

Baby's First Wish

Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University

A happy & healthy life

Dear Parents:
Your Child Is Special

19 & 20 Months

Isn't it nice that your child is like no other in the whole world? With every issue of *Baby's First Wish*, we have told parents that normal children differ in their speed of development. Parents often worry that their children are not developing like other children.

Those who study young children agree on one thing, children develop at their own pace. Some children walk as early as 7 months. Many do not walk before they are 18 months old. Children may begin talking at 8 months or at 24 months, and so it is with all learning.

Your child enjoys learning new skills. You can support this learning, not by pushing or putting down or comparing your child with other children, but by teaching, encouraging, and celebrating her successes.



Happy Dancing

Toddlers like to do things with their parents. They like music and rhythm and body movement. Happy dancing combines all these things. Turn on some music. Teach your child to do a happy dance. Dance to fast music and to slow music. Hold hands and dance together. Clap your hands to music or use large wooden spoons or beat on something that makes a nice noise. Show your little one how to keep the rhythm and play along with the beat. Children grow up to like the kind of music they hear when they are little. Play different kinds of music, and your child will learn to like many kinds.

Remember, *Baby's First Wish* describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special and each child develops at his or her own pace. Children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Baby's First Wish*. If you are concerned about your child's development, see your doctor.



Nutrition

Mealtime Is Mess Time

Toddlers are messy eaters. You can bet that a lot of food will end up on the floor. If you are worried about the carpet or floor, put an old sheet under the high chair. You can shake it out after meals. When it gets really dirty, you can wash it.

Things that make eating easier for your toddler are small items that won't break, such as a:

- Spoon with a short handle.
- Bowl with sides to push food up against.
- Cup that your toddler can circle his hands around and pick up. (This cup shouldn't tip over easily. If you use a training cup with a lid, it can make drinking easier.)

There will be lots of spills. Most of the time they will be accidental. If it happens three or four times in a row, your toddler might be playing or trying to get your attention. This means it is probably time to end the meal.

Serve your toddler food at the same time everyone else is eating. Your toddler will learn how to eat by watching you and other family members eat. Don't expect good table manners yet. Your child will learn these over the next few years.

A high chair can help. Toddlers are such busy little people they might not want to stop to eat when it's time for a meal or snack. When you put your child in a high chair, he knows that it's time to stop what he is doing and eat.

Homemade Toys That Teach

Milk Carton Blocks Why?

Block play allows young children to learn about patterns, shapes, and sizes. They learn how to stack things, and they learn what happens when stacks are knocked down. These lightweight building blocks, which cost almost nothing to make, are very popular with children.

Materials

- Milk or cream cartons
- Heavy plastic or duct tape

Making the Toy

Take any two cartons of equal size and cut them to the same height. Turn one over and slip it inside the other so that it makes a block. Tape the edges with duct tape or heavy mailing tape—a kind children can't peel off and swallow. You can cover the blocks with contact paper or you can paste letters, numbers, or pictures on them.

He She? Him or Her?

Baby's First Wish gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." Please note: when we use he or she, we include all children.



Be Good to Yourself

Give Yourself a Gift

Taking care of a toddler can leave you feeling like you never have a moment for yourself. If you're feeling stressed out, give yourself a gift—some time just for you. Trade babysitting with another parent, or trade a service like cooking a meal in return for a few hours of baby-sitting. You've earned it, you deserve it, and you don't need to be embarrassed to ask for it. Here are some suggestions for spending time on yourself:

- Take a long bubble bath, a walk, or a swim, see a movie, or read a book.
- Plan your future—look for classes you might take, jobs you might like, things you would enjoy.
- Spend time with a friend—without children.
- Talk to someone about the stress you feel and what you might do to reduce it.

The time you take just for yourself will help you feel better and ready to face your child again.

Special Toy or Blanket

Lots of children have special blankets, teddy bears, or toys. Some children take up with the strangest things. They claim them and call them their own forever—or at least until someone makes fun of them. The most common favorite object is a blanket. Your little one may appear every morning with one thumb in the mouth and the other hand holding a ratty, worn blanket.

There are some stories about security blankets that would truly surprise you. Heaven forbid if it should get lost, stolen (who'd want it?), or washed. Yet that blanket or

teddy bear or toy is a friend who has shared your child's life through thick and thin, in sickness and health, in good times and bad. Most of us would welcome such a friend if it could do as much for us.

