

Your
12-14
Month-Old
Baby



Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

First Steps! First Words!

I CAN TALK!

By the time your baby is 14 months old, most babies say, “**Mama**” and at least **one more word**.

I CAN WALK!

Your 12-14 month-old is probably **starting to WALK**. And, your baby wants to **climb** on everything. If you can, put safety gates that fasten to the wall at the top and bottom of stairs.



I WANT TO EXPLORE!

12-14 month-old babies are learning how to move, and how other things move.

Your baby likes to COPY what you do.

12-14 month-old babies will try to brush hair with a brush instead of putting it into their mouths. Your baby will love to stir a pot with a spoon.

Try this!

Read a book with your baby.

Ask your baby to point to the pictures. “Where’s the doggy? Where’s the baby? Point to the tree. Where are the shoes?”

The more you read and talk with your baby, the easier it will be for your baby to learn to talk and read and be ready for Kindergarten.

Following your exploring baby can be fun, but can also be **tiring** and **stressful**. Look inside for ideas about **lowering stress**.



QUESTION: What is my 12-14 month-old baby learning about TALKING?

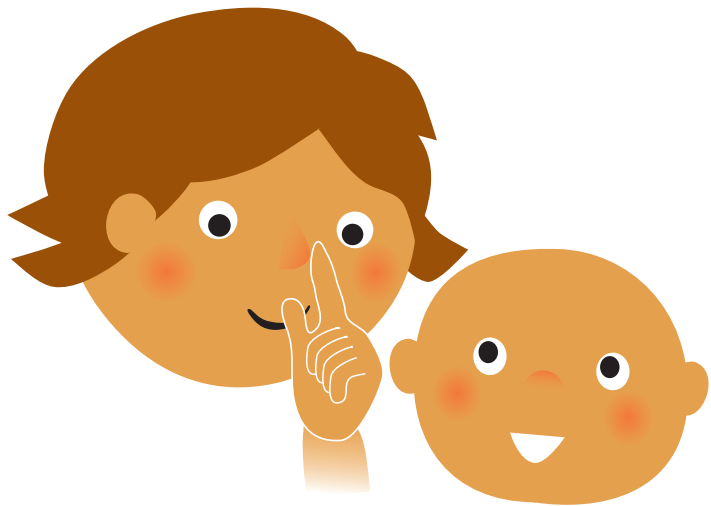
ANSWER: Most **12-14 month-old** babies can say, “**Mama.**” By 14 months, most babies will also say at least **one more word**. Babies **shake their heads “no”** with a frown. This is a time when babies learn that they can make choices. They prove it by saying, “No.” This is a sign of growing up.

Babies who learn more than one language gain something that will help them through their whole lives. If you speak more than one language, talk to your baby in all of the languages you know. Or, you can speak one language and daddy or someone else can speak another language.

Babies who hear more than one language may **seem** to talk a little later. In fact, they **know as many words** as babies who hear only one language. For example, babies growing up in homes where they hear Spanish and English may say, “apple” because it is easier than “manzana.” The same babies may say, “pez” instead of “fish” because “p” is easier to say than “f.” This is a great time for your baby to learn languages!

Your baby understands many more words than he or she can say. Your baby may understand words for parts of the body, clothing, and other familiar objects. You can use color names, but 12-14 month-old babies do not know colors yet.

Some babies do not start talking until they are 18 months old. If your baby is not talking yet, watch and see how your baby responds to you. When you smile, does your baby smile back at you? Does your baby give you a toy, then wait for you to give it back? Does your baby hear you come into the room? If your baby does not respond to you, ask your doctor. If your baby needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even little babies!



Try this!

Help your baby learn parts of the body. Your baby will have fun pointing to parts of the body. “Where is Mommy’s nose? There is Mommy’s nose! Where are Mommy’s eyes? Where is Mommy’s foot?” Play the same game with shoes, pants, shirts and other clothes. The more excited you sound, the more fun your baby will have.



