

Your Child at Three Years

Page 1 of 2



DEVELOPMENT:

All kids develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice that your child:

- Climbs up and down stairs
- Jumps off the floor with both feet
- Balances briefly on one foot
- Pedals a tricycle
- Eats on his or her own
- Washes and dries his or her hands
- Copies a circle
- Unbuttons clothes
- Says more words
- Describes actions in books
- Speaks in sentences and asks questions
- Knows his or her name, age and sex
- Counts to three or higher
- Joins other children in play
- Starts to take turns and share
- Starts to know the difference between boys and girls

IMUNIZATIONS: Hepatitis A (if your child has not already received 2 doses)

Possible vaccine side effects include:

- Fever
- Redness or swelling at the site

If needed, you can give your baby acetaminophen (Tylenol). Ask your doctor for the correct dose. Contact your doctor if your child's symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

NUTRITION:

By now your child should no longer be using bottles. Keep offering your child different foods even if he or she is picky. It can still take 10 to 15 tastes of a new food before your child will accept it. It is normal for your child to eat a lot of small meals and be less hungry.

- Let your child feed himself or herself.
- Offer mostly table foods. Do not give your child small, hard and round foods that he or she can choke on such as nuts, popcorn and whole grapes.
- Limit juice to no more than four ounces a day.
- Switch to low-fat or nonfat milk but do not give your child more than 24 ounces a day. If your child does not drink at least 16 ounces of milk a day, serve other calcium-rich foods such as yogurt and cheese daily.
- Keep giving your child vitamin D and/or fluoride supplements as your provider suggests.



Your Child at Age Three

Page 2 of 2

SAFETY

- Check the height and weight limits on your child's car seat. Large toddlers and kids who weigh more than 40 pounds should use a high-back booster seat. California law requires that children use these seats until they are six years old or weigh 60 pounds. But the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that if your child is too big for his or her car seat, you should put your child in a booster seat until he or she is at least eight years old or four feet nine inches tall. For more information, visit nhtsa.gov.
- Follow safety guidelines when your child is near water and stairs and on high surfaces.
- Keep an eye on your child when he or she is near streets. Teach your child to not follow pets or balls into the road.
- Cook on the back burners of your stove to reduce the risk of burns. If your child gets burned, apply cold water (not ice) right away and call your doctor.
- Make sure that all chemicals, medications, cleaners, knives, matches and other hazardous materials are out of your child's reach.
- Put a hat on your child and apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30 when he or she is outdoors.
- Have your child wear a helmet, elbow guards and kneepads when riding a bike, scooter or skateboard.
- Teach your child to not go with strangers or take anything from them.
- Tell your child not to go near dogs without asking you first.
- Make sure that the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are working.
- If you have guns in your home, keep them unloaded, locked and stored away from ammunition.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, speak with your doctor or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or ndvh.org.
- Keep the Poison Control Hotline posted on your refrigerator: 1-800-222-1222.

SLEEP

- Your child may stop napping during the day.
- If your child has bedtime fears, talk about them and remind him or her that you are nearby. Respond to nightmares right away and comfort your child.
- Avoid responding to "curtain call" behavior from your child that keeps him or her from going to sleep—such as asking for water or many good night hugs.
- If you have questions about your child's sleep habits, ask your doctor for help.

DISCIPLINE

With your child able to say more words, he or she may bargain with you often—"One more story, then I'll nap," for example. Keep consistent rules and limits. Remember, you are in charge. Do not let your child hit or bite. Stop hostile behavior from your child and talk about how those actions affect other people. Teach your child how to say sorry. Time outs are still a good tool at this age but do not use them too often. You should have other ways to teach your child how to act.

TOILET TRAINING

Most children stay dry during the day by age three but some may need more time. Many children still need diapers or pull-ups while asleep. If you have trouble toilet training your child, talk with your doctor. Teach your child to wash his or her hands after using the bathroom.

FOCUS ON FAMILY

- Make time for the whole family to be together. This may include mealtimes, bedtimes and family vacations. Be sure to also make time for you and your partner to be together without your children.
- Encourage your child to explore, do things on his or her own and tell you what he or she wants. Children learn self-respect and love when they feel that their ideas are important to you. Have your child tell you about his or her friends and activities at school. Listen to what your child has to say.
- It is common for new changes to happen during this year such as starting preschool or having a new brother or sister. Have patience as your child adjusts. If you have trouble, talk with your doctor.
- If you let your child watch TV, limit it to less than one hour a day and watch it together. Do not watch TV during mealtimes and do not put a TV in your child's bedroom.

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

- Think about enrolling your child in preschool. This can help build learning and social skills such as sharing and taking turns. If your child is not in school, give him or her a lot of chances to play with other kids.
- Encourage daily exercise by taking your child to the playground or park.
- Supervise as your child eats, bathes and dresses, but let your child do more on his or her own.
- Keep reading to your child daily. Let him or her tell you the story. Visit the library together.
- Encourage your child to play with toys. Expect more creative and fantasy play at this age.
- Help your child brush his or her teeth twice a day. Use water or toothpaste that does not have fluoride in it until your child can spit out the paste and not swallow it. Take your child to the dentist twice a year.
- Speak to your child slowly, clearly and in adult language. Stuttering is common at this age and often clears up on its own. Do not draw attention to it or speak for your child. If you are concerned, speak with your doctor.
- Masturbation is common. Let your child know he or she should do this in private. Be matter-of-fact and do not punish your child for this behavior.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: aap.org; American Academy of Family Physicians: aafp.org; Immunization information: immunize.org, cdc.gov/vaccines, vaccine.chop.edu, familydoctor.org and vaccineinformation.org
- Suggested reading: 1, 2, 3, *The Toddler Years* by Irene DeZande, *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter, and *Positive Discipline A-Z: From Toddlers to Teens, 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems* by Jane Nelsen, et al.
- Other books are available at aap.org/bookstore.