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# Bump, Baby and Beyond

Your Toddler



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# Your toddler

Find out about the big changes that your child will go through as she grows from baby to toddler. It is a time of change for parents too.



## Your toddler at a glance

### Making the effort to understand the world from your toddler's point of view really helps.

#### Understand what she wants

It helps to remember that your time and attention are the most important things to your child, so if she learns to get lots of it by throwing a tantrum, she'll continue down that path. Instead, reinforce good behaviour whenever you see it by giving her praise and cuddles and kisses. When you praise what she does she'll respond by doing it again and again.

She needs to feel safe and secure, and one of the ways you will do this is by giving her structure and boundaries – but she will test them and that's hard on you.

#### Understand how she learns

Toddlers learn by copying, so show her love and affection, treat her – and others – with consideration.

Toddlers learn through playing indoors and outside. You are her best playmate, join in the fun.

She will learn to talk by hearing you talking to her – the more you talk to her and read books together the faster she'll learn.

## Remember the basics

To grow healthy and strong she needs good healthy food. If you eat well as a family she will soon learn to take pleasure in food and mealtimes.

She also needs lots of activity, get out and about together. It's important for her (and you too) that you get involved in lots of fun stuff to do for parents and toddlers locally – find out at your family information service.

Brush her teeth in the morning and last thing at night with toothpaste containing fluoride.

## Look after yourself

Your own health and happiness are really important, if you are not okay then your children will feel it. It's okay to put yourself first sometimes.

### A child Psychotherapist's view:

"The toddler years are times of rapid change and development. Your baby is less dependent on you and is becoming an inquisitive toddler with likes and dislikes of her own. As she learns to walk and talk, she will both challenge parents to the limits and also make them feel proud. All children are different and will develop at their own pace - with parental encouragement - so try not to compare them with older siblings or other toddlers. Learning to understand things from your child's point of view will help."

Julie, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

## You and your child

The 'toddler years' will be a time of big changes for you and your child. She will grow from a baby who needs your constant care and attention into a little person who will thrive and develop with your love, patience and affection.

Try to understand the world from your toddler's point of view. This will make it easier to be patient and help avoid problems.

### In this section we will look at:

- Getting the basics right
- Eating well for toddlers
- Childcare
- Learning to talk
- What you can expect at 12-24 months
- What you can expect at 25-36 months
- We are a family: When mum and dad are not together

## Getting the basics right

The time between your toddler's first and third birthdays can be very demanding. Take a practical approach to the challenges.

### Take a positive approach

- Praise her to encourage her to behave well
- Respect her, her thoughts, needs and wishes. This does not mean giving into her over everything, but try giving her limited choices like what colour top to wear
- Try and see the world through her eyes. Recognise when she's feeling unhappy, angry, tired, bored or hungry. These things may affect her behaviour
- Be consistent and have basic rules that are right for her age. Make sure that everyone who cares for her knows what these rules are

### See the world through your toddler's eyes

The world is an exciting place to your toddler, but it can also be confusing. The way she sees things will depend on her personality as well as how far her brain has developed. You can help by making a real effort to see things from her point of view as she gets used to being more independent.

### Lead the way

Children learn by copying so show them love and affection. Treat them – and others – with consideration. Listen to her views and respect her feelings. It's no good telling her that hitting or shouting is not allowed if that's what you do.

### Lay down some ground rules

Your toddler will naturally want to please you, but she needs to know what you expect of her. Set clear, simple rules that she can understand and are right for her age.

### Be consistent

Conflict can arise when parents and others who care for your child, follow different sets of rules. Make sure other carers know what the rules are. You will confuse your toddler if you allow her to do something one day and then tell her off for doing the same thing the next. When you say 'no' make sure you mean it.

### Show your toddler that you expect her to behave well

Although it may not always seem like it, children love to please their parents. If you expect your toddler to behave badly, chances are she will.

### Be realistic

Don't expect your toddler to know that an ornament isn't a toy to bang on the floor. Put things you don't want her to touch out of the way.

### Reward good behaviour

- Praise and attention work far better than criticism or punishment. Show your toddler you are pleased when she behaves well
- Let her hear you saying good things about her to other people
- Don't use sweet treats to praise good behaviour but give her cuddles, kisses and extra attention

### Think of their feelings

When your toddler misbehaves, it's often because she is hungry, bored, tired or doesn't know how to deal with her feelings. There may be something in her life upsetting her. You can help by letting her know that she's allowed to show her emotions and by giving her a name for her feelings so that she can express them. For example say, 'it looks to me as if you're sad'. Don't worry if you haven't identified it correctly – she'll soon put you right if needs be.

### Tell her when you're pleased

Your toddler wants your attention more than anything else. When you praise what she does, she will respond by doing it again and again. Explain what you mean. Say, 'thank you for putting your blocks away' instead of a general 'that's a good girl'.

### It's all completely normal

There's no doubt about it, being a parent to a toddler can be incredibly rewarding, but at times, incredibly challenging too.

They're growing up fast, developing a sense of self and want more control over their own lives. They become easily stressed and frustrated when things don't go their way, and can get overwhelmed by their own emotions, which can often result in tantrums or meltdowns.

All of this is normal, it doesn't mean your child is ill behaved or that you're a bad parent. The important thing is not to shout or swear at them, it just frightens them. Never use physical punishment, no matter how challenging they may be.

We are constantly learning more about how children's brains develop and how childhood experiences, especially traumatic ones such as being physically punished, can have a negative impact on brain development, which can lead to poor health and wellbeing later in life.

Find out more about baby and child brain development by visiting **Parenting. Give it time** at [www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time](http://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time) and looking up **Development Stages**

### Understand their behaviour and focus on solutions

Key to managing toddler behaviours is understanding why the behaviour happens, what you can do to prevent or manage the

behaviour, and what you can do to calm and reassure your child.

Parenting resources with advice and guidance on this topic are widely available, but may not always provide accurate up-to-date information. For parenting tips, and advice you can trust, visit the **Parenting. Give it time** website at [www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time](http://www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time). All the information on there is regularly updated and has been developed by child psychologists and other experts based on the latest scientific thinking on managing behaviour in children.

### What about physical punishment, like smacking?

Using physical punishment e.g smacking, hitting, slapping, or shaking to discipline a child is harmful. It is not an effective way to improve a child's behaviour or help them learn self-control. As well as hurting the child it can make them feel fear, anger, sadness, and confusion and gives them the message violence is OK, when it is not.

### Physical punishment and the Law

In Wales, it is illegal to use physical punishment of any kind against children. Anyone doing so – including parents or anyone responsible for a child while the parent is absent – will be breaking the law and risks being arrested or charged with assault. The law applies to visitors to Wales too.

For more information visit:  
[www.gov.wales/EndPhysicalPunishment](http://www.gov.wales/EndPhysicalPunishment)

**If you are finding things tricky**

All parents go through times when they find being a mum or dad difficult. For some, the toddler phase is particularly tough. If you are finding it difficult, there's lots of support out there. You might see less of your health visitor after your baby is one, but she will still be there to support you. Let her know if you are finding things hard, or if you need reassurance or support. She is trained in parenting support as well as health issues and will know who you can talk to locally if you need extra help.

**Further information**

Contact the Family Information Service on **0300 123 7777** to find services in your area

**Top tip!**

Choose one thing you'd like to do for yourself and make time to do it. It could be a chat with a friend, getting stuck into a good book, or having a relaxing bath.

**Remember to look after yourself**

Your own health and happiness are very important in raising contented and confident children. Put yourself first sometimes.

**What your child needs most of all is you**

'Toddler battles' are most likely when you feel undervalued, overworked or that life's getting on top of you. So you have to learn to put yourself first sometimes.

**Feeling good and functioning well**

Remember the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing.' These are really important now. If you look after yourself and keep making time for the 'five ways' you'll be in good shape physically and emotionally even on a difficult day.

**When it's more than just a bad day**

Talk to your health visitor or doctor if you:

- Are finding every day a struggle
- Feel constantly depressed, anxious or exhausted even when you're getting enough sleep
- No longer get enjoyment from life, or if you are feeling suicidal

## Eating well for toddlers

Once your child is over one year old she will enter a phase of rapid growth. She will need small, regular healthy meals and snacks to help her get all the nutrition she needs.

