

The Best We Can Be: *Parents and Children Growing Together*




Little Moments Lead to Big Rewards!

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The Best We Can Be: Parents and Children Growing Together


Being a parent is both a rewarding and difficult job. *The Best We Can Be: Parents and Children Growing Together* has been designed to help you in this role. *The Best We Can Be* offers helpful tips for enriching the time that you spend together to support your child's healthy growth and development. In addition, it includes strategies for dealing with the challenges that can come with these emerging skills. We hope that you find the information practical and useful for your family development.

1-4 WEEKS



Special Points of Interest

- Baby Bonding
- Changing Habits
- Get a Handle on Handling
- Baby Talk
- Sing to Soothe



Parents have the glorious opportunity of being the most powerful influence, above and beyond any other, on the new lives that bless their homes.

L. Tom Perry

Baby Bonding

A new baby in the house is very exciting and also very stressful. It is important to make sure that the time you spend with your baby is focused on him, so that you can bond with your baby and he can bond with you. You can do this by talking, singing, and turning everyday activities into quality time between you and your baby.

- **Talking is Telling**

Talk to your baby in soft, soothing tones. This is one way to tell your baby that she is safe, cared for, and loved.

- **Sing a Song**

The sound of your voice is soothing to your baby. Humming and singing make the baby aware of your presence in a happy, calming way.

Big Rewards

The bond you form with your baby is an important part of his healthy growth and development. Babies need to feel loved, cared for, and know that their needs are being met. Bonding occurs through everyday routines and quiet moments spent with your baby.

Get a Handle on Handling

Handling your baby in the right manner is important for your comfort as well as your baby's comfort. Here are some helpful tips on how to hold your baby.

- **The Cradle Hold**
Use one of your arms to create a hammock to carry your little baby while you walk.
- **The Shoulder Hold**
Using one arm, rest the baby against your shoulder while supporting the baby's head with the other arm. This is a wonderful position for walking while you hug your baby.
- **The Forward Hold**
With your baby facing out, place one arm under your baby's bottom and the other arm wrapped across her chest to hold her close to you. Your baby's back should be resting on your tummy so she can see the world around her.

Big Rewards

Babies are sensitive to touch and how we handle them is important to their sense of safety and trust. Newborns feel safest when held close to your body. Touching your baby gently also soothes and comforts him.





Changing Habits

Babies need to be changed several times a day, so use this time for learning and bonding. Diapering is a good time to talk to your baby. Your voice is soothing and your baby will feel calmer if she hears your voice.

- **Time to Talk**
You might talk about the steps it takes to change her, or name the items you use to change her.
- **Something to See**
You can hang a mobile over the changing area so that your baby has something to look at while you talk to him.
- **Hold Her Close**
Many babies like to be held close. While changing your child, try gently holding her arms together close to her chest. This helps your baby feel safe.

Big Rewards

Babies can startle easily at this age, so holding their hands or body can help them to feel safe. Moving closer and talking in a soft voice can also help your baby feel secure.

Baby Talk

During this time in your newborn's life, it is important to remember that her brain is making connections that will help her learn all through life.

- **Use Real Words**

When you talk to your baby, you should use real words spoken in a soft, sing-song way instead of only making silly sounds and noises. This helps even the smallest baby develop skills he will use when he does start to talk and read.

- **Look at a Book**

Reading to your baby or exploring books and pictures is also important. When you read out loud it helps your baby bond with you by matching you with your voice.

Big Rewards

You may feel silly singing or reading to your baby, but there is nothing silly about supporting your child's development. When you sing silly songs, talk to your baby, read books, and use your baby's name, you are building her confidence and helping her develop language skills.





Big Rewards

The songs you sing to your baby can help you and your baby to connect. Take advantage of these special moments by relaxing and rocking as you sing.

Sing to Soothe

Your baby loves the sound of your voice. Singing a song to her can help her to calm down when she is fussy, or help her get to sleep when she is tired. If you do not already have a song that you know your baby loves to hear, you might want to try one of these songs.

- **When calmly playing with your newborn, sing him this song while touching each of his fingers or toes. Use your fingers to alternate and hold each of his fingers as you sing:**

One little, two little, three little fingers
Four little, five little, six little fingers
Seven little, eight little, nine little fingers
Ten little fingers on your hands!

- **Here's another sweet song to sing:**

I love my baby
Oh yes I do
I love my baby
It's really true
And every day
I do I do I do
I sing my baby a song
I love you.

(You can also add your child's name to the lyrics instead of the word *baby*.)

Healthy Habits

Sponge Baths

In the first few weeks of life, and until your baby's umbilical cord stump falls off, it's better to give your baby a sponge bath with a warm soft washcloth. If your baby cries when he is totally undressed, you might try giving the bath in stages and only taking off one piece of clothing at a time. Placing one hand on your baby's stomach can help your baby feel comfort in knowing you are right there during bath time.

The Baby Blues

You've just given birth to a beautiful, wonderful baby, so why do you feel sad and are crying all of the time? You want this to be the happiest time of your life but you may be getting mad at the littlest things, or even at your baby. You may not even feel like getting out of bed to take care of your baby. If you feel like this, call a family member or friend to take care of your baby and get help right away. You may need to be treated by a doctor for the baby blues, or postpartum depression. Seeing a doctor will make you feel better faster and help you continue to care for your baby.

Swaddling

When you swaddle your baby in a nice, cozy blanket for warmth and security, it helps him stay warm and toasty and it may also help him calm down if he is fussy. Simply lay a blanket on a flat surface and fold down one corner about six inches, then place your baby on his back with his head on the fold. Pull the left corner across your baby's body and tuck it under his back. Next, pull the bottom corner up under your baby's chin, and bring the loose corner over your baby's body and tuck it under his back. Some babies like to have their arms free, so you may want to tuck the blanket under your baby's arms.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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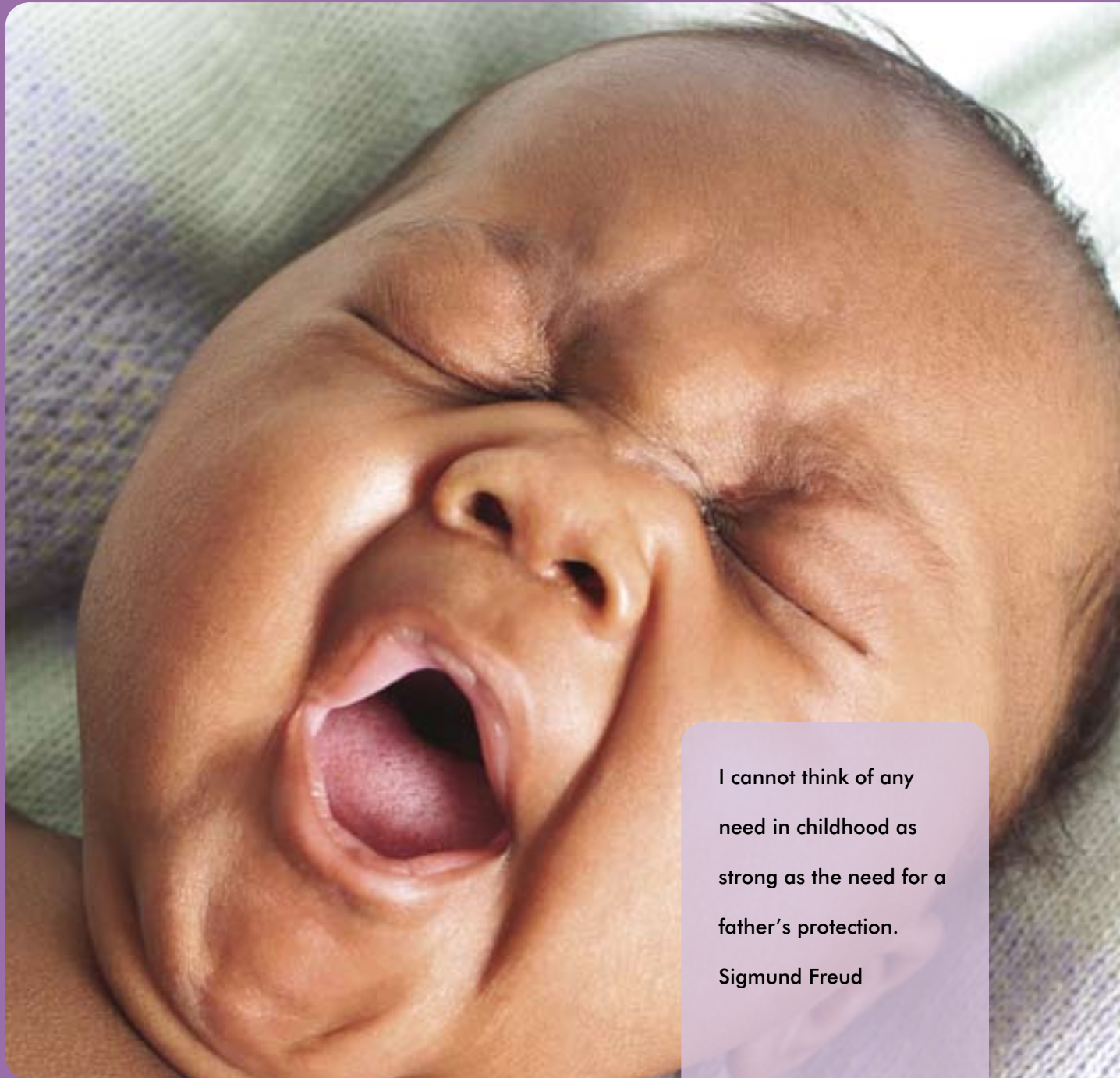


4-8 WEEKS



Special Points of Interest

- Schedule? What Schedule?
- Sense Something
- Involving Dads
- Tub Time
- Sweet Lullabies



I cannot think of any
need in childhood as
strong as the need for a
father's protection.

Sigmund Freud

Schedule? What Schedule?

During the first few weeks your baby may sleep and eat at all times of the day and night. At first it may seem hectic, but it is best to follow your baby's schedule for sleeping and eating during the first few months. Babies will give you cues when they need to eat and sleep.

- **Routines to Live By**
Following your baby's natural schedule is important, but you can begin family rituals and routines for your child. As often as possible, give baths the same time each day, rock your baby as he gets sleepy, and change diapers in the same way to create rituals which will become part of his everyday experiences.
- **Signs and Signals**
Babies communicate through cries, facial expressions and gestures. Understanding what your baby is telling you takes time. Once you can understand your baby's signals, put words to his needs. For example, you can say, "Oh, your cry tells me you are hungry. Let's get your bottle."

Big Rewards

When you listen to your baby's needs she begins to build a trusting bond with you that is worth losing a little sleep over. In time, and with a consistent routine, your baby will begin to follow your family schedule.

Sense Something

One of the best ways to communicate with your baby is through his senses. Babies like gentle handling and rhythmic motion and are sensitive to smell and taste at this age.

- **Touch**
Make sure that you hold your baby in your arms and talk to her in a soothing voice. Touching your baby shows her that you love her and makes your baby feel safe.
- **Smell**
Smell is another sense that your baby is developing. When you hold your baby, he will learn your smell. This helps your baby bond with you and connects your smell with comfort.
- **Sight**
Seeing your face can help develop your child's visual skills. Make sure to make eye contact with your baby and let her touch your face. Using black and white shape patterns like checkerboards will help your baby develop her vision. Point out these patterns to your baby when you see them in- or outside of the house.
- **Sound**
Babies are born with a fully developed sense of hearing. They love to hear their names and the sounds of their parents' voices. They may enjoy singing or soft background noises during their routines, especially when it is time to go to sleep. They also may be sensitive to certain sounds and disturbed by music or loud noises. It is important to be tuned into your baby's likes and dislikes.
- **Taste**
When your baby nurses or drinks formula from a bottle, his sense of taste develops. Sometimes, babies need to try different formulas before settling on one that agrees with them. If you are breastfeeding your baby, he will learn the taste of your milk, which helps in the bonding process.



Big Rewards

Babies learn through their senses. It is important to be aware of the smells, sounds, and textures that your baby likes or dislikes. Smells can calm a baby, or excite him. Sounds can be pleasant for your baby or startle him. The environment affects a baby's mood and planning can help baby feel comforted and calm.



Involving Dads

Involving Dad in the feeding process can help form stronger bonds between Dad and baby. This can be a special time for Mom, Dad, and baby.

- **Let Dad Help**

If Mom is breast-feeding, Dad can bring the baby to his mother for night feedings and then tuck him back in bed after feeding. Dads can also feed the baby mother's milk or formula from a bottle.

- **Helping Hand**

Other ways to involve fathers or other family members is to let them burp the baby after a feeding, hold the baby after she has just been fed, or touch the baby while she is being fed.

- **Family Tunes**

Here's a good song for Dad to sing to his child as he feeds her, or as they rock together.

*My baby laughs, baby cries,
My sweet baby, dry your eyes
Mommy loves you; Daddy, too
We will take good care of you*

Big Rewards

Dads sometimes feel left out of the mommy and baby bond. Involving Dad in daily routines will help build a family connection.

Tub Time

Bath time is a special time to bond with your baby. Enjoy these moments with playful talking and singing. After bath time, wrap your baby in a soft towel and snuggle up to her so you can smell her clean skin.

- **Sound Off!**

You can make sound effects while washing certain parts of your baby. You can also talk to your baby and tell her what you are doing.

- **Tub Talk**

This is also a good time to practice calling your baby by her name and telling her the names of her body parts as she is getting washed.

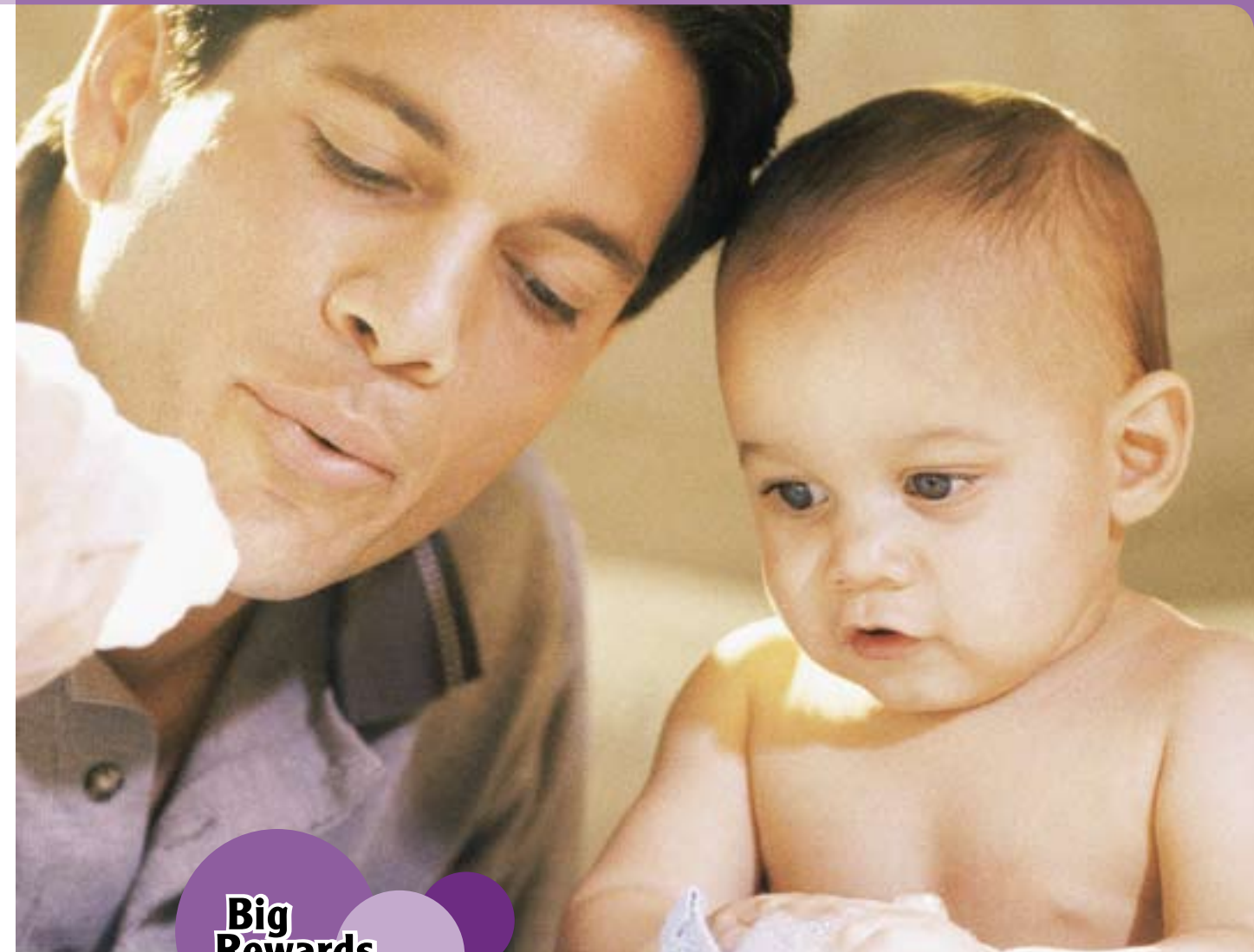
- **Tunes in the Tub**

Babies enjoy the soothing sound of a loved one's voice. Using a soft voice, sing a song as you wash your baby from head to toe. Here's a fun song to sing as you glide the washcloth over your baby.

