



4709 Golf Rd., Ste. 1250, Skokie, IL 60076  
847.676.5394 [www.kidsfirstpediatricpartners.com](http://www.kidsfirstpediatricpartners.com)

2-2.5 YEAR

Your child is now two to 2 ½ years old! It's hard to believe only a year ago he/she was just learning to walk. During the toddler stage most children learn to walk, talk, solve problems and relate to others. Most toddlers are learning to be independent—that's why they enjoy doing things for themselves and can be frustrated when their abilities don't match their goals.

#### DIET

Growth will now be slower and more sporadic. Expect pickier eating. Keep the "big picture" in mind – if your child generally eats some variety of foods over a week they are doing fine. Set a good example for your child. Offer three regular meals and 2-3 healthy snacks. Let your child feed himself/herself with fingers/utensils. Don't be a short order cook – if your child eats poorly at one meal wait until the next meal to feed them. A multivitamin may be offered to especially picky eaters.

No more bottles! Bottle feeding at this age is linked to cavities and dental problems. Your child should exclusively be using a cup. Limit milk to 16-24 oz. day of lower fat milk (skim or 1% unless they are underweight). If your child is dairy intolerant or refuses to drink milk from a cup, offer other calcium rich substitutes (yogurt, cheese, calcium supplemented juices, soy milk, rice milk, etc.). Encourage plenty of water and limit juice to less than 4 oz. day.

Choking is still a risk. Avoid larger firm pieces of food – grapes, hot dogs, hard candies, etc.

#### SLEEP

The average 2 to 2 ½ year old sleeps 13 hours/day. Your child may need somewhat more or less than this. Most toddlers take one nap per day. Even if your child resists napping, it is still important to have a scheduled quiet rest period. It is OK for them to still sleep in a crib or you may transition to a regular or toddler bed.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Language skills will develop an incredible amount for the average two year old. They may be starting to put together 2 or more words (phrases) and repeating new words every week. Their speech should be becoming more articulate and they should be able to follow a two-step command (ex: Go into your room and bring me your teddy bear). They may be able to count to 3, know a few ABC's and sing parts of songs. By 2 ½ years they should be using short sentences, speech should be 75% intelligible, asking "What's that?", counting, and knowing a few colors, and shapes.

Two year olds may be running, climbing up and down stairs holding the railing, throwing a ball overhand, and dressing partially. They may be using a spoon/fork, drinking from an open cup, opening doors, scribbling and drawing straight lines and stacking blocks. By 2 ½ years they may be pedaling a tricycle, copying a circle, brushing teeth with help, and stacking 8 blocks. Two year olds enjoy socializing with other children. "Parallel play" (side by side imitative play) and difficulty sharing is common. Pretend play and interactive play should be emerging by 2 ½ years.

#### SAFETY

Major hazards at this age include burns, falls, choking, drowning, and poisoning. Lock cabinets and keep cleaning supplies, medications, plastic bags, and small objects away from your toddler. If you have a gun, make sure guns and ammunition are kept locked in separate places. The Illinois Poison Control number is (800) 222-1222 – call them if your child has an accidental ingestion. Your child should continue to be in a car seat at all times. Make sure their weight and height are appropriate for your forward facing seat. In the summer months remember sun and mosquito protection!

#### TOILET TRAINING

Do not push your child to toilet train but be aware of signs of readiness. Signs of readiness are usually seen by 2 to 2 ½ with mastery between 2 and 4 years. These signs include: longer periods of dryness, ability to pull clothes up/down, awareness of impending need to urinate or stool, being able to climb on and off potty chair, and the ability to communicate need to use the toilet.

## BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE

Your child is learning to be independent. Offer choices when reasonable but maintain your authority and rules. Praise your child when they are behaving well. Distraction can still be a useful technique. Say “no” and then physically remove your child away from a dangerous situation. Don’t yell or spank – if you feel angry take a few moments to calm yourself before you attempt to discipline your child.

Most children will have tantrums at this age. It is a way to express anger and frustration. Ignore them – over time tantrums will lessen once children realize they won’t be rewarded for them. Use time outs for disruptive tantrums, aggressive, or unacceptable behavior. One minute per age of life is a good guideline.

## A FEW OTHER THINGS...

Between two and three years is a good age to schedule a first dental visit. Use a small soft toothbrush and brush with fluoride free or a very tiny amount of fluoridated toothpaste twice a day.

Read, read, and read with your child every day. Reading is a wonderful way to spend time with your child and encourages language and literacy development. Limit TV watching and video game usage and monitor what programs they are watching.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

We recommend an influenza vaccine, generally given as a nasal spray at this age, in the winter months. Other catch up vaccines may be administered today.

## RECOMMENDED READING:

*How to Get Your Child to Eat: But Not Too Much* by Ellyn Satter

*Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter

*Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles: Winning for a Lifetime* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

*1-2-3 Magic – Effective Discipline for Children 2-12* by Thomas Phelan

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*If you have any questions about this handout please contact our office at 847-676-5394*