A good diet will help your child to grow, learn and have the energy to be active and fight off illnesses and infections. A good diet will also give her a chance to use her hands, mouth and senses.

Spend time talking to her at mealtimes and help her to be independent and make choices. Eating together will also give her a chance to develop social skills, like sharing, taking turns and sitting with others.

**Remember: Good habits now will last a lifetime.**

**Top tips to help toddlers eat well**

- Make sure you give your toddler a variety of foods. Don't get upset if she doesn't eat everything she's offered. Keep offering foods and you will be amazed what she suddenly likes
- Having a few different things on a plate can encourage her to try new things
- Food that looks colourful on a plate will tempt children. Try different textures as well, like raw and cooked vegetables and fruit
- Toddlers love to mimic adults. Sit with your toddler at mealtimes and eat the same food as she does. Showing how much you enjoy it will encourage her to do the same
- Never force her to eat and don't get upset or angry if she refuses food. Appetites, likes and dislikes will vary from day to day. If you keep offering a range of foods at mealtimes she will settle into good eating habits



### Top tips for drinks!

- After your toddler is one year old, drinks should be given in an open cup, not a bottle. This is so they can learn to swallow and not suck drinks through a teat or nozzle.
- The only drinks you need to give your child between meals are water or milk. Any other drinks can damage teeth, even if they have no sugar in them. Most soft drinks are acidic and can damage tooth enamel.
- Children can have fresh fruit juice diluted half-and-half with water, as long as they have it with meals and served in a cup.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners for children under five – things like saccharin and aspartame. These are found in almost all squashes and fizzy drinks.
- Children love water. It quenches their thirst, which is why they want a drink.

### Drinks and teeth

Milk will still be an important drink for your toddler in the first four years of life. Children should be offered about half a pint (300 mls) of milk a day. This could be as a cup of milk at one of their snack times and a cup of milk in the evening.

### Which milk to choose

Children 1–2 years: Whole milk, or unsweetened calcium fortified soya milk if you are avoiding dairy products.

Children 2–4 years: If your child eats well, then semi-skimmed milk or calcium fortified unsweetened soya milk can be their main milk drink. If you are worried your child isn't eating well, you can try giving them whole milk.

Milks to avoid: Children over the age of one do not need fortified milks, like growing up milks or toddler milks, unless recommended by your GP. All young children should avoid rice milk, canned milks, flavoured milks, or low fat milks like 1% fat or skimmed milk.

**Breastfeeding will benefit you and your child for as long as you choose to do it. Carry on as long as you want to!**

### Little and often

Most children need three meals and two 'mini-meals' a day. Toddlers have small tummies, so they need to eat every three hours or so. They are more likely to enjoy small meals so they aren't overwhelmed by the portion sizes. Toddlers don't need snack foods like biscuits, crisps, sweets and ice cream between meals. These foods will fill them up without providing many nutrients, so save them for special occasions. See examples of snacks you can give your toddler inbetween meals.

### Further information

See First Steps Nutrition website for ideas on healthy snacks:

[www.firststepsnutrition.org](http://www.firststepsnutrition.org)

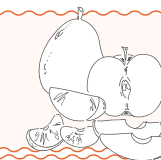
Never leave a toddler or young child alone when eating, as they could choke\*. They are still learning how to chew properly, so sit with them. You will be there to help them if they get into trouble.

*\*For more information on what to do if your child chokes, see page 50*

### Snack attack

Bin the crisps and try some of these snacks:

**Bite-Sized chunks of apple or pear or segments of a Seedless satsuma.**



**Carrot, pepper, cucumber, courgette sticks with hummus dip or slices of cherry tomato.**

**Squares of toast, bread rolls, baps with butter, spread, or peanut butter or bread sticks, with a tomato dip or soft cheese.**



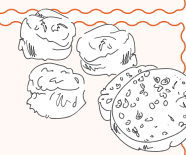
**Mini Sandwiches with yeast extract, tuna, cheese, or mashed banana or even mini pizza triangles.**

**Low salt oatcakes, rice cakes, crackers, crispbreads or unsalted plain popcorn.**



**Natural yogurt and fromage frais, with or without a little chopped fruit.**

**English muffins, crumpets, pancakes, potato or cheese scones**





Portion sizes vary from age to age.

### Menu 1: Lewis, 18 months

**Breakfast:** Unsweetened orange juice, diluted half-and-half with water. Baked beans and half a toasted muffin.



**Morning Snack:** Cup of milk. Toast fingers and soft cheese and a tangerine.

**Lunch:** Chicken breast and mashed potato with peas. Bananas and custard. Cup of water.



**Afternoon Snack:** Cup of water. Sliced apple dipped in natural yogurt.

**Tea:** Cheese on toast with tomatoes. Cup of water.



**Before Bed:** Cup of milk\*

### Menu 2: Ellie, 26 months

**Breakfast:** Unsweetened orange juice, diluted half-and-half with water. Porridge.



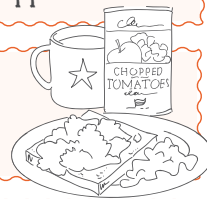
**Morning Snack:** Cup of water. Bread sticks, cubed cheese, and grapes.

**Lunch:** Spaghetti bolognese, grated cheese and broccoli. Tinned rice pudding with dried apricots. Cup of water.



**Afternoon Snack:** Cup of milk. Toast fingers with peanut butter and an apple.

**Tea:** Scrambled egg on toast, with chopped tomatoes. Cup of water.



**Before Bed:** Cup of milk\*

Be guided by your toddler's appetite.

### Menu 3: Saanvi, 36 months

**Breakfast:** Small glass of unsweetened apple juice, diluted half-and-half with water. Wholegrain cereal with milk. A slice of toast with spread.



**Morning Snack:** Orange segments and mini scotch pancakes. Cup of milk.

**Lunch:** Mixed vegetable pilau. Carrot sticks. Cup of water.



**Afternoon Snack:** Cup of milk. Pineapple in juice, with natural yogurt.

**Tea:** Channa aloo, masoor dahl and a chapati. Stewed apple with custard. Cup of water.



### Menu 4: Tom, 12 months

**Breakfast:** Unsweetened orange juice, diluted half-and-half with water. Scrambled egg and fingers of toast.



**Morning Snack:** Sliced banana and a cup of milk.

**Lunch:** Cottage pie with carrots. Melon and grapes cut up. Cup of water.



**Afternoon Snack:** Cup of milk. Cucumber sticks with yogurt dip.

**Tea:** Tuna and sweetcorn pasta. Apple cake. Cup of water.



**Before Bed:** Cup of milk\*

## Your questions:

### How much should my toddler eat?

The amount your toddler eats will depend on her size and how much she runs about. Toddlers have growth spurts. These happen every six months or so during the first few years. Your toddler may want to eat a lot during a growth spurt. At other times she may have less interest in food and you might worry she is not getting enough. As long as she is growing well and is healthy, try not to worry about her changing patterns. Just make sure you offer her healthy foods regularly and encourage her to take part in family meal times.

### What about vitamins?

All children should be given a vitamin A, C & D supplement between their first and fifth birthdays. Ask your health visitor, a pharmacist or your GP for information about types of products available.

### Top Tips!

Never add salt to foods or meals for babies and young children.

Keep the amount of sugar you use low. Sugar damages teeth and children who are used to lots of sweet things may find it hard to enjoy other flavours.

Don't serve foods and drinks designed for adults to young children. Avoid things like adult ready meals, take away foods, drinks with caffeine in them, soft drinks, alcohol, foods with artificial sweeteners and colours in them and highly salted foods like savoury snacks.

### Remember:

Always wash your hands and your toddlers hands before mealtimes and if you are preparing food.

## Childcare

It may be hard to leave your toddler in someone else's care. If you choose who looks after her carefully, the experience can benefit both of you.

Young children need security and routine, but you don't have to be the only one who cares for them. You may need to go out to work or feel that having time apart will help them learn new skills and encourage their independence.

