

Six Big Changes for Toddlers

Between 6 months and 2 years of age, children...



Grow more slowly

- Toddlers get bigger and stronger but their growth slows down.
- Since they are growing more slowly, they will not always want to eat as much as parents expect.
- Parents may think their toddler is “picky” or has a “bad appetite.”



Need to practice their new motor skills

- Between 6 and 18 months, toddlers learn to move in many new ways!
- They need to practice A LOT and may start waking at night or refusing food to get the practice they need.
- Parents are confused when toddlers wake up to practice. Giving toddlers more time to practice during the day can make a big difference. Once the skills are mastered, toddlers don't need to practice as much.



Need to practice using their fingers

- Toddlers have a strong need to practice exploring with their fingers, so they love feeding themselves.
- Practicing is so important that it can become more important than sleeping or eating.
- Practicing during mealtimes can be messy and frustrating for parents.



“Ask” their caregivers to help them learn

- Toddlers learn by interacting with caregivers. They will look at caregivers' faces when trying new things. They point at everything they want to learn about, even foods, but this doesn't necessarily mean they are hungry.
- By 18 months, toddlers are more comfortable learning on their own.
- By paying attention and talking to their toddlers, about their toys and actions, parents will help toddlers learn; this is not spoiling, it's learning!



Get better at remembering things

- Toddlers begin to remember more about what they like and don't like, including specific foods.
- They also remember how, when, and where they are fed (see scripts below).
- Toddlers start to give cues to ask parents for things they can't have.



Start to use “Scripts” to predict daily activities

- Toddlers need to learn everything about the world around them, so they create “scripts” to help them remember what should happen next, who does what, and what they can do.
- By 11 or 12 months, toddlers have “scripts” for bath time, mealtime, bedtime, etc. If something doesn't happen according to the “script” the toddler may get upset.
- Parents can change the script by repeating a new routine over and over. The toddler will learn a new script.