What do you do about these special comforts and attachments—you leave them alone, because, in time—your child will realize the blanket or bear or other toy isn't going to solve life's problems. He will come to realize he can solve his problems by himself. For now, let him enjoy his comforting "friends."

Sometimes Change Takes Time

Does it sometimes seem that your child changes almost too fast, while at other times he learns things so-o-o slowly? Believe it or not, your little one wants to learn and is doing his best. Some things are just hard for him to get the hang of. You can help by being calm and by

telling him you like what he is doing. That way, he won't get upset and have trouble learning.

If your messy eater gets two spoonfuls of applesauce in his mouth without spilling much, let him know you are pleased. If he plays with another child for just 5

minutes without fighting, tell him you like what he is doing.

Let him know you like what he can do. Try not to talk about what he cannot do. He'll learn faster and you'll both feel better.

What's It Like To Be 19 And 20 Months Old?



How I Grow

- I explore a lot.
- I may be able to kick a large ball.
- I like being independent, but sometimes I want to act like a baby.
- I can run without falling too often.
- I can stand on either foot holding on.
- I still like to climb on things.
- I don't know about safety, so I count on you to keep things safe for me.

How I Talk

- I'm very good at saying "no."
- I love to name things.
- I can follow simple directions.
- I like to be read to.
- I can say about 15 words.
- I like to listen to nursery rhymes.

- I ask a lot of questions, mostly by saying "why?" or "what's that?" Be patient with me. I am just trying to learn.

What I Have Learned

- I can pull the toilet paper way out.
- I can put two pieces together to form a simple figure.
- I'm beginning to know what things are for, like a hammer is for banging.
- I can draw an up and down line pretty well.

How I Get Along with Others

- I love cuddling.
- I like to help you do simple things.

- I'm still not very interested in other children.
- I may treat other children like they were things; I may hurt them.
- Even when I'm with other children, I like to play alone.
- I want to keep my toys to myself, and I may hide them so others can't play with them.
- I need time to get to know people; I'm afraid of some people.
- I like to do things without adult help.
- I may be less friendly to adults, but this won't last long.

What I Can Do

- I can brush my own teeth.
- Sometimes I will let you know when I'm going to have a bowel movement.
- I can let you know when I need dry clothing.
- I can feed myself pretty well.

Play I Enjoy

- I like to play alone, but I like adults to be near me.
- I enjoy swinging on a swing.
- I like dressing up in adult's clothes and pretending I am an adult.
- I like picture books, and I love looking at pictures of myself.
- I like to have you sing to me.
- I like making mud pies and pretending to eat them.
- I like to take toys apart.
- I like rides and walks.
- I like to look at myself in the mirror.

Games for Growing



Big and Little

Purpose of the Game

To teach your child about opposites and sizes.

How to Play

- Sit with your child.
- Place three big and three little blocks on the floor.
- Pile the blocks up in different patterns and describe what you are doing. For example, "Now I'll take the big block. Now I'll put the little block on it," and so on.
- Now say something like, "We need a big block. Give me a big block." Or ask for the little blocks, so that your child learns the difference between big and little. Help your child make up other block games or big and little games you can play together.

Touch a Word

Purpose of the Game

To help your child point to objects named and learn the words for these objects.

How to Play

- Sit with your child.
- Turn pages in a baby's picture book and say to your child, "Where's the car? Touch the horse."
- Then say, "Now look at this. This is the word for car." Point to the word and then say, "Point to the car. Touch the word for car." Play this and any game only if it is fun for both you and your child.



Toddler Talk

Let Me Play in Water and Sand

Let me play in sand, dirt, and mud, even if I get dirty. A pile of sand or dirt in the corner of the yard will be great. You can make a sandbox by filling an old tire with clean sand. Keep the sandbox covered when it's not in use to keep out cats and dogs.

Let me play with water. Bathing, filling containers, and washing dishes are great fun. Give me a bucket or can filled with clear water and an old paintbrush. I will paint the sidewalk, the house, and everything I can reach.

Put a small dishpan of water on the kitchen floor or outdoors. Add a funnel, sponge, measuring spoons and cups, a washcloth, and a plastic squeeze bottle. I'll enjoy pouring, washing and squirting. Don't leave me alone with water; I can drown in less than 2 inches of water.

