



This newsletter provides important information about your baby through infancy and early childhood. You will receive 10 issues of this newsletter before your child reaches age 5. Other publications for parents include *Path to Parenthood* and *Growing Up Healthy*. If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter or are interested in a home visit or other assistance, please call one of the Vermont Department Health district offices listed below:

Barre . . . . .	802-479-4200	Newport . . . . .	802-334-6707
	888-253-8786		800-952-2945
Bennington . . . . .	802-447-3531	Rutland . . . . .	802-786-5811
	800-637-7347		888-253-8802
Brattleboro . . . . .	802-257-2880	St. Albans . . . . .	802-524-7970
	888-253-8805		888-253-8801
Burlington . . . . .	802-863-7323	St. Johnsbury . . . . .	802-748-5151
	888-253-8803		800-952-2936
Middlebury . . . . .	802-388-4644	Springfield . . . . .	802-885-5778
	888-253-8804		888-296-8151
Morrisville . . . . .	802-888-7447	White River Junction	802-295-8820
	888-253-8798		888-253-8799

Your health insurance benefits include many preventive services at no charge to you: regular health check-ups and dental visits; immunizations (shots); vision and hearing checks; and child safety and developmental guidance.

Information in these newsletters was adapted from the following sources: *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton, MD; *Babytalk*; *Link Letters*, Healthy Steps; *Baby Your Baby*, Utah Department of Health; *Cradle Crier*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics; and *Path To Parenthood*, Vermont Department for Children and Families.

VERMONT  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
Child Development Division  
103 South Main Street  
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# growing up healthy

A newsletter from Healthy Babies, Kids & Families

## 18 TO 24 MONTHS



*Your baby is now officially a toddler.*

He's probably running, climbing and exploring everything. During his first year, he

had to rely on other people for almost everything, but now he wants to do things himself.

He is beginning to communicate with words, and is well on his way to talking. "No" will become a favorite word as he nears age 2. Although this can be a challenging time for you, it is also an important and normal part of his growth and development.

At the same time, his endless wonder, engaging personality and many new abilities will make this a fun and exciting age. Firm limits to keep him safe continue to be important, as well as maintaining your daily routines.

### General Development

Your 18-month-old has been walking for some time now and is getting better at it every day. He can probably run, throw a ball, seat himself in a chair, and climb almost anything—keep a watchful eye on him.

He will enjoy singing familiar songs. He'll start to learn how to take off some simple clothes by himself. He'll show affection by returning a kiss or a hug.

He will start to talk by saying words and two-word sentences and may jabber to himself often. He will have strong likes and dislikes, and won't be shy to tell you. He will use the

words "me" and "mine," and will have difficulty sharing. Waiting will be hard—he'll want things, "Right now!"

If you keep your explanations very short, he'll start to understand why you ask him to do some things. But in general, he will still have poor judgment and no real sense of danger. His attention span is longer, so he may play alone for up to 15 minutes or more.

### Feeding

Your toddler is so busy exploring his world that he may not have much of an interest in food. If he won't eat what you give him, don't push it, end the meal or snack. Some days it will seem like he doesn't eat anything, but his diet should balance out over the week.

Your toddler needs food from the same basic nutrition groups that you do:

- ▲ Meat, fish, poultry, eggs and beans
- ▲ Dairy products
- ▲ Fruits
- ▲ Vegetables
- ▲ Cereal grains, potatoes, rice, breads, and pasta

By this age, your child should be off a bottle and be drinking from a cup.

## Temper Tantrums

Most children are bound to have temper tantrums sometime in the second year. They can be embarrassing to parents. The child's struggle between dependence and independence often results in tantrums, rather than a parent's actions. Here are some guidelines to help you and your toddler get through tantrums:

- Try to be calm and speak quietly to your child.
- Move your child to a quiet and safe place.
- Try to ignore the behavior. If you speak or look at him, he will likely keep going.
- When he is done, let him know you love him.
- Anticipate when your child might have a tantrum and find ways to change the situation before it happens like going for a walk, moving to another room, or doing a favorite activity.

## Discipline

Discipline is about teaching not punishment. The goal is for your child to learn to set his own limits.