*All of the babies are splashin' in the water
Splashin' in the water
Splashin' in the water
All of the babies are splashin' in the water
Bubble, bubble, bubble, bubble SPLASH!*

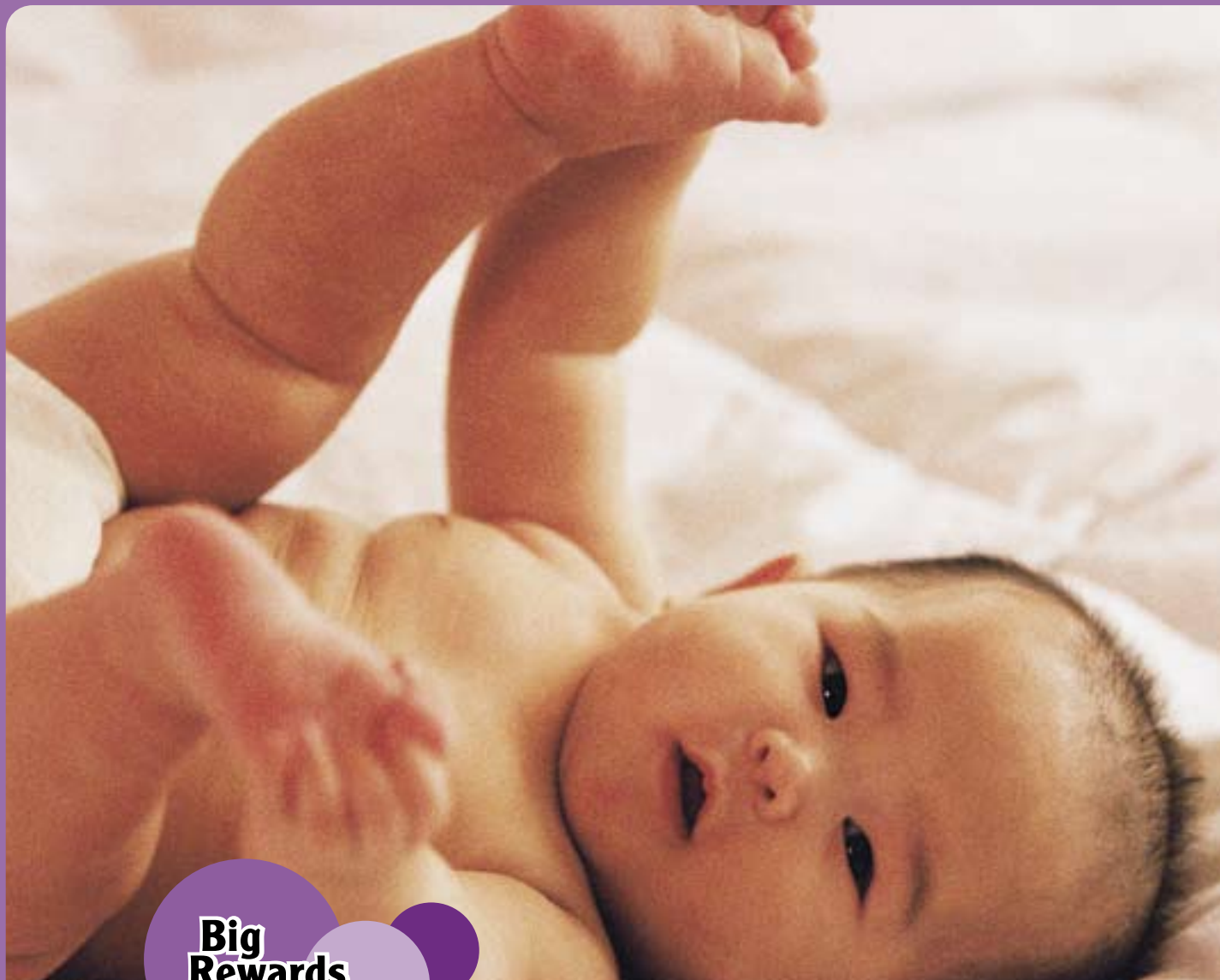
- **Super Snuggles**

As soon as your baby is clean, dry and dressed, hold her close to you and tell her how much you enjoyed this time together. By ending your everyday routine with a hug, kiss or snuggle, you slip a few extra "I love you's" into your day.



Big Rewards

When you use bath time to talk and sing about your baby's body parts, you help her to build a positive self-image, and you help her learn that words have meaning.



Big Rewards

Lullabies are a nice way to soothe your baby, build a bond with her, and introduce her to new words.

Sweet Lullabies

You and your baby can find sleep success using lullabies. As you sing lullabies to your baby, look into his eyes and sing softly and clearly. Here are some lullabies that you may want to try.

TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR

Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder where you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky
Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder where you are!

HUSH LITTLE BABY

Hush, little baby, don't say a word,
Papa's gonna buy you a mockingbird.
And if that mockingbird don't sing,
Papa's gonna buy you a diamond ring
If that diamond ring turns brass,
Papa's gonna buy you a looking glass.
If that looking glass gets broke,
Papa's gonna buy you a billy goat.
If that billy goat won't pull,
Papa's gonna buy you a cart and bull.
If that cart and bull turns over,
Papa's gonna buy you a dog named Rover.
If that dog named Rover won't bark,
Papa's gonna buy you a horse and cart.
If that horse and cart fall down,
You'll still be the sweetest baby in town.

Healthy Habits

Bottles Up!

Your baby may prefer to have his bottle warmed before he eats. The best way to warm a bottle of milk is in a pan of hot (but not boiling) water, or by running it under the faucet. Never use the microwave oven for warming bottles! Remember to check the temperature of the milk before giving it to your baby. Until your baby can sit up and hold his own bottle, always hold your baby semi-upright when feeding him a bottle so the milk does not go in his lungs. Throw away anything left in a bottle after he is finished feeding. Be sure to clean the bottle and nipple before the next use, even if it only contained water. Bottles should be clean and germ-free for the next feeding.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

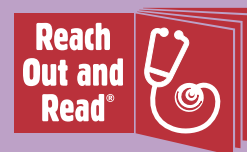
It's simple. NEVER, EVER shake your baby, or throw your baby up in the air, even though you may just be playing. Shaking or throwing your baby may cause serious brain damage and even death. Make sure that everyone who holds your baby knows these important rules. If for some reason you think your baby has been shaken or thrown, take her to the hospital right away.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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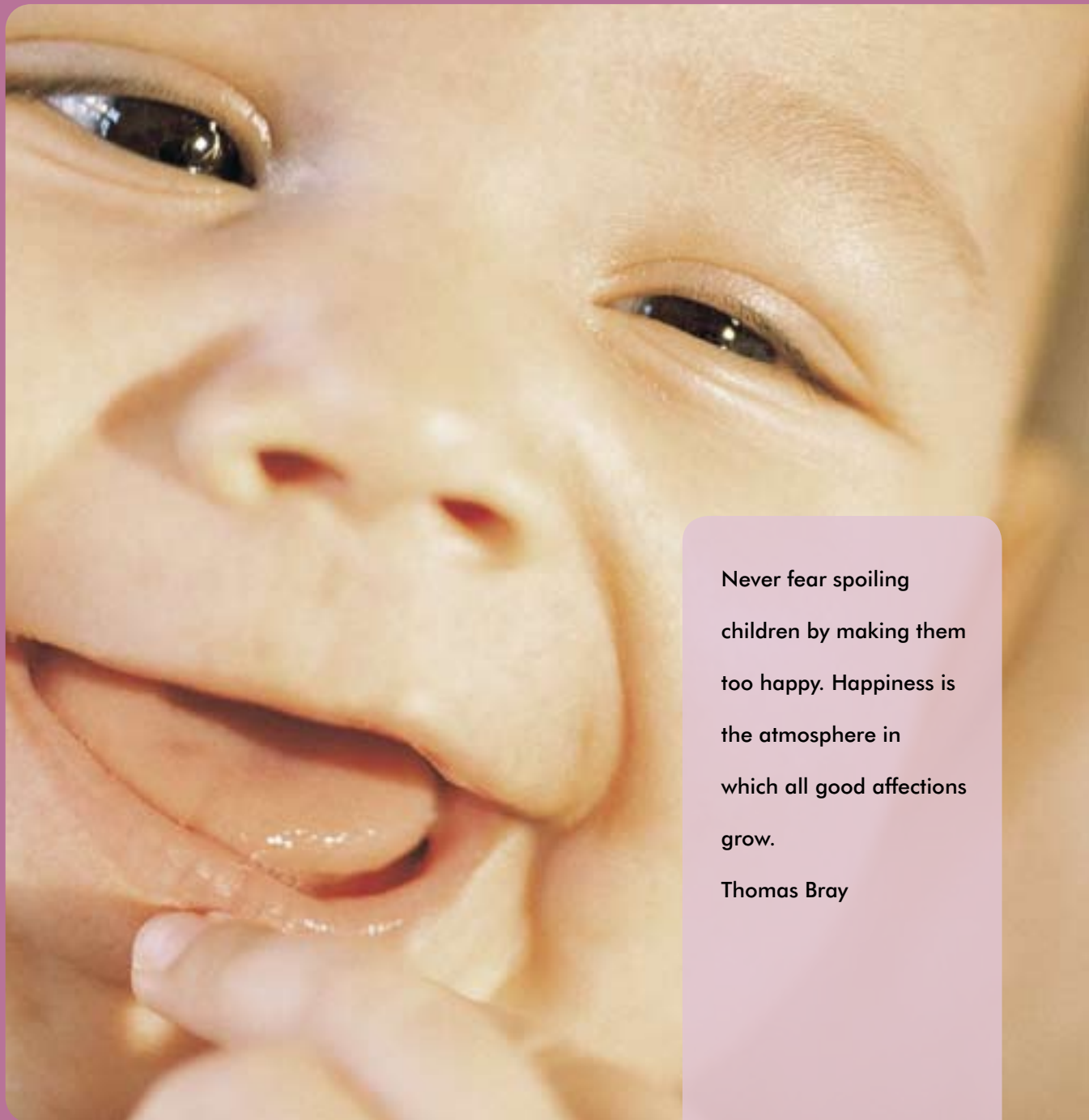


2-4 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- Listening to Your Baby
- Good Toys for Any Time
- Nice Nighttimes
- Good Books for Bedtime
- Talking with Your Baby



Never fear spoiling
children by making them
too happy. Happiness is
the atmosphere in
which all good affections
grow.

Thomas Bray

Listening to Your Baby

In the first few months of life, you're still learning what your baby likes and doesn't like, and your baby is learning how to express those likes and dislikes to you. Sometimes, it probably feels like you're trying to crack a code, but with practice and patience, you will be able to figure out most of these cues.

- **Respond to Your Baby's Cries**

Crying is one of the only ways your baby has of expressing his needs to you. When you respond to his cries, you begin to learn what your baby wants and needs by what soothes your baby. You also teach your baby that he can trust you to meet his needs.

- **Slow Down**

Babies react slower than adults. Listening to her means that you may need to slow down and wait for her response.

- **Don't Worry if You Don't Always Get it Right**

It's okay if you can't understand everything your baby is saying. No parent can understand every cry and coo her baby makes. It takes practice to learn these things, but if you pay attention to her reactions and respond to her cries quickly and in a calm, warm way, you'll soon be able to understand most of what she is saying.

Big Rewards

By trying to read your baby's cues, you show your baby that you are interested in her ideas and feelings.



Good Toys for Any Time

At this age, babies are spending more time awake, and they enjoy playing with simple toys, like the ones listed below.

- **Socks and Wristbands With Soft Rattles**

Babies this age are very interested in their hands and feet, and these inexpensive toys make this kind of play even more fun.

- **Mobiles**

Your baby can see almost as well as an adult now, so he may enjoy an attractive mobile attached to his crib. Make sure the mobile is low enough to see but high enough so he can't reach it.

- **Toys That He Can Grasp**

Toys like rattles with handles, rubber rings or soft dolls are good options.

- **Toys That are Easy to Clean**

When he is done with the toys, you can wash plastic and vinyl toys with soap and water, or run them through the dishwasher. Cloth toys like stuffed animals can go in the washing machine.

Big Rewards

Your baby learns about his world through his senses, which is why he puts nearly everything in his mouth. You can encourage him by making sure the toys he has are safe to explore in this way.

Nice Nighttimes

In the first months, babies need to have their needs met according to their own schedules, which may be different every day. By four months, babies usually respond well to a consistent bedtime, especially when there is a routine to help her ease into sleep. Here are a few tips for developing a nighttime routine you can both enjoy.

- **Set the Mood**

Generally, babies prefer to sleep in a room that is quiet and dark, with a temperature that is not too warm and not too cool. This can help both of you relax and go about your routine in a soft, soothing way.

- **Watch for Clues**

Pay attention to your baby's ways of telling you he's sleepy, and what helps him go to sleep. Does he rub his eyes when he's sleepy? Does he have a special cry? Does he like soft music, or does he prefer it when it's very quiet?

- **Share a Book**

A short, sweet book can be a nice way to spend some time together before you put your baby down to sleep.

Big Rewards

A regular bedtime routine helps babies know what to expect. Try to get your baby to bed around the same time each night following the same routine.





Good Books for Bedtime

Sharing a book can be a nice, soothing part of your baby's bedtime routine, and a nice way for you to spend some time together. If you and your baby don't have a favorite book, try one of these bedtime favorites.

- **Goodnight, Moon**
by Margaret Wise Brown
illustrated by Clement Hurd
- **The Going to Bed Book**
by Sandra Boyton
- **Time for Bed**
by Mem Fox
illustrated by Jane Dyer
- **Counting Kisses: A Kiss & Read Book**
by Karen Katz

Big Rewards

Sharing a book at bedtime helps your baby learn to recognize new words, and helps you build a strong relationship.

Talking With Your Baby

Did you know your baby knows your voice and loves it above all others? It is a good idea to talk to your baby often and throughout the day, especially during mealtimes, bath times, before and after naptimes and during those together times.

- **Learn to Read Your Baby's Cues**

The ways that your baby tells you what she likes and doesn't like—whether it's by turning her head, making a face, or crying—is her way of talking to you. You can tell your baby you understand what she is saying, and you respect her likes and dislikes, by responding to her needs.

- **Use Real Words**

Instead of using “baby talk” or simply making silly noises, talk to your baby in complete sentences, using real words. Talking to your baby is the best way to teach her language, so it is important that she hears plenty of real words.

- **Use Your Softest, Sweetest Voice**

Have you noticed that when you talk to your baby, your voice is a little higher than it is when you talk to older children and adults? This is a natural instinct, because babies prefer voices that are higher in pitch.

- **Use Your Baby's Name Often**

We all love to hear our names spoken by people we love. When you say your baby's name, you show him how much you care for him.

Big Rewards

Even at this young age, your baby can hear the differences among several hundred words. Your baby needs to hear you talking to learn words and understand that they have meaning. The more words your baby hears, the more she will understand.



Healthy Habits

Emergency Numbers & Safety Information for Caregivers

You may be ready to leave your baby at home with a babysitter now. To keep your mind at ease in case there is an emergency while you are gone, show your babysitter how to quickly and safely get herself and your baby out of your home. Put a list of emergency numbers by the telephone and include everyone's home, work, cell and pager numbers along with numbers for neighbors, family doctors, ambulance (911), hospital, police, fire department, poison and health department numbers. Keep a copy of these emergency numbers in the diaper bag, too.

Comfortable Bathing for You and Your Baby

Bath time can be fun for you and your baby! Here are some healthy bath time rules to follow:

- Make sure the bath water is comfortable and warm – anywhere between 96 – 100 degrees F.
- Babies up to six months only need 2 – 3 inches of bath water to get nice and clean.
- Never put your baby into a tub when the water is still running.
- Never leave your baby alone in a tub. If the phone rings or someone comes to your door, scoop your baby up in a towel and take him with you. Bath rings with suction cups are not a safe idea and not ever an “extra” hand for watching baby at bath time.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.




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4-6 MONTHS

Special Points of Interest

- Food for Thought
- Talking Through Your Actions
- Books That Say “I Love You”
- Babbles and Coos
- Play All Day



There are only two
lasting bequests we
can hope to give our
children. One of these is
roots; the other, wings.

Hodding Carter

Food for Thought

You may notice some big changes in your child's feeding patterns around this time. Many babies no longer want a late night feeding. Babies may get excited and be easily distracted during breastfeeding or bottle-feeding. As you hold and feed your baby, you might consider using these tips to help keep your baby engaged and help you spend time together.

- **Find a Quiet Place**

Feeding your baby in a darkened, quiet spot may help to keep her from being distracted during her feeding.

- **Count His Toes**

While your baby eats, hold his foot in your hand and count his toes in a sweet, sing-song way. He'll love your soft touch and the sound of your voice.

- **Finish With a Hug**

After you finish feeding and burping your baby, hug her close to you and tell her how big and strong she is becoming, and how much you love her.

Big Rewards

When you cuddle and talk to your baby during mealtime, you make it easier to keep her mind on what she is doing, and you show her how much you value your time together. You also help to build the foundation for language and communication skills.

Talking Through Your Actions

It is a good idea to talk to your baby about what you are doing with her, whether it is an everyday activity or something you are doing together for the first time. It may feel silly to talk to someone who doesn't talk to you, but she needs to hear you talk, and talk a lot, to understand what words mean.

- **Name Waking Up**
Tell your baby, "Good morning!" Talk about everything the two of you will be doing that day.
- **Name Getting Dressed**
Talk about your baby's body parts as you change your baby from one outfit into another. When he's dressed, give him a big hug and tell him how handsome he looks.
- **Name Changing Her Diaper**
Tell her what you're doing as you lay her down and go through the motions of changing.

Big Rewards

When you describe what you're doing as you do it, you not only help your baby learn language, but also help her learn to expect what will come next. This makes her feel safe and helps you both move smoothly from one activity to the next.





Books That Say “I Love You”

Reading to your baby is a nice way to show your affection, and the books listed below can help you tell your baby just how much you love her.

- **I Love You as Much**
by Laura Krauss Melmed
illustrated by Henri Sorensen
- **Guess How Much I Love You**
by Sam McBratney
illustrated by Anita Jeram
- **You're Just What I Need**
by Ruth Krauss
illustrated by Julia Noonan
- **The Runaway Bunny**
by Margaret Wise Brown
illustrated by Clement Hurd

Big Rewards

Sharing books together gives you time to cuddle with your baby and build an even stronger relationship.

Babbles and Coos

Did you know the noises your baby is making now are the first steps to speaking real words? Here are some good ways to encourage your baby to keep practicing.

- **Copy the Sounds She Makes**
Have you ever seen your baby coo, look at you and wait? If you coo at her, she might just coo back!
- **Cheer Him On**
Smile, laugh, and clap when he makes funny sounds.
- **Talk Back as if She's Speaking Words That You Understand**
"Is that so? I had no idea! Thank you for telling me!"
"You're welcome!"
"I'd be happy to pick you up, and thank you for asking so nicely!"
"Yes, it's true. You are the sweetest, smartest, prettiest baby I've ever met!"

Big Rewards

When you copy the sounds your baby makes, you teach her that a conversation involves taking turns, and confirm to her that she is doing something worthwhile.





Play All Day

Babies learn about their world through their senses. Put your baby on a soft blanket and give her toys that she can explore through touch, taste, sight, sound and smell. Remember, the toys must be safe because at this age everything will go in your baby's mouth.

- **Floor Time**
While on the floor, put your baby in different positions to help strengthen her developing muscles.
- **Play with Me**
Sit with her and join in her play. Shake a rattle for your baby or gently help your baby explore a toy.
- **Talk It Up!**
Delight in your child's attempts to communicate with you. Take turns cooing, smiling, and laughing with your baby. Play games together like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.

Big Rewards

Allow your child time to quietly explore objects on her own, but also set aside time to sit with your child on the floor and connect playfully. Babies learn through exploration of objects, but most importantly babies learn through relationships they have with parents and other important people in their lives.

Healthy Habits

When Feeding is Solid

Around this age, you may notice your baby's hunger cries are lingering beyond her bottle-feeding. It may be time to begin feeding your baby soft, solid foods. It's usually best to begin with some rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula. Introduce cereal slowly. It takes babies about a week to learn how to get the food to the back of their mouths and swallow. If your baby is pushing her tongue out when you try to feed her, she may not be ready. Try again in about a week. Later, you can introduce pureed vegetables and fruits. Babies can have allergic reactions to some types of food. Try not to introduce more than one new food each week to make sure your child does not have an allergy to the new food. During baby's first year, do not give foods that most often cause allergic reactions: nuts, fish, eggs, and strawberries.

