

# Baby's First Wish

Cooperative Extension Service  
New Mexico State University

Dear  
Parents:

Your Child Is  
Curious About  
Everything

Help your child explore her world. Fifteen and sixteen-month-old children are moving fast. They are crawling, scooting, and walking. How exciting it is for them! Their world is full of new things to touch, throw, climb on—and to fall from or knock down. Your quiet, cuddly baby has become a lively little person and that means you have to be lively too. That can be fun, but it can make you tired, anxious, and angry.

Playpens are okay when you need to rest or to calm down, but keep playpen times brief. Enjoy your child's exploring and help her discover new things—safely. She needs to learn about her surroundings so she can feel good about herself and her world.

A h a p p y & h e a l t h y l i f e  
15 & 16 Months



## Toddler Talk I'm Learning About Movement

Help me discover how things move. If I like dropping something from my high chair, give me a paper napkin to drop and let me

watch how the air moves it. Give me a sponge or stuffed toy to throw. I like to hear the sounds things make when they hit the floor. Tell me the names of things and what they do. Roll, bounce, splat. I will soon find out that things that go splat get your attention.

Bounce me gently on your knee or lap or clap with me in time to music. I like the movement and the music.

Let me have space indoors and outdoors to practice crawling and walking. I am going to be running by the end of the year. Right now, let me practice crawling, standing, sitting, and walking on my own.

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. Perfectly normal 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.

# What We Know

## Reasoning with Children Works

Studies of families have been done to learn what parents did to encourage their children to be obedient and cooperative. The studies showed that parents usually control and guide toddlers in one of two ways—with power control or with reasoning.

Power control includes hitting/spanking, use of force, and taking away objects or privileges. It also includes withholding affection or refusing to speak to the child.

Reasoning control means explaining in simple ways that the child can understand why he should behave in certain ways. Reasoning is pointing out that the forbidden actions could hurt her or harm others.

For example, if your child throws

sand at other children, power control might be yelling at her or hitting her. Reasoning control might be telling her that throwing sand could hurt other children, and she must stop.

Parents who used reasoning control were better able to control their children's behavior and help them learn to be cooperative. Over a period of time, reasoning builds respect between the parent and child. It also teaches children how to reason with their friends.

## Look Mom, I Can Feed Myself!

By now, your child has become an expert at putting things in his mouth. This is both good and bad news. The bad news is that lots of things go in the mouth that don't belong there. The good news is this means your child can begin to feed himself. It also means you can eat at the same time your toddler does.

Of course, he will be watching you and will try to do what you do. When he sees you eating with a spoon, he will want to practice eating with his spoon. (Child-size spoons are sold at most variety stores.) But he will still eat most foods with his fingers.

More good news is that your child can begin eating the same foods you eat. There is no reason to buy special junior baby foods. You can easily make your own toddler foods by mashing, dicing, chopping, or shredding the food you eat into small pieces that are easy to chew and easy to swallow.

## When There Are Two Languages at Home

Most people who have studied language learning believe that if you speak two languages at home, then both languages should be used with your child from the beginning.

Some experts suggest that one parent or caregiver always use one language and another parent or caregiver use the second language. This way, the child can keep the two languages more separate and will be less confused about hearing and speaking them.

A child learning two languages will be a bit slower at first in language development than a child learning only one language but by her fourth or fifth birthday, she should catch up and be able to speak both languages well.



## He or 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.



## Self-Esteem Starts Early

Your child's self-esteem is made up of the thoughts, feelings, and ideas she has about herself. All together, these shape her ideas about how important, lovable, and capable she is. Your child's view of herself— her self-esteem is determined by the way you and others treat her. If she sees that she is treated as an important, competent young person by the people who are important to her, then she will feel she is valuable and competent. Your child needs to know that you continue to love her even when you don't like what she does. She needs to know that you expect a lot from her, but that you can accept her limited abilities.

High self-esteem is possible for

everyone. It's not determined by a family's money, education, social class, or dad's or mom's occupation. The basic foundation for your child's self-esteem is being built during the first years of her life. Because you and others cared for her, played with her, and responded to her needs to grow and learn, she learned how valuable she was to you. She also learned that you believed in her ability to learn and develop new skills. She needs this care, guidance, and respect from you as she continues to form her sense of self-esteem.