All this is teaching me about the world I live in—and it's lots of fun.

Guidance and Discipline

Temper Tantrums

Sometimes children between the ages of 1 and 3 have temper tantrums. They may cry, shout, hit, bite, throw themselves on the floor and kick. Some hold their breath. You may not know what started the tantrum. You certainly know you want to stop it!

Some children have tantrums, because they have learned it is a way to get something they want. Others copy parents who have quick tempers. Tantrums might mean that the child is angry or upset. Maybe she has been told too often what she cannot do.

Children seem to have temper tantrums most often when they are too tired, hungry, or very excited. Although temper tantrums are normal for children this age, they don't happen as often if the child feels loved and special.

There is no magic way to handle tantrums, but here are some things you might try:



- Try to stay calm—often hard to do.
- Keep your child from hurting herself or others.
- Remove her from other children or from the place where she's having her tantrum or just hold her in your arms.
- When your child has calmed down, hold her and try to learn the reason for the tantrum.
- If you give the child what she wants when she has a tantrum, she might learn to use tantrums to get her own way all the time.

Watch Out!

Avoid Burns

Burns are very serious and painful for children. The problems and pain from a burn could last the rest of your child's life. Most burns to children occur between birth and 4 years of age.

Most burns to children are caused by:

- Hot liquids and foods, such as coffee, tea, and grease.
 - Touching hot surfaces, such as stoves, irons, and heaters.
- These burns occur most often in

the kitchen when hot liquids are spilled. Be careful when you are cooking and serving. Hot appliances can burn children.

In this early age, children grow so fast parents are often not ready for what a baby can do. Toddlers can pull hot food off a table or touch a hot stove, while they are trying to walk. A 2-year-old will get in your way in the kitchen, and you can spill hot food on him.

Change your habits and house-

hold before your child gets burned. Remember that your child might surprise you with his actions. Be prepared:

- Never eat, drink, or carry anything hot when you are carrying your child; you can't handle both!
- Never leave anything hot on the edge of a table or counter.
- Be very careful when your child is with you in the kitchen. Don't let him play in the kitchen when you are not there.

What We Know

How to Help Toddlers Feel Secure

There have been a lot of studies on parents and their young children. Some parents are close and loving with their children, but others are tense.

In a close family relationship, the child feels secure. She feels she can count on her parents for love, care and safety. When parents see their child's distress and can comfort the child, they become close and secure. Children are more likely to obey parents if they have a positive, trusting relationship.



Questions Parents Ask

What Are the Terrible Twos?

Q. I've heard about the terrible twos. What are they and how do I cope with them?

A. Terrible twos may not be terrible, but they can be hard. Most toddlers go through a period of about 2 years old—some as early as 18 months, some much later—when they love doing just what you do not want them to do.

This happens because toddlers are learning independence at this age. They have the ability to do things on their own and are learning that they can have some power over others. They have learned to say “no” and “I want.” They want right now, and they let you know this very clearly. Sometimes they want things they shouldn't have, and sometimes they want things they don't even want just to show how powerful they are.

Remember, when your toddler reaches this stage, he is not trying to be mean. He's just showing that he is growing up. Take it easy. Use the ideas we have discussed in this newsletter. In a few months, your toddler should be moving out of this period.

Health

Give Your Child a Healthy Smile

Your child's first teeth are important for:

- Helping your child chew and talk.
- Saving space for adult teeth to grow in straight.
- Helping your child feel good about her smile.

By following a few easy steps, you can avoid dental problems in your child's life:

- Gently clean your baby's teeth and gums daily with a damp cloth, gauze, or toothbrush.
- Feed only formula, milk or water from a bottle. Do not add sugar. Offer the bottle only at feeding time.
- If you use a pacifier to comfort your baby, never dip it in any sweet substance.
- If your drinking water has fluoride, (check with your county health department) give your child water to drink. If your child's drinking water does not have fluoride, ask your doctor about fluoride supplements. Fluoride helps build strong teeth.
- Take your child for a dental checkup when she is between 2 and 3 years old.

Coming Next:

- Hassles In Public;
- Choosing Child Care

NMSU COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE OFFICES

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Another 4-H Prevention Program

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