### What you need

Finding childcare can be difficult and stressful as there are so many different types and some are very expensive. They range from childminders, nurseries and nannies, to friends and family. Family Information Services are the first point of contact for advice and information on local services for families and carers.

### Further information

Family Information Services are found in local authorities across Wales. Look for details of your local service on your Local Authority's website.

Top tip! If your toddler is being cared for away from home, let them take something familiar with them.

### What to look out for

When you hand over the care of your toddler to someone else it's important that emotional as well as physical needs are looked after. You also need to make sure that your carer knows your views on issues like behaviour, sweets and TV. Before making your choice, take time to discuss these areas in detail to avoid clashes later on. Toddlers get confused if there is a very big difference in the way they are looked after at home and elsewhere, which is why it's so important to agree some ground rules with your toddler's carer. There will be minor differences in the way things are done.

### Safety first

Between the ages of one and three your toddler is an active little explorer. A major consideration when choosing a carer or a care setting is safety. Registered carers like childminders and nurseries will be well aware of safety issues. But if your child is going to be cared for by a relative or someone who does not have young children of their own, their home may not be child friendly. You will need to work with them to make sure that it is quite safe.

### Further information

For a list of registered childcare providers visit The Care Inspectorate website, which has a list of registered childcare providers that you can access [www.careinspectorate.wales](http://www.careinspectorate.wales)

### Give it time

To begin with you might find that your toddler cries and clings to you when you leave. She might be angry or annoyed with you when you return and go back to babyish behaviour for a time. This is her way of showing you how she feels about being separated from you. Be patient and show that you understand her feelings.

### Babysitting

You and your partner will want to enjoy some time alone together, so you may be looking for a babysitter. In some areas, there are babysitting groups where mums get together and take it in turns to look after each other's children. Again, your health visitor will be able to tell you what is available locally.

Spend some time with your new babysitter before you go out so that you and your child can get to know them. Point out any particular risks or hazards in your home. Sometimes parents ask their teenage children to look after a younger brother or sister. If you're doing this, make sure they know how to get in touch with you and are aware of basics such as telephoning emergency services.

Make sure anyone you leave your child with is responsible, knows where you are, when you'll be back and how to contact you. Also, leave a list of emergency numbers like your GP and make sure that the babysitter knows where the first-aid box is and how to leave the house safely in case of fire.

### Babysitting and the law

The laws about who you can leave your child with are not clear. It is your responsibility to make sure your child is safe and well cared for.

The law doesn't say at what age a child may be left alone, or how old a babysitter should be. If you pay someone to babysit, they should be considered capable of doing so. If they are under 16, then you as a parent could be prosecuted if your child comes to any harm. If your babysitter is 16 or over, a court would generally assume that they were capable of looking after children. If they are babysitting, they have temporary care of your child and a general responsibility to safeguard their health, development and welfare. But remember, this responsibility only applies if your babysitter is 16 or over.

### A health visitor's view:

"Many mums feel guilty about leaving their baby or toddler in childcare. It can be a wrench leaving her but good childcare can benefit your toddler. She will learn to play with other children, make friends, have a chance to do things that you might not have space or time for at home. All these will help her learn and grow."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

The type of childcare you choose will depend on your circumstances, the amount of money you have available and what sort of services there are in your area.



# Learning to talk

## Your toddler has been learning about sounds since before she was born. And during her first year she has been gaining the skills she needs to talk, now it all starts to come together.

At around 12 to 18 months your toddler will probably be able to say two or three words. Over the following six months or so she will add to these. She will point to objects when asked, wave when someone is leaving and say 'bye-bye'. At this stage words tend to be all-purpose. 'Cat' or 'dog' may refer to all four-legged animals, while 'mama' or 'dada' can mean anything from 'great to see you' to 'I'm tired', 'I'm hungry' or 'give me a cuddle', depending on how it's said. Simple phrases like 'want drink' or 'all gone' come out as one word.

### How you can help

- Keep on talking. Your toddler will need to hear a word about 500 times before using it
- Point out things you see when you're out and about ('there's a bus'). As she gets older, add more detail ('there's a red bus')
- Act it out. Help her to make connections between actions and words by talking her through what you are doing. For example, 'let's put your coat on to go out now. First put one arm in the sleeve. Now let's do the other arm'

Soon, she will say her first words, usually between the ages of 9 and 15 months. After that, she will start talking in her own time.

- Remember to speak slowly and clearly. Make your voice slightly higher in order to attract your child's attention
- Have fun singing nursery rhymes and songs, especially those with actions like 'Pat-a-cake' or 'Row, row, row your boat'
- At first your toddler won't pronounce words properly. Baby talk is okay. They might say 'do' for 'dog' or 'dat' for 'that'. You don't need to correct them. They will begin to say things properly in their own good time
- Help them add more words to their vocabulary with new experiences, like a trip on a bus or train, or a visit to a city farm. Talk to them about what they have seen and done
- Help other people understand what your child is saying. If others can't understand, help them out so that your child will gain confidence in talking
- If your child uses a dummy, try not to allow her to speak while it is in her mouth. Better to remove it altogether
- Give your child your full attention. Talk to her face-to-face. This will provide eye contact with her and allow her to copy you

### Consider the advantage of Welsh

Do you want your child to be bilingual? Using Welsh from birth helps with bilingual fluency.

**Cymraeg for Kids** supports parents from birth onwards. Join their free groups for baby yoga, massage, songs and stories, or similar on-line sessions. <https://meithrin.cymru/cymraeg-for-kids/?lang=en>

More tips on how to introduce Welsh to your baby:

- If one of you can speak Welsh, it's important to speak the language with your child all the time. This includes relatives like grandparents, since language is a precious gift.
- If you're looking for childcare, consider a Welsh-speaking childminder or nursery setting.
- Join a '**Ti a Fi**' (literally means 'You and Me') group, to play with your baby and meet other parents.
- Read Welsh or bilingual books and sing together. Free apps, like **Magi Ann** and **Selog**, support parents who don't speak Welsh.
- Enjoy watching children's programmes on S4C. '**Cyw**' is very popular.

### Further information

For further advice on introducing Welsh, visit [www.gov.wales/cymraeg-for-kids](http://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-for-kids)

### Around 19 to 24 months

By 19 months or so, your toddler will usually be speaking at least a few words. She may have a working vocabulary of 50 to 70 words and be able to understand as many as 200. She will be learning words at a rate of 10 or more a day and be starting to string words together such as, 'carry me'.

By the time she is two, she will usually be able to form sentences of two or three words and sing simple tunes. Most children will be able to follow simple instructions like, 'take your shoes to Daddy', or 'where's your hat?'

She may be able to identify pictures and point at actions like running, jumping or crying. She will also begin to talk about what she likes and dislikes. Her favourite word may be 'no'. She will still use names instead of talking about 'I' or 'me'. For example, 'Tami throw ball' or 'Daddy get it'.

### How you can help

- Talk about what is happening as you go about everyday activities. Like, 'We're putting the toys in the toy box. Pass me the blocks, Gwen, you can help me put them in the box'
- Help her learn the names of her feelings. Like, 'you're happy to see Grandad', 'you're angry because it's time to stop playing now'.
- Use questions and answers to help her understand that communication goes two ways
- If something happens ask them 'what?' or 'where?' If you're looking at a book together, ask her what is happening in the pictures

### Around 25 to 36 months

Your toddler's vocabulary will be growing fast now. By about the age of three, she will probably have a working vocabulary of around 300 words and will understand many more. She will be getting the hang of 'I', 'me', 'you' and plurals like 'cats'.

By this time most toddlers will be able to put words together to form simple sentences. Your toddler will probably be able to carry on a conversation and change her tone depending on who she is talking to. She will be able to say her name, age, that she is a girl and name the main body parts. Other people should be able to understand most of what she says.