Your baby doesn’t need words to communicate! Your baby can learn to talk with movements, called, “signs,” like waving bye-bye. Many babies can learn signs before they can learn to talk out loud, but both take a long time to learn. Be patient. (Look at Handout F for more about signs.) Learning to use signs helps babies learn to talk.

QUESTION: What are 12-14 month-old babies' MOVEMENTS like?

ANSWER: Most babies take their **first steps** by 14 months. A few babies are older when they start walking. Babies love to practice **crawling or walking up** stairs. You will get a lot of exercise following your baby up and down, again and again and again! Make sure that your baby can't get to any stairs without an adult close by.

Your baby will be very busy getting into everything. Trash baskets are fun to turn upside down. Pulling books or pans from shelves makes noise. You may get tired of chasing your baby. Life will be easier for you if your baby cannot reach the things you don't want your baby to touch. **Get on the floor and see what your baby sees.** Then move delicate things out of reach.

12-14 month-old babies are getting better and better at **using their hands**. They can pick up little pieces. They love small pieces of food that they can pick up themselves.

Try this!

Your little scientist will want to see how different things move. Let tissue paper float in the air. Blow on it so that your baby sees it move. Play with bubbles. Bounce balls. Roll balls to the wall and let them bounce back. Roll balls to your baby. Blow a leaf into the air. And remember, tell your baby what is happening.



You can make it **SAFE** for your baby to explore. Exploring is very important for your baby. **Babies need to spend a lot of time on the floor playing and exploring.** This is how your baby learns. Using a playpen for short times (fifteen minutes) is O.K. It is best to give your baby as much time as you can on the floor.

Try this!

Your baby loves to **THROW** things. Give your baby soft sponges, light balls and other safe things to throw.

Try this!

Give your baby a cardboard paper towel tube and some small pieces of cereal. Show your baby how to drop the food through the tube.



Your little scientist wants to shake, rattle, and roll, and **EXPLORE** everything. This may mean a big mess, especially during meals. **Making messes helps your baby learn.** You can put a towel or large trash bag under your baby when eating. This makes it easier to clean up. Give your baby small pieces of food that your baby can pick up. You still need to help. Try giving your baby a spoon to play with while you use a different spoon to feed your baby. It won't be long before your baby can eat "all by myself!"

QUESTION: Sometimes I get very angry and frustrated with my baby. I'm tired of having to watch and take care of my baby all of the time. I feel stressed. What can I do?

ANSWER: Every parent feels tired and frustrated at times. It is important that you take care of yourself. When you feel stressed, take a few slow deep breaths. Taking time to relax helps you and your baby. You can teach your baby good ways to handle feelings like anger. By relaxing, you protect your baby from words or actions that could hurt your baby. Ask a friend or relative to watch your baby to give you a break. If you feel you cannot take care of your baby, ask your doctor for advice. Call 211 if you have more questions or need help.

QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 12-14 month-old babies?

ANSWER: You are more important than any toy. **Read** to your baby every day. **Play** on the floor with your baby every day. **Cuddle** your baby every day. **Talk** and **sing** in every language you know!

12-14 month-old babies like to push or pull toys. A stroller is more fun to push than to ride in. They also like balls that are too big to fit into their mouths, toys that squeak, move, open and push. Let your baby hold the book and try to turn the pages. Name the pictures in the books. Read with different voices. Have fun reading to your baby! Children whose parents read to them do better in school.

Try this!

Your baby will love to **COPY** everything you do. You can copy your baby too. This shows your baby that you are paying attention and are interested in what your baby does. Peek-a-boo is still fun for everyone!



Safety Corner



Now that your baby is on the move, he will need someone to watch him all the time. Remember to...

- Keep all electric cords out of your baby's reach. If your baby grabs a cord, he can pull something that can fall on him.
- Cover all electric outlets with safety covers to keep little fingers out.
- Keep small objects that are small enough to fit through a toilet paper roll off the floor. Make sure that there are no coins, small toys, or anything that could be a choking hazard for your baby.



