



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



2 1/2 Years **OUT & ABOUT**

Your child at 2 1/2–3 years old

Older toddlers want to understand the reason for everything — they ask "why" a lot!

What your child can do

Your toddler's body is helping them do bigger and more complex things:

- They can pedal a tricycle
- They can dress themselves with some help
- They can draw a line
- They can turn a knob or unscrew a cap

Your toddler is using words to share their thoughts and feelings:

- By age 3, they may know as many as 1,000 words
- They understand sentences with two ideas, like "You can have a snack when we get home"
- They ask lots of questions
- They know their first and last name

What you can do

Let your child scribble with markers and crayons — this builds early writing skills.

Give your child chances to practice bigger physical skills like pedaling and climbing.

Childproof your home again. Your child can now open caps and doorknobs, so take another look around for safety.

Introduce new words to build their vocabulary. Ask, "Is your snack delicious?"

Ask questions that need more than a yes or no answer. "Where do you think the squirrel is taking that nut?"

Be patient with their "why" questions, and ask what they think before you answer.

Every child grows at their own pace. Your child may reach milestones sooner or later than other kids and still be doing just fine.

Your child is thinking in new ways

Your toddler is developing new thinking skills to help them solve problems.

- They can remember what happened yesterday.
- They act out their own stories through play.
- They are becoming logical thinkers. They might add a blanket when they pretend it is bedtime for a stuffed animal.

Friends are becoming very important.

- They notice how people are the same and different. They may point out things like skin color and size. This is normal curiosity about the world.



What you can do

At dinner or before bed, talk with your child about their day. This builds both memory and language skills.

Help your child use logic in everyday moments. "It's raining outside. What do we need to stay dry?"

Help your child take turns and work out conflicts. "There is only one train. I'll set a timer so you each get 5 minutes with it. While you wait, you can pick something else to play with."

Help your child be kind and thoughtful about differences. "Yes, people come in all sizes and skin colors."

Other things to know and try

- Make a screen time plan that works for your child and your family. Think about what they watch, how long they watch, and whether you can watch together
- Limit screen time and make sure what they watch is right for their age
- Make time for active play every day — with siblings, cousins, or friends
- Set up playdates, join a parent group, or go to a library story hour

At this visit

The care team will measure your child's length, weight, and head size, and check their heart, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Your healthcare provider will discuss vaccines with you at today's visit. The team will talk with you about your child's growth, sleep, eating, and safety — and there will be time for any questions you have.

What comes next

Between 3 and 4 years, your child's language and thinking will take a big leap forward. They will start to play more *with* other children rather than just next to them. Their stories and imagination will get richer. This is also a time when children begin to develop a sense of right and wrong, and they may surprise you with how much they notice and understand about the world around them.

Have more questions?

Talk to your child's healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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