Building good self-esteem in children is one of the greatest challenges of parenthood. The guidance ideas, play ideas, and feeding and language suggestions in *Baby's First Wish* will help you encourage your young one to feel loved and competent.

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## Nutrition

### Mealtime and Snack-Time Routines

It is a good idea to give your child meals and snacks at about the same time every day. He will feel better if he knows he is going to have food at regular times. If he doesn't, he might be crabby and cranky. He might overeat when he finally does get food, because he is not sure when he is going to eat again.

Eating in the morning gives your child energy. He might not want to eat just after he wakes up. That's

OK; try again later. He will probably be ready for food in a half hour or so.

Children have small stomachs and may get hungry within a couple of hours after a meal. Give your child nutritious snacks at midmorning and mid afternoon to take care of his hunger and keep him healthy. Most people eat a meal around noon, and they may eat another meal about 5 or 6 p.m. You can plan the times of meals around what you have to do during the day. Try to stick to this regular schedule of meals and snacks.

Suppose your child refuses to eat at mealtime, but then asks for a snack immediately afterwards. Generally it's a good idea to refuse his request and tell him he must wait until snack time.

If your child doesn't want to eat what you've prepared, don't get into the habit of fixing something different just for him. Remind him that this is what everyone in the family is eating. Tell him it will be a while before the next meal or snack. If he still insists he is not going to eat, quietly remove his plate. Let him leave the table if he wants to.

Encourage your child to try lots of different foods. If he doesn't eat a new food the first time you serve it, don't give up. Children often refuse new foods the first time around. Serve the food again a few days later. He may try it then. He may not try it until you've served it three or four times. By then, he will have seen other people eating and enjoying it and the food will be more familiar to him.

# What's It Like To Be 15 and 16 Months Old?

## How I Grow

- I like to climb on things, and I usually like to do it alone.
- I can climb up stairs on my hands and knees.
- I can climb out of cribs, high chairs, and strollers.
- I'm always on the go; I can walk pretty well; I can run a little.
- I like to carry things in each hand.
- I want to show you how independent I am by doing what I want, not what you want me to do.
- I am learning to walk backwards.
- I can turn pages in a book, a few at a time.

## How I Talk

- I can say three or four simple words besides "mama" and "dada."
- When you ask me to, I can point to my shoes or parts of my clothing.



- I can let you know what I want by the way I talk or point.
- I can follow simple requests like "Give me the ball."
- I can point to pictures you name, if the things in the pictures are familiar to me.
- I can understand simple directions such as "no," "come," "show me," and "look."
- I am learning to talk back and forth with people.
- I don't usually like having a whole story read to me.
- I would rather point to pictures in a book and have you talk to me about them.
- I am beginning to say "no" a lot.

## What I Have Learned

- I like to feel different kinds of things—smooth things, rough things, soft things. I like soft things and smooth things, I may not like things that stick to my fingers.
- I can throw a small ball but I usually throw it crooked.
- I may be able to build a tower of two blocks.
- I can scribble with a pencil or crayon.

## How I Get Along with Others

- I mostly want my own way; I don't cooperate much.
- I like lots of attention.
- I am easily entertained.
- I can tell when someone I know is not around.

- I can recognize myself in a mirror or photograph.
- I'm pretty self-centered and often not friendly.
- I like to copy the way you do things like sweeping the floor, setting the table, or raking the lawn.
- If you show me that you like what I do, I will do it a lot.
- Sometimes I will get things for you.
- I like to know where you are at all times.
- I'm not very good at giving but I like to get things.

## What I Can Do for Myself

- I like to do things for myself but I don't do them very well.
- I can let you know when I have wet or soiled pants, but I'm still too young to be toilet trained.
- I may be able to use a spoon but I spill.

## Play I Enjoy

- I like to turn switches on and off.
- I like to throw things, push things, and pound on things.
- I like to spin wheels.
- I like playing with spoons, cups, and boxes.
- I don't play very long with any one toy. I like to carry around a soft doll or toy animal.
- I like playing in sandboxes.
- I like rolling a ball with you.

# Games for Growing

## Naming Pictures

### Purpose of the Game

To help your child learn the names of things pictured in a book.