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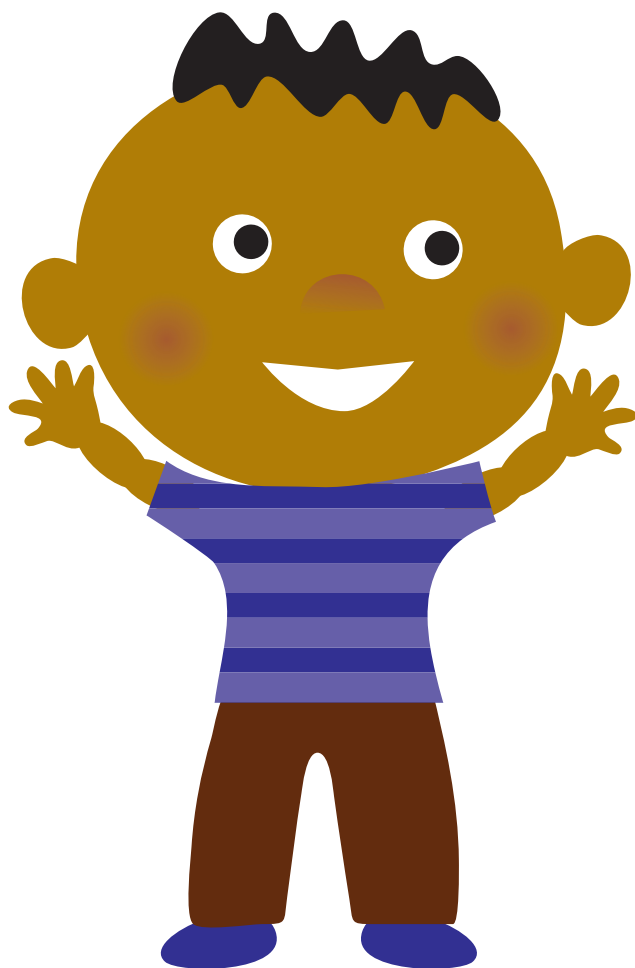
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Here I Come!



I LOVE TO TALK! Most children say 1 to 50 words by the time they are 17 months old. Your child probably understands 75 to 300 words.

I CAN WALK! Your 15-17 month-old is walking more smoothly. Children first walk with their legs wide apart and arms spread to help them balance. With more practice, children walk with their legs closer together and arms closer to their bodies. Some 15-17 month-old children can **run**.

I AM WATCHING YOU! Your child watches and copies you. You can help your child learn new skills and accept new experiences.

TANTRUMS! Many children have had a screaming tantrum by now. Tantrums are part of normal development, but that doesn't make them easy for parents. Tantrums show that your child wants to be independent.

LEARNING takes time. Your child will learn right from wrong with your help. This kind of teaching is called **discipline**. There are many ways to help your child learn to behave appropriately.

READING is even more fun. Your child can enjoy books. Talk to your child about what is in the pictures. "Where's the doggy? Point to the tree! Where are the shoes?" Ask your child to point to the pictures. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to learn to talk and read and be ready for Kindergarten.



QUESTION: What is my 15–17 month-old learning about TALKING? My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child how to say the words correctly?

ANSWER: When children are first learning to talk, the words do not sound like adult words. Some sounds are very hard to learn. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “R” sound and “L” sound. Usually, mothers and fathers understand many of the words that their children say, even if the words sound very different from how an adult says them. You can repeat the word to your child, saying it correctly. For example, if your child says, “Dah,” for DOG, you can say, “Yes, that’s a DOG!” This way, you are teaching your child two things. First, you are teaching your child that you understand. The more your child feels understood, the more your child will want to talk. Second, you are showing your child the right way to say the word. If you tell your child that the word is wrong, your child may be less willing to try new words.

Try this!

Bored with doing dishes? Put it to music and teach your child about plates, bowls, cups, spoons and forks by singing, “This is the way I wash the bowl, wash the bowl, wash the bowl. This is the way I wash the bowl so early in the morning.” Make up verses about everything you wash. You can also sing this as you bathe your child to teach body parts. “This is the way I wash your nose...”



QUESTION: What language should I speak to my child?

ANSWER: Learning more than one language will help your child throughout his or her life. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. Or, you can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to your child in all of the languages you know. Talk, talk, talk!

