

Raising Healthy Children: Age Two¹

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It's probably hard to believe that the baby you brought home from the hospital is already two years old. Welcome to another exciting stage of your child's development!

Use the information in this publication as a guide. Talk to your pediatrician if you have any questions or concerns. These are general guidelines; each child develops at his* own pace.

Nutrition

Is your two year-old a picky eater? It can be frustrating, but try not to worry. Children usually need to be exposed to a food up to 12 times before accepting it. So keep offering a new food every so often; one day your child may decide he likes it!

Food preferences are developed early in life. As a parent, you have the important role of introducing new foods to your child. Offer healthy foods with various flavors and textures. Save sweets and empty calories, such as soda and chips, for special occasions.



- Raisins
- Whole grapes
- Hot dogs (unless they are cut into small slivers—NOT rounds)
- Peanut butter

Food Allergies

Food allergies are getting to be more common in young children. Common food allergens include:

- Peanuts and tree nuts (such as pecans and walnuts)
- Seafood
- Milk
- Eggs
- Soy
- Wheat

Choking Hazards

When feeding your child, choose foods that are bite-sized and have a safe texture and shape to avoid problems with choking. Foods that are potential choking hazards include:



- Popcorn
- Hard candies
- Nuts
- Raw vegetables
- Hard fruits

Contact your child's doctor if you notice signs of a food allergy. Common signs of food allergies include:

- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Hoarse voice

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- Hives
- Itching
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain

If your child has a food allergy, there are numerous cookbooks and Web sites that can help you prepare foods that are safe for your child.

Eating Habits

It's important to allow your child to choose how much to eat. Let your child learn to respond to his feelings of hunger and fullness. Young children have small stomachs, so offer them small amounts of food on their plate; let them ask for more if they are still hungry.

It is common for toddlers to refuse to eat a meal or snack, and that's okay. Sometimes they just aren't hungry. They need to know that they can't beg for food right after refusing to eat, though; they will have to wait for the next meal or snack. Help your child know when to expect food by keeping a regular feeding schedule. Children who graze all day tend to lose their ability to sense hunger and fullness. Offering your child three meals and two to three healthy snacks every day is a great way to make sure he is getting enough food.

You will be excited to know that your child will soon begin feeding himself, too. Allow your child to practice using a small fork and spoon, but be sure to supervise him, and if he gets frustrated, step in and help.

Juice

Fruit is a better option than juice for your child because it contains fiber. Even 100% fruit juice can contribute to weight gain and diarrhea in toddlers if they drink too much of it. Limit your child's daily juice intake to about 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice. If your child is thirsty, remember that water is a good choice.



Milk and Dairy

Does your child drink milk or eat dairy foods? Milk and dairy foods are important sources of calcium and vitamin D and several other nutrients throughout your child's life. Calcium and vitamin D are important for building strong bones and teeth. Your two year-old needs about 500 milligrams of calcium every day. About 2 cups of milk a day will provide this amount and is all your child needs. Too much milk can cause your child to eat less food and may lead to an iron deficiency.

Whole milk was great for your baby, but now that your child is two years old, experts recommend switching from whole milk to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk. This can be an important step in helping your child keep a healthy body weight.

Physical Activity

Play time is fun, and it's good for child! During your child's first few years of life, his brain is rapidly developing. Playing and interacting with others is important. Make sure to provide your child with opportunities to be active with friends.

Daily activity is an important part of development for young children. Experts recommend the following.

30 minutes of *structured* physical activity

Examples include:

- walking
- playing at the playground
- attending a class that involves being active



60 minutes of *unstructured* physical activity



- Exploring
- Playing with toys

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- No TV, video games, or computers
- Except when sleepy, keep sedentary time to less than 1 hour

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Providing a safe play environment means less worry for you and more fun for you and your child!

Hja Yhc'fYW Uf[Y'

With all of this activity, your two year-old needs plenty of rest. At this age, your child needs about 13 hours of sleep, including one nap.

8 Yj Ycda Ybh

At the age of two, your child is probably doing many new things. Emotional displays are also more common at this age.

9a chcbU`8 Yj Ycda Ybh

You can expect your two year-old to experience frustration. Don't worry, this is common. You can help prevent tantrums by addressing your child's frustrations or removing the source of the frustration.

Some strategies that can be useful in preventing tantrums include:

- Offering choices to your child when possible
- Gently letting your child know before it is time to switch between activities
- Establishing routines, including ones for naptime and bedtime
- Planning ahead; if your child throws tantrums when he is hungry, bring healthy snacks with you
- Avoiding situations that are likely to cause tantrums
- Distracting your child if a tantrum is about to occur
- Praising your child's good behavior
- Avoiding activities outside the home during naptime

If your child has a tantrum anyway, remove him from the situation, and stay calm. Encourage your child to use words to express his feelings. Talk softly to your child. Try to understand your child's wants and needs.

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There are certain developmental milestones for two year-olds. Compare your two year-old's development to the activities listed below.

Most two year-olds can:

- run well
- walk down stairs
- jump in place
- gallop
- do a double jump
- jump vertically



Most two year-olds can also:

- speak more than 50 words
- put two words together to form a sentence
- be understood at least half of the time
- draw lines and circle scribbles
- gain better control of hands (hand-eye coordination)
- are interested in or ready to begin potty training
- have 20/20 vision
- see details
- like colors

Here are some fun things your two year-old may enjoy doing:



- Using crayons
- Playing with dough
- Building with blocks
- Making easy puzzles

For more information about child development, contact one of the following reliable sources in your county:

- Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Educator (look in the blue pages of your telephone book.) Florida Extension offices are

listed online by UF/IFAS at <http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu> or <http://SolutionsForYourLife.com/map>.

- WIC nutritionist at your county Health Department (also in the blue pages of your telephone book).

For referral to a registered dietitian (RD) in your area you can call the Florida Dietetic Association at (850)386-8850 or check the yellow pages of your phone book

**Although we refer to a male child in this document, the recommendations also apply to female children.*

Your Two Year-Old

Your child's height

Your child's weight

You can check your child's height and weight percentiles by looking at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Growth Charts at: <http://www.cdc.gov/GrowthCharts/>. Charts are provided by gender and provide percentile curves of different body measurements such as height and weight that are used by health care professionals to track growth. Ask your pediatrician to provide an explanation about what the numbers mean for your child.

Recommended Web Sites

KidsHealth – <http://kidshealth.org/>

MyPyramid for Preschoolers – <http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/index.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics – <http://www.aap.org/>