

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT TWO TO THREE YEARS

While reading this information, please keep in mind that all children are unique. While the sequence of development is practically the same for all children (for example, most children learn to crawl before they learn to walk), each child's rate of development is different. There is a wide variation in normal development. Some children reach developmental milestones earlier than others. Some reach them later than others. Rarely does a delay in reaching a developmental milestone mean that there is a problem. In most cases, delays turn out to be normal. Remember that premature infants generally reach developmental milestones later than other infants of the same birth age. Parents with any questions or concerns about their children's development should contact their children's health care provider.

Highlights in Physical Development

***Hands/Grasp.** By two years of age, most children can turn the pages of a book one at a time. Children this age are often learning to twist or turn objects with their hands. As a result, they may be able to turn a doorknob to open a door. As children approach three years of age, they get increasingly better at using their hands. At two years of age, most children will probably use a crayon by holding it in a fist-like

grasp, and as children approach three years of age, they will begin to use a more mature grip (between the thumb and first two fingers) of a crayon or pencil. They will probably begin to draw pictures, too, instead of scribbling. By three, many children will be able to use scissors, and they may be able to perform tasks like threading beads onto a string. Between two and three years, most children can take off their clothes, such as pajamas or pants, by themselves.

***Standing/Walking.** During the period from two to three years, most children become very mobile, and they begin to use this new mobility to explore the world around them. Many children this age love to climb up and down furniture, and also in and out of objects such as big boxes. It is also at this time that many children will begin to run. Some can even walk up and down stairs alone, while holding onto a rail.

Highlights in Cognitive/ Language Development

Language is usually well developed in most two-to-three-year-old children, but they may speak so quickly that they are difficult to understand. Many children will now begin to use language to ask questions and give directions. Vocabulary is increasing rapidly, and the two-and-a-half-year-old will be learning about 50 new words each month. By three years of age, most children will

have a vocabulary of about 900 words, and they will speak in sentences of three to four words. Many will begin to use pronouns, including the personal pronoun "I." Most children will be able to repeat short rhymes and sing short songs.

Highlights in Social/Emotional Development

Negativism, which usually begins sometime after fourteen months of age, is still present in many children during the period from two to three years. Temper tantrums are quite common during this time. Most children this age assert their independence by saying "no," by throwing temper tantrums, and by demonstrating stubbornness. This negativism is a normal and important part of development. This is simply how children let the world know that they have ideas of their own, and that they want to make some decisions for themselves. Many children protest just for the fun of finding out how it feels to say "no." Parents should be careful not to overreact to the minor rebellions of their two to three year old children, because if they react too strongly to these rebellions, they run the risk of reinforcing rather than discouraging the negativism.

As children approach their third birthdays, they will begin to play with other children. Group play will require adult supervision.

Toilet Training

Between the ages of two and a half to three years, most children develop better control over their bowels and bladder. By this time, most children are able to verbalize their toileting needs. Some children may be in full control of their bowel movements, but will probably still need help with wiping.

Children become toilet trained at a wide variety of ages. It is important that parents not be too disappointed if their children develop bladder and bowel control later than other children. Some children simply develop these abilities later than others. Patience and understanding on the part of parents will make toilet training an easier process for all involved.



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