

The Growing Child: 3-Year-Olds



How much will my child grow?

In 3-year-olds, growth is still slow compared with the first year. Most children have become slimmer and lost the rounded tummy of a toddler. All children may grow at a different rate, but the following is the average for 3-year-olds:

- **Weight.** Average gain of about 4 to 6 pounds per year.
- **Height.** Average growth of about 2 to 3 inches per year.

After age 2, children of the same age can noticeably vary in height and weight. As long as the child is maintaining their own rate of growth, there should be no reason to worry. Talk with your child's healthcare provider if you have concerns.

What can my child do at this age?

As your child continues to grow, you will notice new and exciting abilities that develop. Children may progress at different rates, but these are some of the common milestones most children reach in this age group:

- Runs and jumps easily
- Walks up the stairs unassisted
- Rides a tricycle
- Washes and dries hands
- Holds crayon between fingers and thumb (not a fist) and can draw a circle
- Catches a large ball most of the time
- Serves themselves food or pours a drink with supervision
- Unbuttons some buttons
- Can concentrate on tasks for 8 or 9 minutes
- Has all 20 primary ("baby") teeth
- Vision is nearing 20/20
- Bladder and bowel control are usually established and uses potty chair or toilet
- May sleep 11 to 13 hours total and may still take a short afternoon nap

What can my child say?

Speech development is very exciting for parents as they watch their child start to speak clearly and interact with others. Every child develops speech at their own rate, but here are some of the common milestones for most children in this age group:

- Speech can be understood by others
- Speaks in 2- or 3-word sentences and progresses to 4- or 5-word sentences

- Can remember simple rhymes or lyrics
- Uses "please" and "thank you"
- Talks about at least 1 thing that happened during their day
- Names a few colors

What does my child understand?

Children may progress at different rates, but here are some of the common milestones your most children reach in this age group:

- Understands size differences such as big and little
- Understands long sentences
- Asks "why" constantly
- Draws a person with 3 or more body parts
- Knows what comes next in a well-known story
- Says full name and age
- May have fears of certain things. For example, dark, monster under bed, and going down the drain.
- Attempts to solve problems
- Remembers certain events
- Can point to the correct picture when asked a simple question about it.

How does my child interact with others?

Every child is unique and will develop a different personality. Here are some of the common behavioral traits that may be present in your child:

- Starts to share
- Likes to play with other children, and asks to play with children if none are around
- Can take turns
- Likes to be a "helper"
- Stays away from danger, such as jumping from a tall height
- Temper tantrums are less often
- Starts to show feelings in socially acceptable ways, such as comforting others who are hurt or sad

How to help increase your child's learning and emotional security

Here are some ways to foster the emotional security of your 3-year-old:

- Spend time allowing your child to talk with you.
- Teach your child how things work.

- Encourage play with other children.
- Encourage your child to tell you stories.
- Listen to your child and show that you are pleased by your child's talking.
- Let your child do as much as possible for themselves when getting dressed, brushing teeth, and combing hair.
- Have your child help with simple chores, such as picking up toys.
- Give your child old clothes for "dress up" and allow them to pretend being a mom, dad, healthcare provider, cowboy, and the like. Even old sheets or towels can become skirts, capes, or turbans. You can also pretend you are an elephant, butterfly, robot, or other characters and play with your child.
- Sing songs or nursery rhymes and teach your child the words.
- Read stories with your child and ask your child to name pictures in the stories or retell part of the story.
- Help your child play with crayon and paper or chalk and chalkboard by showing how to draw circles and lines and then put them together to make a stick figure. Make figure faces that are happy, sad, or surprised, and talk about the different feeling shown in each picture.
- Let your child build things out of blocks or boxes.
- Give your child a safe space to ride a tricycle.
- Listen to children's music with your child and dance.
- Practice counting with your child.
- Give your child the chance to play games with other children. Church groups, YWCA or YMCA recreation centers, or libraries often have preschool programs.
- Put puzzles together with your child.
- Let your child have pretend playtime with dolls, cars, or toy cooking utensils.
- Play hide and seek and follow the leader.
- Let your child use their imagination by playing with play dough or clay.
- Trace your child's hand or whole body and make a picture.
- Show your child you are proud of any artwork and hang it up for display.
- Teach your child colors.
- Play ball with your child. Play different games with the ball, such as tossing a ball into a box or rolling the ball up and down an incline.
- Limit screen time (TV, phone, tablet) to no more than 1 hour a day. Don't put any screens in your child's bedroom.

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