

## *The Incredible Growing Machine*

By two and a half years of age, your child's distinct personality is emerging. Your toddler loves to please others and is thrilled when you praise her. Children learn behaviour with encouraging comments. **"I really liked the way you let Emma play with your new ball!"** Be specific with your praise. Take advantage of teachable moments and offer positive reinforcement.

*"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning; between the things he or she does 'just for fun' and things that are 'educational'. The child learns while living and any part of living that is enjoyable is also play".*

*-Penelope Leach*

Play is good for your toddler. It allows her to get to know other people, to develop motor skills, to learn language and expand her imagination. It helps her to improve her problem-solving skills and encourage concentration. Toddlers learn best through hands-on exploration. For example, taking things apart, pushing in, pulling out, filling and emptying containers are all fascinating to a toddler.

Your 2 1/2 to 3 year old can become totally absorbed in her play. Give your toddler some warning before you announce that play time is over. **"Sara, you can fill 3 more containers, and then we must tidy up and go"**. This gives her time to change her focus, prepare for the end of an activity and reinforce the concept of time. Ending activities will become much easier.



*Sometimes you get discouraged  
Because I am so small  
And always leave my fingerprints  
On furniture and walls.*

*But every day I'm growing -  
I'll be grown some day  
And all those tiny handprints  
Will surely fade away.*

*So here's a little handprint  
Just so you can recall  
Exactly how my fingers looked  
When I was very small.*

*-author unknown*

## Listening Skills

Listening to your 2 ½ year old chat to himself while playing can be revealing and comical. At this stage, he has enough words to understand his speech most of the time. There will also be words and sentences which make sense only to him. He can carry out simple questions, **"Bring me the paper, please"** and **"Where is the book?"** By three years, these skills continue to improve. Your toddler will ask **"Why"** a lot. Answer his questions in a simple way. If you get tired of all the **"Whys"**, try asking him, **"Why do you think?"**.

## Parents Need Time Too

As much as you may enjoy being a parent, it is not easy spending all your time with a toddler. Is it important that you regularly make time to look after yourself and to take time to work on your relationship with your partner. This will take some planning! Even setting up time alone with your partner is often a challenge. Arranging time away from your child may be a lot of work but you will be more effective as a parent if you also look after yourself and your adult relationships.

We all experience stress at some point in our lives. The important thing is what you do with it. One strategy for dealing with the stress of balancing parenting, relationships, your job, and money is to recognize the early signs of burnout:

**Physical signs** – Headaches, chronic colds, nausea, exhaustion

**Emotional signs** – increased frustration over little issues, feeling trapped

Eating right, exercising, and taking regular breaks from your toddler are ways to help you manage stress. Talk to your partner or friends. If you are feeling really overwhelmed talk to your health care provider. Stress can be managed.

## Sweet Dreams – Developing Good Sleep Habits

Sleep issues vary from family to family and with each child. For some, these are resolved easily and early. There are other children who continue to wake during the night, even at 3 years of age. The most important thing to remember is that you and your child need enough sleep in order to function the next day. Most toddlers will sleep a total of 10 – 13 hours in a 24 hour period. Your toddler may stop napping at this age, or have some days where he may or may not need a nap.

Sleep problems are common in toddlers and he may resist going to bed. Here are a few simple suggestions to help improve your toddler's sleep patterns:

- Have your child wind down about half an hour before bedtime, ideally at the same time each day
- Start with a peaceful and predictable sleep routine such as bath, brushing teeth, and reading a story
- Naps should not be too late in the day as they may affect nighttime sleeping
- Allow your child some time to talk about their day
- Make your child's room quiet and cozy – soft, soothing music might be comforting
- If your child has a favourite stuffed animal or blanket, make sure it is in the bed
- If your child is afraid of the dark, have a night light or leave the door slightly open
- Save time for cuddles, say goodnight and leave the room
- Be gentle, but firm if your child protests



## Trust Me. Trust My Tummy.

Healthy eating habits start with a spoonful of trust and a slice of patience. To help encourage healthy eating habits for a lifetime, make eating a social and enjoyable time.

