented housing options, and this tool helps people locate cooperative housing that meets their needs.

Website: chf.bc.ca/find-co-op/

Immunizations

BC Centre for Disease Control provides information on Immunization Programs and Vaccine Preventable Diseases.

Website: bccdc.ca/our-services/service-areas/immunization-programs-and-vaccine-preventable-diseases

BC Pediatric Society helps advocate for improved health for infants, children, youth and their families.

Website: bcpeds.ca/families/immunization

HealthLink BC Files contain information on many vaccination-related topics.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca

ImmunizeBC has information about immunizations in British Columbia, including common questions.

Website: immunizebc.ca

Vaccination and Your Child is an online resource of the Canadian Paediatric Society that answers many common questions about having your child vaccinated.

Website: caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/vaccination_and_your_child

Indigenous Services

Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC (AHSABC) is a leader in Aboriginal early childhood education. AHSABC provides support to AHS sites throughout the province to promote excellence in programming. AHSABC is dedicated to the development of Indigenous children and their families, and works in collaboration with other organizations and government to ensure consistent standards of quality.

Website: ahsabc.net

Aboriginal Infant Development Program offers culturally relevant home-based prevention and early intervention services for Indigenous infants. It is a parallel organization to the BC Infant Development Program. For information on local programs, contact the Office of the Provincial Advisor for Aboriginal Infant Development Programs or your public health unit.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-388-4881

Website: aidp.bc.ca/home

Aboriginal Supported Child Development is a community-based program that offers a range of consulting and support services in a culturally relevant and meaningful way to children, families and child care centres to allow children with extra support needs to participate in fully inclusive child care settings. To find a program in your area, talk to a public health or primary care nurse or visit the website.

Website: ascdp.bc.ca

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres aims to improve the quality of life of Canada's Indigenous people and to protect and preserve Indigenous culture for the benefit of all Canadians.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-990-2432

Website: bcaafc.com

BC Aboriginal Child Care Society is a non-profit provincial organization offering Aboriginal early childhood programs throughout British Columbia.

Website: acc-society.bc.ca

First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) is responsible for planning, managing and delivering services and funding health programs, in partnership with First Nations communities in B.C. Guided by the vision of embedding cultural safety and humility into health service delivery, the FNHA works to reform the way health care is delivered to B.C. First Nations through direct services, provincial partnership collaboration and health systems innovation. When it comes to maternal, child and family health, FNHA's approach is health and wellness now and into the future for the whole family.

Phone: 1-866-913-0033

Website: fnha.ca/what-we-do/maternal-child-and-family-health

Website: fnha.ca/what-we-do/ehealth/virtual-doctor-of-the-day

KUU-US Crisis Line KUU-US Crisis Line Society provides a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia (as per KUU-US Crisis Line Society | HealthLink BC).

Phone toll-free: 1-800-588-8717

Youth Line: 250-723-2040

Adult Line: 250-723-4050

Website: kuu-uscrisisline.com

Métis Nation British Columbia – Children & Families develops and enhances opportunities for Métis chartered communities and Métis people in B.C. by providing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services.

Website: mnbca.ca/mnbca-ministries/children-and-families

2SLGBTQIA+

BC Children's Hospital Gender Clinic provides treatment with puberty blockers and/or gender-affirming hormones for transgender and gender-questioning youth up to the age of 18. The website offers resources for transgender and gender-questioning youth and their loved ones.

Email: bcchgenderclinic@cw.bc.ca

Website: bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/gender

BC Government provides resources and information to promote gender equity in British Columbia. New services and opportunities are helping to expand access to childcare, health care, education and training, affordable housing, counselling and crisis support services, as well as support for people facing gender-based violence.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/gender-equity/resources

Kelty Mental Health helps families across the province navigate the mental health system, connect with peer support, and access resources and tools to support well-being. Their team assists professionals working to support the mental health and well-being of children, youth and families in B.C. schools.

Website: keltymentalhealth.ca/

Pflag Canada offers peer-to-peer support, striving to help all Canadians with issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. They support, educate and provide resources to anyone with questions or concerns. They offer local, practical and emotional peer-to-peer family support for individuals and their loved ones challenged by gender/sexual identity.

Website: pflagcanada.ca

QMUNITY is a non-profit organization based in Vancouver that works to improve queer, trans and Two-Spirit lives. They provide a safer space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people and their allies to fully self-express while feeling welcome and included. Their building serves as a catalyst for community initiatives and collective strength, and they provide personal support, information and referrals for queer, trans and Two-Spirit people of all ages to live healthier, happier lives. Programs include free and low-cost counselling, an STI clinic, free legal advice through Access Pro-Bono, and an employment drop-in clinic.