Try this!

Dressing can be a lot of fun. As you dress your child, ask about the parts of the body that are hidden. When you put pants on your child, you can ask, “Where’s your foot? Oh! There it is.” Putting a shirt over your child’s head is more fun if you are saying, “Where’s your hair? I see hair! Eyes? I see eyes! Nose, where are you? I see a nose!”

QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?

ANSWER: Some children do not start talking until they are 18 months old. If your child is not talking yet, watch and see how your child responds to you. When you smile, does your child smile back at you? Does your child give you a toy, then wait for you to give it back? Does your child hear you come into the room? If your child seems not to respond to you, ask your doctor. If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even little children.

QUESTION: What are 15–17 month-olds’ MOVEMENTS like?

ANSWER: Your 15–17 month-old is walking more smoothly. Some 15–17 month-olds can walk backwards. Some 15–17 month-olds can **run!** Your child may want to practice going up and down stairs. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can’t get to the stairs without an adult close by.



Try this!

You can tell how many months a child has been walking. A child who is learning to walk stands with his or her legs wide apart and arms spread out for balance. A child who can carry a toy while walking has been walking for at least one month. A child who can look up while walking has been walking for at least two or three months.

Your 15-17 month-old is getting better at using fingers and hands too. Children this age love to eat small pieces of food that are easy to pick up with their fingers. Pieces of cheese, peas, and cereal are food and toys. Children like to fit objects inside of each other (stacking cups, shape-sorters). Scribbling with a crayon helps a child's fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help your child write when they go to Kindergarten!

This dough is fun!

Stir together:

1/4 cup salt

1 cup flour

1/4 cup water

Have your child mix the flour and salt in a bowl then add water. Knead and squeeze the dough to make a clay consistency. You may need to add more water.

Ideas: Divide into sections, then knead in food coloring (liquid or paste). Kids love making the white play dough change colors. Use unsweetened Kool-Aid for color and scent. Add glitter for sparkly playdough.

Remember: Children less than one year of age should not play with this dough. Always be nearby when your child plays with the dough to make sure he or she doesn't choke on small pieces.

Try this!

This is a great age to give your child playdough to play with. You can make your own. Then play with your child. Show your child how to make snakes and balls. Show your child how to push a ball flat into a pancake or tortilla. Let your child cut it with cookie cutters or cups.



Try this!

Your child is watching you. When you are at your child's doctor appointment, ask the doctor to pretend to check you first. Show your child that it does not hurt. Then your child may want a turn.

QUESTION: My child throws screaming TANTRUMS in stores. What can I do?

ANSWER: Tantrums are part of normal development, but they are not a fun part of parenting. First, try to prevent the tantrum by making sure that your child is not too hungry or tired when you go shopping. 15-17 month-olds are not patient. They want things NOW. Second, you can pick up your child to try to comfort him or her. Third, you can take your child out of the store to give your child a chance to calm down.

QUESTION: My child gets into everything! Sometimes I feel like all I do is say, “NO” all day long. How can I teach my child right from wrong?

ANSWER: Your child is not trying to disobey. Your child is not trying to make you mad. Your child will learn, but it takes a long time. Here are some ideas to help your child learn. Try to say “yes” as much as possible, and save “no” for safety. Saying, “no” tells your child to stop, but does not tell your child what to do instead.

Make a safe play area where your child can play safely. Put things that your child can play with in that area.

Ignore. Sometimes your child wants your attention and will stop the behavior if you ignore it. Of course, you cannot ignore dangerous behavior.

Distract your child. When your child reaches for something breakable, give your child something safe to play with. When you are on the phone, give your child something special to play with.

Move your child away from things you don’t want touched. Tell your child why you are moving him or her. You can combine these ways of helping your child learn. For example, say, “Please don’t touch the stove. The stove is hot. You can play here.”

QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 15-17 month-old children?

ANSWER: You are more important than any toy. **READ** to your child every day. **Play** on the floor with your child every day. **Cuddle** your child every day. **Talk** and **sing** in every language you know!