### How you can help

- Join in her make-believe games. Ask what she's doing, where she's going, where she lives and what she likes to eat
- Encourage her to use words to describe things, such as the 'red' ball or the 'soft' blanket
- Use every opportunity you can to talk to her. When looking at a book or TV, encourage her to tell you what's happening and explain why she thinks things happen
- Encourage her to help you and put names to things. Teach her that different activities have different words. Such as, in cooking the words are chop, mix, beat, peel, hot
- Enjoy stories, nursery rhymes and songs together

### Tune in, turn off

There are some great children's television programmes these days, but don't let the box take over. Television can entertain and inspire your child – and give parents a bit of a break. But too much television can lead to weight problems and prevent children giving their full attention to more important things, like learning to talk. The best way for your little one to watch the box is with you – and in small doses.

### Ways to help your toddler get the most out of watching TV

- Help her to understand what is on screen. Explain anything that could be difficult to understand and ask questions. 'What do you think is going to happen next?', 'What was your favourite part of the story?'
- Encourage her if she plays games based on what she has seen. Give her props, like a tea towel for a cloak, or make a cardboard crown
- Don't have the television on at mealtimes and keep it out of the bedroom
- Don't use television to reward or punish her
- Don't allow the television to be a constant presence in the corner. Turn it off when you're not watching and play instead. Turn it off at least one hour before bedtime

### If you are worried

Children learn to communicate in their own time. But slow language development can be a sign of hearing or other difficulties. If you think there is a problem, talk to your health visitor who can refer you to a speech and language therapist if needed. There is probably nothing to worry about, but the sooner you look into it the better.

**Top tip! Be firm with the amount of screen time your toddler has. Toddlers should have no more than two hours a day.**



**What you can expect at 12-24 months**  
 Toddlers learn a lot in a short space of time. Let your toddler set the pace. She will be learning how to process the information she gets from her senses by thinking, remembering, imagining and solving problems. She is learning to understand her emotions and those of other people around her. This is a vital skill for forming relationships.

**Remember: The more active your toddler starts to become the more important it is to ensure your home is a safe place for them\*.**

To help to understand your toddlers progress, see opposite page for a guideline as to how your toddler should be developing between the ages of 12 and 24 months.

However, it is important to understand that all toddlers develop at different paces. If you have any concerns speak to your GP or health visitor for further advice, support and guidance.

\*For more information on keeping your home safe, see page 52

### **She's learning to move in new ways**

Help her development by;

- Making her surroundings safe because she doesn't have a sense of danger yet
- Realising that going to the shops is a real adventure. She may want to climb up steps or on to a wall
- Helping her develop physical skills – for example, by helping her get down from somewhere she's climbed

### **She's learning to control her hands and fingers**

Help her development by;

- Giving her lots of healthy finger foods, so she can feed herself
- Taking time when you dress her so she can put her arms in the sleeves
- Letting her join in family meals. Give her a spoon to hold, but be patient with her if she's slow or makes a mess
- Letting her have blocks so she can try to build a tower and other toys and objects that allow her to practise her dexterity
- Letting her drink from a cup
- Not telling her off if she draws on the wall. To her it's no different to a piece of paper. Show her where she can draw
- Helping her as she's learning fast but will still want you to play with her and help her to do difficult things
- Being patient with her, as she will want to know about how things work, so give her the chance to figure things out for herself

### **She's learning more about herself and other people**

Help her development by;

- Letting her help you around the house by giving her simple but real jobs to do
- Letting her help when you are dressing and undressing her
- Playing games of pretend, but don't take over
- Letting her be around you as you do things and set her a good example to copy
- Understanding if she cries when you go away. She's scared you won't come back. Tell her when you're coming back
- Showing her pictures of herself and her family and talk to her about them
- Letting her have other children round to play or go to their houses, but don't expect her to play 'with' them yet
- Not expecting her to know about sharing. Help by providing two toys
- Understanding that if she lashes out it's because her feelings are strong. Show her other ways to get what she wants





## What you can expect at 25-36 months

Toddlers' experiences of the world will shape their development. You can help your toddler to learn by doing things together.

### Important things to remember

Your relationship with your child is important in helping her to develop in a healthy way. Her physical, mental and emotional growth are all linked and depend on each other.

The age at which toddlers learn to do things varies, so don't worry if there are a few things your child seems to be taking longer to pick up. If your toddler seems noticeably different to other children, or you think that things aren't quite right, ask your health visitor for help.

### She's learning finer control of her hands and fingers

Help her development by;

- Reading to her as much as you can and letting her turn the pages
- Giving her blocks to play with and paper to draw on
- Carrying on giving her finger foods, but let her use a spoon and fork if she wants to
- Letting her help you prepare her food. She can wash fruit, snap green beans, and mix things too.
- Letting her help you lay the table before your meals
- Letting her pour the milk over her breakfast cereal
- Using jars with safety caps if there's anything dangerous in them that she really shouldn't touch
- Not making her use her right hand if she prefers to use her left

### She's learning to move in lots of different new ways

Help her development by;

- Making your home a safe place so she can explore and practice new things
- Taking her out doors so she can run, jump and climb
- Being prepared for her to keep repeating new skills
- Taking her for walks and swimming and let her join in family games like football
- Holding her hand when she goes upstairs and remind her to hold on to the banister
- Letting her go up and down steps when you are out
- Putting on some music and dancing with her
- When you're out, talk to her about what you're doing so she can learn new words
- Helping her understand ideas, like big and small, high and low, wet and dry
- Getting her a trike or other wheeled toy. A hand-me-down one is fine

### She's learning even more about herself and other people

Help her development by;

- Understanding that pretend play is how she learns about the world
- Setting her a good example so she knows how to behave
- Not worrying if your toddler copies things you do, like putting on makeup if you have a boy, or dad shaving if you have a girl
- Understanding that if she copies behaviour that you don't like it will help her more if you explain why rather than telling her off
- Letting her spend time playing with other people so she can learn about making friends
- Understanding that when she has tantrums her feelings may frighten her
- Letting her play with other children at home, at their house or nursery, so she can learn more about taking turns and sharing
- Letting her join in family meals so she can learn to enjoy eating with other people. Invite other children to tea sometimes, or let her go to their house
- Having fun with her

**Remember: The more active your toddler starts to become the more important it is to ensure your home is a safe place for them\*.**

*\*For more information on keeping your home safe, see page 52*

## We are a family

Families come in all shapes and sizes and it is not family structure that matters the most. Responsible, committed and stable parenting by people who care about a child will give her the best start in life.

If you as parents divorce or separate the change will have an impact on your toddler. But if you handle the break-up sensitively, she will cope.

Talk to her about the separation in words she will easily understand. She needs to know that both of you still love her and will continue to be involved in her life.

### If you are separating

Before you part, make plans for sharing parenting in the future. It is important the parent who is leaving has a clear, defined role. If you can't talk to each other, it's a good idea to get outside help with solving practical problems. Keep in touch with both sets of grandparents. Make sure you inform your toddler's nursery and other groups.

Try to keep your toddler's daily life as familiar and stable as possible. Stick to her routine and have a consistent approach to discipline and treats. Be prepared for her to revert to more babyish behaviour for a time.

### One on one

It can be very tiring when there's no one else to share parenting. It's important to make time for yourself and get the emotional support you need, as well as the practical, financial support you may be eligible for.

### Smart tips for lone parents

- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it
- Try to get out of the house regularly
- Get your child used to being looked after by other people so she doesn't become too dependent on you alone

### Step-parenting

Building a relationship with a child takes time. If you are a step-parent, look for activities you can share so you can get to know each other.

### A child Psychotherapist's view:

"It's hard work being a parent, especially if you are on your own. Try and make some time for yourself during the day, even 30 minutes can make a difference. Meet up with other parents and share the care and some adult company. Try and get out of the house. A short walk can provide a breathing space for you and your child, as well as reducing stress levels."

Julie, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

### Further information

For support and guidance for changing family circumstances visit:  
[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)

There are many organisations which can provide support and guidance for changing family circumstances.

## Common challenges

Your toddler is developing fast in lots of different ways. So it is no surprise that at times you can feel overwhelmed and unsure of how to handle some situations. Your toddler will need structure and boundaries to make her feel safe, but she will test them and this will be hard on you.

Don't despair. Find out about the common challenges you're likely to come across and the steps you can take to make things a bit easier.

