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Well Child Care at 2 Years

Nutrition

Family meals are important for your child. They teach your child that eating is a time to be together and talk with others. Letting your child eat with you makes her feel like part of the family. Let your child feed herself. Your toddler will continue to improve using the spoon, with fewer and fewer spills. It is good to let your child help choose what foods to eat. Be sure to give her only nutritious foods to choose from. For many children, now is the time to switch from whole milk to 2% milk.

It is very important for your child to be completely off a bottle. Ask your doctor for help if she is still using one.

Development and Discipline

At this age, children often say "no" or refuse to do what you want them to do. This normal phase of development involves testing the rules that parents make. Parents need to be consistent in following through with reasonable rules. Your rules should not be too strict or too lenient. Enforce the rules fairly every time. Be gentle but firm with your child even when the child wants to break a rule. Many parents find this age difficult, so ask your doctor for advice on managing behavior.

Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe:

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is either valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that he enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say "no."
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit alone for 2 minutes. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Make consequences as logical as possible. Remember that encouragement and praise are more likely to motivate a young child than threats and fear. Do not threaten a consequence that you do not carry out. If you say there is a consequence for misbehavior and the child misbehaves, carry through with the consequence gently, but firmly.
5. Be consistent with discipline. Don't make threats that you cannot carry out. If you say you're going to do it, do it.
6. Be warm and positive. Children like to please their parents. Give lots of praise and be enthusiastic. When children misbehave, stay calm and say "We can't do that. The rule is _____. " Then repeat the rule.

Some children at this age are showing signs that they are ready for toilet training. When your child starts reporting wet or soiled diapers to you, this is a sign that your child prefers to be dry. Praise your child for telling you. Toddlers are naturally curious about other people using the bathroom. If your child seems curious, let him go to the bathroom with you. Buy a potty chair and leave it in a room in which your child usually plays. It is important not to put too many demands on the child or shame the child about toilet training. When your child does use the toilet, let him know how proud you are.

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Spend time teaching your child how to play. Encourage imaginative play and sharing of toys, but don't be surprised that 2-year-olds usually do not want to share toys with anyone else.

Mild stuttering is common at this age. It usually goes away on its own by the age of 4 years. Do not hurry your child's speech. Ask your doctor about your child's speech if you are worried.

It is important to set rules about television watching. Limit total TV time to 1 hour per day. Watch television shows with your child. Ask your child questions about what the characters were doing and how they were feeling. Children should not be allowed to watch shows with violence or sexual behaviors. Find other activities you can do with your child. Reading, hobbies, and physical activities are good alternatives to TV.

Safety Tips

Prevent Fires and Burns

- Practice a fire escape plan.
- Check smoke detectors. Replace the batteries if necessary.
- Check food temperatures carefully. They should not be too hot.
- Don't smoke near children.
- Keep hot appliances and cords out of reach.
- Keep electrical appliances out of the bathroom.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Don't allow your child to use the stove, microwave, hot curlers, or iron.
- Turn your water heater down to 120°F (50°C).

Car Safety

- Use an approved toddler car seat correctly.
- Sometimes toddlers may not want to be placed in car seats. Gently but consistently put your child into the car seat every time you ride in the car.
- Give the child a toy to play with once in the seat.
- Parents wear seat belts.
- Never leave your child alone in a car.

Pedestrian Safety

- Hold onto your child when you are near traffic.
- Provide a play area where balls and riding toys cannot roll into the street.

Prevent Drowning

- Continuously watch your child around any water.

Avoid Falls

- Teach your child not to climb on furniture or cabinets. Avoid placing furniture (on which children may climb) near windows or on balconies.
- Install window guards on windows above the first floor (unless this is against your local fire codes.)
- Lock doors to dangerous areas like the basement.

Poisons

- Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc., locked away.
- Put poison center number on all phones.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not store toxic substances in drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

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Immunizations

Routine infant vaccinations are usually completed before this age. However, some children may need to catch up on recommended shots at this visit. In some areas of the United States hepatitis A vaccination is given to children at age 2. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about whether your child needs any vaccines.

Next Visit

A once-a-year check-up is recommended. Before starting school, your child will need more vaccinations.

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