### How to Play

- Sit with your child on your lap.
- Read a picture book to your child.
- Encourage your child to find things pictured in the book. "Where's the rabbit? Find the bird. What is the boy doing? Is he playing with the toy?"
- Finish the story.

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## Reading Alone

### Purpose of the Game

To help your child learn to turn pages alone and look at pictures so that he gets to know magazines as things that can be read.

### How to Play

- Ask your child, "Do you want to read a magazine?"
- If yes, turn the pages of a magazine a few times and point to some pictures.
- Let your child look at the magazine alone.

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## Bath Time Fun

You may have noticed how much your little one loves to splash in water. Take an extra minute or two at bath time to let your child have more fun.

Keep some toys just for water play. Plastic containers, measuring



cups, spoons, and funnels all make fine bath toys. Be sure to wash them before giving them to your toddler.

During the bath, you can play the Name Game, a good way to have fun and help your little one learn the names of her body parts. Point to each body part while you say, "Here's your nose, here are your eyes." and so on. Soon your child will be able to point to the right part when you say the name.

When your child sits in the water, you can sing or chant, "One hand splash, other hand splash, up, down, splash, splash all around."

Remember always to stay in the bathroom with your little one. She is not old enough to bathe alone and could easily fall or get caught under the water.

## Watch Out

## These Are the Accident Years

Do you know that ...

Accidents are the greatest threat to the life and health of your child? More children die and more children are disabled due to injuries than all diseases combined.

As a parent you worry about the illnesses your child may get and you take special care to protect him. You must take the same care to protect him from accidents. Your child cannot protect himself.

Young children are growing and developing all the time. Their ability to do things changes suddenly. In no time at all, he can reach for a hot cup of coffee in your hands and get burned. Often accidents happen because parents are not aware of what their children can do suddenly.

Here are some ways you can prevent accidents:

- Protect your child from falls with stairway gates and window guards.
- Don't leave chairs near open windows or cabinets.
- Cover electrical outlets.
- Keep your child away from hot stoves and heaters.
- Avoid scalds by turning the water heater down to 120° to 130°F.
- Lock doors that lead to dangerous areas.
- Keep dangerous substances locked up or safety capped.

## Be Good to Yourself:

### Know When You're Really Stressed Out

We all feel like the world is closing in sometimes. You may feel like you have too much to do, not enough time, not enough money, nobody to help out. If you feel that way sometimes, you're not alone. When stress gets too heavy, you might have headaches or trouble sleeping. You may feel angry all the time, even when nothing is happening. Stress can do real harm to your health and your relationships with your family, children, and friends.

You can learn to recognize the signs of stress in your own body. You may feel your muscles get tight, your hands might begin to sweat, or your breathing might get heavy and fast. Ulcers, migraine headaches, asthma, and high blood pressure can come from stress.

What can you do about it? First, remember that it's normal to feel stress when you are a parent—all parents feel stress sometimes. Talk to others about how you feel. Learn what other people do when they get "stressed out." Try different ideas for coping with stress, such as self-help groups, parent stress hot lines, exercise and time out for yourself. You can be in charge of your own stress—find out what works for YOU.

## Health:

### Lead Poisoning Is a Serious Illness

The main cause of lead poisoning is chewing nonfood items that contain lead, such as peeling paint or plaster in an old home, colored newsprint and comics, toys, and furniture painted with lead-based paint, or soil contaminated by

leaded gasoline, or certain types of crayons.

Other sources of lead poisoning are some folk remedies. Only give your child medications prescribed by a doctor. If you renovate your house or refinish furniture, be careful that your child does not get dust or chips from the old paint in his mouth.

Children with lead poisoning don't always look or act sick, at least not at first. Lead poisoning often shows up in simple things like laziness, grouchiness, upset stomach, headaches, or loss of appetite. Sometimes there are no signs at all until serious damage has occurred.

Since toddlers put everything in their mouths, supervise them carefully. Remove all items in your home and yard that may contain lead. If you think your child has eaten lead, ask your doctor to check your child for lead poisoning.

## Questions Parents Ask:

### Why Do My Two Young Children Fight All the Time?

**Q.** My 16-month-old daughter and my 4-year-old son fight constantly. It's driving me out of my mind. Why are they fighting and what can I do about it?