### In this section we will look at:

- Temper tantrums
- When mealtime is a battleground
- Toilet training
- A good night's sleep
- Concerns about sexualized behaviour

## Temper tantrums

Try to rise above the tantrums, they won't last forever. Here's how to remain calm and cool.

If there's one thing toddlers do well, it's throwing a tantrum. The worst time for tantrums is at around two years old. With firm and fair boundaries the tantrums will usually begin to fade by the time your child is three. By the age of four most toddlers have worked out that there are better ways to get what they want.

A full-on temper tantrum is tough for you and frightening for your child. The good news is that a few simple strategies will prevent or contain most of your child's tantrums.

### Why tantrums happen

It may seem as if your toddler is having a tantrum out of spite, to attract attention, or just to annoy you. Tantrums really happen because she is frustrated by being a toddler.

At this age, she will be learning to do so many things, but she will be frustrated by the things she can't do yet. She will be grappling with the rules of the world and the fact that some things are not allowed.

Because she can't tell you what she's feeling she may end up screaming and throwing herself around. Remember she may be scared by the force of her rage.

However helpless you may feel, you are the one in charge. You need to do everything possible to get that message across. That doesn't mean having a tantrum yourself, shouting or smacking your child. These are signs that you are out of control. What it does mean is being prepared for tantrums and drawing up a tantrum strategy in advance.



### Tantrum control

Try to prevent tantrums by giving praise. Your time and attention are the most important things to your child. If she learns to get your attention by throwing a tantrum, she'll keep doing it.

Reinforce good behaviour whenever you see it by giving her praise and cuddles and kisses. Spotting the early warning signs of a tantrum is the best way of stopping them getting out of control.

Try to become aware of tantrum triggers, like tiredness, hunger, too much heat or cold. Where possible, try to avoid situations that you know are likely to start a tantrum, like supermarket checkouts and busy shopping centres.

Distract your child if you see them gearing up for a tantrum. Sing a funny song, suggest she helps you to look for a toy, or take her to another room – anything that shifts her attention.

Giving her a choice over some aspects of her life can help stop tension building up. You could allow her to make certain decisions, like what shoes to wear, or whether to brush her teeth before or after her bath.

### Four questions to ask

If your child is throwing lots of tantrums, it may help to work out why. This might help you to spot one happening in the future. You could ask yourself:

1. What triggered the tantrum?
2. What did she do during the tantrum?
3. How did you react?
4. What was the end result?

### Remember

- Praise her when you see her doing something well
- Be clear and calm about what you expect
- Don't be embarrassed, tantrums happen to all parents
- Stay firm and ignore the behaviour. Don't argue or reason
- Make sure your child is safe.
- Once the tantrum is fading, reassure your child and carry on with what you were doing before

### A mum's view:

"Look around you and realise there are 10 other toddlers throwing tantrums at the same time!!"

Carlien, mum of Joshua 3 and Luke 1

When mealtime is a battleground  
Mealtimes are one of the few areas where your toddler can express her growing independence and have control. Mealtimes should be fun, so try and avoid fighting when it's time to eat.

Try talking about food, reading about food and playing with new foods. When you give a new food to your toddler, she will be more willing to try it if she knows what it is.

### Think small

Toddlers don't like big portions. Keep servings small so eating doesn't seem like a big task. Cut finger foods into bite-sized pieces that are easy for little hands to pick up.

### Stay calm

If your toddler turns down food, it is the food they are saying no to, not you. If she doesn't want to eat, take the food away without a fuss.

### Be patient

Toddlers tend to be naturally unadventurous. She may need to see a new food five to 15 times before she's willing to eat it. If she says no to something new, calmly take it away. You can try serving it again another time.

### Don't bribe

Don't bribe, force or reward her for eating. If you promise her a biscuit for eating lunch, you are teaching her that lunch is a punishment and the biscuit is a reward.

It is normal for small children not to trust new tastes and textures.

**Let them help**

Get your child to help you with preparing food, because it will help her to feel part of things. Even young toddlers can rip up the lettuce for a salad, or wash fruit. Older children can help with mixing, or laying the table.

**Make it special**

Children like to be independent and love having small bowls of their own finger foods. Try strips of cheese, toast fingers, raisins and vegetable sticks.

**Keep it simple**

Don't waste time and energy creating complicated meals. Fresh food that tastes and looks good is best.

**Set a good example**

Children learn by watching you. If you are a fussy eater, your child may become one too. Eating together at a table will help your child to learn.

**Don't expect manners**

Don't expect toddlers to have good table manners. It's natural for a young child to want to squash their food and explore it with their fingers. Playing is part of understanding. Put a bib on her, protect the floor with a plastic tablecloth and don't worry about the mess. She'll get tidier as she gets older.

**Know when to call it a day**

If your child stops eating, turns away or gives you other signs that they've had enough, it's time to stop. Trying to force your toddler to carry on eating when she has had enough will just get everyone cross and could cause her to over-eat or refuse food altogether. Mealtimes should not usually last longer than 30 minutes.

**A health visitor's view:**

"Lots of toddlers are fussy eaters, as they are eating food they have never seen before and some days they are hungrier than others. Toddlers also have a small attention span and are easily distracted. It's important that you eat together as a family, as little eyes are watching and will copy everything you do and the faces you make when eating food. Also remember their tummy is the same size as their fist, so it doesn't take a lot of food to fill it up."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

## Toilet training

After a couple of years of buying disposables or washing cloth nappies, you probably can't wait for your little one to be potty trained. But don't be in too much of a hurry.

Don't be worried if other children learn to use the potty earlier than yours. Many children start at around the age of two, but every child is different. Stay calm and don't rush her into it.

**Getting started**

Once she has got a rough idea of what it's all about, get a potty or toddler toilet seat and step and let her get used to it. At first, she'll probably use it as a toy. You can encourage her to find out what it's really for by playing at putting a doll or a teddy on it. Children this age love to copy you, so let her come with you when you go to the toilet. Talk about what you're doing in simple terms and perhaps let her use the flush if she's not scared by the noise. Avoid words like 'dirty' that may cause her to feel unclean. Be patient and try not to expect too much, too soon. You may find your toddler masters her bladder before her bowels, or the other way around. It will all work out with time.

### Three clues that your child is ready for potty training:

1. She tells you she wants to do a wee or a poo. At first, this may be after rather than before the event! But at least she's becoming aware of her bowel and bladder movements
2. There are longer spells between wet nappies. She has a wet or dirty nappy after a meal or drink and can then be dry for a good few hours
3. She shows that she's aware of bodily functions. She imitates you going to the toilet or shows some other sign that she is aware of what's going on inside her body

### Potty training without the tears

#### Time it right

Pick a period when you have plenty of time. If she is about to start nursery, or you have a holiday planned, it's best to leave it until things are less hectic. Be consistent once you've started. Don't change backwards and forwards from nappies to pants or knickers during one day.

#### Be prepared

If you live in a house, keep a potty upstairs and another one downstairs. Be sure to have a potty with you when you're out and about. It's a good idea to keep one in the car too and to take a set of spare clothes out with you.

#### A child Psychotherapist's view:

"Be prepared for backward steps, usually at times of change."

Julie, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

#### Top tip!

Make sure everyone who cares for your child knows that they are potty training. Tell them the words you and your child use for the toilet.

### Don't hang about

Don't ignore it when she says she needs to go. To begin with, when she needs to go, she will need to go straight away. As she gets older she will be able to wait longer.

The summer months can be an easier time to try potty training, as your little one can run around without a nappy. Bath time is another good time to introduce the pot. Make a note of your child's pattern of bowel movements so you can pick the best times of day to try it.

#### Get the clothes right

You don't want to spend ages changing your toddler's clothes. Make sure what they're wearing is easy to remove.

### Let her set the pace

If you know when she is likely to want the potty, encourage her to sit down on it. Make sure she feels it is her choice. She will like to feel that she's in control.

#### Be prepared for accidents

It is normal for toddlers to do a poo or wee before they can get to the potty during potty training. When these accidents happen, change her clothes straight away and calmly encourage her to have a go on the potty or toilet next time.