**You decide:** What foods to offer. When to offer meals and snacks. Where your child will eat.

**Trust your child to decide:** Which foods to eat. How much to eat.

**Tips for building healthy eating habits:**

- Provide a healthy meal or snack every 2 or 3 hours
- Seat your child at the table for meals and snacks without TV or toys
- Allow your child to say **"no thank you"** or **"more please"**
- Let your child leave the table when he is full – 20 to 30 minutes is enough time to eat
- You are your child's most important role model, so practice healthy eating habits yourself
- Discourage eating or drinking (except water) between set times
- Offer small portions of food
- Let your child feed himself
- Keep mealtime free of pressure
- Eat together as a family whenever possible

**If you are concerned about your child's eating habits or weight gain (too much or too little) talk to your health care provider, public health nurse or registered dietitian.**



# Look At What I Can Do!

From 2 ½ to 3 years, these are some of the things I can do:

2 1/2  
Years

- I like to balance on one foot for a second
- I can carry a conversation of 2 or 3 sentences
- I can pick up and put away my toys with help
- I can name at least 4 pictures
- I can sort white and coloured laundry
- I like to help put the groceries away
- I can put on my own t-shirt
- I can ride my tricycle using the pedals
- I can jump with both feet off the floor at once
- I can help tear lettuce and help set the table
- I can copy a circle
- I can describe what some things are for or how I can use them such as "what is a raincoat for?"
- I am beginning to share toys and books, but not all the time



3 Years

- I can dress without help – my shirt or pants might be on backward and my shoes on the wrong feet but that's okay
- I am curious – I like to ask "Why?"

## Watch for these Speech and Language Milestones

### By age 3 my child:

- Uses 900 – 1000 different words
- Uses sentences of three or more words
- Asks questions like, "Who", "Where", and "Why"
- Talks about things that happened in the past
- Can tell a simple story
- Speaks clearly enough for people outside the family to understand most of the time
- Puts sounds at the beginning and end of most words
- Follows two-part directions like, "Go to the kitchen and get your hat" without gestures

Parents usually know their child best. If you did not check all of the boxes above, please call **tykeTALK** at 519-663-0273 or toll free at 1-877-818-8255 to find out more that you can do to help your child learn to talk.

## Safe Travelling

If your child now weighs over 40 pounds (18 kg) he may ready to move from his front-facing car seat to a booster seat. But don't be in a hurry to move your child to a booster. It is safer for your child to use a 5 point harness as long as possible, up to the car seat's maximum weight or height limits.

A booster seat allows your child to safely use the adult seat belt by positioning it properly over her body- shoulder belt in the centre of the chest and lap belt on the upper thighs.

A booster seat will also raise a child so that she can see out of the window. This can, in fact, increase safety too – a happy child makes a better passenger, who is less likely to fuss and distract the driver.

For information about booster seat installation and safe use go to the Infant and Toddler Safety Association website listed on the back of this newsletter.





## Play

### Picnic Fun for Everyone!

Your child will love having a picnic! You can pack a lunch and go to the park, or have a picnic at home. He will have lots of fun spreading out a big blanket or making a tent in the living room. Your child will have fun including his dolls and stuffed animals. His play dough creatures could have fun eating pretend **"play dough treats"**.

Your child loves to talk to you during play. Point out different colours of objects around him. Say, **"Let's put the red blanket on the ground"** or **"the green frog is in the water"**. It might take him a while to learn all of the colours. Keep repeating them to your child. There is so much for him to learn and it's fun to learn together!