Phone: 604-684-5307 ext. 100

Phone toll-free: 1-800-566-1170

Email: reception@qmunity.ca

Website: qmunity.ca

Trans Care BC connects transgender, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse parents and caregivers to supportive, gender-affirming care providers.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-999-1514

Email: transcareteam@phsa.ca

Website: phsa.ca/transcarebc

Medical Resources

BC Urgent and Primary Care Centres offer essential health care services to families in need. The website provides details about the services offered, locating nearby centres, and what to expect during a visit.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/health-services/urgent-and-primary-care-centres

British Columbia College of Nurses & Midwives regulates the professions of nursing and midwifery, and maintains an online directory of nurses, nurse practitioners and midwives. Nurse practitioners can provide primary care to individuals and families in need of a primary care provider. Midwives can provide primary care to pregnant people and their newborn babies, from early pregnancy through labour and birth and up to 6 weeks after birth.

Phone: 604-742-6200

Toll-free: 1-866-880-7101 (within Canada only)

Email: info@bccnm.ca

Website: registry.bccnp.ca/ElasticSearch/Search

Canadian Paediatric Society promotes quality health care for Canadian children and establishes guidelines for pediatric care. The organization offers educational materials on a variety of topics, including pregnancy, immunizations, safety issues and teen health.

Phone: 613-526-9397

Website: cps.ca

Caring for Kids is a website that provides parents and caregivers with information about their child's health and well-being. Developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society.

Website: caringforkids.cps.ca

College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC services the public by regulating physicians and surgeons, and provides information on medical licensing, standards of practice, complaints and disciplinary processes, and resources for patients seeking information about health care providers.

Phone: 604-733-7758

Toll Free: 1-800-461-3008

Website: cpsbc.ca/

HealthLink BC – Health Connect Registry If you live in British Columbia and need a family doctor or nurse practitioner, register for the Health Connect Registry.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/health-connect-registry

Oak Tree Clinic at BC Women’s Hospital & Health Centre provides specialized, interprofessional HIV care for women across the lifespan. This includes care from birth, throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood – including reproductive health, pregnancy, menopause and beyond – in a safe environment.

Phone: 1-888-711-3030

Website: bcwomens.ca/our-services/specialized-services/oak-tree-clinic

Pathways Medical Care Directory offers a range of medical services, including primary care, urgent care, specialist consultations, and preventative health care services. Their website provides information about their services, health care providers, and how to book appointments.

Website: pathwaysmedicalcare.ca/

Mental Health

For information about perinatal depression support groups, contact your public health unit.

BC Crisis Line provides emotional support to youth, adults and seniors in distress, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-784-2433

Website: crisiscentre.bc.ca

BC Reproductive Mental Health Program offers resources on parent and caregiver mental health, including tools that you can use yourself. Through referral from your health care provider, the program offers counselling for depression and other mental illnesses in pregnancy and after birth.

Website: bcwomens.ca/our-services/mental-health-substance-use/reproductive-mental-health

British Columbia Association for Living Mindfully (BCALM)

is a non-profit society dedicated to facilitating increased mindfulness and reduced stress in homes, schools and workplaces throughout B.C. They offer mindfulness-based stress management programs across the province, some of which are covered through MSP with a referral from a primary care provider.

Email: info@bcalm.ca

Website: bcalm.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association – Confident Parents: Thriving Kids offers strategies to support you and your child that may be struggling with anxiety or behaviour changes.

Website: welcome.cmhacptk.ca/

HealthLink BC provides information on mental health and a variety of other health topics.

Phone: 8-1-1

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/

Help Starts Here provides a searchable listing of mental health and substance use resources and services, organized by community.

Website: helpstartshere.gov.bc.ca/

KUU-US Crisis Line KUU-US Crisis Line Society provides a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia (as per KUU-US Crisis Line Society | HealthLink BC).

Phone toll-free: 1-800-588-8717

Youth Line: 250-723-2040

Adult Line: 250-723-4050

Website: kuu-uscrisisline.com

Pacific Post Partum Support Society is a non-profit society dedicated to supporting the needs of postpartum individuals and their families. Support is available by phone, text and through a guide, *Postpartum Depression and Anxiety: A Self-Help Guide for Mothers*.

Phone toll-free: 1-855-255-7999

Phone: 604-255-7999

Website: postpartum.org

New Immigrants and Refugees

Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) covers certain pre-departure medical services for refugees coming to Canada for resettlement and provides limited, temporary coverage of health care benefits to some people who aren't eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance.

Website: canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-within-canada/health-care/interim-federal-health-program/coverage-summary

Welcome BC provides many services and supports for newcomers to help them settle in the province.

Website: welcomebc.ca/Start-Your-Life-in-B-C/Newcomers-Guides

Nutrition

Canada's food guide is available through the Health Canada website.

Website: food-guide.canada.ca/en

Dietitians of Canada offers a wide range of resources related to nutrition and dietetics on the website.

