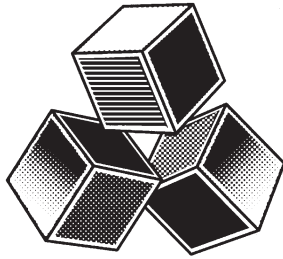


25 and 26  
Months Old



# PARENT EXPRESS

## A Guide for You and Your Child

### Dear Parent:

*Two-year-olds are terrific, tender, trying, taxing, and exciting.*

Your little one has come a long way in two short years, and so have you. Now, she is no longer a toddler, but rather a young preschooler. As a parent of a 2-year-old, this next year you will need:

- ▶ Patience to help you cope with your child's mood swings, from cooperative to unreasonable
- ▶ Awareness to help you make sure your child's surroundings are safe
- ▶ Loving firmness to help you gently apply rules in a consistent way so your child can learn responsibility and self-sufficiency
- ▶ Humor to help you laugh at yourself and with your child
- ▶ Wonder to help you see your 2-year-old as the creative, special person she really is
- ▶ Enthusiasm to enjoy and celebrate your toddler's many accomplishments during this year

### In This Issue

- ▶ Prevent Cuts and Scrapes
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- ▶ Toilet Training
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- ▶ Setting a Healthy Table
- ▶ Successful Parenting
- ▶ Guidance and Self-Esteem

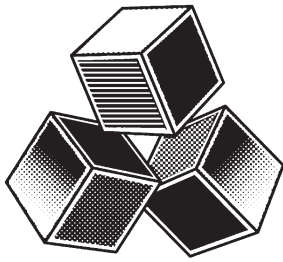
### Prevent Cuts and Scrapes

Small children often get minor cuts and scrapes. These injuries happen when children fall, run into things, or step on sharp objects.

- ▶ Do not let your child play near furniture that is unstable or that has sharp edges.
- ▶ Do not let your child play where she can climb to high places.
- ▶ Close doors to rooms that are not safe and doors that go out to your yard or apartment hallway.
- ▶ Put shoes on your child when she runs outdoors.

### Regular Health Checkups Are Important

Young children grow fast. As they grow, they need regular health checkups so the doctor can spot any problems early. Many of these problems can be taken care of before any serious or long-term effects occur. The checkups also provide a record of your child's health, including immunizations. You will need this record when you enroll your child in childcare, preschool, or kindergarten. If your child needs special food or medication while away from home, the health record will also provide caregivers



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*If you do not have a doctor for your child, your local health department can provide the name of a physician or health department clinic where your child can get a complete examination.*

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correct medical information. Keep your child's health record in a safe place where you can find it easily.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends toddler checkups at 12, 15, 18, 24, and 36 months and every year after age 3. It is also recommended that children 6 months and older get a yearly flu shot, usually in October or November. Of course, if parents or doctors have special concerns about your child, examinations will be more frequent.

If you do not have a doctor for your child, your local health department can provide the name of a physician or health department clinic where your child can get a complete examination.

## A Question about Thumb Sucking

**My son is 2½ and still sucks his thumb. Is this okay?**

Yes, thumb sucking is a common behavior of children under 6 years old. It's one way a young child has to comfort himself. Many doctors believe that if you keep a child from sucking his thumb or fingers, he may develop sleeping problems or begin to wet his bed. Thumb sucking usually disappears on its own, especially if the child is not pressured to give it up.

Sometimes parents pull thumbs and fingers out of their young children's mouths because they are worried about dental problems. Dental problems do not usually occur until the child's permanent teeth erupt at age 5 or 6. Even then, there may be no ill effects from casual thumb sucking.

If you are worried about your child's thumb sucking, keep track of how often he sucks it and for how long.

Take these notes for several days. This record will help you and your doctor or dentist discuss the situation and decide what to do about it.

## Two's Talk

### I Like Learning New Words and Helping Out

- ▶ When we go for walks, take along a bag to collect treasures—leaves, rocks, flowers, and pieces of wood. We can look at these treasures and name them when we get back home.
- ▶ Repeat the names of things over and over again, using simple words and short sentences. Talk to me about what I am doing and what you are doing. Don't use baby talk.
- ▶ Let me get things for you. Name what you want, and I will even go to other rooms to find it.

## Games for Growing

### What's Your Name?

#### Purpose

This game gives your child practice saying his first and last name and helps him feel good about himself.