## Talk

### I Love to Learn!

By the time your child is 3 years old, he should be able to follow 2 to 3 step directions. When you are cleaning up toys together, you can ask him to find the truck and the ball and then put them in the toy box. While reading books you can ask your child questions about the pictures like, **"Where is the bird?"** and **"What is the boy doing?"** He is starting to learn about the concept of one and more than one. Use a big piece of paper to trace around his body and help him learn about his eyes, ears, hands, arms and legs. If your child says **"foots"** instead of **"feet"** you can just repeat the word **"feet"** with him again. Some **"rules"** are hard for your child to learn.



## Grow

### Activities to Learn and Grow

Make exercise part of your family's daily routine. You can go for walks together, play catch, go swimming, make angels in the snow, build a snow fort or go to the nearest playground and have fun. Making a garden is a great activity for your child too. He loves to dig in the dirt and water the plants. Some neighbourhoods have community gardens that people can use. If there is no place for a garden, you can plant seeds in a cup or flower pot in the house and watch them grow. Talk to your child about the miracle of life together.

# Talking to Your Child About Sexuality

We are all sexual beings from birth. The way you touch, hold and comfort your child shows your attitude towards his body and sexuality. A child first learns about physical affection from his parents. Through these relationships he learns about caring and responsibility. Cuddle and hold your child often. A child who receives affection grows to be an adult capable of giving affection appropriately.

Through his parents a child learns feelings, attitudes, and values. Parents can give important positive messages when they:

- teach their child proper names for all body parts and functions
- help him understand the rules about nudity and privacy.

As your child grows, the chances to discuss sexuality will often come up naturally. For example, your child may be curious about a pregnant woman or see dogs or other animals mating. These are good times for you to raise the subject. For a young child, give honest answers, direct and accurate explanations, and keep it simple and short. When he stops asking questions you have probably given him enough information. Providing him with an answer you are comfortable with gives you the opportunity to teach your child your own values.

## What are the Normal Stages of Sexual Development?

### **18 months to 3 years old:**

- learns words for body parts and functions and may ask questions about them
- is curious about and explores own body, including genitals
- notices and asks questions about the differences between boys and girls

### **3 to 5 years old:**

- interested in babies, pregnancy, and birth
- loves rude words about going to the washroom
- notices differences between boys and girls and may ask questions about their body
- continues to explore own body

There are many picture books for young children as well as books for parents. Check out your local library to find books to help you discuss sexuality with your child.



## Positives or Negatives

At this age your child still likes to try out different behaviors. He may still have outbursts and temper tantrums. Be caring, consistent, and patient with him – as difficult at this may be at times! Labels such as “Bad Boy” if he does something wrong will not help him develop the ability to make good choices. Instead, talk about the behavior or activity that is the problem. Say, **“Biting hurts”** instead of **“You are a bad boy for biting”**.

Here are a few strategies for discipline that may be helpful at this age:

- Time In (as opposed to Time Out): Time Out does not work for many toddlers. They become extremely upset at the separation and may be afraid you won’t ever come back. Sometimes some positive attention or simply a cuddle works wonders.
- Redirection: If he won’t stop the behavior, redirect him to another activity.
- Logical Consequences: If she does something she’s been told not to do, the consequence is to lose the activity. For example, if she throws her doll in the dirt, she loses it until it is cleaned.
- Rewards and Incentives: These are different from bribery. Rewards are given after the behavior and not always because you asked for the behavior. Bribes usually occur before the behavior. For example, **“I see you tidied up your toys. Thank you. Would you like a story?”** instead of **“Stop yelling and I will give you a candy.”** Food rewards are not a good idea as it develops poor food habits.

Spanking is not an effective type of discipline. It only teaches the child that it is OK to hit someone when she gets angry. Positive reinforcement makes her want to do what is expected. Hearing **“I love you”** gives your child a feeling of security and confidence.



## **St. Thomas Site**

1230 Talbot Street, St. Thomas, ON N5P 1G9  
519-631-9900 | 1-800-922-0096

## **Woodstock Site**

410 Buller Street, Woodstock, ON N4S 4N2  
519-421-9901 | 1-800-922-0096