Talk to your baby as you do when you are breastfeeding or bottle-feeding her. Use the same songs, stories, or way of talking to your baby when you start feeding her solid foods as you do during breastfeeding or bottle-feeding. Help your baby know that it is time for feeding by continuing your routines when introducing solid foods.

From Danger Home to Discover Zone

It's never too early to start baby proofing your house and making sure your home is safe when your baby starts to creep and crawl around. Here are some healthy tips to help keep your baby safe while exploring the world around her.

- Make sure railings inside and outside your home are no more than 3 ½ inches wide so your baby doesn't get her head stuck or slip through.
- Transfer cleaners and poisonous chemicals from under the sink to an overhead cabinet.
- Use safety plates that automatically cover the outlet when the plug is removed. Babies can choke on outlet plug covers if they find a loose one on the floor.
- Install toilet locks – babies love toilet water!
- Keep salt out of your child's reach. Even a very small amount can be fatal if eaten by a baby.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





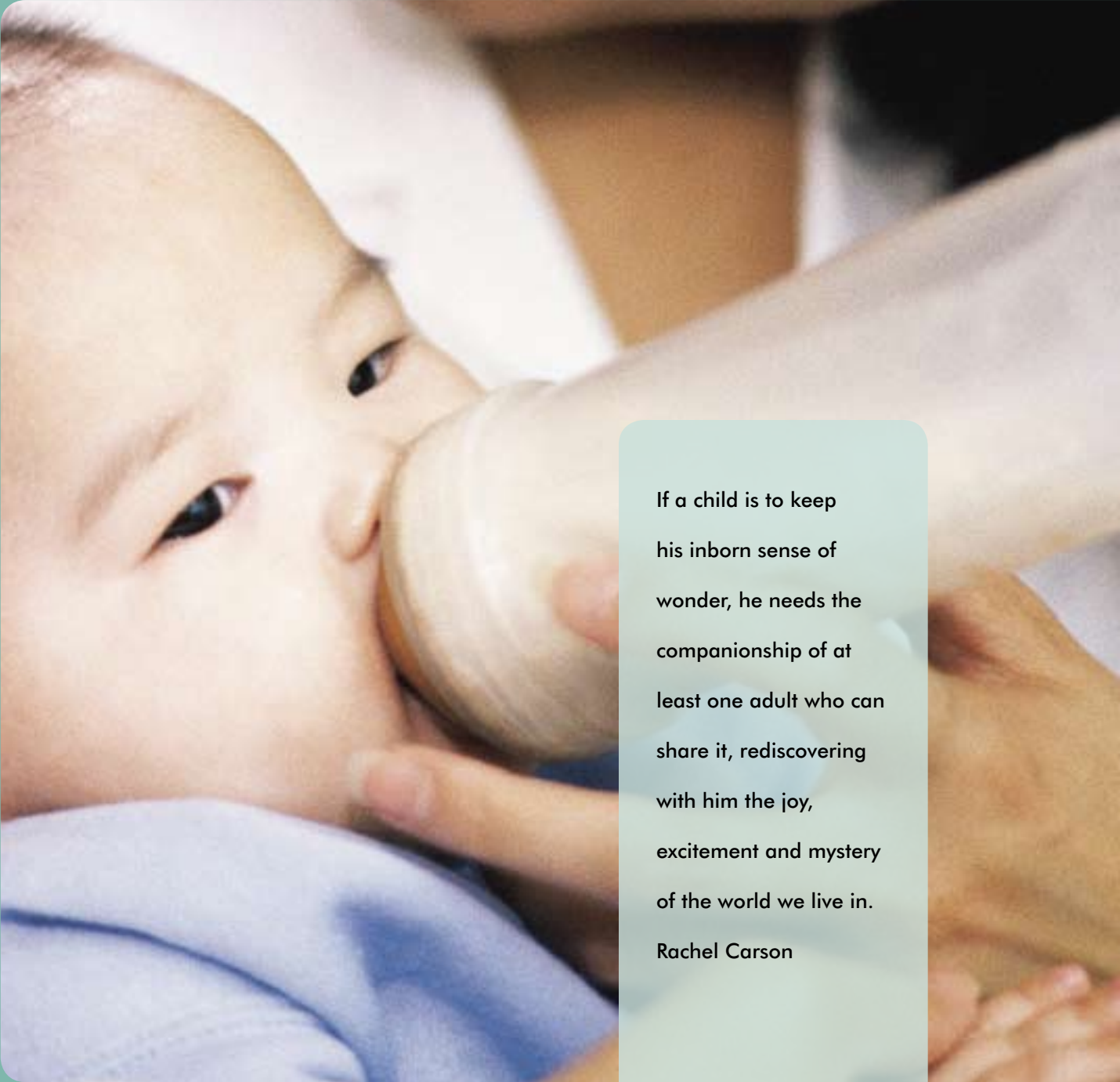
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6-9 MONTHS

Special Points of Interest

- Mealtime Marvels
- Reading Regularly
- Fighting Sleep
- Learning Through Play
- It's Still There!



If a child is to keep
his inborn sense of
wonder, he needs the
companionship of at
least one adult who can
share it, rediscovering
with him the joy,
excitement and mystery
of the world we live in.
Rachel Carson

Mealtime Marvels

Mealtime can be fun and engaging for you and your baby! By six months of age, babies are social creatures and enjoy the social interaction that goes along with mealtime as much as we do. They also are more physical and may want to try holding their spoons themselves. These tips will help you enjoy this time together and support your child's emerging skills.

- **Dinner Conversation**

Talk about what your baby is eating, and the tastes and smells of the food. Respond to her when she makes noises, gestures, and speaks words.

- **Spoon it Up**

Give your baby a chance to hold her spoon if she wants. Spoons with slightly bent handles are easier for very small hands. She will still need help from you, but she will enjoy having a chance to practice this skill before you jump in and help. This is sure to be messy, so be sure to place her high chair over an easy-to-clean floor.

Big Rewards

Mealtime is an excellent time to talk with your baby. Babies learn to talk when adults talk to them and take care of their needs.

Reading Regularly

At six months, your baby is able to sit up, hold and respond to a book. It may not look like it, but these are the first stages of reading. Here are a few tips for making this time valuable.

- **Cuddle Up With a Good Book**
Sit in a soft spot and hold your baby in your arms as you read to her.
- **Holding On**
Let your baby hold the book. It's okay if she holds it upside-down or puts it in her mouth.
- **Point to Pictures**
In particular, babies love pictures of faces, people, and other babies.
- **Family Albums**
Put a few family pictures in a small plastic album and let her “read” the pictures.

Big Rewards

Reading to your child is an important step in teaching her to read, and when you hold her and read to her, you make reading a pleasant experience and show her that you love her, too.





Big Rewards

Routines establish patterns that babies need to develop trust and believe that their needs will always be met. When routines are consistent, babies can begin to know what will come next and this helps them feel secure, safe, and happy.

Fighting Sleep

During this period, your child is quickly learning new physical skills. She may be anxious to practice these skills and as a result, she may try to fight sleep, or may wake up during the night. Keeping a consistent bedtime routine will help make this an easier time for both of you.

- **Quiet Time**

You might try putting your child down for an extra rest time during the day. Even if she doesn't sleep, it may be helpful for her to have a little more time to relax so she will have energy and not feel as cranky.

- **Returning to Sleep**

If your child wakes up during the night, you can help your baby soothe herself back to sleep by making sure the lights are dim, playing some soft music, or giving her a favorite soft toy or doll to cuddle.

- **Rock-a-by**

If he is having trouble falling asleep or getting back to sleep on his own, you may want to rock him and sing a favorite bedtime song.

*Go to sleep, my teddy bear,
Close your little button eyes,
And let me smooth your hair.
It feels so soft and silky that,
I'd love to cuddle down by you,
So,
Go to sleep, my darling teddy bear.*

Learning Through Play

For babies, almost anytime can be playtime. Enjoy playful moments with your child by participating in your baby's play with these simple and fun games.

- **Blowing Bubbles**
Sit in front of your baby to blow bubbles. Tell her how big she is when she reaches up to touch them.
- **Shake, Rattle and Roll**
Hold a rattle out for your baby to take. Dance and sing along as she shakes the rattle.
- **Mirror Image**
Babies love to look at themselves in mirrors, but if you're going to put a mirror in your baby's reach, make sure it is shatterproof.

Big Rewards

Toys and games are not only fun, but they also help your child to learn in a way that is best for her. In this way, children's work is their play and their play is their work—so help your child get to work!





It's Still There!

Around this time, young children are learning that people and objects do not disappear just because they are out of sight. This new skill can make for fun and exciting play times for the two of you, but it can also make it more difficult to leave his sight.

- **Peek-a-boo**

Peek-a-boo is a favorite game for many babies and parents. Play peek-a-boo by hiding behind your hands, a blanket, a stuffed animal, or even a door. Laugh together as she looks for you or waits for you to reappear.

- **Where Did it Go?**

Use a blanket or box to hide a rattle, stuffed animal, or other favorite toy. She may pull the blanket off or remove the box herself, or she may need a little help from you. When you find the toy together, celebrate by saying, "There it is!"

- **It's So Hard to Say Goodbye**

Your child may cry when you leave the room or leave him with another caregiver. This is his way of telling you that you are still in his mind and he looks forward to the time you return. He may find comfort in hearing you reassure him you will be back soon.

Big Rewards

This emerging skill is called object permanence, and it is just one sign that your child is growing and maturing into a secure child who believes he can be successful and is ready to explore his world.

Healthy Habits

Anemia and Iron

Young children are at great risk of iron deficiency because they grow so fast and their growing bodies need a lot of iron. This can happen due to lack of iron in a baby's diet and is seen most often in children six months to three years of age. If this continues, babies can develop a condition called anemia, which may hurt a baby's mental and physical development. Those at highest risk are low birth weight infants after two months of age, breastfed term infants who receive no iron-fortified foods or supplemental iron after four months of age, and formula-fed term infants who are not consuming iron-fortified formula. It is important to ask your doctor or nurse if your baby is getting enough iron.

Sun Safety

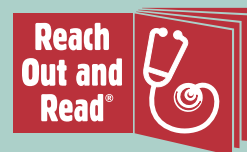
Sunscreen is only one step in keeping safe from sunburn and over-exposure to the sun. Parents should limit outdoor time with infants between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Keeping infants covered with loose fitting clothing that covers arms and legs and a hat with a wide brim to shade the infant's face is a good idea. Also, put the shade top down on the infant's stroller or hold an umbrella to shade the infant. Make sure your baby drinks plenty of fluids during hot weather. After swim time, dry your baby well and re-dress her in dry, loose fitting clothing that covers arms and legs and hat with a wide brim to shade her face. The American Academy of Pediatrics now advises that sunscreen use on babies less than 6 months old is not harmful on small areas of a baby's skin, such as the face and back of the hands. Ask your pediatrician. Remember, your baby's best defense against sunburn is avoiding the sun or staying in the shade.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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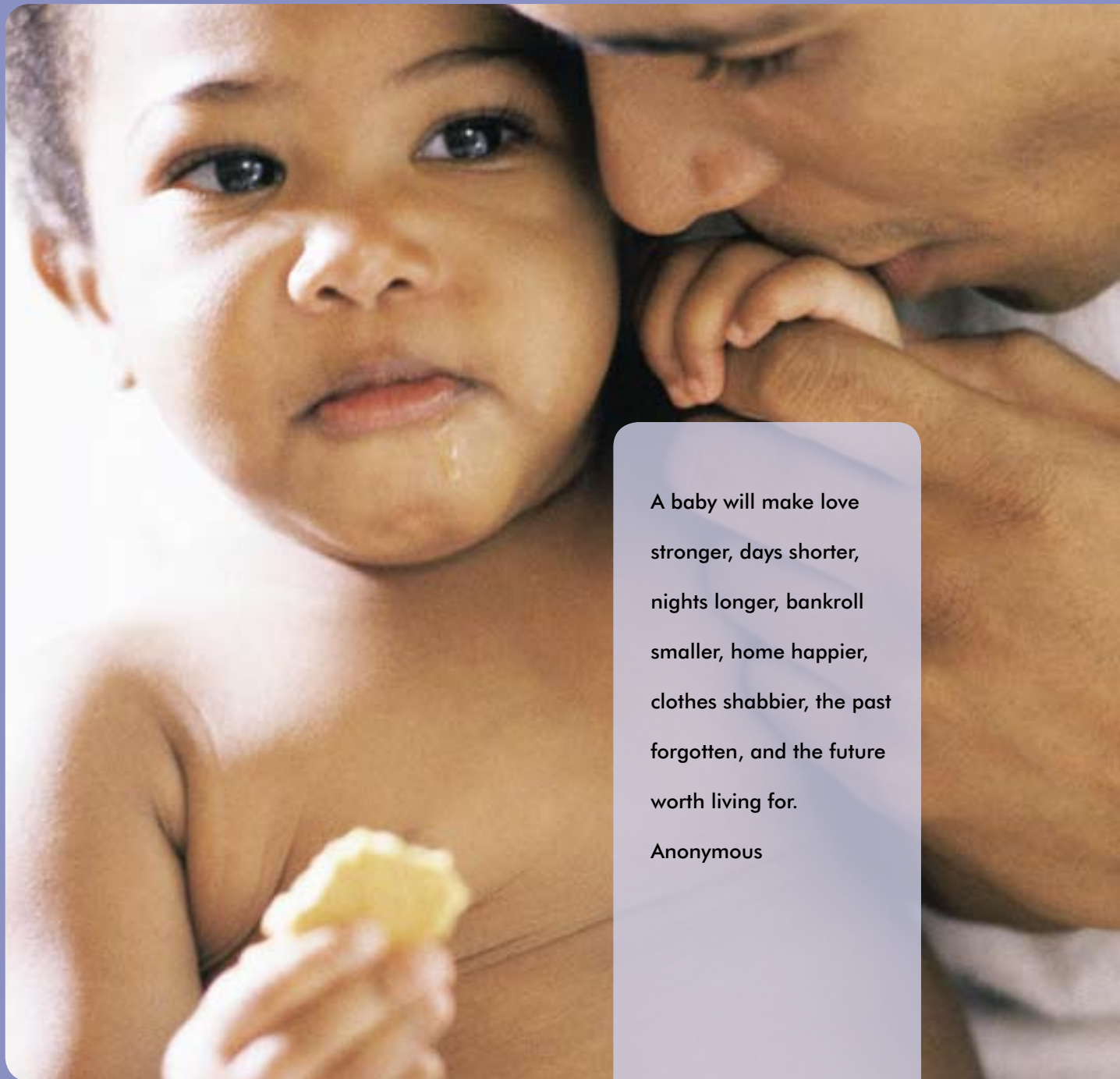


9-12 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- Feed Me a Conversation
- On the Go!
- Ways to Play
- Good "Goodbyes"
- Lots of Language



A baby will make love
stronger, days shorter,
nights longer, bankroll
smaller, home happier,
clothes shabbier, the past
forgotten, and the future
worth living for.
Anonymous

Feed Me a Conversation

Your toddler is becoming very social. He wants to talk more and be involved in family activities. Mealtime is a great way to involve your toddler in family routines and conversations and support his increasing skills and independence.

- **Finger Food**

Give your baby finger foods that are bite-sized and soft enough to chew, like Cheerios™, crackers, and cooked macaroni noodles. This can make mealtimes messy and a bit frustrating, but when you support this skill, you help your baby build confidence. Be sure and sit with your baby when he is feeding himself. This is a good social time, as well as it is important to watch him eat for safety reasons.

- **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?**

This is a good time to relax and share a moment with your baby. Some meals can be shared with all family members. Bring baby's chair close to the table to enjoy the family talk.

- **What's for Dinner?**

Talk about the foods he is eating as you put them in front of him. Ask him about the smells, colors, and tastes of the different foods.

Big Rewards

If you are not sure what to talk about with your child, focus on what you and your child are doing and describe it out loud. Remember, the more words your child hears, the more she will know!

Ways to Play

The bond you've formed with your child helps him feel secure and confident, and these feelings, along with his increasing motor skills, makes him want to explore his world and play more independently. He also likes having you play with him so you can share in his pleasure, help with his challenges, and build an even stronger relationship.

- **Look What Happened!**

Toys like busy boards and activity boxes are often called cause-and-effect toys because when your baby pushes a button or turns a dial, something fun and exciting happens!

- **Fill and Dump**

Young children love filling up boxes and buckets with blocks and small toys, and then dumping them out again and starting all over. A cup in the bathtub for filling and emptying can be a great source of entertainment.

- **Rhyme Time**

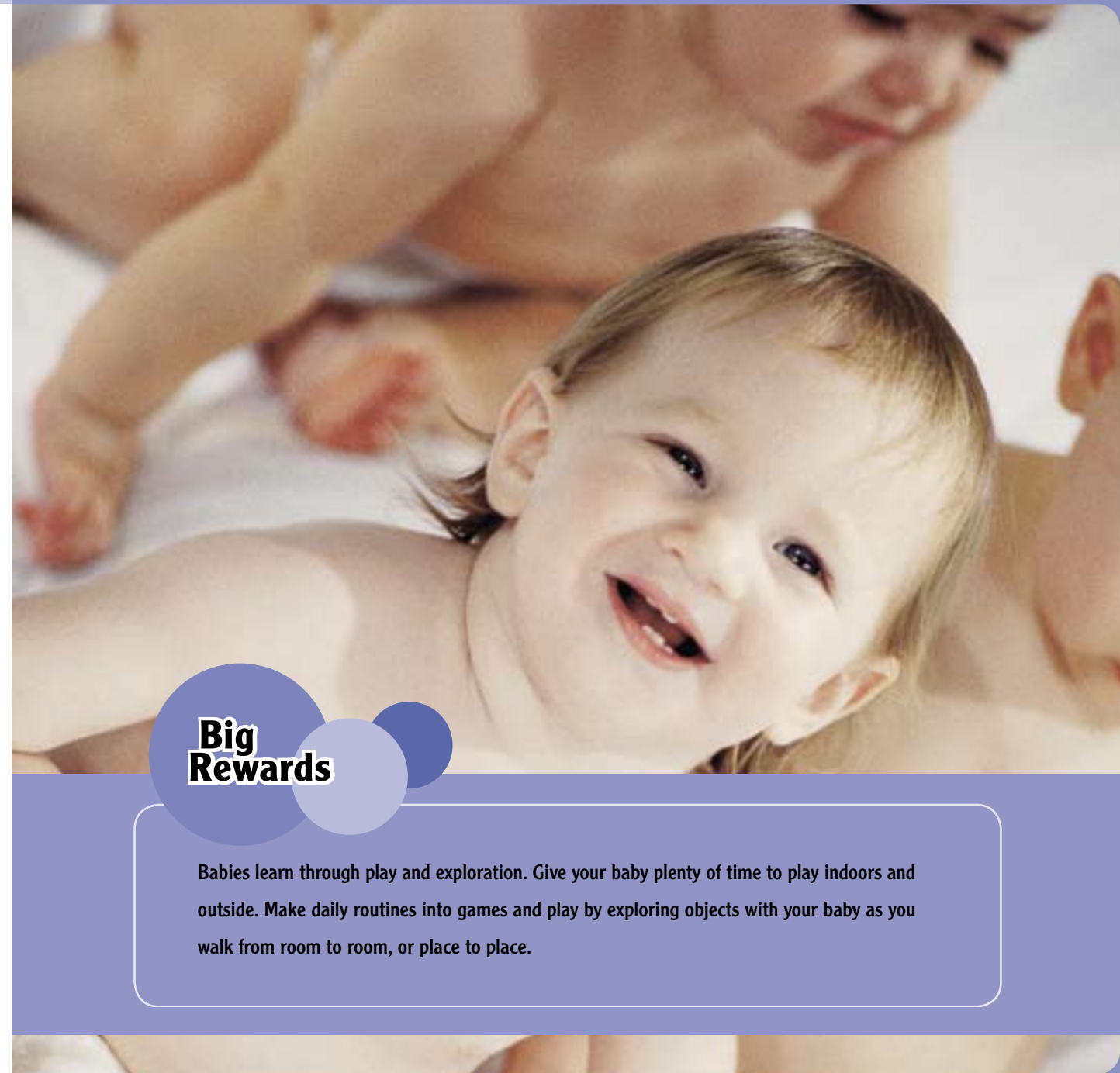
You can keep your child entertained by reading short books with funny rhymes, telling nursery rhymes, and singing songs with rhymes like this one:

THE WIND BLOWS

The wind blows low,
The wind blows high,
It tickled my nose as it went by!
Tickle, Tickle, Tickle
(repeat and add other body parts)

Big Rewards

Babies learn through play and exploration. Give your baby plenty of time to play indoors and outside. Make daily routines into games and play by exploring objects with your baby as you walk from room to room, or place to place.





