

How children develop – 1-2 years

Play and safety

Every child is an individual.

Every child develops at their own pace, usually through the same stages or milestones, and in the same order.

Children grow and learn continually, but not in a smooth flowing pattern.

Sometimes they practise skills for quite a while and seem as if they will never move on. At other times they learn many skills very quickly.

Recent evidence shows that the early years of life are important for laying the foundation for good health and development throughout life.

This fact sheet is a general guide to child development. If you have any concerns about your child's development, seek advice from your child health nurse or doctor.

Learning through play

Children learn about their environment through play. At this age, they need the freedom to play, explore and learn. But they also need a safe environment in which to do this.

Give your child the chance to learn while making the environment as safe as possible. If you spend time with your child, you can provide both safety and stimulation.

A variety of play situations will also help your child develop – such as playing alone or with other children, in your own home or at others' homes, active or quiet play, as well as organised or unstructured play.

Children of this age will enjoy and learn from:

- Playing in sand – using old plastic jugs, wooden spoons, buckets, spades.
- Playing with water (always with adult supervision) – using jugs, floating objects, splashing.
- Going for walks - feeling the grass, dirt and puddles, climbing over logs and seeing birds and animals.
- Looking at and reading books. They will start to understand simple stories like the 'Three Little Pigs'. You'll find your child will enjoy 'reading' stories from their books and imitating the sounds of animals. Children enjoy hearing the same story over and over again.
- Singing songs and making music – singing songs with mum or dad, and playing musical tapes, CDs or musical instruments like tambourines, drums, whistles and bells – can be fun.

Talking is also a form of play for children of this age. They will enjoy musical toys such as age-appropriate tape players, 'talking' dolls and animals, and toy telephones.

Don't forget children of this age try and taste everything – avoid choking hazards.

These types of toys are ideal for this age group:

- Toys to handle and fit together - nests of cups or tins, hammer toys, saucepans and lids
- Toys for sorting and placing - simple jigsaws, sorting games, building blocks, shape sorters
- Toys to push and pull - large balls, box on wheels, strong cardboard boxes (to get in to)
- Toys to cuddle, hug, and talk to - stuffed animals, rag dolls, hand puppets.

Playing with adults

Children love playing with adults. You could try:

- Playing peek-a-boo
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes
- Looking at books
- Going for short walks – talking about the things you see as you walk.

Keeping your child safe

Children of this age are so active they need parents and adults to constantly watch them and keep them safe. They are not well coordinated and cannot understand the idea of danger.

They will not tell you before they are about to do things, so you will need to anticipate them and stay one jump ahead.

If possible, visit or contact the KidSafe House next to Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane at 50 Bramston Tce, Herston.

Here are some hints for keeping your child safe:

Caring for your child

- Always know where your child is, whether indoors or outdoors.
- Never expose your child directly to the sun for the therapeutic treatment of nappy rash, jaundice or other medical conditions.
- Avoid being out in the sun between 10am and 3pm, and seek shade where possible from permanent or portable shade structures, including strollers and pram covers.
- Always adopt sun safe behaviours whenever you and your child are outdoors:
 - Slip on protective clothing (long sleeve shirts with a collar, shorts and skirts)
 - Slop on sunscreen (a broad spectrum SPF 30+)
 - Slap on a hat (broad brim or legionnaire style)
 - Wrap on some sunglasses (Australian Standard: AS 1067).





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Toys

- Allow your child only those toys suitable for their age group. Be aware that your child may be able to get hold of older children's toys.
- Avoid toys with small parts that your child could swallow or inhale. Toys in this category are usually labelled 'not recommended for children under three years'.
- Toys should be safe, durable and washable.
- Supervise all play with ropes and toys with strings, such as pull-along toys.
- Cuddly toys should be stuffed with old stockings, dacron or polyester. (Crumbled foam, beans and beads can all be swallowed or pushed into ears or noses.)

Bath time

- Always check the temperature of the water before putting your child in the bath. Use your elbow to test.
- Never leave your child alone during bath time – not even for a second. Take the phone off the hook.
- Children should not be left in the care of older children no matter how reliable they seem.

Safety in the home

- Make sure your child is never left unsupervised near the family dog, if you have one.
- Always make sure your child is strapped in securely when in a high chair, to prevent falls.
- Fence your swimming pool with an approved fence and self-locking gate. When visiting places with swimming pools, ensure the fence and gate are adequate. Check your fence and gate regularly.
- Stay with your child at all times when he or she is in or near any water, such as a pool, spa, the ocean, a bath, backyard water feature, bucket of water, dam or a wading pool.
- Make sure there are no objects small enough to swallow within reach of your child.
- Remove temptation – and the chance for breakages – by putting delicate things away.
- Use safety barriers for steps, stairs and rooms you don't want your child to enter, and to keep them away from fireplaces and heaters. Specially designed barriers can be purchased.
- Keep kettle and iron cords out of your child's reach.
- Cover power points when they're not in use.
- Make sure all low cupboards have child resistant latches.
- Ensure that furniture – like TVs in cabinets and coffee tables – is sturdy enough for your child to pull up on and has no sharp corners that the child can cut themselves on if they fall.
- Store medicines, cleaning aids, pool chemicals and garden poisons – as well as any sharp or dangerous items – well out of reach, or in a cupboard with a child resistant latch.

Be aware of medicines and pills that are kept in handbags, especially those of visitors.

- Be alert to any potentially poisonous plants or mushrooms in your garden.
- Don't nurse your child on your lap while drinking a hot cuppa.
- Dangerous objects, like heaters, fans and hot drinks should be kept out of reach.
- Keep the toilet door closed and nappy buckets out of reach with a lid on, as small children can fall into them head-first.
- Keep the bathroom door closed so your child can't touch the hot taps. Tempering valves should be fitted to your hot water system, reducing the temperature to a child-safe 50°C.

Out and about

- Always check where your child is before reversing the car.
- Every time your child travels in a car, they must be in an approved and properly fitted child restraint.
- Make sure your child is always strapped in securely when in a shopping trolley or a stroller, and stay with them. This will help prevent falls.
- Never leave your child alone in the car – not even for a minute.

Remember...

It takes children a long time to learn, remember and recognise dangerous situations.

Until then, keeping a close watch on your child is the only way to be sure they are safe.

For more information

If you would like more information on your child's development or if you are concerned about your child, contact your local child health nurse.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

Remember these telephone numbers. You might like to store them in your phone's speed dial:

Emergency 000
Poisons Information Centre 13 1126

Acknowledgement

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