



What You Need to Know: 3 Years Old

Nutrition

- Offer a variety of table foods diced into small pieces. Let your child feed himself with a utensil or fingers.
- He should be exclusively using a cup (no bottles).
- Do not feed your toddler peanuts, nuts, or popcorn.
- Avoid giving large pieces of food, raw carrots or celery, seeds, whole grapes, or hot dogs that may choke your toddler.
- Your job as a parent is to choose healthy foods for your child and offer those 3-5 times per day. It is your child's job to decide how much to eat and whether to eat at all. Intuitive eating should be encouraged.
- Be a good role model of healthy eating.
- Growth in toddlers is inconsistent and so are their eating habits. Expect appetite to go up and down.
- Offer healthy choices. Limit foods and drinks which are high in simple sugars, trans fats, and refined flour. Limit fatty foods, sweets, and juice intake.
- Your toddler should drink 16-24 oz. of cow's milk each day. Drinks derived from nuts, such as almonds, are not milk.
- Vitamin D supplementation is recommended, 600 IU per day. A multivitamin may be the easiest way to provide it.

Sleep

A regular bedtime routine is very important to children. The average 3-year-old sleeps 10-13 hours per day (including naps). Typical bedtime at this age is 7-8 pm. Some 3-year-olds stop taking consistent naps. If your child refuses to nap, it is still helpful to have a quiet period of rest at a scheduled time each day. Nighttime fears and resistance to staying in bed are common problems.

Development/Milestones

- Shows affection without prompting
- Takes turns in games
- Shows concern for a crying friend
- Understands "mine", "his", "hers"
- Dresses and undresses self
- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
- Carries a conversation using 2-3 sentences

- Plays make-believe
- Builds towers with more than 6 blocks
- Turns door handle
- Says words like “I”, “me”, “we”, “you” and some plural words like “dogs”, “bikes”, “cats”

Safety

- ***Injuries are the leading cause of death in children younger than 4 years in the United States***
- If your child has outgrown the rear-facing car seat, he should be in a **forward-facing** seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat manufacturer. Children should always ride in the back seat.
- If you have a gun in the home, make sure it is in a locked safe, unloaded, and separate from ammunition.
- Lock cabinets and keep cleaning products, medications, plastic bags, and small objects away from your toddler.
- Keep the Poison Control number in your phone (800) 222-1222
- Keep children away from stoves, ovens, fire, or hot liquids.
- Have a working smoke /carbon monoxide detector on every floor in your house.
- Teach your child the dangers of cars in the street, and always closely supervise your child when near a street.
- Teach children to be careful around dogs.
- Knowing how to “swim” does not ensure the child’s safety in or near water at this age. Use an age/weight-appropriate life jacket whenever around any water.
- Use a properly fitted bicycle helmet whenever your child is on a bicycle or a tricycle.
- Never leave your child in the car alone, even for a minute.
- Start discussing stranger safety, privacy, name, address, and phone number.

Parenting

- Be consistent. Parents should be on the same page.
- Praise good behavior. Tell them “good job” when they listen or do what is asked.
- Avoid too many rules.
- Do not yell or spank.
- Be a good role model.
- Use time-outs for disruptive tantrums or unacceptable behavior. A minute per age is a good guideline.
- Praise behaviors you like and ignore those you want to discourage.
- Tantrums can become more common as your child struggles to master new skills and situations. Anticipate tantrum triggers, like being tired or hungry. You can help reduce tantrums with well-timed naps and meals.
- Teach your toddler not to hit, bite, or use other aggressive behaviors. Model nonviolent behavior by not spanking your toddler and by handling conflict with your partner in a constructive way.
- Help your child express their feelings and emotions.
- Hug and hold your child often.
- Consider finding a preschool or playgroup to help develop social skills.

Toilet Training

Signs that your toddler is ready to start toilet training:

- Stays dry for two hours
- Knows if she is wet or dry
- Can pull pants up and down
- Can tell when she is going to have a bowel movement
- Shows interest in learning
- Few children successfully toilet train at two years of age. Most will be more willing and capable at two-and-a-half to three.
- Consider the book, “It’s You and Me Against the Pee” by Julia Cook and Laura Jana, MD, when starting this process.

Other Things....

- Dental care – Schedule dental visits every 6-12 months.
- Use a soft toothbrush and a small amount of fluoride toothpaste, about the size of a grain of rice, to clean your toddler’s teeth twice daily every day.
- Limit the amount of screen time to less than 2 hours a day and monitor the types of shows your child watches. Young children should not be allowed to use smartphones.
- Spend time with your child every day – read books, do crafts, pretend play to encourage an active imagination and to show love and affection.
- Answer questions about body parts in a simple and honest way. Use correct terms for body parts.
- Encourage your child’s independence.
- When possible, allow choices between a couple of options when it comes to snacks, books, or toys.
- Protect from sun exposure with clothing, hat, shade, or an umbrella. Use broad-spectrum, PABA-free sunscreen with at least SPF 30. Reapply frequently.

Vaccines Given at Your Child's Next Well Visit (4 years)

- Hepatitis A
- MMRV (Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella)
- DTaP/Polio

Suggested Reading

[Best Ways to Discipline](#)

[How to Give a Time Out](#)

[“Your child, Birth to 5 years \(AAP\)”](#)

[Topics on Toilet Training \(Healthychildren.org\)](#)

[“It’s You and Me Against the Pee” by Julia Cook](#)

Useful Websites

[www.canyonviewpediatrics.com](#)

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines](#)

[www.aap.org](#)

[www.seatcheck.org](#)

[www.healthychildren.org](#)