



# Living with toddlers

Between the ages of one and three, toddlers are learning the lesson of being individual, independent people. You can shape and guide your child's development as they discover their sense of self.

## Toddler behaviour in a nutshell

You can help to bring out the best in your toddler. Here are some examples of what you can do:

- **Encourage curiosity.** Toddlers learn by testing and experimenting with everything around them. Good self-esteem helps them try new things.
- **Allow exploring and make a trade.** Avoid constantly telling your child 'no'. Try some other ways to change their behaviour, for example, if you want to discourage them blowing milk bubbles, suggest going outside to blow bubbles later. If your child is sucking on your favourite scarf, replace it with a less precious item. Consider putting your favourite things out of harm's way.
- **Offer two choices.** Give your child two choices you are happy with. For example, 'Do you want to wear your red or your green t-shirt?'
- **Change the environment to something safer.** When your child wants to 'help' in the kitchen, move them away from the oven but give them a wooden spoon and a pot to bang.
- **Show your child how you feel.** If they hurt you, pull a sad face and say 'ouch'. If they keep doing it, stop looking at them and withdraw a little. Use 'I' statements, for example, 'I don't like it when you pull my hair'. This helps to develop empathy.
- **Avoid rewarding bad behaviour.** Your attention is a reward for your child. Avoid giving it when your child is doing something you do not like.
- **Use effective instructions.** Be clear, specific and reasonable.

- **Explain the consequences of their actions.** This helps give your child a better understanding of the world.
- **Manage transitions.** Toddlers can find it hard to change from one activity to another. Extra time, sensitivity and planning can help. Children thrive on consistency and predictability; they like a regular routine.
- **Praise, encouragement and rewards.** Encourage the behaviour you want. Tell your child what it is that you like and use positive attention to encourage your child. Smacking does not change a child's behaviour in a good way and they might try to copy that behaviour and get into trouble.
- **Manage habits.** If your child's habit is interfering with everyday activities and has become embarrassing or is causing harm, consider taking action.
- **Tell the truth.** Teach your child the value of honesty rather than punishing their untruths.
- **Make friends.** Keep play dates short at first and step in to guide the play if necessary.
- **Some children are outgoing and some are not.** Consider how you talk about your child when they show 'shyness'.
- **Imaginary friends.** These friends grow out of healthy active imaginations and enable children to express their feelings, and enable your children to practise their social skills.

## Fears and worries

If your child shows signs of anxiety:

- acknowledge your child's fear. Don't dismiss or ignore it
- gently encourage your child to do things they are anxious about but avoid pushing them to face situations
- wait until your child gets anxious before you step in to help
- praise your child for doing something they are anxious about, rather than criticising them for being afraid
- avoid labelling your child as 'anxious'.

## Home safety

Your toddler needs your constant supervision to stay safe. By removing sources of danger, you give your toddler the freedom they need to explore.

Toddler-proof your home by getting down to your child's level and looking around.

- Toddlers love to climb so secure your furniture, especially bookcases and TVs.
- Keep chairs away from windows and balconies so your child cannot climb on them.
- Turn off heaters when you leave the room.
- Curtain tie-backs and window blind cords are a strangling hazard. Remove them or hook them well out of reach.
- Teach your child not to slam doors and to keep fingers away from the hinge.
- When you make a cup of tea or coffee, keep the hot cup away from their reach.
- Install a safety gate at the top of stairs and consider teaching your child to walk down the stairs backwards.
- Turn down your hot water system to 50°C to prevent scalding.
- Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit but keep it out of your child's reach.
- Check your fire alarm batteries are working regularly.

## Choking risks

You can avoid choking risks.

- Encourage your toddler to sit down while eating, rather than walking or moving around.
- Nuts can choke a child under the age of five.
- Keep toys for small children and older siblings in separate boxes.
- Keep small household objects, such as spare batteries, out of reach of young children.

## Safety in the bedroom

- Leave the side of the cot down if your child keeps trying to climb out. Consider moving them into a bed.
- Avoid bunk beds until your child is about nine years.

## Safety in the kitchen

Consider having your child stay out of the kitchen when you are cooking.

- Prevent appliance cords from hanging over the edge of benches.
- Turn saucepan handles inwards and cook using the back of the stove top.
- Keep washing-up liquid, insect sprays and other chemicals locked away and up high.
- Remove stools or chairs that could help your child reach dangerous items.
- Dispose of all plastic wrapping without delay and knot plastic bags you intend to store.

## Safety in the bathroom

- Never leave your toddler alone in the bath. Drowning is quick and silent. If you need to leave the bathroom, take your child with you.
- Check the bath water temperature before you put in your child. The correct temperature for children's bathwater is 37–38°C.
- Lock medicines out of reach.

## Safety out and about

- When out walking, hold hands or use a pram to keep your child from darting into dangerous situations.
- Remember sunscreen and a hat. Toddlers burn very easily.
- Always buckle your child into a car restraint that is right for their size.
- Never leave your child in a car alone – always take them with you. Children left in cars overheat very quickly.
- A secure garden fence allows your toddler to play safely in your backyard but make sure they cannot open the gate. If your garden isn't fenced, make sure your child cannot go outside without you.
- Keep your eyes on your child when around pools, ponds, dams, water tanks and so on. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

## More information

The Queensland Government provides families with up-to-date information about approved early childhood education and care services in their local area, and has parent tip sheets on a range of topics.

To access the latest information or to find an early childhood education and care service call 13 QGOV\* (13 74 68) or visit [www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au](http://www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au).

For service ratings visit the MyChild website at [www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au) or the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au).

### Other languages

If you need an interpreter, phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

### Assistance making a call

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment:

- TTY users phone 133 677\*, then ask for 13 74 68\*.
- Speak-and-listen users should phone 1300 555 727\*, then ask for 13 74 68\*
- Internet relay users should connect to the National Relay Service at [www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx](http://www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx) then ask for 13 74 68\*.

### Acknowledgement

The information in this publication was sourced from the Raising Children Network at [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

### Disclaimer

This publication is offered as a guide and should not be considered an exhaustive statement on the subject.

\*Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.