Website: dietitians.ca

Dietitian Services – HealthLink BC can answer your questions about healthy eating, food and nutrition. Registered dietitians are available by email and phone from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Services are available in more than 130 languages.

Phone: 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing)

Email: healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/email-healthlinkbc-dietitian

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/health-services/registered-dietitians

Food Allergy Canada offers information and resources to help Canadians with food allergies live with confidence.

Website: foodallergycanada.ca

UnlockFood.ca offers everyday guidance from the Dietitians of Canada.

Website: unlockfood.ca

Parenting

Support groups, such as Parents without Partners, Mother Goose! and Nobody's Perfect, as well as the family resource program (Family Place), are available in many communities. Contact your local public health unit, mental health agency or family resource centre.

BC211 connects people to the community, government and social services they need. Help is confidential and available in many languages. Call, chat online or text 2-1-1 every day between 8 am and 11 pm.

Phone/Text: 2-1-1

Website: bc211.ca

Dad Central connects, inspires and trains dads and communities to build healthy children together by providing an extensive library of resources and guidance for the dad journey.

Website: dadcentral.ca

FNHA Fatherhood is Forever is a resource booklet about fathering for First Nations and Métis parents and caregivers in B.C.

Website: fnha.ca/WellnessSite/WellnessDocuments/fatherhood-is-forever.pdf

Parent Support Services Society of BC provides self-help parenting support to parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, kinship care providers and caregivers throughout British Columbia through their Parenting Support Circles program.

Website: parentsupportbc.ca/services/support-groups/

Physical Activity

Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines show that there is an important relationship between overall health and how much sleep, sedentary behaviour and physical activity children get in a 24-hour period.

Website: csepguidelines.ca

Physical Activity Services – HealthLink BC is staffed by qualified exercise professionals who provide general physical activity information and professional guidance to help British Columbians be more physically active and lead a healthier lifestyle. Translation services are available in 130 languages.

Phone: 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing)

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/physical-activity

Postpartum Support

BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs offers free postpartum supports including the Healthy Care Pregnancy Pilot Project which provides support to newly parenting individuals who use or have used substances in the province and the Pregnancy Hub which offers access to referrals to local programs & services, an evidence-based resource library, a monthly newsletter, exciting live and recorded webinars, virtual classes and events.

Website: bcapop.ca

Doula Services Association of BC promotes doula support for families in British Columbia. Their mission is to raise awareness about the role of Perinatal (fertility, birth, postpartum, loss) Doulas within B.C., to provide a referral service to B.C. families and to deliver continuing education to members, health care professionals and the public at large. Their referral program offers volunteer doula support to low-income families.

Website: bcdoulas.org/find-a-doula

Pacific Post Partum Support Society provides support to parents and caregivers and their families experiencing postpartum/perinatal distress, depression and anxiety through support groups and phone and text support.

Phone/Text: 604-255-7999 | Toll-Free: 1-855-255-7999

Website: postpartum.org

Prescription Drugs

MotherToBaby offers information about the safety of medications while breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Website: mothertobaby.org

PharmaCare subsidizes eligible prescription drugs and medical supplies.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-663-7100

Lower Mainland: 604-683-7151

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents

Safety

BCAA Child Passenger Safety Program provides information and resources to keep children safe while travelling on B.C. roads.

Phone toll-free: 1-877-247-5551

Website: bcaa.com/community/child-car-seat-safety

BC Centre for Disease Control – SmartSex explores a wide range of downloadable guides and handouts on various sexual health topics, available in multiple languages.

Website: smartsexresource.com/

BC Drug and Poison Information Centre provides 24-hour poison information services.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-567-8911

Website: dpic.org

BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit provides useful fact sheets by email.

Website: injuryresearch.bc.ca

Burns and scalds in young children – HealthLink BC provides information on risks related to burns and scalds in young children, how to prevent them and what to do when your child is burned.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/burns-and-scalds-young-children

Canada Safety alerts and notices for child car seats informs parents and caregivers about child car seat and booster seat safety.

Website: tc.canada.ca/en/road-transportation/defects-recalls-vehicles-tires-child-car-seats/safety-alerts-notices-child-car-seats

Canada Safety Council is a national, non-government charitable organization that provides safety information, education and awareness covering traffic, home, work and leisure.

Phone: 613-739-1535

Website: canadasafetycouncil.org

Canadian Red Cross teaches emergency child care, first aid, CPR and basic skills for dealing with emergencies.

Phone toll-free: 1-877-356-3226

Website: redcross.ca

Get Checked Online is a free and confidential online sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing service offered by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC).

Website: getcheckedonline.com/Pages/HowGetCheckWorks.aspx

Health Canada: Consumer Product Safety

Phone toll-free: 1-866-662-0666

Website: hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php

For information specific to safer baby equipment: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/nursery-products.html

Parachute provides information on keeping children safe and preventing injuries.

