

musculature and short legs. The legs retain a slightly bowed or curved appearance during the second year from the weight of the relatively large trunk.

Sensory Changes

Visual acuity of 20/40 is considered acceptable during the toddler years. Full binocular vision is well developed, and any evidence of persistent strabismus requires professional attention as early as possible to prevent amblyopia. Depth perception continues to develop, but because of toddlers' lack of motor coordination, falls from heights continue to be a persistent danger.

The senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch become increasingly well developed, coordinated with each other, and associated with other experiences. All of the senses are used to explore the environment. Toddlers visually inspect an object by turning it over; they may taste it, smell it, and touch it several times before they are satisfied with their investigation. They shake it to see if it makes noise and vigorously test its durability.

Another example of the integrated function of the senses is toddlers' development of specific taste and texture preferences. Toddlers are much less likely than infants to try new foods because of their appearance, texture, or smell, not just their taste.

Maturation of Systems

Most of the physiologic systems are relatively mature by the end of toddlerhood. By the end of the first year, all the brain cells are present but continue to increase in size. Myelination of the spinal cord is almost complete by 2 years old, which parallels the completion of most of the gross motor skills. Brain growth is 75% completed by the end of 2 years.

The volume of the respiratory tract and growth of associated structures continue to increase during early childhood, lessening some of the factors that predisposed children to frequent and serious infections during infancy. The internal structures of the ear and throat continue to be short and straight, and the lymphoid tissue of the tonsils and adenoids continues to be large. As a result, otitis media, tonsillitis, and upper respiratory tract infections are common. The respiratory and heart rates slow, and the blood