

GROWTH AND YOUR 1 TO 2 YEAR OLD

You're in for a year of changes! Midway through this year, most babies are walking and many are starting to have conversations. They're turning into toddlers. By their second birthdays, most are losing that "baby" look and growing taller instead of rounder. As these toddlers get stronger and more capable, their rate of physical growth slows during this year.

It's important to make sure your toddler has plenty of nutritious food to eat to establish healthy eating habits, and a safe environment where he or she can be active and explore.

How Much Should My Child Grow?

During this second year of life, your toddler may gain between 3 and 5 pounds (1.4 to 2.26 kilograms). An average 15-month-old girl weighs about 22 pounds (about 10 kilograms) and stands 31 inches (79 centimeters) tall. Boys tend to be about a pound heavier at 15 months but about the same height. By age 2, both will stand about 34 inches tall (86 centimeters) and weigh about 27 to 28 pounds (12.25 to 12.7 kilograms) on average. Your toddler's head size also will not change as dramatically this year, with about 1 inch (2.54 centimeters) added to head circumference.

What you will notice more than actual growth are changes in a toddler's appearance. Instead of sporting the rounded belly and soft arms and legs suited to crawling on all fours, during this second year your toddler will most likely trim down, become more muscular because of increased activity, and begin to look more like a preschooler than a baby.

Should I Be Concerned?

Like babies, toddlers come in all shapes and sizes. Your doctor will continue to plot your child's growth on a growth chart during regular checkups. Although you may be concerned that your child is too thin or too chubby at any one time, the most important thing is that your child continues to grow at a steady rate.

If your baby is happy, active, and interested in nearby surroundings, then most likely he or she is getting enough to eat and growing properly.

During the second year of life, your baby is going to start self-feeding and trying new tastes and textures for the first time. Now's the time to start building your child's palate with nutritious foods that are packed with the vitamins needed for healthy growth.

It's common for toddlers to take to simple flavors, like macaroni and cheese, and want to stick with them. To build a foundation of healthy eating habits, it's important to keep exposing your child to a variety of different foods, and not accommodate these food ruts. Many kids, especially at this age, need to be exposed to a new flavor 10-15 times before they will accept it, so keep trying!

A heavier child should not be put on a calorie-restricted diet without specific medical advice and supervision.

Encourage activity and exploration by providing a safe environment that lets your child be active every day. In addition to the physical benefits, this is also how a lot of learning takes place. (Be mindful of childproofing - and you may want to put away special vases or decorations so you don't worry about them being broken or your child being hurt.) This probably won't be too much of a push, as most young toddlers are seizing every opportunity to move, whether by scooting, crawling, cruising, or walking. It's a good idea not to let babies spend too much time in confined spaces - such as car seats, strollers, swings, and cribs - or to restrain them from moving and exploring.

What's Next?

From the time your child is born, it's tempting to make comparisons with other children: Look how tall that baby is, look how early that one started walking, look at how that child can count. It's important, though, to appreciate and accept your child's physical qualities, and to know that weight and height are just as much a part of who your child is as hair and eye color. Your baby will grow to be the size his or her genetics intended. It's up to you to provide a safe and healthy environment to foster that growth.

Speak with your child's doctor if you have any concerns about your child's growth.

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