

tantrums, negativism, and obstinacy. “Getting into things” is their way of learning about their world, especially relationships. Successful mastery of the tasks of this age requires a strong foundation of trust during infancy and frequently necessitates guidance from others when parents and toddlers face the struggles of toilet training, limit setting, and sibling rivalry. Nurses who understand the dynamics of growth and development of toddlers can help families deal effectively with the tasks of this age.

Biologic Development

Proportional Changes

Physical growth slows considerably during toddlerhood. The average weight gain is 1.8 to 2.7 kg (4 to 6 pounds) per year. The average weight at 2 years old is 12 kg (26.5 pounds). The birth weight is quadrupled by $2\frac{1}{2}$ years old. The rate of increase in height also slows. The usual increment is an addition of 7.5 cm (3 inches) per year and occurs mainly in elongation of the legs rather than the trunk. The average height of a 2-year-old child is 86.6 cm (34 inches). In general, adult height is about twice the 2-year-old child's height. Accurate measurement of height and weight during the toddler years should reveal a steady growth curve that is steplike in nature rather than linear (straight), which is characteristic of the growth spurts during the early childhood years.

The rate of increase in head circumference slows somewhat by the end of infancy, and head circumference is usually equal to chest circumference by 1 to 2 years old. The usual total increase in head circumference during the second year is 2.5 cm (1 inch). Then the rate of increase slows until at age 5 years, the increase is less than 1.25 cm (0.5 inch) per year. The anterior fontanel closes between 12 and 18 months old.

Chest circumference continues to increase in size and exceeds head circumference during the toddler years. The chest's shape also changes as the transverse, or lateral, diameter exceeds the anteroposterior diameter. After the second year, the chest circumference exceeds the abdominal measurement, which, in addition to the growth of the lower extremities, makes the child appear taller and leaner. However, toddlers retain a squat, “pot-bellied” appearance because of their less developed abdominal