

Playtime from 12 months helps your toddler discover...



Toddlers need a lot of activity – several hours a day. The more they move the more confident and independent they will become.

It's important to give them freedom to move and explore while keeping them safe. So, look at an area from your child's level. Check for unstable furniture, tablecloths or cords they could pull down. As toddlers fall often provide a carpet or soft grassy area where they can practise walking.

Their body

There are two main ways you can help your toddler develop their physical abilities.

1. Plan several 5 - 10 minute play periods a day to help your child develop movement skills (this type of planned activity should add up to about 30 minutes a day).*

You can:

- Encourage them to crawl through, step onto, over or around obstacles such as cushions or large cardboard boxes. Do this on a soft floor in case they fall and give them the help they need. At first you may need to hold one or both their hands
- Roll a ball for them to chase. They may enjoy being helped to push or kick a large soft ball
- Help them to practise crawling or walking up and down some steps
- Blow bubbles for them to chase
- Help them to climb onto and push ride-on toys
- Dance or do large body movements to music eg. bend, wave their arms, move a streamer or scarf
- Take them for a short walk and stop to look at ants and pick up leaves
- Race them to get a favourite toy
- Copy what they do and describe their movements eg. "run fast", "kick the ball".



2. Provide play areas and toys that encourage large body movements so your child can be active most of the day (this type of unplanned activity should be from one to several hours a day).*

Give your child:

- Large blocks. Make your own out of cereal or tissue boxes
- Push/pull-along toys like a vacuum cleaner, lawn mower, wagon or doll's stroller. Try local garage sales to find these

- Sand play such as digging and playing with trucks. Make sure sand is well drained and kept clean by covering it when not in use
- Large climb-on toys. You can borrow from these from a toy library
- Large soft toys or bags they can carry around
- Toys that require activity such as rolling balls down a chute
- Some cupboard space and kitchen utensils such as plastic bowls and containers they can stack, bang, drum or pretend to cook with
- A shelf for toys, puzzles or books they can take down and put back.



The world around them

- Be prepared for your toddler to swing between wanting freedom and clinging to you for the comfort and reassurance they need to venture out into the world.
- Toddlers should not be inactive for more than 60 minutes at a time unless they are asleep. However, they still need short, quiet times and activities to calm and settle them like reading a book, having a cuddle or singing songs with actions.
- Toddlers **do not** need screen time like watching TV or DVDs. They learn and refine skills like eye-hand coordination and language by being with real people and handling real objects.
- As toddlers are learning how to move their bodies and make sense of what they see, hear, touch and experience it's easy for them to become overwhelmed, especially when they are tired. They may become distressed on shopping trips.
- When they are eating or trying to play turn off the radio or TV so they can concentrate.
- When going on outings with friends consider going to a park where toddlers can run around. Outdoor time gives them a chance to listen to sounds such as birds singing or the wind blowing the trees.
- Involve your child in everyday activities. Let them help you to pick up toys, wipe the table, and pass you pegs when hanging out the washing. Keep instructions simple like "pick up the trucks" rather than "clean up the mess" so they know exactly what you expect.
- Try to arrange some toddler-free time each week so you can do something for yourself. You could take turns with another parent, ask a relative to baby-sit or use Occasional Care. This also gives your child a chance to meet other adults and children.

* *Current recommendations from the American National Association for Sport and Physical Education*