#### How to Play

When you are with your child, say his name to him in songs and stories, using his last name too. Make up games where he tells his name. Show him how much you enjoy it when he names himself in his photographs.

## Happy Face Colors

#### Purpose

This game helps your child learn to solve problems and match colors.

#### Materials

- ▶ Sheet of cardboard about 16 by 11 inches or one regular-size manila file folder
- ▶ Ten sheets of different-colored paper or 10 different-colored crayons to color white paper
- ▶ Pencil
- ▶ Drinking glass
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Glue (make sure the bottle is labeled nontoxic or child safe)
- ▶ Marker pen for drawing simple faces
- ▶ Envelope

#### Making the Game

- ▶ Make your happy face circles by drawing around a drinking glass. Make two circles of each color of paper or color two circles with each crayon.
- ▶ You will have 10 pairs of circles, each pair a different color. Draw happy faces with eyes open on one set of circles. On the matching circles, draw happy faces with eyes closed.
- ▶ Cut out all of the circles and stack them in two separate piles: one with all eyes open, one with all eyes closed.
- ▶ Glue all of the happy faces with eyes open to the cardboard or to the file folder. Put the happy faces with eyes closed in an envelope.

#### Playing

- ▶ Place the happy face cardboard or opened manila file folder in front of your child on the floor or at a table.

- ▶ One by one, give him a different color happy face circle. Encourage him to put each one on the same color happy face glued to the cardboard. Say the name of the color as your child puts each happy face on the correct color.
- ▶ When all the faces have been matched, have your child pick up the happy face circles one by one and hand them back to you. Say the color of each circle as your child hands it back to you.

## Fun Drummer

### Purpose

This game helps your child learn about different sounds and rhythms. It also builds coordination.

### How to Play

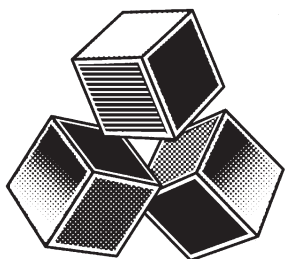
Show your child how to make different drumming sounds by hitting things with a spoon or a fork. He can hit a pan, a chair, the floor, his shoe, a magazine, and so forth. You can take turns leading the game, with each of you hitting one thing after another in sequence. You also can try drumming to singing or music, or you can mix fast and slow drumming sounds.

## Homemade Toys That Teach

### Feelie Bag

### Purpose

This toy helps your child learn by touching things. She learns that some things are soft and some hard, some cool and some warm, some rough and some smooth, and some light and some heavy. This toy can help your toddler learn to tell one type of texture from another.



### Materials

- ▶ Paper bag
- ▶ Assorted small objects to feel
- ▶ Crayon

### Making the Toy

- ▶ Write your child's name in large letters with the crayon on the paper bag. This lets her know that the bag is hers and gives her the idea of writing.
- ▶ Choose some things she might enjoy feeling and put them in the bag. Examples would be a smooth rock, a rough rock, a sanded piece of wood that won't splinter easily, a piece of paper egg carton, some pieces of cloth, a feather, and so on. Be sure the things you put in the bag are not sharp or dangerous.

### Playing

- ▶ Close the top of the bag, leaving a hole just big enough for your child's hand. Ask her to reach in and find something soft, hard, smooth, or rough. Ask her what she has found and help her learn to say, "I have found something hard," or "I have found something rough."
- ▶ You can turn this activity into a guessing game. Have your child reach in and touch something. Have her say, "I have found something soft. What is it?" or "I have found something hard. What is it?" Then you guess what it is. You can take turns guessing. This is a good game for two or three children to play together. Your child can help change the game by putting different things in the bag.

## What It's Like to Be 2 Years Old

### How I Grow

- ▶ I often have to look at my feet to keep from stepping on things that are in my way.
- ▶ I like to do things the same way each day.
- ▶ I like to walk by myself; I don't like being carried or pushed in a stroller.
- ▶ I can walk backwards for about 10 feet.
- ▶ I can jump with both feet off the ground.
- ▶ I can balance on one foot for about a second.
- ▶ I'm interested in lots of things but usually just for a few minutes.
- ▶ I get into things and make messes.
- ▶ I can take lids off jars. Be sure anything you don't want me to open has a safety cap.
- ▶ I may have learned from adults to fear snakes, mice, and spiders.