On the Go!

Your baby is on the move. Give him opportunities to explore the play area in a safe way.

- **A Space to Explore**
Make sure that your baby's play area is safe and uncluttered so he can practice crawling, pulling up and cruising.
- **Cruisin'**
Your baby will want to pull up and cruise along furniture. A couch, a sturdy coffee table without sharp corners, or a few chairs with their backs pushed against the wall can make a good place to practice this skill.
- **Obstacle Course**
Put a few pillows or couch cushions on the floor to provide an extra challenge for your crawling baby.

Big Rewards

You may notice that when your child falls down or tumbles over while he's practicing his new physical skills, he looks to you to see your facial expression. This helps him to figure out how he should feel about what just happened.

Good “Good Byes”

Your baby is now very familiar and comfortable with you. She may be afraid of new people and situations. It is natural for her to cry when you leave. You can comfort her by having a “good-bye” routine.

- **Take a Minute**
Spend a little extra time with her when leaving, and always reassure her that you will be back soon.
- **Family Photos**
You may want to create a “baby photo album” for her. Take a small photo album and put pictures of familiar people and objects in it. This may comfort her while you are away.
- **Read a Story**
Find a quiet place in your child’s care room to sit together and share a favorite book before you leave.

Big Rewards

When children separate from parents or meet new faces, they may feel stressed. Help your child feel comfortable in these situations by responding to her emotions with soothing words and touch.





Lots of Language

Your baby's understanding of language is taking off! At nine months she will understand just a few words, but by twelve months of age, she will understand up to 60 words.

- **Word Games**

You can help your child to learn more language by asking her to identify objects, giving her the names of objects when she points to them, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes.

- **Bathtub Fun**

While giving your child a bath, let the washcloth drip water on his head as you sing *Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head* or *Rain, Rain Go Away*.

- **Read, Please!**

Be sure to read to your baby often. By this age your baby will want to look at pictures with you. She will point to pictures and want to hear your words describe what she sees.

Big Rewards

Babies understand much more than they can express at this age. Be careful with what you say and how you say it because your baby may be more aware than you realize. Watch as your baby begins to look at things you talk about. Babies may know words like dog, cat, fan, and other familiar household words.

Healthy Habits

Crib Safety

Even the most beautiful cribs can cause accidents. It is important to read these safety crib tips and check to make sure your baby's crib is safe.

- Avoid cribs with high corner posts that can catch your baby's clothes.
- Make sure the mattress (and crib sheet) is snug on all sides. No more than 2 adult fingers should be able to fit in between the mattress and the side of the crib.
- Measure the space between the crib slats. They should not be more than 2 3/8" inches wide and no slats should be missing.
- Screw in all bolts and hardware nice and tight.

Safe Sleeping

To feel safe and secure every time you put your baby down for sleep, follow these safe sleep tips:

- Never fasten a pacifier around the baby's neck.
- Remove the overhead mobile when your baby can push up on his hands and knees.
- Put up the cribs rail every time.
- Remove drapes, ribbons, cords and wall hangings from around the crib.
- Always place your baby on her back to sleep.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.

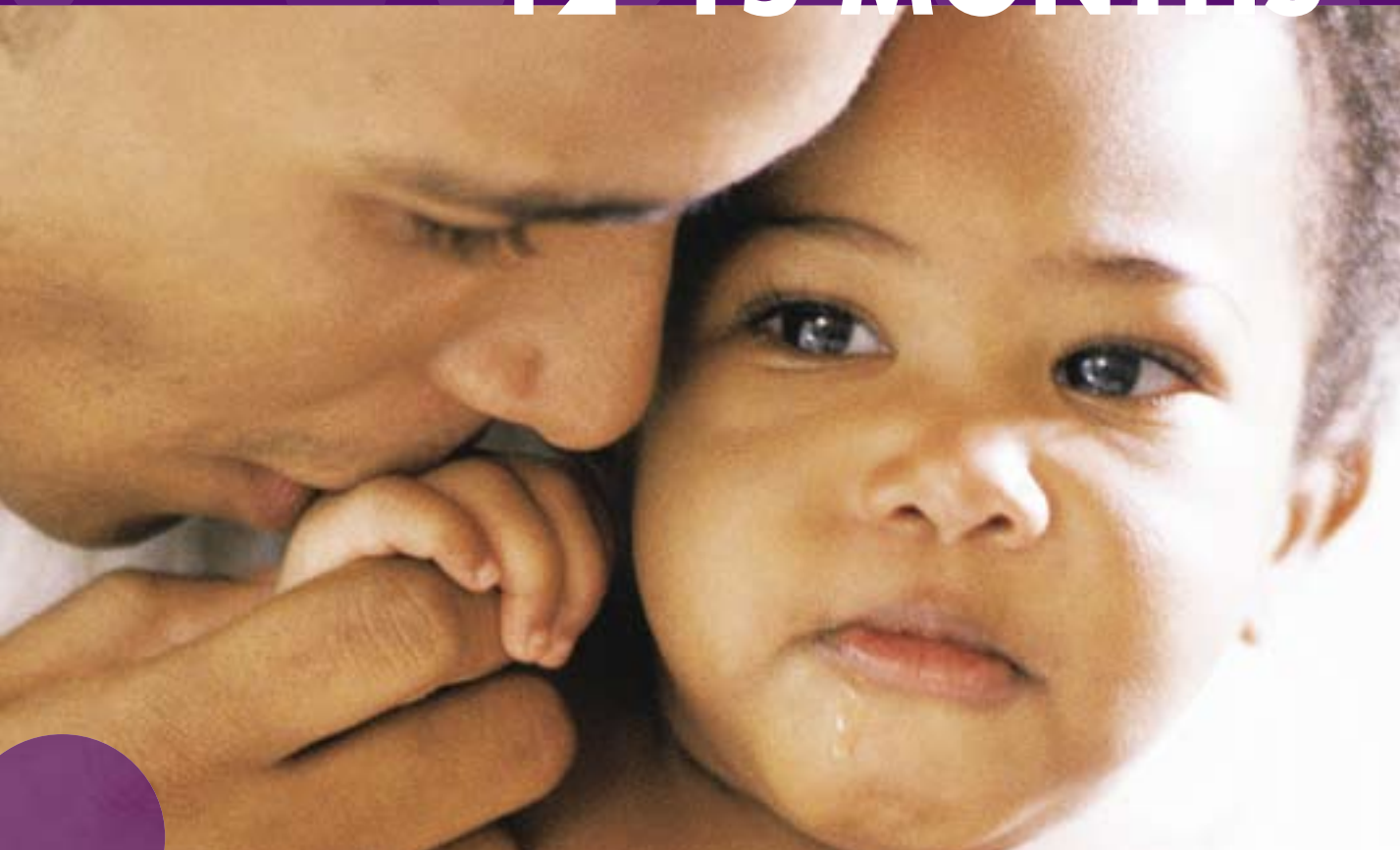




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12-15 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- Play, Play and Play Some More
- Look At Me: I'm Just Like You
- OUCH!
- Ready, Set, Talk!
- Animal House



Every beetle is a gazelle
in the eyes of its mother.
Moroccan proverb

Play, Play, and Play Some More

Your baby is starting her second year of life. Her play is going to become more physical and will eventually grow into social and imaginative types of play. Babies at this age are still learning through their senses and the movement of their bodies. Here are some fun activities that you can do to encourage her learning.

- **Me and My Shadow**
Take your toddler outside on a sunny day and do a shadow dance with him. Stand next to your child and move your arms or other body parts. Have your child make his shadow look like yours. Take turns leading the dance.
- **Put Your Right Foot In**
Sing a song with your toddler that encourages movement of her body, such as *The Hokey Pokey* or *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*.

Big Rewards

Your toddler is now into more physical activities. Make sure that his play area is safe for running, jumping, dancing, and climbing by putting pillows on the floor, moving furniture to the side, and putting breakable objects out of reach.

Look At Me: I'm Just Like You

Your toddler is starting to copy the things that you do each day. Children learn many things by imitating the actions of adults or familiar objects in their lives. Allowing children to imitate familiar people, activities, or objects will help them to make sense of how their world works.

- **Starting the Day**

Let your child get dressed with you in the morning. Allow her to try on your shoes or an old shirt. Sit with her and let her do your hair like you do for her every day.

- **Telephone Time**

If your toddler picks up the phone and talks into it, pretend that you are on the other line. Ask her about her day, or what she wants to do later. Tell her you are so glad she called, and that you love her very much.

- **Wash and Dry**

When it is time for the laundry to come out of the dryer, let her help you put the laundry in the basket. As you fold your clean clothes, give her a warm towel or t-shirt from the pile and let her fold alongside you.

Big Rewards

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Imitating you is not only a way for her to learn about her world, but also an act of love. And when you encourage her and enjoy this time together, you show her that you love her, too.





OUCH!

Biting is a developmental stage that many children go through. Your child may bite because he is hungry, has tooth pain, or he may be frustrated because he doesn't have the words to express his needs. But regardless of the reason, parents must be patient and supportive to help their toddlers move through this stage.

- **Biting Hurts!**

When your child bites, it is important to talk to her about the biting. Explain in very simple terms that biting is not an acceptable behavior. You may want to try comments like "No biting. Biting hurts."

- **Teach Kindness**

When your child bites another child, use this as an opportunity to teach caring for others. Let your child know that biting hurts, and help him to recognize the other child's pain. Use words like, "She is crying because the bite hurt her arm."

- **Offer Another Solution**

If your child is biting because he is angry or frustrated, help him find other ways to show his feelings. Teach him words to express himself and assure him that it is okay to feel angry by saying, "I understand that you feel angry and that is okay, but biting hurts. You need to use your words to communicate."

Big Rewards

If your child is in the biting stage, try to look for a pattern of when the biting occurs. Does your child bite right before a meal? Does she bite at the same time every day? Does he bite when he is angry? Does he bite when he is frustrated? If you can anticipate when your child might be more likely to bite, you may be more likely to prevent it from happening.

Ready, Set, Talk!

Your toddler's language development is gearing up to take off. She will soon be a full-fledged talker. She will start to understand many more words and also be able to say quite a few. When it comes to talking, your involvement will make a big difference. It is important to talk with your toddler as often as possible.

- **Point it Out!**

Sit with your child and look through a magazine or book of pictures. Point at the pictures and name each one.

- **Do You Hear What I Hear?**

Sounds are everywhere. Take your toddler to the front yard or the park. Sit and listen to all different sounds and name every sound you hear, like birds chirping, cars going by, lawn mowers, and children playing.

- **Little by Little**

Sometimes around this age, children may not talk as much as they may have been talking before. They may need their energy for their new motor skills. This is only temporary, and is very typical for this age.

Big Rewards

It is important to talk to your child, but it is also very important to listen to him. When your toddler tries to talk, listen carefully and repeat his words back to him.





Animal House

Many young children love animals and the sounds they make. If your child is interested in books about animals and the family pet, you can build on this interest to support her learning.

- **Fly, Fly Fly!**
Cover a pinecone with peanut butter and birdseed. Hang the feeder outside your window. Watch the birds with your child and talk about their actions and sounds.
- **Family Pet**
If your child starts pretending to be the family dog or cat, play along! Call her by your pet's name, and ask her if she needs her head scratched.
- **The Greatest Show on Earth**
Take your toddler's stuffed animals and set them on a blanket. Sit with your child and encourage him to make the noises that the animal would make. Put on a "pet show" or "circus."

Big Rewards

Animal sounds are often some of the first words in a child's vocabulary. When you create playtimes out of your child's interest in animals, you support her language development and you keep your child interested in playtime, which helps your child grow and learn.

Healthy Habits

Let's Eat!

Meals and snack times can be a happy bonding time between you and your toddler. It's also a good time to allow your toddler to be independent by learning to feed himself safe and nutritious finger foods. Don't know what to serve your toddler? Almost any food can be finger food when it is finely chopped, cut into thin slices or cut into small pieces.

- Offer small bites of new foods.
- Have meals and snacks at about the same time every day.
- Always be nearby when your child eats.
- Newspapers under a high chair or table help make clean up easy.
- Let your toddler experiment with a child-sized spoon and fork.

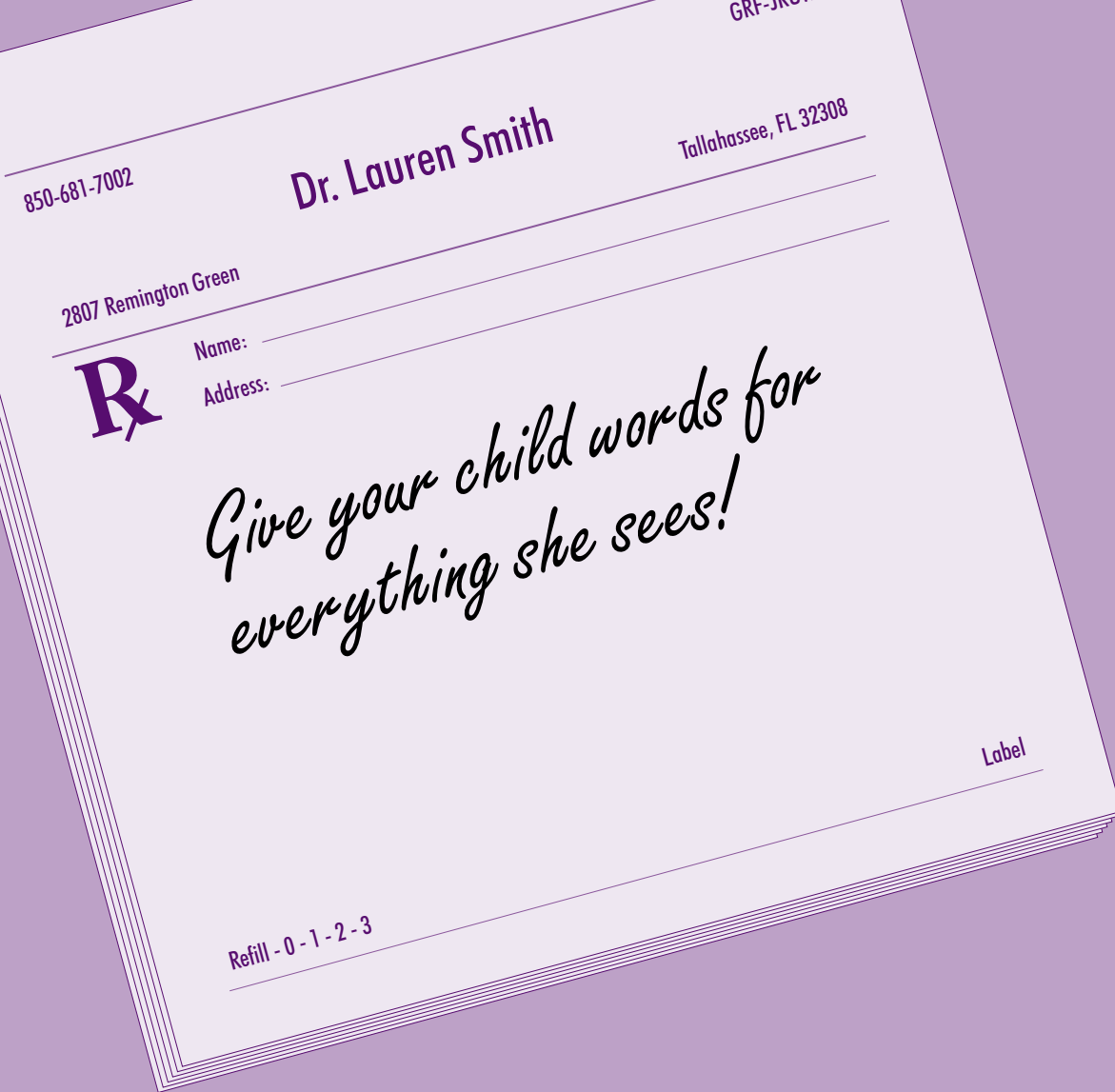
Water and Swimming Pool Safety

Florida is famous for its sunny days, beautiful beaches and swimming pools. There are a lot of fun ways to cool off in the hot weather, but you cannot be too careful in making sure your toddler is safe wherever there is water.

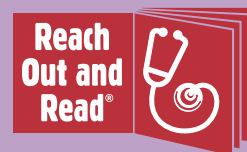
- Stay within an arm's length of your child at all times near water.
- Empty all buckets or large containers of water around the house and yard. Inflatable pools should be emptied and stored away after each use.
- Young children are fascinated by water. Be sure to keep them away from ditches, drainage pipes, hot tubs, whirlpools, toilets, bathtubs, fountains and fishponds.
- Teach your child to swim at an early age, but be sure your child is ready. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend swimming lessons for children under three.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.