Your child will enjoy fitting things into each other. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are great toys for this age. Crayons, playdough, finger paints, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills and see how she or he can create! Your child won’t be able to make a craft that you can recognize, but will have fun painting and playing with colors.

Try this!

Let your child help you with your chores. It may take longer with your child’s help, but you are teaching your child the importance of work, and showing your child that you value their help.



Safety Corner



Children can get hurt in the blink of an eye. The first step in providing a safe environment for your child is to prepare your home properly.

Toddler safety in the KITCHEN:

- Place safety latches on all doors and cabinets, especially where cleaning products and medicines are located.
- Use the back burners on the stove and turn all pot handles towards the back of the stove.
- Never hold or pass hot liquids over your child.

Toddler safety in the BEDROOM:

- If possible, don’t place the crib near or under a window. If the crib is placed near the window, be sure that all windows are securely latched or use a window guard. A toddler can climb out of the crib, and through the window.
- Remove curtains and blind cords from around the crib. These can lead to strangulation deaths.



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Yes! and No!

I LOVE TO TALK. Most children say at least 20 words by the time they are 20 months old. Often, a child's favorite word is "NO." You may not understand all of the words your child says. Your child may be combining two words into sentences. Your child probably understands hundreds of words.

I CAN RUN, CLIMB and JUMP. Your 18-20 month-old is walking, running, climbing and jumping! (And you are chasing!) Your child probably still walks with legs wide apart and arms spread to help balance.



I LIKE TO BE AROUND OTHER CHILDREN. Your child is beginning to be interested in other children, but needs help learning how to be with other children.



READ READ READ! Reading should be fun. Let your child help decide what you read and how much you read. Let your child turn pages. Talk to your child about what is in the pictures. Most children only pay attention for short times. Don't worry if you do not finish the book. Your child learns best when reading is fun for both of you. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

Look inside for more information about talking, movements, and friendships of 18-20 month-old children.

Try this!

You can repeat words to your child, saying them correctly. For example, if your child says, “Bah,” for BALL, you can say, “Yes, that’s a BALL.” This way, you are teaching your child that you understand.

The more your child feels understood, the more your child will want to talk. You are also showing your child the right way to say the word. If you tell your child that the word is wrong, your child maybe less willing to try new words.

QUESTION: My child says a lot of words in baby talk. How can I teach my child to say the words correctly?

ANSWER: When children are first learning to talk, the words do not sound like adult words. Some sounds are very hard to learn to say. Even many five-year-olds still have trouble with the “R” sound and “L” sound. You probably understand your child better than other adults understand your child.

QUESTION: What language should I speak to my child?

ANSWER: Children who learn more than one language gain something that will help them through their whole lives. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. Or, you can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to your child in all of the languages you know. Talk, talk, talk!

QUESTION: My child says “NO” all day long. What should I do?

ANSWER: Saying “NO” is part of normal development, but not always a fun part of development. This is a time when children learn that they can make choices. Your child is not trying to make you mad. 18–20 month-old children want to control what happens to them. They prove it by saying, “NO.” This is a sign of growing up. You can decide when to accept a “NO” and when not to accept a “NO.”



Try this!

Sometimes you can give your child a choice. For example, if your child says, “NO” when you are trying to dress him, you can say, “Do you want to wear the red shirt or the yellow shirt?” This gives your child some control. Sometimes your child cannot have a choice. Taking medicine that a doctor has prescribed is not your child’s choice. You can say, “Even though you do not want the medicine, you need to take it so that you will be healthy.” This shows your child that you understand the “NO,” and explains why you cannot give in to your child’s wish. The good news is that children grow out of saying “NO” to everything.

QUESTION: What if my child is not talking yet?

ANSWER: By 20 months, most children say at least 20 words. If your child is not talking yet, watch and see how your child responds to you. When you ask your child a question, does he or she understand you? When you smile, does your child smile back at you? Does your child give you a toy, then wait for you to give it back? Does your child hear you come into the room? If your child seems not to respond to you, **ask your doctor**. If your child needs extra help, it is best to get the help as early as possible. There are special programs for helping children, even very young children.