#### Encourage them with praise

If she uses the potty give her praise, but don't make a big deal of it. For example, don't reward her with food or toys. Ignore the odd lapse and never tell her off for not using the potty or for having an accident.

#### A health visitor's view:

"Toilet training is a subject everyone has an opinion on. Your child should be ready to potty train at around two years of age. Watch for your child showing signs that they recognise the need to go. Plan when you are going to start and remain consistent. Starting and stopping only causes confusion for your child." Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board



## A good night's sleep

The world is a new and exciting place for your toddler, so sleep can seem like a boring interruption.

At this age, your child will also realise that she is separate from mum and dad and she may be frightened of being left alone for good.

On top of this, it is becoming clear to her that playing up at bedtime is a great way to wind up the grown-ups. But don't despair, peaceful nights are just a few simple steps away.

### A health visitor's view:

"Sleep is all about routine and calming down before bedtime. Try and stick to a regular bed time. Don't give them too much fluid before bedtime or they will wake up frequently to use the toilet."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

### Routine matters

The single most important thing you can do to ensure that your toddler gets a good night's sleep is to set up a simple bedtime routine. It's up to you to develop your own system, but it could go like this.

Talk to her about how she is going to get ready for bed now. Play a quiet game and talk about what you did today and any plans you have for tomorrow.

Give her a warm bath, put the lights on low, keep distractions to a minimum and clean her teeth. Put pyjamas on her in her bedroom. Finish with a story – nothing too exciting – or a gentle song or rhyme. Kiss and cuddle her and say 'goodnight' or 'I love you', then leave the room with confidence and without fuss.

### Things that may help your child sleep

- Keep it down: Try to keep things calm and quiet during the hour or so before bedtime. This will help your toddler get in the mood to rest. Switch off the television at least an hour before her bedtime
- Curb your enthusiasm: Avoid rough and tumble games, scary stories, television programmes and electronic games
- Gently does it: Warn her when it is nearly bedtime so that it doesn't come as a surprise
- Beds are for sleeping: Never confuse the issue of sleeping by sending your little one to her cot or bed as a punishment
- Get in the groove: Stick to a regular bedtime. Children sleep best if they go to bed and get up at around the same time every day
- Start helpful routines: Don't let her become reliant on drinks (unless you are continuing to breastfeed), or television
- Hold your nerve: Changes in routine – as a result of teething, illness, the arrival of a new baby, Christmas or a holiday – can disrupt sleep patterns. Be prepared for this and try not to get into bad habits. If you behave consistently, they'll soon go back to their usual routine
- Warning signs: If your child seems grumpy during the day she is probably over-tired. Try putting her to bed a bit earlier

## Your questions:

### Is it okay to let my toddler cry for a few minutes if she wakes at night?

It's difficult to decide just how long to leave a crying toddler at night, because it is distressing to both of you to allow her to cry for too long. However, don't jump out of bed at the first cry. She will often soothe herself and return to sleep. If she doesn't, some gentle reassurance can be what's needed to settle her.

### When is it time for a nap?

Typically, a one-year-old needs about an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. A two-year-old usually needs an hour in the afternoon, but by the age of three most toddlers are okay with a short nap in the afternoon or none at all.

Between 15 and 18 months your child may reach a stage where one nap doesn't seem enough, but two is too much. The same may happen around the age of three.

If she falls asleep in the pushchair don't disturb her. It sometimes helps during these transition periods to make bedtime a bit earlier. Even if your toddler doesn't sleep during the day, some 'quiet time' after lunch should help to relax and revive her.

## Concerns about Sexualized behaviour

Many toddlers show an interest in holding or playing with their genitals, or games that may seem a bit sexual like mummies and daddies or doctors and nurses. Parents have told us that they are not sure what is normal and when they should worry.

### A health visitor's view:

"Do talk to your health visitor if you have any worries about these issues, she will be able to give you support and information and help you if you need to take action."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

### Look at the chart opposite to see:

- Things your toddler may do which are part of normal development – these are labelled green
- Things that a toddler may do which might cause a worry and that you need to keep an eye on and have a chat to your health visitor or GP about – these are labelled amber
- Things that are a definite cause for concern and where you need to get help – these are labelled red

| GREEN  | AMBER  | RED   |
|--|--|---|
| Holding or playing with own genitals.  | Pulling other children's pants down or skirts up/trousers down against their will. | Persistently touching the genitals of other children. |
| Attempting to touch or curiosity about other children's genitals.              | Talking about sex using adult slang.   | Persistent attempts to touch the genitals of adults.  |
| Attempting to touch or curiosity about breasts, bottoms or genitals of adults. |  | Simulation of sexual activity in play.                |
| Games e.g. mummies and daddies, doctors and nurses.                            |  |   |

### Further information

- Talk to your health visitor or GP
- Call the NSPCC Helpline on **0800 800 5000** or visit [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- Call the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) on **0870 000 3344** or visit [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)
- Call Stop it Now! on **0808 1000 900** or visit [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)
- Call Parents Protect! on **0808 1000 900** or visit [www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk)

## Keeping them healthy and safe

All children will get ill from time to time and most will have the occasional accident. Find out here how you can help to keep your child safe and healthy. Remember good habits that you instil now will last her a lifetime.

As your toddler grows and develops and becomes more independent, caring for her will become different from caring for her when she was an baby.

### In this section we will look at:

- Daily health care
- Minor illnesses
- More serious illnesses
- If your child starts choking
- Specialised health needs
- Making your home safe
- Your health service: What to expect and who can help

## Daily health care

Making basic health care a part of your daily routine at an early age will instil good habits for your toddler, which they will continue to follow as they get older.

### Teeth

- Brush your child's teeth in the morning and last thing at night with fluoride toothpaste. For children under two years use a thin layer of toothpaste and for older children used a pea-size amount
- Encourage your child to spit, but not rinse after brushing. Leaving toothpaste on the teeth gives it time to work
- Sugar is the main cause of tooth decay. Don't give her sugary snacks, especially between meals. The safest drinks for children's teeth are milk and water
- Both you and your child should visit the dentist regularly. The dental team can give more information about looking after her teeth

All NHS dental treatment is free in Wales for children up to the age of 18. Contact your local Health Board to find NHS dentists in your area.

### Further information

Designed to Smile is an NHS Dental Health Improvement Programme funded by Welsh Government helping children to have healthier teeth.

[www.designedtosmile.co.uk](http://www.designedtosmile.co.uk)

### Ears

- The ears are self-cleaning. Never poke a cotton bud into them
- A child tugging or holding their ears can be a sign of ear infection
- Contact your doctor if your child is grouchy, in pain, or has a discharge from her ear

### Eyes

- Avoid risk of irritation by never smoking around your child
- Consult your health visitor or doctor if your toddler seems to have problems with her sight. Watch out for squinting or crossed-eyes, closing or covering one eye, rubbing her eyes a lot, or a family history of sight problems

### Hair

- Keep her hair clean and brushed or combed
- Make hair washing a game. Prevent tears at bath time by using a shampoo shield, or flannel
- Watch out for head lice ('nits'). You may see them on her hair close to the scalp. Your pharmacist or health visitor can tell you about the best products to get rid of them
- Regular combing with a 'bone comb' (a fine-tooth comb) at least twice a week will help to prevent hair lice becoming a serious problem
- Shampoos and sprays that claim to prevent head lice do not work

### Feet

- Let your toddler go around barefoot indoors – but make sure your floor is clean and safe. This will encourage her feet to develop properly
- For outdoors, give her comfortable, lightweight shoes with flexible, non-skid soles
- Have her feet measured every six-to-eight weeks, because she's growing rapidly at this time
- Always make sure that her socks fit. Tight socks can damage her feet too
- Keep an eye on her toenails and always cut them straight across the top
- If something is wrong with your child's feet or they're walking oddly, talk to your health visitor or GP

### Urinary/genital area

- Keep your child's genital area clean and use a barrier cream to prevent nappy rash if needed
- If a rash develops, let her go around with her nappy off. Ask your health visitor for advice
- Watch out for threadworms. They look like little white threads in your child's poo. Your pharmacist or health visitor will be able to suggest treatments
- Seek medical advice from your health visitor or GP if your child is often constipated, has loose poo, or blood in their poo