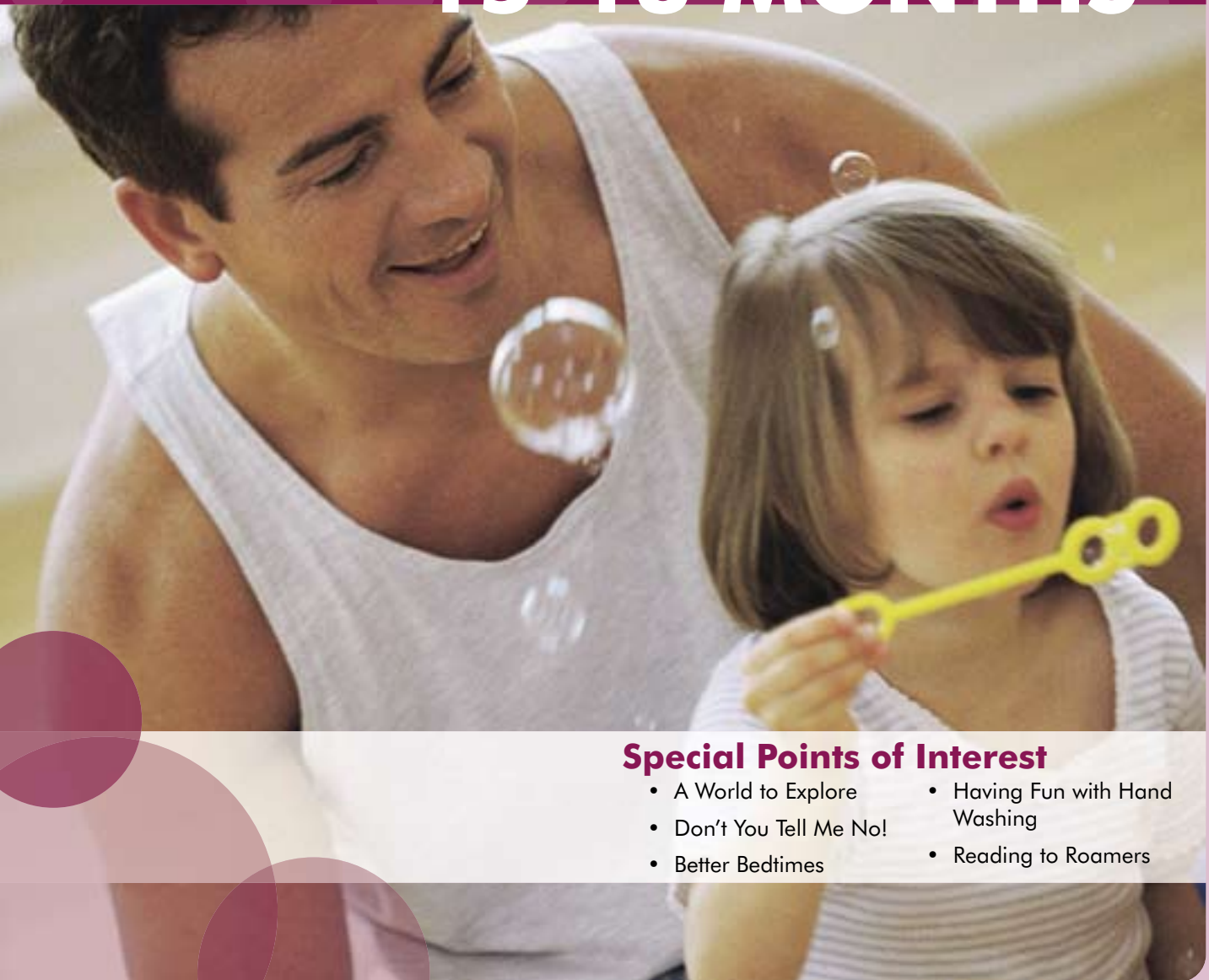




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15-18 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- A World to Explore
- Don't You Tell Me No!
- Better Bedtimes
- Having Fun with Hand Washing
- Reading to Roamers



Your children need your
presence more than your
presents.

Jesse Jackson

A World to Explore

Now that your toddler has become more mobile, he will be very curious. Not only will he be going through cabinets and everything in sight, he will want to know how things work. It is important to encourage his curiosity but within safe boundaries.

- **Fun in the Kitchen!**

Have a cabinet in the kitchen with items like pots, pans, plastic containers, and wooden spoons that he can explore and play with freely.

- **Touchy, Feely!**

Put out materials that have different textures, like soft cotton, cool metal, and squishy sponges. Let her explore the items, and talk about the way they feel.

- **Change is Good!**

Rotate toys in and out of his play area. Introduce the new toys by sitting and playing with your child and showing how they work. When children have new items to play with, their interests are peaked and they tend to be more engaged in play.

Big Rewards

Your toddler may be into everything. It is very important to make his surroundings safe for exploration. Put away breakable or dangerous items and use a safety gate to block your child from going into places that are not safe.

Don't You Tell Me No!

As your child moves through her daily routine you may encounter some new challenges. At this age your child is beginning to understand and question some of her daily activities. For example, she may refuse to get dressed in the morning or resist climbing into her car seat. She is not just being difficult. She is trying to understand the rules we live by, as well as understand her own abilities to do some tasks and not others. It is important for parents to be supportive of their child's independence but still maintain some control.

- **Offer Choices**

One way to assist children is to offer choices. When dealing with a refusal to do a task you may say, "Do you want to climb into the car seat, or shall I lift you in?" or "Would you like to wear the blue shirt or the red shirt?" Offering your child choices will let her feel like she is in control while you are both getting your needs met.

- **Stay Strong!**

Always be consistent with your reactions to your child's behavior. When children are given consistent responses, they will learn what is acceptable and what is not.

- **Stay Calm!**

Always maintain your own emotions. If you feel yourself being frustrated, step back and take a deep breath.

Big Rewards

When a child tells you no, it is not because she is being difficult. Your child is exploring her independence. But remember to be consistent in your reactions because your child is looking to you for cues on how to respond emotionally.





Big Rewards

When you sit with your child every night and read or sing before bedtime, you're not only helping her learn, you are creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Better Bedtimes

Bedtime can be challenging when toddlers refuse to go to bed, or want to hear the same story twenty times before they can sleep, or wake up during the night. You can make it easier when you follow a consistent routine.

- **It's Almost Time For Bed!**
Your toddler may not be quite finished with his activity when it is time for bed. This may cause some conflict when trying to get him to sleep. Try to give your child warnings or signals that it is almost time for bed. Remind him often by saying "Five more minutes, and we need to clean up" or "One more try and then we need to put the toys away and get ready for bed." Or you may have a nighttime song that you sing every night that lets him know it is time for bed.
- **Not Again!**
If you read that story one more time you think just might explode! Remember that children learn through repetition. Every time you read that same story you are supporting your child's language, social, emotional, and memory skills.
- **Getting Back to Bed**
Some parents struggle with what to do when their child wakes up during the night. Should they rock them back to sleep or let them cry it out? It may help to offer your child something soft to cuddle with, and then patting his back as he soothes himself back to sleep.

Having Fun with Hand Washing

Finding time to love and learn together isn't always easy, but with these tips, even a routine chore like hand washing can mean quality time spent with your child.

- **Mirror Image**

If there's a mirror over the sink, talk about what you see in the mirror. Make funny faces, and laugh at the funny faces your child will make.

- **Get Silly**

As you go through the motions, make silly noises to accompany your child's actions. When you squirt soap in his hands, make a squirting noise. Make shushing noises as the water runs.

- **Sing a Song**

Use this time to sing a favorite song, or you can sing this song to the tune of *Row, Row Your Boat*.

Wash, wash, wash your hands
Often every day
Don't forget to use the soap
And wash those germs away!

Big Rewards

Make the most of every moment with your child. Every minute you spend together is a minute you can learn, laugh and love together.





Reading To Roamers

Reading is a great way to spend time together, but the active toddler may not be interested in sitting still through an entire story. Here's how you can support your child's independence and make reading a good experience for your child.

- **Go With the Flow**

Toddlers who are becoming independent may resist if something is done or chosen for them. You can let them be in control by:

- letting your child hold the book, even if it's upside-down
- letting your child turn the pages, even if she turns two or three at a time
- letting your child quit when he is finished, even if you didn't get through the entire book!

- **Keep Books Low**

When books are on low shelves, in open boxes or in baskets on the floor, toddlers can reach them without help. You can also keep books in the child's book bag or diaper bag, in the car by the car seat, or next to a toddler's bed.

- **Put On a Show**

Your child may really enjoy stories that are told using a lot of hand gestures or where the different characters have funny voices. The more interesting you make it, the more your child will like story time.

Big Rewards

Reading with your child is important for learning language, but what is most important at this age is that this is a fun time for your child so your child loves books and loves reading.

Healthy Habits

On the Go

Snacks don't have to come in fancy packages and taste like candy. A piece of fruit is probably the most healthful snack going for a toddler. Here are some other healthy suggestions to offer at home or carry on the road:

- Sliced cheese
- Whole grain crackers
- Breakfast fruit bars
- Low sugar cereal

Zip them up in a baggie and you're ready to roll!

Roll Ride Along

Riding around the store has recently become more entertaining for young children as they cruise around in colorful "automobiles" attached to the shopping cart and sit alongside a sibling while parents shop. For a safe time at the store, keep these shopping cart tips in mind:

- Always have your child sit in the space provided in the correct way, buckling the safety strap.
- Keep hands and feet inside "automobile" riding carts.
- Do not let children stand inside shopping carts.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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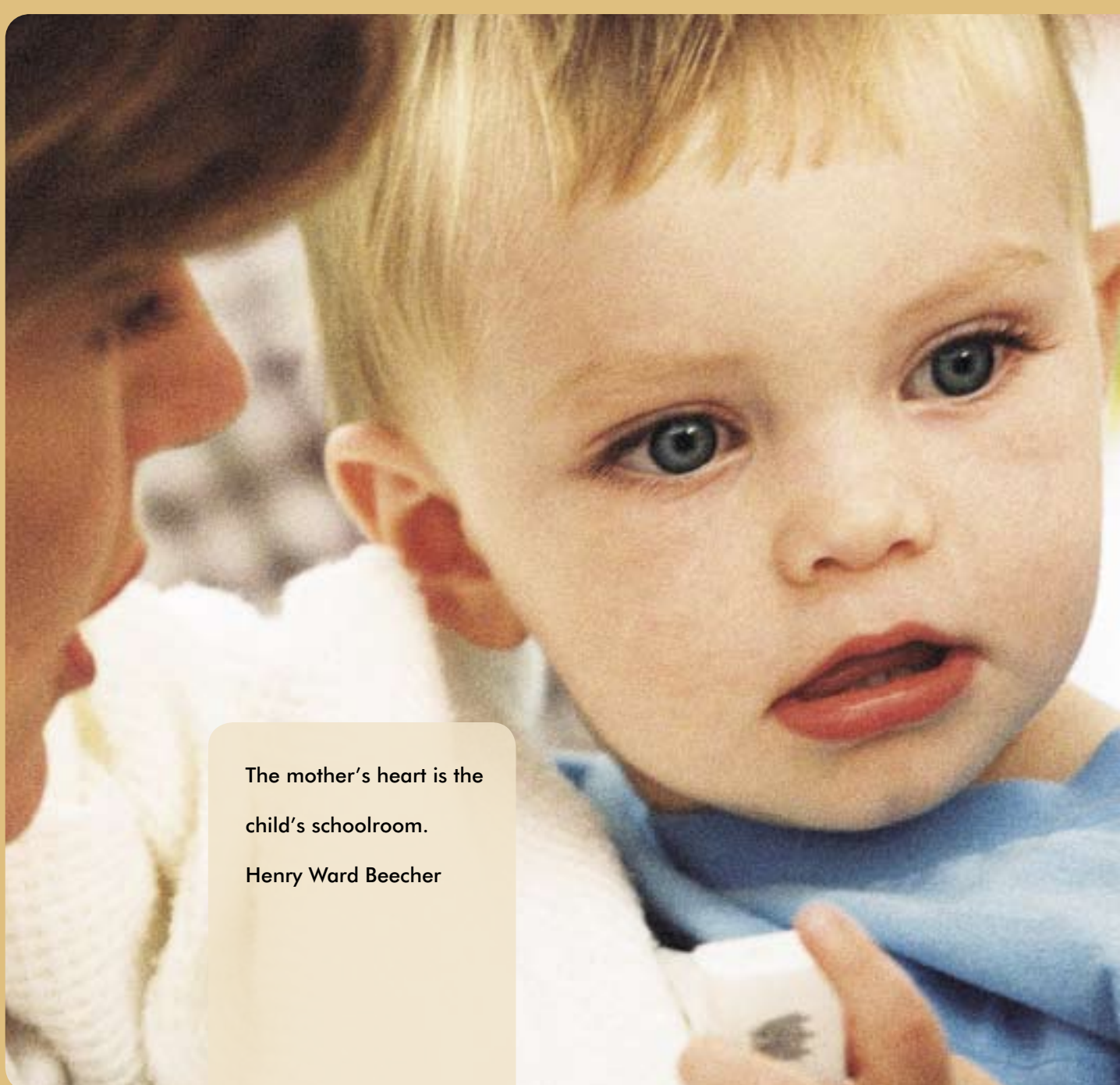


18-24 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- Feelings! Nothing More Than Feelings!
- Teeth for Two
- Great Books About Feelings
- The Right Time for Toilet Learning
- Imagination Station



The mother's heart is the
child's schoolroom.

Henry Ward Beecher

Feelings! Nothing More Than Feelings!

It is perfectly natural at this age for your toddler to display a wide variety of emotions in a short period of time. He may cry one minute and be happy and content the next. This can be difficult for parents but it is very important to acknowledge these feelings and give words to them. Also, try some activities to help children learn to cope with their feelings.

- **Give it Words!**

When your toddler is happy, crying, laughing, or angry, use a statement that will give words to her feelings and help him to understand that these feelings are typical. Tell your toddler, "Oh, I see you are angry. It is okay to be angry," or "You are sad because Daddy had to leave for work."

- **Identify the Feeling**

Take an old magazine and cut out pictures of children displaying various emotions. Sit with your child and talk about how the children are feeling.

- **Give Me a Break!**

Like you, sometimes your child just needs a place to take a break. Create a space in your home where your child can go just to get away or calm down. Use a corner of a room with pillows and books, a cardboard box with a flashlight and some soft toys, or a sheet draped over a table or chair to create a special place.

Big Rewards

Sometimes it is difficult for children to get control of their feelings. Make sure to sit with your child and talk with her about her feelings.

Teeth for Two

Chores don't have to be a bore. Make the time you spend brushing teeth a nice time with these tips.

- **Do it Together**

Your child loves doing the same activities as you. To make it extra special, buy toothbrushes that are the same color, so she'll be just like you!

- **Take Turns**

If you're having trouble getting your child to let you help him with brushing, try letting him help you brush your teeth first! If you make this a shared activity instead of a power struggle, you're likely to get clean teeth as a result.

- **Sing a Song**

Can you sing and brush at the same time? You might have a good time—and a good laugh—if you try! Pick a favorite tune, or try this song, sung to the tune of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.

Got my toothpaste, got my brush,
I won't hurry, I won't rush.
Making sure my teeth are clean,
Front and back and in between.
When I brush for quite a while,
I will have a happy smile!

Big Rewards

When you and your child brush your teeth together, you not only encourage good dental health, but you add a little extra together time to your day.





Great Books About Feelings

Books can be a great way to teach feeling words and label feeling faces. Here are a few you may find helpful.

- **Glad Monster, Sad Monster: A Book About Feelings**
by Anne Miranda
illustrated by Ed Emberley
- **On Monday When It Rained**
by Cherryl Kachenmeister
- **My Many Colored Days**
by Dr. Seuss
illustrated by Steve Johnson & Lou Fancher
- **When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry**
by Molly Garrett

Big Rewards

Sharing books with feeling words and faces help children to label their own feelings. And when children can label their feelings, they can talk about their feelings instead of acting out.

The Right Time for Toilet Learning

Your child is becoming more independent, and is doing more to help take care of herself. You may be wondering whether or not it is time for her to learn how to use the toilet. Children may start showing signs of being ready as early as eighteen months, but it is not uncommon for a child to still be in diapers at 3 years of age. Your child may be ready if she:

- Tells you when she is "going" and then when she needs to "go"
- Likes to imitate your behavior
- Can put things where they belong
- Wants to do things herself and says "no"
- Is interested in the toilet and likes to follow you into the bathroom
- Has regular, predictable bowel movements
- Can pull her pants up and down
- Understands what wet and dry mean and has words for urine and bowel movements
- Can walk and is ready to sit down on the potty

Big Rewards

It is important to wait until you and your child are ready before you begin. Starting too early can be frustrating to both you and your child, and can end up making the process much longer.





Imagination Station

Younger toddlers imitate the world around them. As they get older they will begin to use their imagination more and become very involved in imaginative play. Encourage your child to use his imagination. Common toys like stuffed animals and everyday objects like cups and blankets are all you need to let the magic begin!

- **Bringing Up Baby**

Help your child take care of a baby doll or stuffed animal. Props like bottles, blankets, and diapers will add to her fun. Let your child bring his plastic baby doll into the bath with him. While you help your child get clean, he can help his baby scrub up!

- **"Going to bed"**

A blanket and pillow are the only things your child needs to pretend it's bedtime. He may put his baby doll to sleep, or pretend to sleep himself.

- **Tea for Two**

Give your child some sturdy plastic cups, saucers, and teapots, and the two of you can pretend to pour and sip tea. Blow on your cup as if the tea is too hot, and ask him if he takes his tea with milk or lemon.

Big Rewards

Through imitating and imagination your child will gain an understanding of how to use objects and tools. As your toddler continues to use her imagination she may invent new uses for familiar objects. This type of play also lets her play with language and practice using the words and phrases she has heard.

Healthy Habits

Wash your hands and brush your teeth

Part of your child's growing independence is learning to take care of his health and cleanliness. This means helping him develop good habits like washing his hands and brushing his teeth. With a little extra patience on your part, your child will come to accept (and love) hand washing and brushing his teeth as part of his daily routine. Good times to practice hand washing are:

- Before and after eating
- After diapering or toileting
- After sneezing and wiping your child's nose
- After playing with a pet or playing outdoors

Even young children's teeth need to be kept clean a couple of times a day and your child will be thrilled with his own toothbrush. These tips will help make sure your child's teeth stay strong and healthy.

- Do it together! The younger your child is, the more assistance she might need.
- Toothpaste is not necessary since the main concern is removing food and plaque from teeth. Once your child is able to spit after brushing, you can put a small dab of fluoride toothpaste on the end of his brush.
- To help in preventing cavities, never let your child fall asleep with a bottle, either at naptime or at night.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.