QUESTION: How coordinated should my 18-20 month-old be?

ANSWER: Your 18-20 month-old is walking more smoothly. Your child walks with his or her tummy out, and shoulders back. Your child can walk backwards, sideways, and can even run. Your child is beginning to walk up stairs with help. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can't get to the stairs without an adult close by. Your child can jump. When your child wants to pick up a toy, he or she can bend down and pick it up.



QUESTION: Should my child be using forks, spoons and crayons?

ANSWER: Your 18-20 month-old is getting better at using fingers and hands. Children this age still love to eat small pieces of food that are easy to pick up with their fingers, but are also starting to use a spoon or fork, and drink from a cup. They also like to fit objects inside of each other (stacking cups, shape-sorters, puzzles). Scribbling with a crayon helps a child's fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help your child write in Kindergarten.

QUESTION: My child sometimes tells me when his diaper is wet or messy. When should my child start using the toilet?

ANSWER: Children who are trained to use the toilet before they are 2 years old are more likely to still have accidents when they are 4. Waiting until your child is really ready will make it easier for both of you. Your next handout (Handout J for 21-23 month-olds) will include ideas about using the toilet.

Try this!

Playgrounds are more and more fun now that your child can move around more easily. Many children love slides and swings and sandboxes. Talk about everything you and your child do. Swings and slides are great places to talk about opposites such as up and down, back and forth, high and low, come and go, close and far. Use those words to tell your child what is happening as you play with your child on the swing or slide. Bring a ball and be ready to chase it. Your child will love throwing balls, but probably cannot catch yet. When you run after the ball, say "Look how far you threw the ball! I'm getting closer and closer and closer and closer and closer ...". Children love hearing the same word repeated. If you sound excited, your child will be excited too!

Be careful! Because 18-20 month-olds are so active, playgrounds can have dangers. Make sure that someone catches your child at the bottom of the slide; your child is too little to go down a slide alone. Your child may love to swing, but will not understand how to be safe near swings.

Try this!

Draw with your child. Do not worry about drawing something that looks real. The scribbles are what your child will enjoy. Many 18-month-old children scribble in a circular motion. It will not look like a circle, but it will look round. By 20 months, your child may be able to copy your drawing of a line up and down.

Try this!

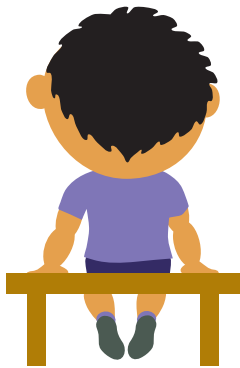
Bring enough spoons and plastic cups to the sandbox for all of the children. Don't worry. In a few months your child will learn to share.

QUESTION: Is my child old enough to play with other children?

ANSWER: 18–20 month-olds are very interested in other children. They want to be around other children. They play near each other, but not with each other. This is called “parallel play.” If the other child is building a tower, your child may build a tower. If your child fills a bucket with sand, the other child may fill a bucket with sand. They are not old enough to share toys, but they like to do what other children are doing.

18–20 month-old children do not know how to be friends yet. Some days they might play really well. Other days, they may bite, pull hair, or hit other children. They are not being mean. They do not understand that it hurts when they hit or bite.

Some parents bite or hit their child back because they want their child to learn that these hurt. Doctors say that you should not hit or bite your child back. Biting or hitting your child teaches your child that bigger people are allowed to hurt smaller people.



Try this!

Move the biter or hitter away from the other child. Tell them that hitting or biting hurts and that they cannot play with other children until they stop. When the children are together again, stay close and try to stop a bite or hit before it happens.

QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 18–20 month-old children?

ANSWER: You are more important than any toy. READ to your child every day. Play on the floor with your child every day. Cuddle your child every day. And TALK and SING in every language you know!

Your child will enjoy fitting things into each other. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are still great toys for this age. Crayons, playdough, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills and see how she or he can create. Your child won't be able to make a craft that you can recognize, but will have fun painting and playing with colors. 18–20 month-old children like to play with balls and to push or pull toys.