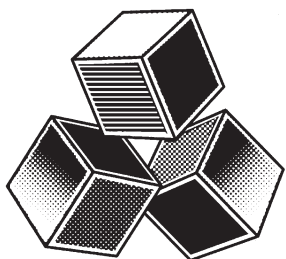
### How I Talk

- ▶ I like to learn words that describe things such as high, big, wet, and hard.
- ▶ I can understand sentences, but I can't say long sentences yet.
- ▶ I like books; I can point to pictures and name them.
- ▶ I usually give information in two- or three-word sentences such as "All dirty," "Go to store," "That mine."
- ▶ I can sing parts of songs or all of short songs.
- ▶ I'm learning what front, back, side, and under mean.
- ▶ I am paying more attention now to what people say.

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*Many doctors believe that if you keep a child from sucking his thumb or fingers, he may develop sleeping problems or begin to wet his bed. Thumb sucking usually disappears on its own, especially if the child is not pressured to give it up.*

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*Don't start toilet training until your toddler shows he wants to use the toilet. Then the process should go quickly and smoothly. Toilet training should not be upsetting to parents or their children. If it is, wait a few weeks and try again.*

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- ▶ I can use plurals such as the words dogs, books, and cups.
- ▶ I can imitate my parents' voices.
- ▶ I talk mostly to myself and adults, not much to other children.

### **What I Have Learned**

- ▶ I can draw a pretty good circle.
- ▶ I understand why some things happen, such as that flipping a switch makes the light come on.
- ▶ I'm getting better at remembering and keeping my attention on things.
- ▶ I can sometimes understand "today" and "pretty soon," but I don't understand "yesterday."
- ▶ I'm beginning to understand the difference between one and two.
- ▶ I can sort silverware in a drawer.

### **How I Get Along with Others**

- ▶ I'm good at getting your attention.
- ▶ Mostly, I'm still just interested in myself.
- ▶ I don't usually share toys or play well with other children my own age.
- ▶ I may hit other children, not because I don't like them but because I just don't know what else to do.
- ▶ I stare at other people and like being looked at.
- ▶ I may call other children baby; men, Daddy; and women, Mommy.
- ▶ If you ask me to do something simple, I can usually do it.
- ▶ I am now more willing to be away from you.
- ▶ I want to do things my own way by myself.

- ▶ I say "no" a lot and often do what you don't want me to do just to show you how independent I am.
- ▶ It helps me to feel important if you admire what I have learned to do.
- ▶ I like our routines, such as the story and hug you give me before I go to sleep.

### **What I Can Do for Myself**

- ▶ I can use a spoon and fork pretty well. I still spill some.
- ▶ Sometimes I can ask to go to the toilet.
- ▶ I like to wash my hands but not my face.
- ▶ I can brush my teeth, but you will need to help me until I am older and better coordinated.
- ▶ I'm still better at undressing than I am at dressing.
- ▶ I like to help you put things away and clean things up.

### **Play I Enjoy**

- ▶ I like to talk to myself when I play.
- ▶ I like wheel toys such as kiddie cars. Be sure I ride these safely.
- ▶ I like to play in the bathtub and often don't want to leave it.
- ▶ I like stories you tell me about myself and my things.
- ▶ I like to run, gallop, and sway to music.
- ▶ I like toys that I can pile up, nest, or sort by color or size.
- ▶ I like to hear favorite songs over and over again.
- ▶ I sometimes act silly just to make you laugh.
- ▶ I like to paint with large paint brushes and finger paint; I'm pretty messy.

## **Toilet Training**

Sometime after the second year, most children become interested in learning to use the toilet on their own. A potty on the floor that the child can use himself helps him get started. Learning to use the toilet is important to the child and, of course, to his parents. Give him lots of praise for every success.

Don't scold for accidents. Praise successes. Most children will stop dirtying before they stop wetting. Most will be able to stay dry during the day before they can stay dry at night. Many children cannot stay dry at night until they are about 3 years old.

Sometimes children seem to be toilet trained and then they start wetting or soiling again. This can happen when the children are upset about something such as a new baby in the family, pressure from adults to stay dry, or family stress. Again, be patient and caring, and praise successes.