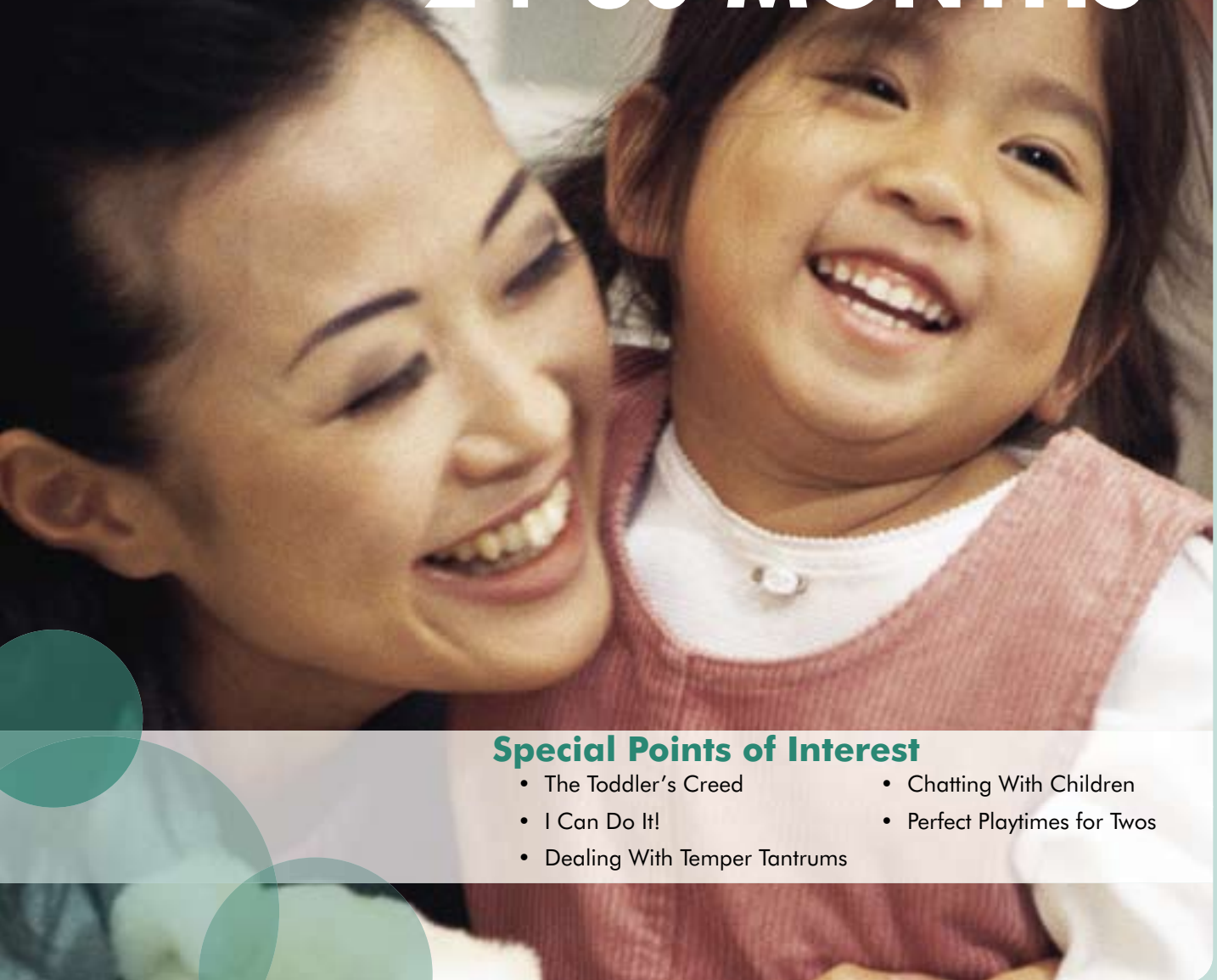




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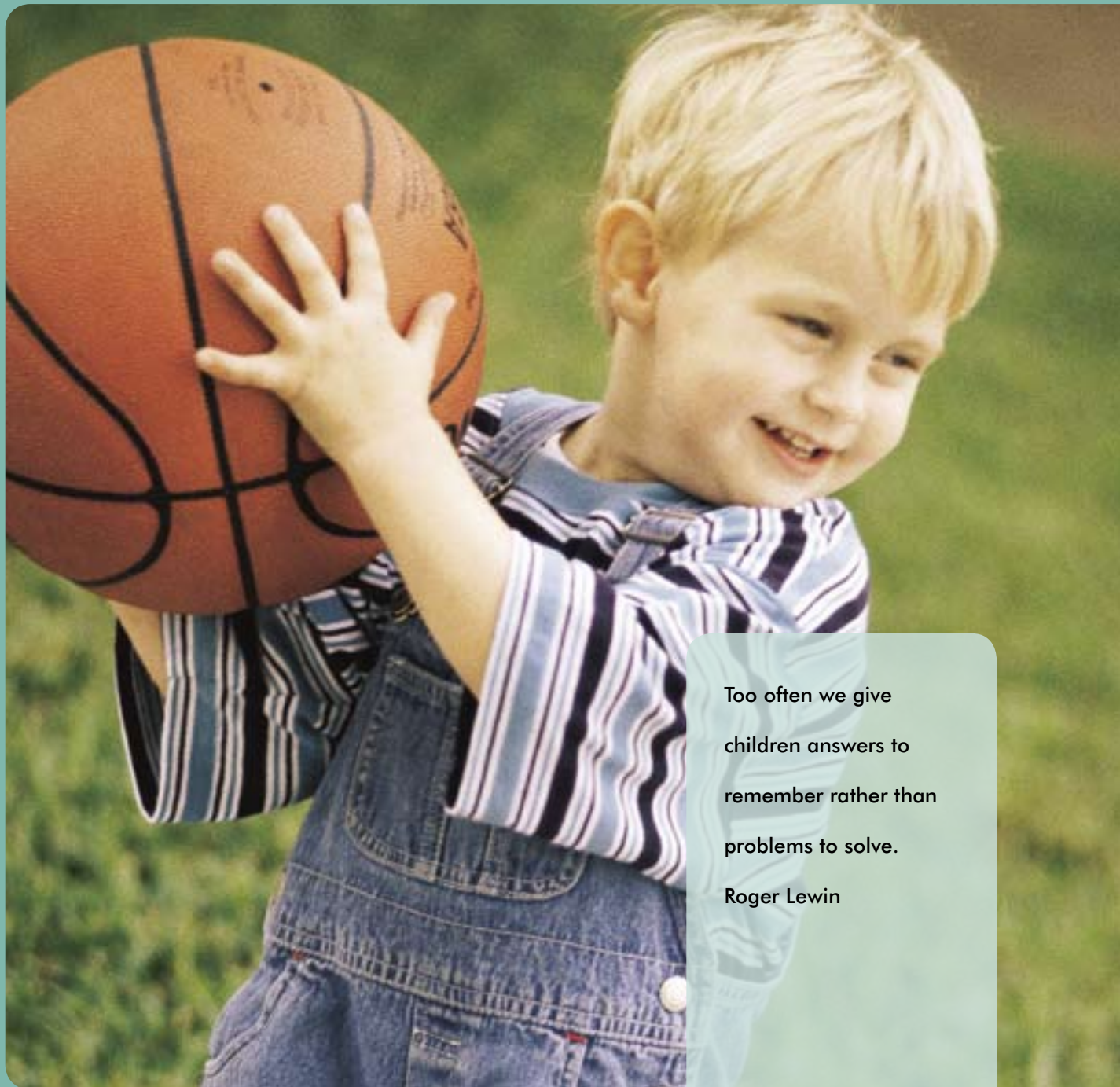


24-30 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- The Toddler's Creed
- I Can Do It!
- Dealing With Temper Tantrums
- Chatting With Children
- Perfect Playtimes for Twos



Too often we give
children answers to
remember rather than
problems to solve.

Roger Lewin

The Toddler's Creed

Take a look at this creed written long ago and decide if it expresses your child's way of thinking at this age!

If I want it, it's mine.

If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.

If I can take it away from you, it's mine.

If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.

If it is mine, it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what.

If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.

If it looks just like mine, it's mine.

Big Rewards

At 2 years of age, your child is not able to think from others' point of view. He is going to need your help to learn right from wrong and how his actions affect others around him.

I Can Do It!

Your toddler is working very hard to learn new skills, and she needs plenty of time and opportunities to practice. Here are some ways to let your child practice her new skills throughout the day.

- **Getting Dressed**

If your child wants to dress herself, give you and your child time in the morning and at night to practice. Pants with elastic waists are easier for children to pull on themselves. If your child wants to pick out her outfit for the day, have two or three choices that are okay, and let her pick the one she wears.

- **Feeding**

Let children feed themselves by having food that is bite-sized and plates, bowls and utensils that are designed for smaller hands. Give yourself time in the morning and at night so your child has the time he needs. Let your child eat in an area that is easy to clean up, and let your child eat before his bath at night and in his pajamas in the morning, so you won't be so worried about messes.

- **Easy Kitchen Chores**

Letting your child help when you are doing chores helps your child feel empowered, lets you spend time together, and helps you get the job done. Children this age can help with easy jobs like sweeping; wiping low surfaces; putting napkins, spoons and butter knives on the table; and washing plastic dishes (with the help of a chair pulled up to the sink, and you close by!).



Big Rewards

Give your child time. Working with spoons and cereal, or socks and shoes, can be tricky new experiences, and especially challenging for small hands. Sometimes, you may want to jump in and help, especially when you are running late and your toddler is taking a long time, or your child is making a mess in the process, or she just wants to do something for the twentieth time. But it is important to your child's self image and her learning that she have the chance to do the things she wants to attempt. By allowing time for her to try a task, you tell your child that you believe in her.



Dealing with Temper Tantrums

Young children are easily frustrated when they can't complete a task or can't have what they want, and they make sure their irritation is known. This can be especially hard to deal with when you're late for work, trying to get to bed, or out in public. Here are a few things to remember about temper tantrums:

- **This is Normal**
Temper tantrums are typical for young children.
- **This Won't Last Forever**
As your child learns new words and other ways to express his frustration, he will throw fewer and fewer temper tantrums.
- **She Needs Time**
Make sure there's plenty of time for morning and evening routines so she'll have time to do for herself and you won't feel rushed, and give her plenty of warning when you plan on changing activities.

Big Rewards

Keep your cool. It's easy to get frustrated yourself when it feels like everyone in the grocery store is staring at you and your screaming child, but you can't expect your child to learn how to control her feelings if you can't control yours. It will all be over much sooner if you stay calm, and chances are, everyone in the grocery store has been in the same situation at some point in their lives.

Chatting with Children

At this age, your child can probably express herself fairly well with the words she knows, but she is still learning conversation skills. Talking to you is the best way for your child to learn new words and phrases.

- **Talk About Everyday Experiences**

Children like to talk about the things they do during the day, the people they meet, and events that are new and exciting. Give your child the opportunity to share his day with you.

- **Talk About the Stories You Read Together**

Young children are beginning to understand stories with characters that do things that they do, or that have characters with problems that they have to deal with. Talk to your child about what is happening with these characters.

- **Talk About Your Child's Feelings**

Talking to two-year-olds about feelings helps them learn words to express their emotions. The more young children are encouraged to share these feelings, the better they are able to deal with their emotions.

Big Rewards

Children need adults who will listen to what they say. You can show your child your love, as well as support him in learning to talk, by being an active listener.





Perfect Playtimes for Twos

Playtime is more than just fun. It's how your child learns about his world. When you give your child the time, space and toys he needs to play, you help your child gain the skills he needs to succeed in both school and in life.

- **Flex Those Muscles!**

This may be the most physical time of your child's life. Take your child outside so she can run, jump, and climb. Let her have balls in different sizes so she can practice throwing and kicking.

- **Building Up and Tearing Down**

Give your child a chance to construct with a variety of materials. Let her play in a sandbox. Give her water to measure and pour. Let her stack blocks and other objects. Give her pop beads to take apart and put back together.

- **Music and Movement**

Sing simple songs with your child. Sing and act out songs with simple movements. Give her a scarf to dance with as you play a song she loves. Teach her simple finger plays, like *The Itsy-Bitsy Spider* and *Where is Thumbkin?*

Big Rewards

Build on something your child likes. Your child will enjoy playtime more, and play longer, if it is something that interests him. If he shows an interest in leaves, go for walks in the neighborhood and pick up interesting leaves, rake piles of leaves and jump in them, or make leaf rubbings. If he likes a story about a camping trip, throw a blanket over the kitchen table so he can have his own "tent" to play in.

Healthy Habits

Food and Insect Allergies

Your child could be allergic to certain foods or to an insect bite or sting and unfortunately, you won't know it until it happens. Allergic reactions to both food and insect bites and stings can range from a mild reaction to more serious complications. The most common food allergies are milk, eggs, peanuts, walnuts, cashews, fish, shellfish, soy and wheat. If your child has any of the following reactions after eating something or being bitten or stung, call for emergency medical treatment (911) right away:

- *Sudden difficulty in breathing*
- *Weakness, collapse, or unconsciousness*
- *Hives or itching all over the body*
- *Extreme swelling near the eye, lips, or penis that makes it difficult for the child to see, eat or urinate.*

Children Act Fast...So Do Poisons!

Children ages one to three are at the highest risk of poisoning themselves. Young children this age put anything in their mouths. This is part of learning. Many household products can be poisonous if swallowed, if they come in contact with the skin or eyes, or if inhaled. The best way to keep your child from eating or swallowing something poisonous is:

- *Keep harmful products out of your child's sight and reach.*
- *Buy medicine and household products in childproof packages.*
- *Always replace the safety caps immediately after use.*

Post the phone number to the *Poison Control Center*, 1-800-222-1222, by your phone. If your child swallows a substance that is not food, call your doctor or this number.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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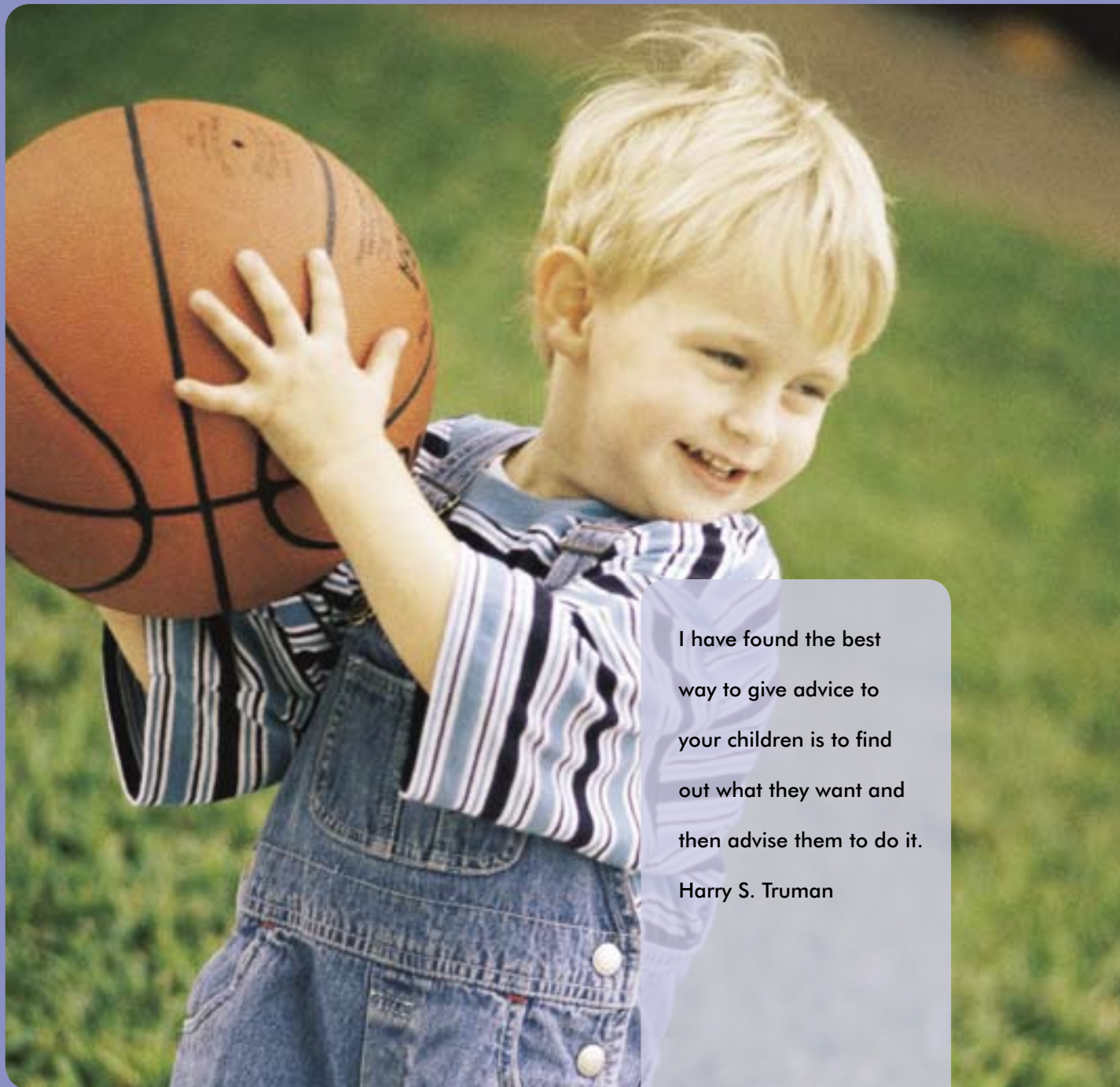
30-36 MONTHS



Special Points of Interest

- Trucking Along
- Taking Turns
- Marvelous Mealtimes
- Good Books About Eating
- Write On!





I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

Harry S. Truman

Trucking Along

Young children are often very interested in forms of transportation. You can use this interest as a way to learn new words, discover fun new ways to play, and spend some time together.

- **Bus Stop**

Next time you see a school bus or a public bus, point it out to your child. Talk about all the people you see getting on board and where they might be going. You can even sing the song *The Wheels on the Bus*.

- **Trash Time**

Young children like to fill things up and dump them out, so it only makes sense that they might be fascinated by the garbage truck. Make a point to watch the next time the trash collector comes by your house, and talk about the sights and sounds. Later, with a few empty boxes and some crumpled newspaper, the two of you can pretend to be trash collectors, too!

- **Construction Trucks**

If there is construction going on at a house or road in your neighborhood, walk over with your child and, from a safe distance, talk about the different kinds of trucks you see and the jobs that they are doing.

Big Rewards

When you use a subject your child loves to start a conversation or spend some time together, you show your child that his interests are important to you, and you help make learning fun.

Taking Turns

Sharing is an important skill, but it is one that can be challenging for young children. Your child will need your help and lots of opportunities to learn how to play with others successfully.

- **Enough to Go Around**

One way to avoid fights is to have enough for everybody. Set up play activities that don't depend on one cool toy but instead have a lot of props that can be split among the children. Drawing, playing with blocks, or using pots and pans to “cook” may be good ways to play with others. This is a good practice for everyday activities, too. For instance, you might buy cups and dishes that are the same kind and color so problems don't come up at mealtimes.

- **Set an Example**

Make a point to talk about and demonstrate sharing during your regular routines. If there is only one roll left at dinner, offer to split it with someone. At night, let someone use the bathroom sink to wash his hands and brush his teeth before you. Use words like “please” and “thank you” to show consideration for each other.