Safety Corner



There are so many fun things to discover and explore in the playground. Most playground injuries come from falls.

Tips to consider:

Before Play:

- Make sure the playground equipment is appropriate for your child's age.
- Look for sharp edges, loose or broken screws on playground equipment.
- Make sure your child isn't wearing clothes with drawstrings. These can get tangled in the playground equipment.

During Play:

- Watch your child carefully. Accidents can happen quickly!
- Teach your child playground behavior such as no pushing or shoving.
- Keep children under 5 years old in a play area away from older children.



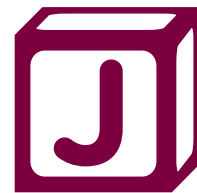
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Busy All the Time!

I TALK and TALK. Most children say at least 40 words by the time they are 23 months old. Your child is learning new words every day.

Playing is how I learn. Playing teaches your child about the world.

I like to be near other children. You are still your child's best playmate, but your child is interested in other children. Children this age like to play near each other, but do not really know how to play with each other.

I CAN go up and down stairs. Your 21-23 month-old is very busy walking, running and moving more easily.

I may be interested in using the toilet. Many girls are ready when they are about 2 years old. Boys usually are ready later when they are about 2-1/2 years old.



READ, READ, READ! Your child may have a favorite book. Let your child choose the book and turn the pages. The more you read and talk with your child, the easier it will be for your child to be ready for Kindergarten.

Try this!

Children enjoy walks around the home or neighborhood where you tell them the names of what they see. For example, say things like, “That’s a BOOK. Do you like that BOOK? That’s my PLATE. I EAT my dinner from that PLATE. That’s a BIG POT. We COOK in it. That’s a BROWN DOG. Do you like the DOG? That’s a BABY. See the BABY’S BLUE HAT?” Your child is very interested in learning new words.



QUESTION: How should I talk to my child?

ANSWER: Talk a lot! Your child will understand you best if you speak slowly and clearly and use short, easy sentences. Your child is learning pronouns like, “me, you, he, she, I, him, her.” This means that your child understands more when you describe what you do and what your child does. Talk about everything you and your child are doing.

QUESTION: My child calls all animals “DOG.” Should I worry?

ANSWER: This is normal. When children are first learning to talk they often use one word to mean more than one thing. “Dog” can mean dog, cat, giraffe, or any animal. Soon your child will begin to use the correct words. “Apple” can mean, “Give me an apple,” “I see an apple,” “I have an apple,” or something else about apples. Your child is probably starting to put two words together to say “Want apple” or “See apple.”

Try this!

Your child is beginning to learn about time. Use words like before, after, soon, and later when you talk to your child. You can talk about everything you do and everything your child does.

Remember, this is the best time for your child to learn more than one language. If you speak more than one language, talk to your child in all of the languages you know. You can speak one language and someone else can speak another language. Also, sing to your child in all of the languages you know.



QUESTION: How can I help my child learn to play nicely with other children?

ANSWER: Most 21–23 month-olds want to be around other children. If another child is playing with a ball, your child may want a ball. If your child is reading a book, the other child may want to read a book. 21–23 month-olds still are too young to share toys, but they like to do what other children are doing.

Try this!

Bring enough books and balls for all of the children. Your child does not know how to share yet. Don’t worry. In a few months your child will learn to share.

QUESTION: What if a child is biting or hitting other children?

ANSWER: If one child bites or hits another child, move the biter or hitter away. Say, “Hitting or biting hurts and you cannot play with other children until you stop.” When the children are together again, stay close and try to stop a bite or hit before it happens. 21–23 month-olds do not bite to be mean. They do not understand that it hurts when they hit or bite.

Some parents bite or hit their children back because they want their child to learn that these hurt. Doctors say that you should not hit or bite your child back. Biting or hitting your child teaches your child that bigger people are allowed to hurt smaller people.