Phone toll-free: 1-888-537-7777

Website: parachutecanada.org

PreparedBC offers help with emergency planning and creating emergency kits.

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc3

Public Health Agency of Canada offers online information on many child safety topics.

Website: phac.gc.ca

Safe Start is an injury-prevention program of BC Children's Hospital that provides information to parents and caregivers on how to make homes and cars safer.

Website: bcchildrens.ca/health-info/healthy-living/child-safety

Safer Sleep for My Baby promote safe sleeping practices for babies.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-babies-0-12-months/baby-safety/safer-sleep-my-baby

The **Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada**

Sex & U resource offers evidence-based information and resources on sexual health, contraception, STIs, pregnancy and relationships.

Website: sexandu.ca/

St. John's Ambulance offers programs in first aid, CPR and child care.

Local branches of St. John Ambulance are listed in the white pages of your telephone directory, and in the Yellow Pages under "First Aid Services."

Website: sja.ca

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of British

Columbia provides free, confidential, non-judgmental emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone toll-free: 1-800-784-2433

Website: crisiscentre.bc.ca

Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome British Columbia Program seeks to reduce the incidence of shaken baby syndrome in British Columbia by providing timely, relevant and scientifically sound information.

Website: dontshake.ca/

Speech-Language Therapy

Speech language services are available through public health and a variety of community service providers.

BC Early Hearing Program (BCEHP) is the province-wide screening program to check hearing for babies born in BC. The program provides integrated services from hearing screening to hearing testing as well as early language support following identification of hearing loss.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-612-2347

Website: phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/bc-early-hearing-program

Speech Hearing BC is a non-profit association of speech-language pathologists and audiologists in B.C., and offers a tool to find a professional on their website.

Phone toll-free: 1-877-BCASLPA (222-7572)

Website: speechandhearingbc.ca/public

Travel

HealthLink BC provides tips for parents and caregivers on how to prepare for and ensure the safety and well-being of children while travelling.

Website: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/travelling-children

Vision

Annual vision exams may be covered or partially covered under the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) for children and adolescents up to age 18.

Your regular health care provider should check your child's vision at every visit, starting at birth.

Further information is available from your optical provider or from the government website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp.

BC Doctors of Optometry offers a tool to find a Doctor of Optometry and the BC Doctors of Optometry Eye Health Library.

Website: bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca/find-a-doctor

Website: bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca/patients/library/

BC Healthy Kids Program provides coverage for eye wear for children up to age 18 from lower income families. For more information, visit the website or talk with your public health unit.

Phone toll-free: 1-866-866-0800

Website: gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/social-development-poverty-reduction/healthy-kids.pdf

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/policies-for-government/bcea-policy-and-procedure-manual/health-supplements-and-programs/healthy-kids

Website: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/family/child-teen-health/dental-eyeglasses

We are always looking for new and helpful resources for families. If you have any suggestions, please contact us at chbcadmin@phsa.ca.



Appendix

Canada's food guide 140

Eat well. Live well.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day

Have plenty
of vegetables
and fruits

Eat protein
foods

Make water
your drink
of choice

Choose
whole grain
foods



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Discover your food guide at

Canada.ca/FoodGuide

Eat well. Live well.

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat



Be mindful of your eating habits



Cook more often



Enjoy your food



Eat meals with others



Use food labels



Limit highly processed foods



**Marketing can influence
your food choices**

*

Healthy eating recommendations



Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.

Be mindful of your eating habits

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

Cook more often

- Plan what you eat
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

Enjoy your food

- Culture and food traditions can be a part of healthy eating

Eat meals with others

Make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day.

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.

- Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat

Limit highly processed foods. If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts.

- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no added sodium, sugars or saturated fat
- Choose healthier menu options when eating out

Make water your drink of choice

- Replace sugary drinks with water

Use food labels

Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices

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Toddler's First Steps

A Best Chance Guide to Parenting Your 6- to 36-Month-Old

Your child will go through amazing changes between 6 and 36 months of age. *Toddler's First Steps* is packed with practical information on child development, nutrition, health and wellness, parenting and safety – all of which will help you provide the environment and support that contribute to your toddler's healthy growth and development.

You can access more information at:

HealthLink BC

British Columbians have trusted, free health information just a phone call or click away.

HealthLink BC gives you quick and easy access to non-emergency health information and services. Speak with a nurse about symptoms, talk to a pharmacist about your medication questions, find information about physical activity from a qualified exercise professional, or get healthy eating advice from a dietitian. HealthLink BC will also direct you to other health services and resources available in your community.

Dial 8-1-1 or visit healthlinkbc.ca.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.

Translation services are available in over 130 languages on request.