- **Talk About Feelings**

When fights do happen, help the children to understand each other's feelings. If your daughter is yelling because the truck she was playing with was snatched away, tell her you can see that she is upset and help her express this to the person that snatched the toy. Then, the three of you can come up with a solution that is fair to everybody.

A photograph of two young girls of African descent smiling and hugging each other. The girl on the left is wearing a blue plaid shirt and has a white bow in her hair. The girl on the right is wearing a pink plaid shirt. They are outdoors with green foliage in the background.

Big Rewards

Young children are still learning about how their actions can affect other people's feelings. When one child takes a toy from another child, it is only because he wants it for himself, not because he wants to hurt others. When you use these times to talk about feelings, you help children understand how their actions affect others, and you show them that sharing feelings is part of problem solving.



Big Rewards

Your child has a growing need to be independent. This can make mealtime a challenging time, but it can also be a very rewarding time. By having one meal together a day and including a family ritual at the beginning, you make this a time that you and your child will enjoy.

Marvelous Mealtimes

Toddlers are always on the go, so they may prefer eating little bits throughout the day rather than sitting down for long meals. But having a meal together is a great way to spend time with your child and talk about your day. Choose one meal that your whole family can sit down to enjoy together, and use these tips to make this a meaningful time.

- **Shifting Gears**

Your child might have trouble moving from playtime to mealtime if she is having a fun time. You can make this an easier time by giving her a few minutes of warning before you ask her to come into the kitchen for a meal. You also might get her help in a few easy jobs, like pushing the buttons on the microwave or stirring a pot.

- **Mealtime Rituals**

You and your family can create a mealtime ritual that makes this a special time for all of you. You might have a song that you sing together before the meal, or you might take turns saying something about your day, or something you like about each other.

- **Something Old and Something New**

Two-year-olds enjoy new experiences, but they need familiar ones, too. Try preparing something your child has never had before. Talk about the way it looks, how it feels in her mouth, and the taste. If she doesn't like it, respect her feelings and have something on hand that you know she likes.

Good Books About Eating

Books can be helpful for talking to children about new foods and good nutrition. Here are a few books about eating that are good for two-year-olds.

- **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**
by Eric Carle
- **Jamberry**
by Bruce Degan
- **Sheep Out to Eat**
by Nancy E. Shaw
illustrated by Margot Apple
- **Prudence's Book of Food**
by Alona Frankel
- **Gregory, The Terrible Eater**
by Mitchell Sharmat

Big Rewards

Sharing a book before dinner can be a nice way to move from playtime to mealtime. If you don't have a mealtime ritual already, consider making reading a regular part of your pre-dinner routine.





Big Rewards

Learning to use crayons and other writing tools takes time. Your child may only make a few dots on the page at first, or he may break a crayon, or just crumble up the paper. As your child gets older, has more opportunities to practice, and has the help of patient, encouraging people like you, he will learn to scribble, make lines, and eventually draw. When you give your child the materials and opportunities he needs to create art, he can express his feelings and understand his world a little better.

Write On!

Your child learns so much about her world and herself through the process of drawing. Sometimes parents are nervous about letting their two-year-olds use crayons, markers and paints because of the mess they can make. But it's important to give your child the opportunity to express her creativity and practice her drawing and writing skills at an early age. These tips will help increase the fun and decrease the mess for both you and your child.

- **Bigger is Better**

Young children may have trouble making small arm movements, so if they only have small sheets of paper for drawing, they may color off the paper and onto the furniture. Let your child draw on sheets of newspaper, or tear open brown paper bags to make large sheets that will allow them to make big movements but stay on the page.

- **Sidewalk Chalk**

These fat pieces of chalk are perfect for drawing on the driveway, patio, or a wooden fence, and when your child is ready for a clean slate, you can hose the area down and start all over again.

- **Contain It**

Clear plastic containers with screw-top lids make great containers for crayons and markers. This way, your child can see them and ask for them, but she can't get into them without your help.

- **Take It Outside**

If you're nervous about letting your child draw or paint in the house, take the activity outside. Spread a shower curtain liner or an old sheet on the lawn and use a cardboard box as a writing surface or an easel.

Healthy Habits

Is Your Child Ready for a Bed?

When your toddler gets too tall for his crib—in other words, when the side rail hits below the middle of his chest—it is safer for him to sleep in a bed. If you haven't already made the change, these tips will help you and your child make a safe, happy switch.

- Change is hard for anyone, and especially for a small child. You will probably have more luck making the change if you pick a time in your child's life where there aren't other changes happening.
- Make a safe, smart choice. A toddler bed is nice, but your child will soon grow out of it. You might consider a twin bed with a bed rail, or a mattress or futon on the floor. You'll also want to set the bed up away from heating units, curtains, blind cords, wall lamps and any other safety concerns.
- Make the change gradually. Let your child get used to the idea of sleeping in a bed before you put the crib away. In the beginning, you might spend some of your nighttime ritual time—whether it's reading or singing a lullaby or just talking—together on the bed before putting your child in her crib. Once it becomes more familiar, she might be ready to try sleeping there.

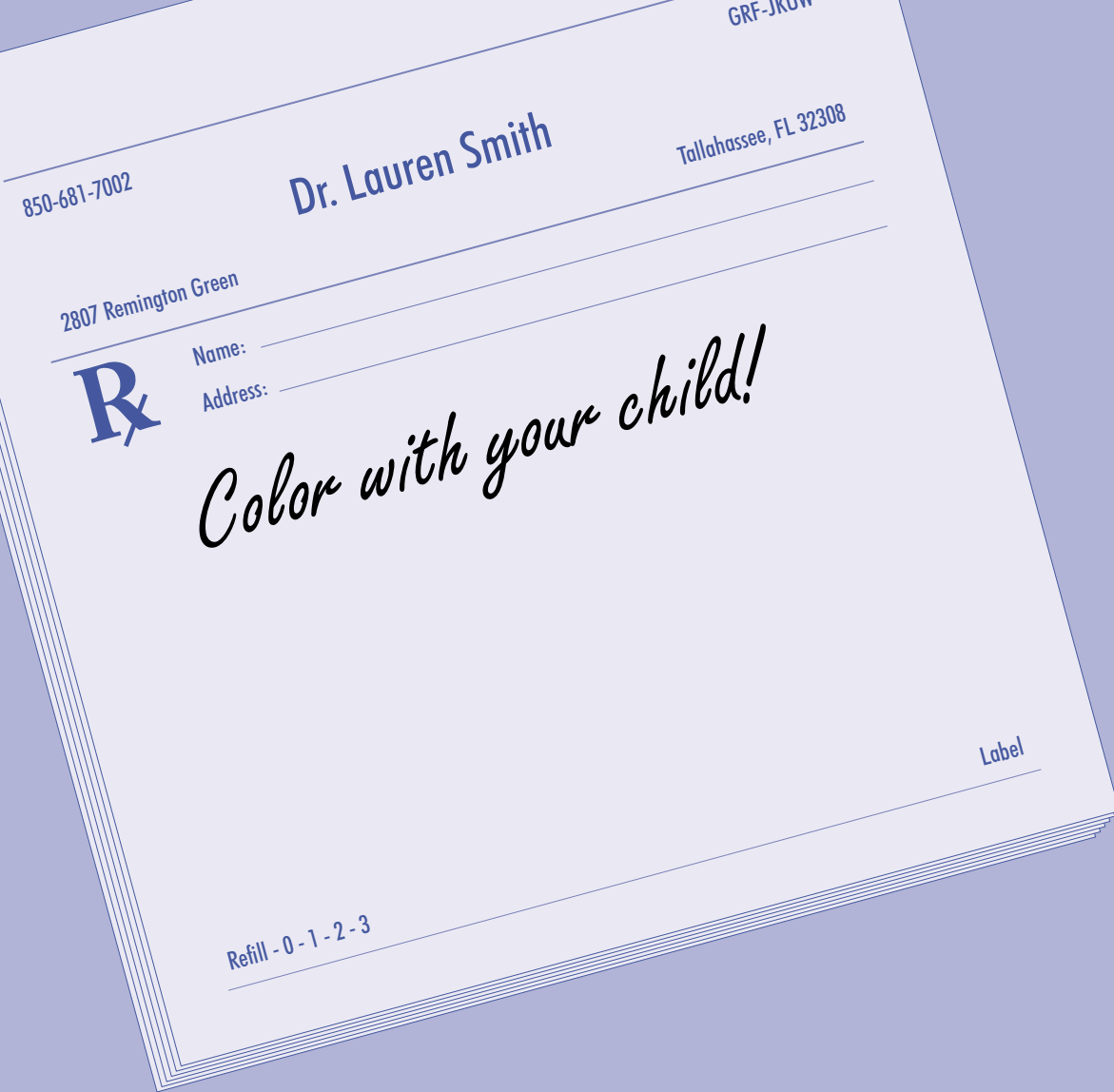
Travel Time

Now that your child has gotten a little older, you may feel ready to travel in the car for longer periods of time. These tips will help make a car trip a safe, happy time.

- It is very important for your child to be in his car seat. The car seat should be in the back seat and properly installed. If you are not sure if your car seat is safely installed, your local police department or sheriff's department can check it for you.
- Protect your child from the sun by applying sun block that has an SPF of 15 or higher. For extra protection, keep the back windows shaded.
- Don't push it. Keep your trip to six hours a day, and make lots of stops at safe places. You will be a much safer driver if both you and your child have time to stretch and relax.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.

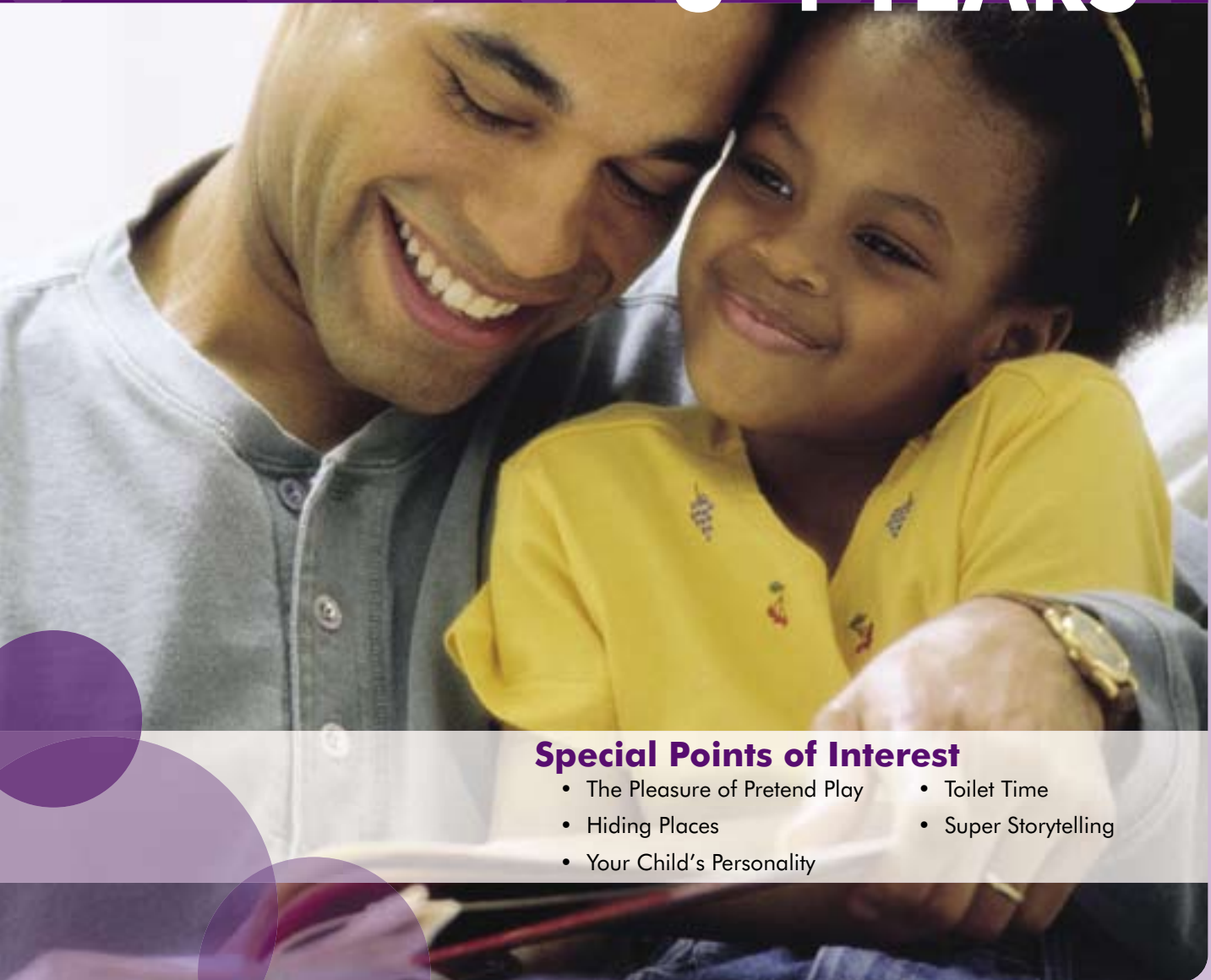




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3-4 YEARS



Special Points of Interest

- The Pleasure of Pretend Play
- Hiding Places
- Your Child's Personality
- Toilet Time
- Super Storytelling



A three-year-old child
is a being who gets
almost as much fun out
of a fifty-six dollar set
of swings as it does out
of finding a small green
worm.

Bill Vaughan

The Pleasure of Pretend Play

Pretend play is where children imitate the actions they see in real life. You can support this play with everyday objects from around your house.

- **The Budding Chef**
With a few pots, pans and wooden spoons, your child can “cook” you a glorious meal! Use plastic or paper plates, bowls, and other kitchen items to help him as he pretends to cook, serve meals, or open a restaurant.
- **Picnic Time**
Give your child sturdy, unbreakable cups and dishes and a basket. Spread a blanket on the floor and pretend to have a picnic. If you like, you can even enjoy a real snack this way.
- **Fashion Emergency!**
Encourage your child’s imagination by having some of your old clothes (hats, vests, shirts, purses, shoes) for her to dress up in. You will enjoy the outfits your child will come up with!

Big Rewards

Pretend play gives children the chance to practice their life skills and to deal with issues they may not understand.

Hiding Places

At this age, your child may have an increased need for some quiet, alone time, or simply may enjoy a little nook to hide. Here's a few ways to help him create a hiding place.

- Throw a sheet over a table to make a house.
- Drape a towel between two chairs.
- Use the cushions from the couch to build a fort.
- Use a large cardboard box.

Big Rewards

For an extra special hiding place, make a flashlight available.





Big Rewards

Your child's behavior is influenced by his personality, by his environment, and by the people who care for him. Your positive reactions will help guide the behavior of even the most spirited children.

Your Child's Personality

Young children have definite—and sometimes strong—personalities. Knowing your child's personality, and reacting in ways that best suit his personality, is a big part of guiding his behavior.

- **Know Your Child's Personality**

What kind of personality does your child have? Is he:

Flexible:

These children keep fairly regular schedules and adjust to changes easily.

Slow to Warm Up:

These children are quieter than most, and need a little extra time adjusting to new people and new situations, but their reactions are usually mild and they can be easily comforted.

Feisty:

These children have strong emotions, have a hard time adjusting to new people and new situations, and are more difficult to calm down. They may have strong reactions to bright lights and loud noises.

- **Be Positive**

Parents can view their child's behavior in positive or negative ways. A three year old who insists on putting on her own shoes and socks can be seen as stubborn or as persistent. By viewing a child's personality in a positive light, you build a stronger relationship with the child.

- **Make it Fit**

You and your child may be very alike, or very different. Either way, it's important for you to find a way to love and support your child in the way that she needs. If your child is slow to warm up to new situations, she may need you to hold her when someone comes over for a visit, or when you go shopping in a busy mall. If your child is feisty, she may need extra time for morning and nighttime routines so she can try to do things herself, and you feel willing to let her try.

Toilet Time

By three years of age, most children are ready to learn to use the toilet, if they haven't already. Your health care provider can help you decide when and how to help your child learn this skill, and these tips can help you along the way.

- Keep your child in loose pants so he can pull them up and down easily.
- Watch for sounds, faces, or poses that signal your child's need to go to the bathroom. When you see him doing this, ask if he is ready to go.
- Praise your child when he tells you he needs to use the potty, with or without a reminder.
- Take care of your child's skin by keeping him dry and clean. Don't leave him in soiled clothing as a teaching method.
- Coordinate with your child's other caregivers. It's important that they know how you want your child to learn to use the toilet so that he receives the same message when you're not there.

Big Rewards

Expect accidents, and reassure your child when they happen. Accidents are natural and part of the learning process, and are never a reason to punish your child.





Super Storytelling

Reading with your child doesn't mean that you are bound by the words on the pages. With these tips, a book can lead to much, much more!

- **Ask Questions About the Story**
The characters and events in a book can provide the opportunity to talk about familiar objects, people and activities. A book about dogs can lead to a conversation about your family dog.
- **Let Your Child "Read" the Book**
At three years old, your child may have memorized a favorite story. Your child will love the chance to "read" and express his creativity by telling the story in his own way.
- **Talk About the Pictures**
You do not have to read the book to tell a story. The pictures in a book can lead into a conversation about your child's day, or a story that you both make up together.

Big Rewards

A good book is made better when you let the words and pictures help you leap into a rich conversation or a story you create together.

Healthy Habits

Keep Things Healthy and Cool – with Water!