### Skin

- Wipe your child's face and hands gently before and after eating. Be careful of her delicate skin. Don't use baby wipes all the time
- Keep her nails short
- Give your child a bath every few days, or daily if she likes it. For some families it is part of the bedtime routine. Dry her well and apply body moisturiser if needed. Never leave your child alone in the bath, even if she is with another child. She may turn on the hot tap and be scalded and children can drown in seconds
- In summer use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor of at least 15 on her skin and dress her in light, loose clothes and ensure she wears a hat
- Always put on more sunscreen after she has been in water

### Lungs

- Make sure nobody smokes around your child. Do not smoke in your car. Second hand smoke can damage your child's health. Children are more vulnerable because their bodies are young and still developing
- Ensure she gets plenty of fresh air
- Check with your doctor or health visitor if she develops wheezing, coughing (especially at night), shortness of breath, or complains of pain or tightness in the chest. These are all symptoms of asthma

### A health visitor's view:

"Bath time isn't just about cleanliness it can be fun and a great time for learning about water too. If you have some simple toys in the bath such as a little plastic tea pot and cup, or an old yoghurt pot and a jug you can play with your toddler and she will learn pouring, about full and empty and overfilling, all without a mess for you to clear up."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board



## Minor illnesses

Toddlers tend to get more minor illnesses like coughs and colds than older children because their immune systems are still developing. The occasional bout of illness is to be expected and can help them to build up immunity.

Too many illnesses can wear your child down. Healthy nutritious food, regular activity, fresh air and a few simple hygiene measures can help to keep them healthy and will help prevent many common illnesses.

### Easy ways to stay well

- Keep floors clean and regularly change and wash bedding, clothes, towels and soft toys. Watch for any build-up of moulds or dust mites that can trigger allergies such as asthma.
- Keep kitchen surfaces clean and don't let pets go near family food. Use separate chopping boards for raw food and ready-to-eat food.
- Keep your home tidy to help avoid injuries
- Make sure your toddler washes her hands after going to the toilet. Do the same yourself and also after changing their nappy or blowing your nose and before meals
- Make sure your child gets all their immunisations and has check-ups

### If your toddler has a temperature

- Encourage her to rest and drink plenty of fluids
- She doesn't have to stay in bed unless she wants to. It's okay for her to be with you as long as she can rest
- Avoid exciting games and toys. Do quiet things with her until she feels better
- Keep the room cool – open a window if it's hot
- Dress her in just a nappy, or pants if she's toilet trained
- If she's staying in bed, take the duvet or blanket off if she starts sweating
- Give sugar-free paracetamol syrup or ibuprofen for children. Always stick to the dose that's recommended. Don't leave it in her bedroom
- Remember, never give aspirin or adult's medication to a child under 16 or ibuprofen to a child who has asthma

### Caring for an ill child

Children are usually tired and grouchy when they are ill, so be patient. She may want to sleep more, so let her stay in bed if she asks. She'll probably want you around, so be prepared to spend time reading and watching television together. Breastfed children may wish to breastfeed more often at this time.

Keep things familiar and low-key – now is not the time to wean her off a dummy or change routines.

If she's hungry, give her something light to eat and give her plenty to drink. Drinking is more important than eating when she is ill.

Once she's feeling better, she can go outside if the weather is fine – but keep her indoors if it is cold, damp or foggy.

### A health visitor's view:

"When your toddler is ill it is hard work for you. When she is better and you get the chance take a bit of time for yourself to recharge your batteries. Have an early night, treat yourself to a soak in the bath, go for a walk with a friend. Something that will help you feel better and help you get your energy back."

Angela, Aneurin Bevan Health Board

## Your questions:

### How do I know if my child is sick?

You're the best judge of whether your toddler is unwell. If you think she's ill, even if you can't quite put your finger on what's wrong, speak to your GP or health visitor.

A classic sign of illness is a fever. Your child may have one if she's flushed or feels hot and sweaty, or if her temperature is over 38°C or 100.4°F. You can use a strip-type thermometer or a digital, non-breakable one to measure her temperature. You can also get a rough idea by feeling her forehead.

Other clues that your child is ill include a runny nose, coughs and sneezes, a rash, sleeping more, lack of appetite, increased whining, clinginess and listlessness. If your toddler's temperature doesn't stop her from playing and eating normally, there may not be anything to get too worried about. Teething does not give children a fever. If you are concerned, no matter what their temperature, call your health visitor or GP.

Always call the doctor or NHS Direct Wales out of hours if your child:

- Cries constantly and can't be comforted
- Seems drowsy and floppy and won't wake up
- Has a fever that lasts for more than three days
- Is not getting better after an operation or course of treatment for an illness
- Has been vomiting for more than 24 hours
- Has a headache or stiff neck
- Seems to be dehydrated, for example has strong concentrated wee or has not had a wee for several hours

### Further information

If you need urgent advice and care when your GP surgery is closed you can also call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 46 47** or information on childhood illnesses is also available at [www.111.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.111.wales.nhs.uk)

### Top tip!

**You're the person most familiar with your toddler's health, so follow your instincts if you think there's something wrong that should be looked at by the doctor.**

## More Serious illnesses

### Don't hesitate to see the GP if your child has any of the symptoms described below.

#### Fits and fevers

A sharp increase in temperature can cause a child to have a fit – or a 'febrile convulsion'. If this happens, your child will go stiff, lose consciousness, throw her head back and her limbs will jerk. She will go pale and may foam at the mouth. The attack will end after a few minutes and she will return to normal colour and becomes conscious, or falls into a deep sleep. These fits are scary to watch but usually harmless.

#### Always seek medical help

- After the first convulsion
- If there's no improvement after a convulsion
- If a convulsion lasts longer than five minutes
- In case of breathing difficulties
- If another one starts soon after the first

#### Here's what to do:

- Put her into the recovery position (pictured below), lying on her side



- Loosen her clothing and don't try to hold her down
- Don't put anything into her mouth and remove anything she might swallow

#### Meningitis and septicaemia

Meningitis and septicaemia are very serious diseases that can affect anyone very quickly. They are not common, but it is important to know the signs and symptoms and get medical help quickly.

## If your child starts choking

Remember you should always stay with your child while they are eating in case they choke.

### IF YOUR CHILD STARTS CHOKING

If your child does choke and cannot breathe properly, follow these instructions:

1. Shout for help
2. Pick up your child and support their chest and their chin in one hand
3. Give 5 sharp blows between the shoulder blades with the heel of the other hand to help dislodge the object.

If your baby is still experiencing difficulty breathing, you should call 999 immediately.



### Further information

Learn how to deal with choking by visiting [www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/learn-first-aid-for-babies-and-children/choking-child](http://www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/learn-first-aid-for-babies-and-children/choking-child)

Or ask your health visitors about local first aid courses.

## Specialised health needs

In cases of chronic illness, disability or developmental, behavioural or emotional difficulties, there are services to support you and your child.

Doctors, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, eye and hearing specialists, dietitians, psychologists and nurses are there and ready to help. They can also put you in touch with families in similar circumstances to you.

### Tapping into the system

Your toddler may have been identified as needing specialised care at birth, or at an early-years check. But it may be you who notices something is not quite right. Your first port of call should be your health visitor or GP. Be persistent until your concerns are properly addressed. Your GP or health visitor may refer you to a hospital specialist, or to a child development centre, where you'll be able to see a community paediatrician and a team of other experts. Your child should be assessed

quite quickly, but the time it then takes to access the specialised services your child needs may vary considerably.

### Seven important questions you should ask if your child has a specialised health need:

1. What is the name of my child's condition?
2. How can it be treated or managed?
3. What extra support will my child need, and who will provide this?
4. How long will I have to wait to get the services my child needs?
5. Where can I get more information about my child's problem?
6. Are there any support groups or charities that can help my child, me, or my other children?
7. Could you put me in touch with any other parents of children with the same problem?



## Making your home Safe

Toddlers can move very quickly, and you may feel you can't turn your back on them for a second. Our guide to safety around the home can help you think ahead and avoid any nasty injuries.