Sure, you're eager to be rid of diapers, but if you don't rush toilet training, probably everyone will be less stressed. Don't start toilet training until your toddler shows he wants to use the toilet. Then the process should go quickly and smoothly. Toilet training should not be upsetting to parents or their children. If it is, wait a few weeks and try again.

## **When You're All Tied Up in Knots**

Stress can make your body feel bad. Over the long term, stress can cause physical damage. Over the short term, you may feel headaches, tight muscles, backaches, or a stiff neck. Here are some exercises you can do

any time to relieve the physical effects of stress:

- ▶ Sometimes stress makes us breathe poorly and we don't get enough oxygen. Deep breathing can make you feel better, and it can give you time out to help you handle whatever is causing the stress. Close your eyes and sit up straight. Breathe in, slowly and deeply. Count silently to two—hold the air in for another count—then let the air out slowly. Repeat this slow, deep breathing for up to three to five minutes if you can. You should be more relaxed when you finish.
- ▶ When your muscles are sore but you don't have time to go swimming or walking, try these exercises. Try to raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for a few seconds, then drop your shoulders back down. Repeat a few times. Try rotating your shoulders around, one at a time, then together. With your shoulders relaxed, move your head slowly from side to side, then gently around in a circle. Breathe deeply while you exercise.

## Setting a Healthy Table

Food choices that young children make are affected by many different things. Young children watch parents' and playmates' reactions to help them decide whether a food should become a part of their diets. Television, radio, and in-store grocery advertising can also influence their food choices.

As a parent, you want to give your child the gift of a lifelong, healthy relationship with food. Research shows the best way to do this is to help him feel good about better food choices. How will you know which food choices are better? You will know by reading the Nutrition Facts label included on all packaged foods in the United States since 1994.

This label tells you how many calories and nutrients are in one serving of the food. It can help you choose foods

with nutrients important for your child's growth. Look for foods that provide dietary fiber, calcium, iron, folic acid, Vitamin A, and Vitamin C.

Your attitude and behavior toward a food will influence your child's food choices. By displaying a positive attitude toward nutritious foods and eating them regularly, both mothers and fathers can help children learn to enjoy foods that will become the basis for lifelong healthy eating.

Physical activity is also important at this age. Enjoy outdoor activities with your toddler—go for a walk, play tag, or go to a local playground. Again, your child is watching you, so you should be active as well.

## Successful Parenting

We know that what parents do for and with their young children shapes their children's development. Dr. Alice Sterling Honig reviewed studies of parenting and child development to find out how parents of competent toddlers behaved with their children. She writes that toddlers who were most competent were the ones whose parents:

- ▶ Carefully organized their children's routines
- ▶ Encouraged their children to help a lot with household chores
- ▶ Allowed their children to do some messy things such as washing dishes
- ▶ Read to their children daily
- ▶ Severely limited and supervised their children's television viewing
- ▶ Observed their children closely to keep them safe and to fit activities to their developmental level
- ▶ Had firm, consistent household rules and gave children reasons for these rules
- ▶ Saw themselves as teachers of their children and actively helped their children learn
- ▶ Played with their children, frequently including pretend play

## Guidance and Self-Esteem

We all want our children to grow up feeling they are lovable and capable. One of the trickiest and most important skills parents must learn is to guide their children in ways that control naughty behavior and help the children feel good about themselves. This is hard to do when you are angry or upset because your child is causing a problem.

You need practice and a lot of patience at these times in order not to be critical or accusing. Unfortunately, a young child who lives with criticism can come to feel hopeless and may stop trying to cooperate. When your child misbehaves, she needs help-outs instead of put-downs. Help-outs make her feel you love her and you know she can learn to do better. Put-downs do just the opposite. Listen to yourself. Try to substitute help-outs for put-downs.

Following are some help-out comments:

- ▶ Here's a sponge. I'll help you clean it up.
- ▶ That's hard to do. Let me do it with you.
- ▶ I'm proud of you for trying that. Hold it with both hands next time, and it may not fall.
- ▶ That is a dangerous thing to do. You could fall. Let me hold your hand.

Following are some destructive put-downs:

- ▶ I knew that would happen if I let you do it alone.
- ▶ Can't you do anything right?
- ▶ You're being a brat.
- ▶ Why do you always drop things?
- ▶ You never pick up your clothes.
- ▶ Won't you ever learn?
- ▶ Can't you see that's dangerous?

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