Each time you feel you need to discipline your child, you will have the chance to teach him the difference between what he can and cannot do. For instance, when he is doing something dangerous or unacceptable, stop him and find a way for time-out in a quiet corner of a room or playpen, or a hug in a rocking chair, to break the cycle. Hold him and say: "I love you but not what you are doing. I'll have to stop you until you learn to stop yourself."

Toddlers are developing their memory and can forget often. He will need lots of practice and time to learn about rules. Try to make rules for the really important things.

(Source: *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*. American Academy of Pediatrics)

## Sleeping

Your baby may be sleeping at least ten hours a night and taking a nap during the day. But sleep may not come easily. He may get out of his toddler bed or stand up in his crib.

If your child cries after tucking him in, reassure him that everything is okay and that it is time to go to sleep. Let him try to settle down himself. If he continues to cry or get out of bed, try briefly repeating the same steps.

A bedtime ritual can be one of the most important aids to getting your toddler to sleep. This may include a bath, picking out a special toy or blanket to sleep with, reading books, a drink of water and kisses and hugs.

## Language

Your baby will most likely begin talking, but his words may be hard to understand at first. Once you understand what he is trying to say, repeat the word. Talk to him as much as possible throughout the day. Try not to use a lot of baby talk.

Books are also a great way to help your child learn words. As you read together, you could point to an object on the page and say its name. By the time he turns two, if you still can't understand at least half of your child's talking, he doesn't use two-word phrases, such as "me go," or he can't follow simple instructions, talk to your health care provider (your family doctor, nurse practitioner, or clinic) about checking his hearing and speech.



## Becoming a big sister or brother

In past newsletters we have talked about your older children and their adjustments to the new baby, but now your toddler may be about to become a big brother himself.

Follow the techniques outlined for older children in previous newsletters. These include letting him help with new baby preparations, telling him that babies are a lot of work and won't be able to play with him right away, and letting him know how much you love him.

Even though it may be tempting to toilet train

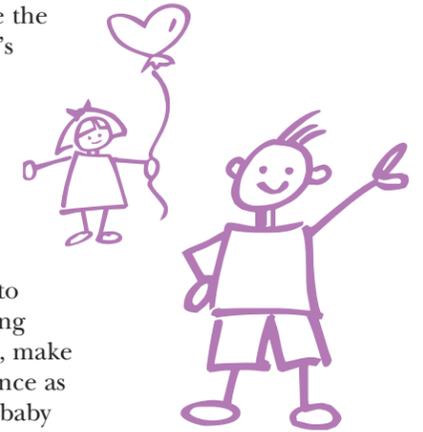
your toddler before the new baby arrives, it's not worth it. The less pressure you put on your toddler, the better it will be for everyone. If there are big changes that need to be made, like moving him to a new room, make them as far in advance as possible. Once the baby arrives, have him "help" you feed, bathe, change and dress his new sibling. Take advantage of the baby's naps to spend time alone with your toddler and talk about how important he is to you and the baby.

Remember to take care of yourself as well. Parenting a toddler is hard enough, but after the new baby arrives, it may seem even harder. Arrange for a partner or friend to take care of your children so that you can take breaks in your care-giving schedule. If you feel you need additional parenting support or advice, call your health care provider.

## Safety

It is easy to either overestimate a toddler's ability to avoid dangerous situations or underestimate how quickly he can get in trouble. Your child is active, curious and eager to explore, increasing the risks and hazards of accidental injury. Keep the following in mind:

- ◆ Make sure that your toddler is never left unattended near water—he can drown in only a few minutes.
- ◆ Make sure he's supervised at all times when he is outside; cars traveling up and down the street, pulling in and out of driveways, and parking at and pulling away from curbs are especially dangerous.
- ◆ Always watch your toddler when he is playing on playground equipment—most is made for older children, and he may try to imitate "big kids."



## Environmental Spotlight: Radon

Radon is a gas you can't see, smell or taste. Your family may be exposed to radon gas in your own home without you even knowing it. High levels of radon have been found in every state. It occurs naturally and can enter your home through the rock and soil beneath your foundation. Breathing radon over time can cause lung cancer. Radon is easy to detect and homes with high levels can be fixed at reasonable costs. The first step to check if you have high radon levels is to test your home. You can get a free and easy to use kit by calling:

Vermont Office of  
Environmental Health  
1-800-439-8550