

Child Health and Parenting Service (CHaPS)

A guide to your child's development at 2-3 years

Your child's development is unique. Children develop at different stages and achieve as individuals. You play an important role in your child's development, guiding and letting them explore their surroundings.

Your child at the age of 2-3 years is having a rapid growth in their emotional development. At this age, expect big feelings, tantrums, simple sentences, pretend play, independence, new thinking skills and much more. Toddlerhood can be a challenging time for parents and caregivers as the child is starting to express themselves and their needs. Your toddler is also starting to understand how their behaviour affects you and how your behaviour affects them.

Here are some ideas of what typical development looks like at this age and guidelines when to seek professional support. Your Child's Personal Health Record also includes some developmental information. If you have any concerns about your child's development, please seek advice from your Child and Family Health Nurse (CFHN) or General Practitioner (GP).

What is happening at this age?

Talking and Understanding

- At this time, your child is able to understand more than they can express. Language is beginning to develop rapidly
- Your child will start to put words into simple sentences (2-3 words) and point to several body parts
- You might notice your child starting to use tone in conversation and ask repeatedly 'why' and start using 'mine', 'my'
- Your child, will understand when an object is 'in' or 'on' something and be able to point to familiar pictures in a book

Playing and being active

- Play remains very important because it is how children learn and explore feelings.
- Your child at 2 years old will still play side by side with other children and co-operative play starts to be seen
- Your child is starting to become independent and wanting to try to do things for themselves such as taking off their socks and shoes, supervise and support them as they explore and learn
- Around 2 years, your child may start to show an interest in imaginative play and enjoy activities such as dressing up and having tea parties
- Reading, singing, and telling stories are very important as they support language development, imagination and the connection you have with your child
- Your child will enjoy being active and is getting better at running, climbing and balancing. They might also develop some new gross motor skills like kicking and catching a ball
- This is also the age when they will start showing interest in toilet training

Social and Emotional

- Tantrums or emotional outbursts are common. This is because children's social and emotional skills are starting to develop at this age. They might be testing out their growing independence
- They are discovering that the way they behave can influence the way other people behave. Often your toddler may be frustrated as their ability to express their emotions using words is just developing

How to support your child's development at this age?

Here are some simple things you can do to help your child's development at this age:

- Remember children learn by experience and copying – modelling new skills and behaviours will help your child learn
- Encourage your child's talking, thinking and imagination by reading together out loud, telling stories, singing and reciting rhymes
- Provide opportunities for toddlers to play with other children and make friends
- Encourage everyday skills like dressing and undressing, putting on shoes, using a spoon and drinking from a cup
- Practice sorting and matching objects with your toddler to encourage learning, memory and fine motor skills
- Talking with your toddler about everyday things and naming everyday objects
- Not all play needs to be structured – giving your child free playtime allows them to be creative and experience and express many different feelings (such as joy, excitement, anger and fear)
- Make time for outdoor play at a park or playground, in the backyard, on a beach or joining in a community activity. Moving around on different surfaces develops strength, balance and coordination.

When to be concerned about your child's development and what to do



Talk to your GP or phone 1300 064 544 to speak with a Child Health Nurse if you have concerns about your child's development

For Example:

- Concern about your child's vision or a turned or lazy eye
- Concern about your child's hearing, are they turning to sounds? Can they follow simple instructions?
- Concern about communication – isn't using two words together and/or they are not copying words or actions
- Concern about how your child uses their hands or fingers to do things, for example holding a small object, isn't scribbling or trying to draw
- Concern about your child's ability to use their arms or legs - for example, difference between right and left side of body in strength, movement or tone or loose and floppy movements or stiff and tense movements
- Concern about your child's behaviour, emotions and interactions with adults or children
- Concern that your child is not coming to you for affection or comfort.

Resources: Websites containing information on 2-3 year old behaviour, development, nutrition, play and learning, safety, sleep:

- [Toddler development at 2-3 years | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Child's Development 2 to 3 years | Starting Blocks](#)
- [Kids Health Information : Challenging behaviour – toddlers and young children \(rch.org.au\)](#)