### A child safety expert's view:

"We shouldn't wrap children up in cotton wool. They do need to learn about risk and to be given the opportunity to explore and develop."

Karen, Children in Wales

Children will still have bumps, bruises and little trips and this is fine. We should focus on preventing the type of injuries that can lead to serious injuries.

For toddlers, these serious injuries are most likely to be caused by:

- Falls from a height
- Scalds
- Burns
- House fires
- Drowning
- Poisoning
- Blind cords

### Preventing falls from a height

There are many causes of falls from a height, but the most common are shown below:

**Stairs:** For toddlers under 24 months old, screw mount a safety gate at the top and the bottom of the stairs. Adults should always keep it closed and should not step over it as children learn by copying your behaviour.

If your toddler is over 24 months old, she will be able to climb over the gate, so the safest thing to do is to remove it. This may feel uncomfortable, but if you teach her to climb up and down the stairs slowly and with the handrail, then it is likely to be safer than leaving the gate up.

If you have a young child in your house, then leave the safety gate up, but teach your toddler not to climb over it and to ask an adult to open it if she wants to go through it.

**High chairs:** Every year, many children are injured after falling out of their high chair. Use a securely fitted four or five point harness every time and don't leave your toddler alone in it. Many high chairs only have a lap strap and this is not enough to prevent falls, so you may have to buy a harness.

**Windows:** Fitting a window restrictor is the safest way to avoid a fall from an upstairs window. If possible, fit one that opens without a key as these are safest. If you have one with a key, make sure the key is kept on a hook next to the window, but high up and out of sight of children. Always put the key back in the same place, you'll need to know where it is in an emergency.

Removing toys, games and teddies from the window sill will make them less attractive to toddlers, also keep cots, beds and toy boxes away from the window.

### A consultant Paediatrician's view:

"Toddlers view the world as an adventure playground, so we usually need to be two steps ahead of them! They depend on us to learn about danger, but also need the freedom to explore and learn some lessons themselves. Over-cautious parents lead to under-confident children."

Aideen, Aneurin Bevan Health Board



### Preventing scalds

The biggest causes of scalds in toddlers are hot drinks and bath water, but prevention is simple.

**Hot drinks:** A hot drink can still scald a child 20 minutes after it has been made. You may feel this is too cold for you to drink, but a child's skin is thinner and it could still be dangerous to them.

Never hold your toddler when drinking a hot drink. It's not worth the risk, so just wait until you have put your baby down. Keep hot drinks pushed towards the back of a high surface so that your toddler can't reach them.

**Baths:** Most bath scald injuries happen when children are unsupervised. They happen when running a bath and if an adult leaves during the bath. Never leave a running bath or the children unattended. Always check the water with your elbow, it should be tepid and not hot as a child has thinner skin.

### Preventing burns

Burns are usually caused by contact with a hot, dry area. This includes oven doors, radiators, fires and heated hair appliances such as hair straighteners. Supervise children around these and wherever possible, keep them out of reach of children. Use a fireguard that is securely fixed to the wall.

### Preventing house fires

Having a working smoke detector, a safe night time routine and a well practiced fire escape plan can all help to reduce the risk of a fire.

#### Further information

You can book a free home fire safety check with the Fire and Rescue Service by phoning  
**0800 169 1234**

### Preventing drowning

Children can drown in as little as 3cm of water. Check your home and your garden to see where your risks are.

Preventing drowning at home:

- Check outside for buckets and toys that have collected rain water
- If you have a pond, think about how you can make it safer. Can you fill it in, fence it off or put a grid over the pond?
- Does your neighbour have a pond? If so, could your toddler get access to it through the fence or the hedge?
- Always stay with your toddler when they are in the bath. If the phone rings, either leave it or take her with you
- Drowning can happen in seconds. It is usually a quiet accident and you won't always hear it happening. Don't assume that you will hear splashing or coughing

### Preventing blind cord injuries

Toddlers love to look through windows, climb onto window sills and play in blinds and curtains. Unfortunately blind cords have been the cause of fatal and serious injuries in children.

Preventing blind cord injuries:

- Look around your home, have you got any cords that form a loop. These might be blind cords, roman blinds, venetian blinds or curtain tie backs
- Where possible, use a cleat hook. This is, a hook with two ends that you can wrap the cord around to keep it out of the way. Place it as high as possible
- Consider other options than a blind in your child's bedroom
- If buying a blind, choose a blind with no cords or loops
- Take tie-backs off curtains
- Move beds and other furniture away from the windows where you have blinds

### Preventing poisoning

Toddlers explore everything without understanding the dangers. Their taste buds are still developing. Because of this, things like cleaning products may not taste nasty to them. Check your home for any poisonous items that might be lying around. You'll be amazed at what there is. There might be tablets and bleach in the bathroom, cleaning products and liquitabs under the sink, perfumes and medication in the bedroom, nicotine products and liquid air fresheners in the lounge.

Poisoning prevention:

- Check every room for poisonous items
- Lock them away, up high and out of sight
- Swap your kitchen cupboards around. For example, put your tins under the sink and the cleaning products in a high cupboard
- Put all poisonous items in a high kitchen cupboard and use a cupboard restrictor. Doing this means that you are more likely to prevent your toddler being poisoned
- Remember that handbags often contain medicines. Hang your bag up and ask visitors to do the same

### Kitchen

Make sure your kitchen is a safe place and the things your child does in there are safe for her age. Always keep an eye on children in the kitchen at all times.

Fit short power leads on kettles and other appliances and push them well back out of reach. Use the back hobs on your cooker and turn pan handles away from the edge. Don't put chairs near the cooker, as she can climb up. If you have to leave the room, remove pans from the heat.

Put away plastic bags, including nappy sacks. Babies can suffocate on nappy sacks, always keep them out of reach.

Never leave the front door open. Your toddler can be through it and out on to the road in an instant.

### Out and about

Always make sure your child is:

- In an appropriate car safety seat
- Safely strapped into a five-point harness in their pushchair
- Kept hold of at all times. A harness or wrist strap can be helpful but remember that pulling too hard could hurt your child
- Reminded often about road safety and the dangers of traffic

Children will always have injuries, this does not mean that you are a 'bad' parent. Toddlers are susceptible to injuries at home because of how they explore, develop and learn. As a parent, you can use the tips above to help prevent the more serious and common injuries, but also learn from any injuries that do happen and make changes if necessary.

### Things to think about for the future:

- Where did it happen? Think about the room. Could you move things around, add something or take something away
- When did it happen? What time of day was it? Was there lots of chaos around or too much time on her own?
- How did it happen? Were rules broken, was it a normal everyday activity?
- Why did it happen?

Answering these question will help you to understand why it happened and also how to stop it happening again.

## Your health service Your health visitor is still at the end of a phone, even when your child gets older.

The best time to call your health visitor is first thing in the morning, or towards the end of the day. They will usually have an answering machine, so leave a message if they are not in.

### Make the most of your GP

Your GP is there to help you if your child is ill or if she has a chronic condition like eczema or asthma. Don't forget to take your child's red book if you have one. You won't always come away with a prescription. Many illnesses get better on their own.

### Checks you will be offered

Your child will be offered a programme of health checks at different stages, combined with support and advice during her early years. These are listed in your 'red book' which helps you keep an important record of your child's development.

These health checks are intended to support you as a parent in helping your child develop. As her parent, you will be aware of your child's strengths and needs. If you are worried about any aspect of your child's progress, such as speech, hearing, walking, coordination,

learning or behaviour, you should contact your health visitor to discuss whether your child needs any additional help or assessment.

### Immunisations

Further routine immunisations are due at 12 to 13 months and a nasal spray flu vaccine is offered to all children from the age of two years each year in autumn.

At three years and four months your child will need a second dose of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella). This is to boost protection before your child goes to school. Measles still causes outbreaks in schools in Wales. They also get a booster against whooping cough which commonly affects children.

Remember, it's important to catch up on missed immunisations. If your child has missed an immunisation and is older than the recommended age, talk to your health visitor, practice nurse or GP.

### Further information

[phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/vaccination-information1/](http://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/vaccination-information1/)



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## Bump, Baby & Beyond

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