**A.** Sibling rivalry can be a problem, especially when young children are less than 3 years apart in age. The older child may be fairly happy with his new brother or sister until the baby begins to crawl.

As you well know, when your baby begins to get into things, you have to pay more attention to her. When this happens, her older brother may understandably feel you love him less. To make matters worse, the little crawler can break and take her brother's toys. Let your son know you understand

and sympathize with his feelings. Suggest ways he can cope with his little sister without hurting her.

For the next 6 to 12 months, you may feel you are constantly stopping quarrels and the biting, hitting, and hair pulling that goes with them. Worse, you seldom know which child started the quarrel.

There are some things you can do to cope with this rivalry. Protect your children from hurting each other or each other's things. It does no good to try to make your older child feel guilty for his anger. After all, his feelings are quite normal and understandable. Do let him know you will not let him hurt his sister or let his little sister hurt him.

Do what you can to make life more bearable for your older child. Do not lavish praise on his little sister in his presence. Encourage your friends and relatives to follow this advice too. Give your son enjoyable out-of-home experiences, a fun trip, a play group, a babysitter just for him. Do this in a way that makes your son feel special, not pushed out or rejected.

Give your older child your undivided attention at least once a day. All your children need this special show of affection and care. You might be tempted to put extra demands on your older child at this time. You might expect him to be more responsible, patient, unselfish, and grown-up than he reasonably can be at his age. Ease up on these expectations.

Don't try to decide which child is to blame for a fight. Just separate them. If they are fighting over a toy, take the toy away from both of them. Then help them find something else to do.

Try to remember that fighting is common for children of these ages. Your children have not turned into monsters. Be patient, understanding, and firm. This period will pass.

# Homemade Toys That Teach



## Touch Treasure Box

### Why?

This toy helps toddlers learn about the different ways that things feel. They learn how to tell one feel from another. The toy also gives them a chance to collect and learn about the shapes, colors, and sizes of different objects and materials.

### Materials

- Small cardboard box, like a shoebox
- Crayon
- Small touch treasures collected by child
- Glue (check the bottle to be sure it says nontoxic or child safe)

### Making the Toy

Print your child's name in large letters with the crayon on top of the treasure box. With your toddler's help, glue small objects of different textures and shapes inside the box. You can include

pieces of sandpaper, scraps of wool, fur, sticks, small toys, shiny lids, rocks, and so forth. Make sure these things are not sharp or dangerous and make sure they're not small enough to choke your child.

### Playing

Your toddler will enjoy just looking at and touching the things in her treasure box. Encourage her to tell you about the objects. You can tell her which ones are hard or soft, which are big or little, which are round or square. You and your toddler can take turns talking about the objects.

You might want to have separate treasure boxes for special kinds of things. For example, a box of all round things or things that are all hard, all furry, or all shiny. You can take walks to collect natural things like leaves, cones, and flowers for an outdoor treasure box. You can make a treasure box of things from a special occasion, trip, or a person.

## Nesting Cans

### Why?

This toy helps children begin to learn about big and little.

### Materials

Three to five cans of different sizes that can fit one inside the other. The cans should have smooth edges. You can use juice cans, fruit cans, coffee cans, and so forth.

- Colored paper or cloth to cover cans
- Glue
- Paper yape (not transparent tape)

### Making the Toy

Cover the sides of the cans with colorful paper or cloth. You can use wrapping paper, construction paper, magazine pictures, wallpaper scraps, and so on. Glue the covering onto the cans securely. Tape the can's sharp edges and seams.

### Playing

Your child can nest these cans one inside the other, stack them to make a tower, line them up in order of size, or roll them across the floor. You and your child will find other ways to use the cans for play and games.

## Don't Rush Toilet Training

Toilet training should not be a hassle if you don't rush it. Children are ready for toilet training at different ages. Most girls are ready at about age two, most boys at about two and one-half. Sure, you'd like to be rid of mess and diapers but be patient. When your child is ready for toilet training, you will probably find it will go quickly and easily. We'll be writing more about toilet training in a few months.

**Coming Next :**  
**Toddler Immunizations;**  
**Guidance Ideas**

NMSU COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE OFFICES

# Baby's First Wish

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Another 4-H Prevention Program

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