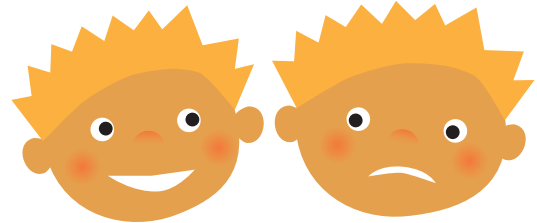
QUESTION: How coordinated should my 21–23 month-old be?

ANSWER: Your 21–23 month-old can use his or her hands to carry things while walking. Your child can walk backwards, sideways, and can even run. Your child can walk up and down stairs holding onto a railing or the wall, and putting both feet on each step before moving to the next step. Even though your child may seem to have better balance now, make sure that your child can’t get to the stairs without an adult close by. Your child can jump. When your child wants to pick up a toy, he or she can bend down and pick it up.



Try this!

Turn on some music and jump and move to the beat. Give your child a plastic bowl and a spoon and let him or her play along.



Try this!

You can help your child learn words for feelings too. Tell your child how you feel. Use words like happy, sad, excited, angry, and other feeling words. Children who can use words to explain their feelings do not hit or bite as much as children who do not know those words.

QUESTION: Why does my 21–23 month-old take off his or her clothes?

ANSWER: Because your child can! This is a new skill and your child is practicing. Your child takes off all of his or her clothes and can put some of them back on. Zippers and buttons may still be hard for your child. It will be a couple more years before your child can tie their shoes. Many children this age really like to be naked. They also are interested in exploring all parts of their bodies. This is normal.

QUESTION: My child makes a big mess when eating or coloring. What can I do to help?

ANSWER: When eating, use a plastic mat under the plate and a shower curtain on the floor. Using a spoon or fork and drinking from a cup helps children learn to control their hands. You can tell from the mess they make that they are still learning. Scribbling with a crayon helps a child’s fingers grow strong. Scribbles will not look like letters, but scribbling will help your child write in Kindergarten.

Remember, now that your child can run, he or she can get away from you more quickly. Your child does not yet understand how to stay safe. Stay near your child in stores, parks, and everywhere.

QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for 21-23 month-old children?

ANSWER: Crayons, play dough, and other art supplies give your child a chance to practice new finger skills. Stacking cups, shape-sorters, and simple puzzles are still great toys for this age. 21-23 month-old children like to play with balls and to push or pull toys.



Try this!

Make a puzzle! Glue magazine pictures to cereal boxes, cardboard or heavy paper. (Make sure that you use non-toxic, child-safe glue.) Cut the picture into two pieces and let your child put it back together. You can make this puzzle as hard or easy as you want. When your child can put two pieces together, cut it again into three or four pieces. Make sure that the pieces are not small enough to fit through a toilet paper roll. Your child could choke.

QUESTION: I am tired of changing diapers. When should my child start using the toilet?

ANSWER: Children who are trained to use the toilet before they are 2 years old are more likely to still have accidents when they are 4. Waiting until your child is really ready will make it easier for both of you. Here are some signs that can help you know when your child is ready to use the toilet.

- 1** Is your child noticing when he or she is peeing (urinating) or pooping (having a bowel movement) in a diaper? Does your child pull on his or her pants or say, “Uh oh” when peeing or pooping in the diaper? Choose words to teach to your child (toilet or potty, pee or poop) or teach your child to point when he or she needs to go to the bathroom.
- 2** Is your child interested in copying what you do? Does your child want to watch you using the bathroom? If you are comfortable with this, it can help your child learn to use the toilet.
- 3** Does your child like to put things where they belong? You can tell your child that urine and bowel movements (or BM’s) belong in the toilet. Use the words that you are comfortable with.
- 4** Try not to start during a time when your child’s favorite word is “no.” It is much easier to toilet train when your child is more interested in pleasing you.

Safety Corner



Your child is busy exploring. Make sure the area around your child is safe. Always keep an eye on your little one as he explores around the home.

Here are some tips:

- Do not place toys on top of furniture.
- Place furniture away from windows.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Help your child climb up and down the stairs by holding his hands.
- Make sure stairs are clear of toys and other objects.
- Keep windows locked when they are closed.