

# Tips for Keeping Infants and Toddlers Safe: A Developmental Guide for Home Visitors – Toddlers

The toddler years are a time when children are building skills in all areas. They remember what they learn and share it with others. They understand things more deeply, make choices, and engage with others in new ways. The changes in their physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development help them to build new skills that prepare them for school and later learning.

During the toddler years, children begin to use their large and small muscles in new ways. They practice running, jumping, kicking, and throwing. Although unsteady at first, many children begin to climb stairs by the time they reach age 2. By 2-and-a-half, most toddlers who practice often have generally mastered stairs and are ready to begin climbing more challenging playground equipment. But as their mobility increases, so do the safety hazards. They need close supervision, especially when climbing. Like children of all ages, playground surfacing in areas where children play outside must cushion toddlers' many falls. Safety gates are an important piece of safety equipment for children in this age group.

Toddlers move from mouthing things within their reach (at 1 year old) to using their fingers and hands to manipulate objects (at 2-and-a-half years and older). They also are learning more about their environment. For example, they continue to learn that a hidden object is not permanently gone, remember things that happened, sort things by characteristics, and use language to describe what they experience. They explore their world using their imaginations and the games they play. Yet, all learning requires some level of risk. Until they understand what is safe, a toddler may take risks that can lead to injury. Families with toddlers need to remove all hazards from the environment and teach children how to explore and engage in active play safely.

Toddlers interact and play with other children, but they are learning to share. They may lack the language skills to easily express their feelings or ask for what they need and want. As a result, they depend on family members to teach them how to play with other children, share and take turns, and model how to interact safely with both children and adults. Consistent routines and clear expectations can reduce the risk of challenging behaviors that may result in injuries to themselves, other children, and adults.

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