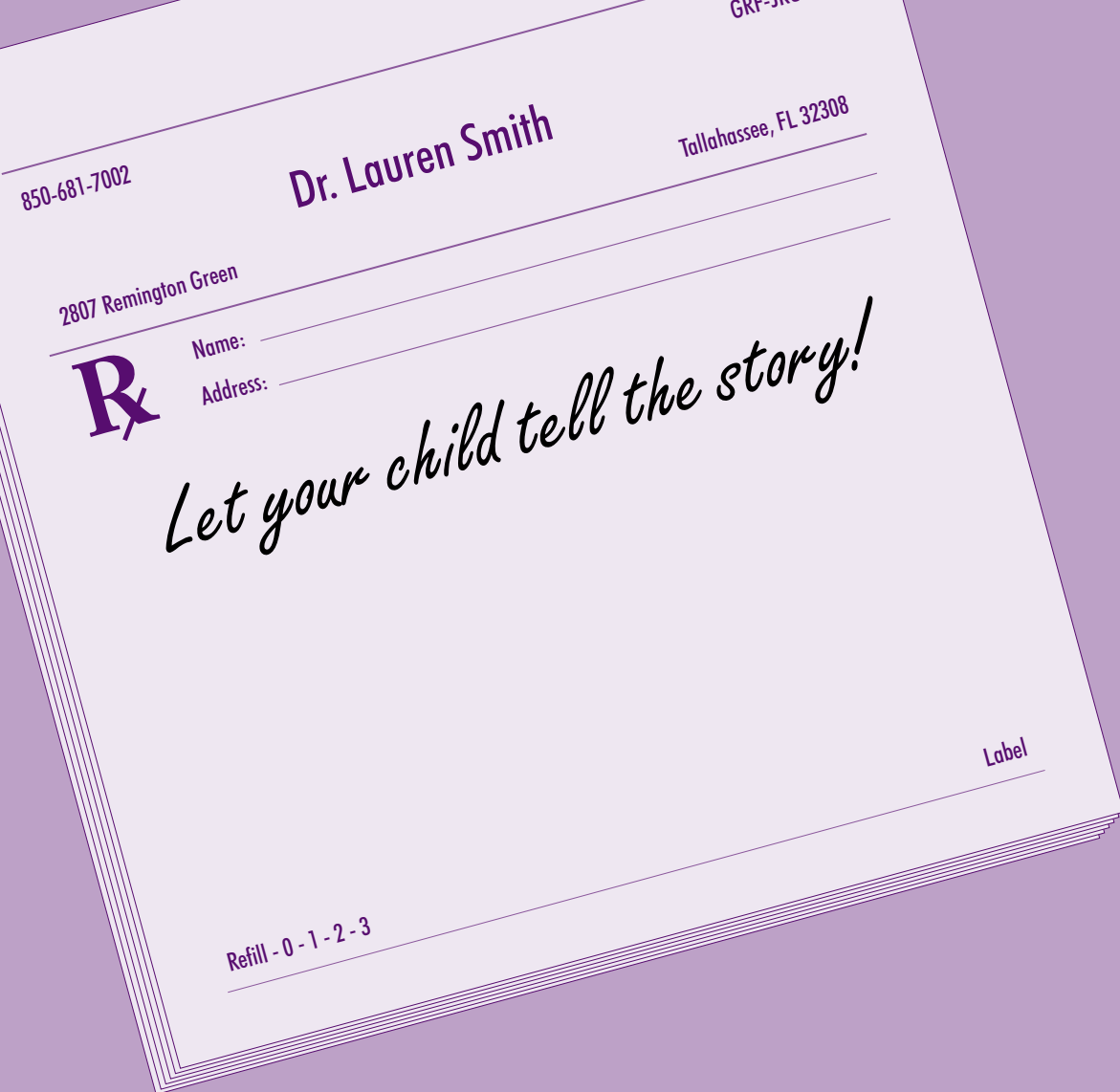
Our bodies cannot live without water. Drinking water on a regular basis is important for all ages and helps us to eliminate waste from our bodies and maintain our body temperature. Your active three-year-old will need to drink water throughout the day no matter what the weather, but especially on hot days when he is playing hard and sweating. It is important to know that:

- Drinking water from the faucet must be free of contaminants like lead and bacteria.
- Water is inexpensive and convenient!
- If your child is sick, he might need extra fluids including water to keep from getting dehydrated.

Water will satisfy your child's thirst much better than a soda. It's a healthy idea to get in the habit of offering water instead of sugared drinks when your child is thirsty.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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4-5 YEARS



Special Points of Interest

- Making Meals Meaningful
- Positive Guidance
- Play Imitates Life
- Take it Outside
- Family Outings



In a child's lunch basket,
a mother's thoughts.
Japanese proverb

Making Meals Meaningful

At four-years-old, your child can begin to participate more actively in family mealtimes. He can help you set the table, serve food to himself, and help with meal preparation and clean up.

- **Mixing it Up**
Include your child in meal preparation by allowing him to help measure or stir ingredients. Explain what you are cooking and how you are preparing the foods that you will be eating.
- **Serving Spoons**
Give your child opportunities to put food on his plate. Talk about each dish and encourage him to take a little of everything to sample.

Big Rewards

Mealtime provides a good opportunity for conversation and interaction. Building dinner routines around sharing stories and daily events can be rewarding for the entire family.

Positive Guidance

Guidance includes more than saying “no” to behavior you don’t like. It means saying “yes” to behavior you like! It’s important tell your child what to do, instead of always saying what not to do. And when your child does the right thing, it’s important to encourage this behavior.

- **Catch Your Child Being Good**

Rewarding children with positive feedback can encourage good behavior. When you notice your child playing quietly, using manners, or generally behaving appropriately, comment to your child and praise him with statements like, “Thank you for helping me with the groceries. I liked the way you used two hands to put the jars in the cupboard.”

- **“Dos” instead of “Don’ts”**

Let your child know what kind of behavior you want instead of what behavior you don’t want. If he’s running in the house, say, “Walk slowly.” If she’s petting the dog too firmly, say, “Pet softly.”

- **Applaud Her When She Keeps Her Cool**

When your child handles her anger and frustration in a positive way, like stomping her feet instead of kicking, or saying “I’m so ANGRY!” instead of hitting, give her a big hug and tell her how glad you are that she found a good way to share her feelings.



Big Rewards

Let your child know you are aware of how hard she is working to learn new things, and how proud you are. When you recognize her not only for her successes, but also for her attempts, you help her become a confident, independent person.



Play Imitates Life

Young children learn through play. Your child will imitate things he sees everyday while he plays. This is an important part of children's development and one you can participate in and enjoy.

- **Grocery Shopping**

Keep empty food boxes like cereal boxes and clean, plastic food containers that held items such as peanut butter, mayonnaise, soda bottles, and whipped topping. Your child can put these on low shelves and pretend to go grocery shopping. Tell him what you need from the store, and give him a paper bag to hold his "groceries."

- **Just Like Yesterday**

Talk to your child about a recent experience you had together, like going out to eat, going to the zoo, or another place you've visited. Make a play to act out the experience. Let your child help make the play by asking questions that they can answer about the experience.

Big Rewards

Dramatic play provides opportunities for children to make sense of what they experience or observe. Through this type of play, children are working on thinking skills, emotional and social skills, language and vocabulary skills, and creativity.

Take it Outside

There are many wonderful opportunities for play and learning outdoors. Take a walk with your child, plant flowers, or go to a local park. It's healthy for both of you!

- **Park It!**

All communities have city parks that have open fields and playground equipment for outdoor play. Pack a picnic and your bikes and enjoy the afternoon!

- **Nature Walks**

Talk to your child about things that are outside. Describe the sights, sounds, and smells as you enjoy a walk together.

Big Rewards

It is important for your child to spend time outdoors. Spending time together walking, talking, and playing is a fun way to teach your child about nature and is a good way to include physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.





Family Outings

There are many ways that your child can practice reading and writing while you are away from home.

- **Grocery Lists**

Give your child a notepad and ask her to help you with a grocery list. Allow her to scribble and write as you tell her what you need from the store. Take the list with you as you shop and talk with your child about the items that you need from the store as you are shopping.

- **Signs**

As you ride around town, talk to your child about the signs that you see and what they mean. Talk about restaurants, street signs, and other words and symbols that you see.

- **Library Stops**

Your local library will have a children's section and many book choices for your child. Take a trip to the library and check out books with your family.

Big Rewards

Everyday errands and chores provide opportunities for learning and fun with your child. Talk to him about the things you see, what you are doing, and how he can help. Children enjoy helping if the activity is a fun time spent with a parent. This will also make the errand more enjoyable for you!

Healthy Habits

Get Moving! You Can Do It!

Being physically active at a young age can help establish a lifetime of health and good physical fitness. Four-year-old children are beginning to have more control over their bodies. Fitness fun for the whole family might include a nature walk, walking the family dog, and exercise and movement to music.

- Be a role model and get moving, too!
- Avoid competitive games and activities. Children this age do not understand winning and losing.
- Physical activities should center on the fun of being active together!

Picky! Picky! Picky!

The child who used to love green beans has suddenly decided he doesn't like them anymore, or any other green, yellow or red food! This can be a difficult time and it will be tempting to let him eat whatever he wants just so he eats something. Here is some "healthful" advice:

- Offer small amounts of nutritious foods along with foods he will eat. Encourage but don't force him to eat.
- Don't make him "clean his plate" until he can get up from the table.
- Grate nutritious vegetables in foods he likes such as pizza or spaghetti sauce and meatloaf.
- Set a good example and eat nutritious foods too!
- Limit high sugar, salt and fatty foods and snacks.
- Let him help cook meals.
- Eat family meals together.

Always check with your child's doctor to make the safest, healthiest decisions for your family.





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5-6 YEARS



Special Points of Interest

- Now We're Cooking
- Creatively Speaking
- Family Chores
- Everyday Math and Science
- Time for Bed



There is always a
moment in childhood
when the door opens
and lets the future in.

Graham Greene

Now We're Cooking

Cooking with your child helps him to begin developing many skills. He can learn about math by measuring the ingredients, and recipes are a good way to practice his up-and-coming reading skills. When you talk about the ingredients, the steps, and the different smells, feels and tastes with your child, you give him the chance to learn and practice his language abilities.

Play Dough

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
4 teaspoons cream of tarter
2 tablespoons cooking oil
2 cups water
food coloring

Stir together all ingredients. Pour into a skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly and scraping from the bottom like scrambled eggs, until completely cooked through. Pour out onto a clean, dry surface, and knead until cool.

Big Rewards

It is important for children to have the chance to learn and practice reading, writing and counting skills during meaningful experiences with you. By cooking with your child, you introduce him to concepts of math, language, and reading that will help him master these tasks in school.

Creatively Speaking

Arts and crafts can be fun and inexpensive. With paper, crayons, markers, fabric, scissors and glue, many art projects are right at your fingertips.

- **Coloring**

Keep paper, crayons, pens, and markers handy for your child to color and draw. Talk to your child about her drawings. Write the words she says about her picture on the back of the paper. This lets your child see you write the words she is saying and helps her begin to read.

- **Play Dough**

Use a rolling pin or cookie cutters to design play dough art. Talk about what you are making with your child and ask what she is making.

- **Puppets**

Use old socks to make hand puppets. Draw on faces with a marker. Tell a story as you make puppets with your child, or make up a story using your new puppets.

Big Rewards

Art activities are always fun, but they also provide opportunities for learning. Your child will learn about size, shape, color, and texture as you make arts and crafts. Talk to your child about the colors and texture of the materials. Ask her about her art and talk about the different things you see in it. Use words like sculpture, collage, blending, and sketch to talk about art materials and help your child learn new words.





Family Chores

Chore time can be help time if you include your child. Here's a list of easy chores for you and your child to do together.

- Placing dirty clothing in the laundry hamper
- Feeding the family pet with dry pet food
- Tidying up toys after playtime
- Simple yard jobs such as picking up sticks before mowing and watering plants
- Cleaning up after meals or snacks by throwing away trash

Make your work together fun by singing a song.

CLEAN UP

*Clean up, clean up
Everybody, everywhere.
Clean up, clean up
Everybody do your share.*

Big Rewards

Children learn about responsibilities and work by doing household chores. Involving your child and giving him chores tells your child that work and chores are important. Making the experience enjoyable by working together tells your child that work can be positive and rewarding.

Everyday Math and Science

There are many opportunities for learning about math and science right inside your home.

- **1,2,3**

Play counting games with your child. How many spoons are in the drawer? How many pictures are hanging in the bedroom? How many chairs are in the house?

- **Don't Shriek, Speak!**

Talk to your child about bugs and insects you see as you find them outdoors. If you see a spider, talk about the spider and then check out a book on spiders the next time you are in the library.

Big Rewards

Math and science are all around us. Talk to your child about nature, numbers, shapes and sizes—these are all related to math and science. These talks will have a strong effect on your child's ability to learn math and science in school.





Time for Bed

Your child may need some time after the last activities of the day to settle down and get ready to go to sleep. Here are a few ways to spend those last few minutes before bedtime together.

- **Get the Wiggles Out**

If your child seems playful at bedtime, help her to let off some steam with some playtime before you begin your bedtime routine. She may enjoy dancing or a little tickling before the quieter activities.

- **Talk About the Day**

Talk about the things you and your child did that day, and let him know what a good time you had with him.

- **Kiss Her Goodnight**

Wish her toes a good night, and then give them a kiss. Do the same thing for her knees, belly, fingers and head. When you're done, wish your child a good night, and give her a big hug.

Big Rewards

When you and your child use bedtime for talking about the time you spent together and the things you did, you are creating and sharing true stories about yourselves. This helps your child learn new words and teaches her about the shape of a story, and it also helps to build your relationship.

Healthy Habits

Ready for Kindergarten!

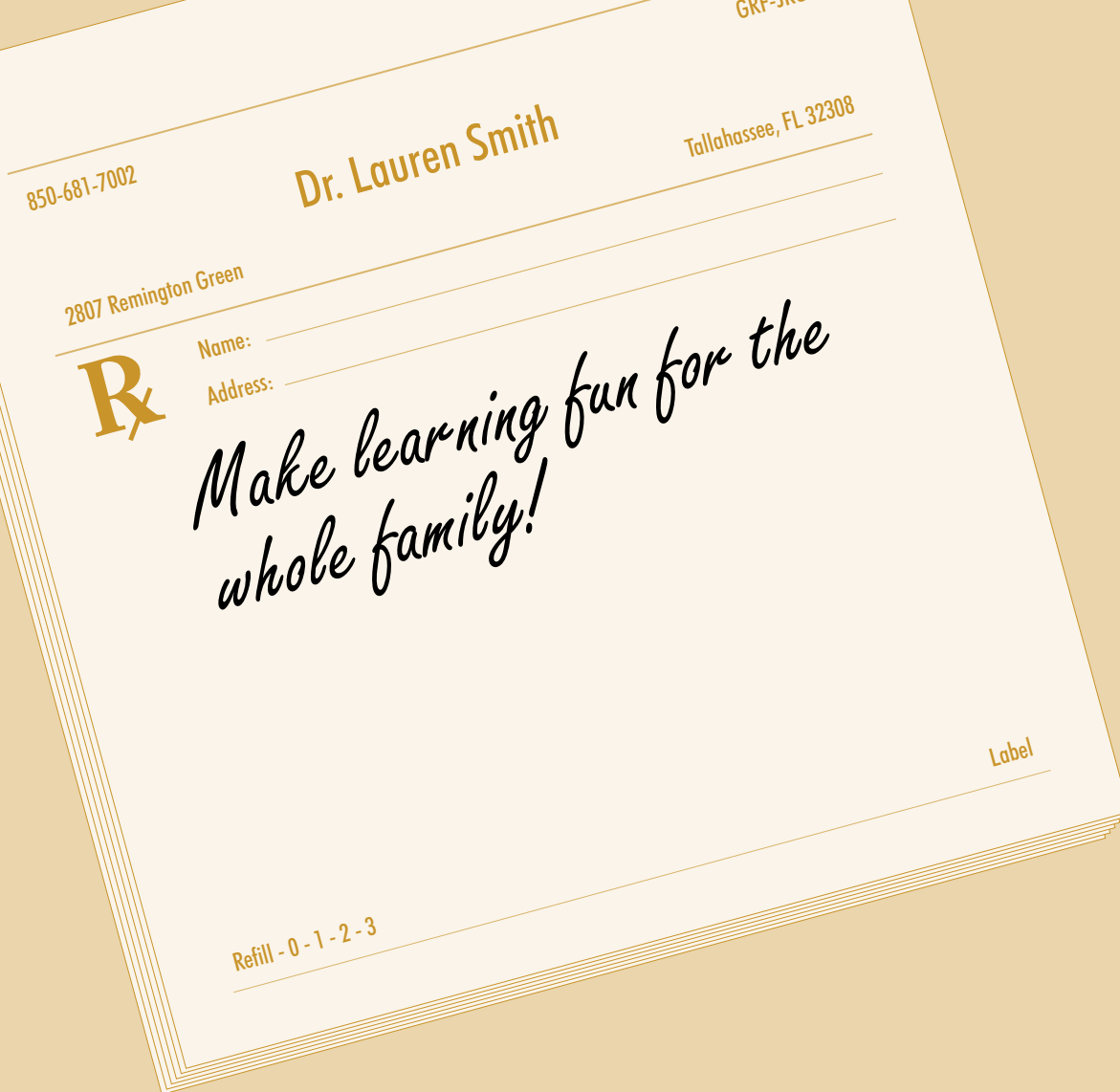
At age five, your child is ready for the excitement and new challenges of kindergarten. For new students, schools have a special time for families to meet their teacher and visit each area of the school like the cafeteria, library and playground. Before your child begins school, you will be responsible for making sure your child's immunization records are up to date along with a recent well child check up. Talk to the school nurse or your child's teacher if:

- Your child has a special health care need such as food allergies or asthma
- Is on any medication

Your child's health record is confidential information and cannot be discussed without your permission. You should feel safe in sharing important information with your child's teacher or school nurse, as it is their responsibility to protect you and your child's privacy.

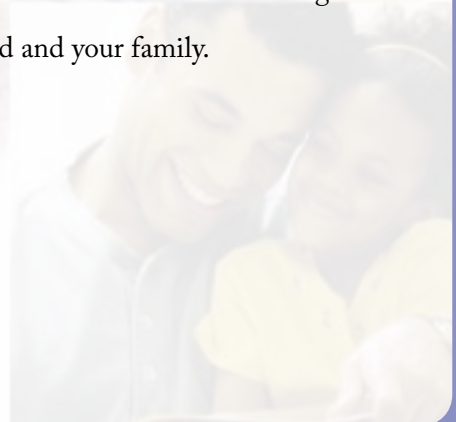
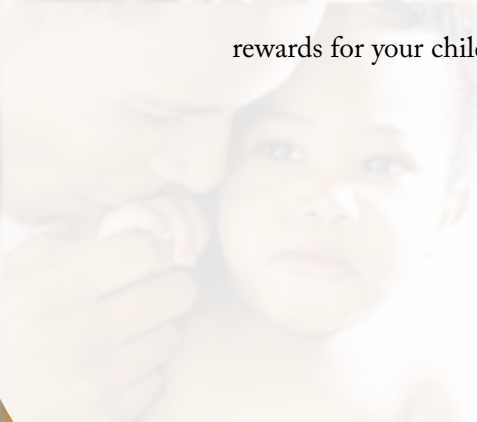
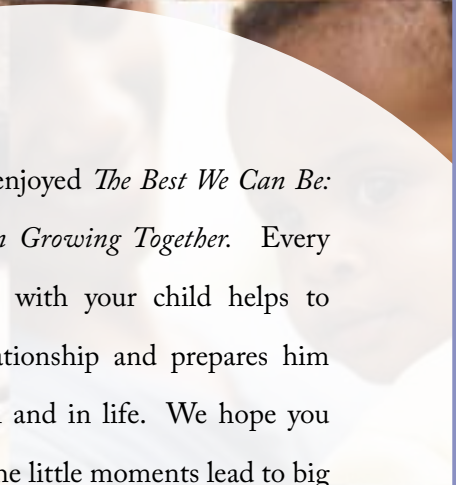
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We hope you have enjoyed *The Best We Can Be: Parents and Children Growing Together*. Every moment you spend with your child helps to strengthen your relationship and prepares him to succeed in school and in life. We hope you will continue to let the little moments lead to big rewards for your child and your family.

