

Wellness Guide at 3 Years Old

Helpful tips to support your child's development at this stage of life.



Development

- **Activities:** Your preschooler is busy with running, jumping, walking backwards, learning to pedal a tricycle, throwing a ball overhand, working buttons/levers, turning door handles, solving 3-4 piece puzzles, and building towers. Your child enjoys matching (e.g. color matching), counting, and memory games.
- **Communication:** Your child is having conversations; strangers understand most of their words, and their favorite word might be "why".
- **Pretend Play:** Your child has an active imagination and likes to pretend play (play "dress up", cook/feed you imaginary food).
- **Inclusion:** They can wash/dry their hands and be a little helper around the house/in the kitchen.
- **Interaction:** Other ways to have fun together and learn include singing songs, sharing rhymes, and reading.
- **Interaction:** Face-to-face interaction with caregivers will enhance your child's social and verbal development.
- **Concerns:** Reach out to your child's provider if you have concerns regarding your child's development or speech.

Safety

- **Drowning** is a leading cause of accidental death in this age group. Continue constant supervision around water.
- Introduce helmets for bikes/tricycles/scooters.
- Discuss street safety, animal safety, and strangers.
- Secure heavy furniture to the wall.
- Preschoolers are safest in their car seat, in the back seat of the car.
- Be cautious about open windows and furniture near windows that can lead to falls.
- Keep household cleaners, vitamins, and medicines out of reach or locked away.
- Never leave your child alone in the car or at home.
- Keep sharp objects, small objects/magnets/batteries, balloons, and plastic bags out of reach.
- Verify that smoke alarms are working properly and avoid smoke exposure.
- Remove/lock up guns. Lock away cigarettes, lighters, alcohol, marijuana, and vaping devices.

Digital Media Plan & Safety

- Limit screen time to 1 hour a day of high-quality programs.
- Bedtime and mealtime should be electronic-free zones.
- Do not allow screens in children's bedrooms.
- Visit the AAP website to create a [Family Media Plan](#).
- Consider a break from screen time if your child struggles to transition off of screens.

THE 5 Cs OF MEDIA USE

Family Well-being

As your 3-year-old is learning about cooperation, caregivers also need to figure out how to balance their own needs with the needs of their family/children. Working together and understanding each other's needs promotes respect, collaboration and builds positive relationships. It also helps to model the words/behavior you want your child to say/do.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

POISON CONTROL:
(800) 222-1222

SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE: 988

Sleep

- Continue simple, calming bedtime routines when your preschooler is getting tired and ready for sleep.
- Consider a toddler/big bed.
- Many preschoolers are not able to learn how to fall asleep if they are falling asleep while being held or when lying next to you.
- You can help them learn how to fall asleep on their own by putting them down when they're drowsy, but not fully asleep.
- Expect a protest if this is a new change for them.
- Toddlers still benefit from an afternoon nap or quiet time. If your child has given up daytime naps, consider adjusting to an earlier bedtime.

LEARNING TO SLEEP

Toilet Training

- There is not one “right” way to toilet train. Many preschoolers are physically and emotionally ready.
- Your child will be more successful if they have a potty seat and can communicate when they need to go potty.
- Punishment, feeling forced, and too much praise can be overwhelming and interfere with training.
- Let your child choose underwear when they’re ready.
- Find the right method that works for your family.
- Be patient - it takes times and accidents are expected.
- Most children daytime train first, followed by nighttime training at 3-4 years old. It is normal for night wetting to still occur even if they’re dry during the day.

TOILET TRAINING RESOURCES

TOILET TRAINING

CONSTIPATION

Toddler Care

- Brush teeth with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on a soft toothbrush 2 times per day. Make a dentist appointment.
- Use sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher).

Overseas Travel

If your family will be traveling internationally, schedule a virtual eTravel consultation at least 4–6 weeks before departure to review travel health recommendations, vaccines, and medications.

TRAVEL CONSULTATION

Feelings

- Your preschooler is developing friendships, sharing skills, and turn-taking skills, but still needs adult assistance when conflicts arise. Your child is recognizing the causes of feelings and can empathize (such as with a hug) to those who are upset. You can point out pictures/people and ask them, “What are they feeling?”
- Help your child notice another person’s point of view (“When you pushed him, it hurt. He looks sad.”). This can be followed by problem-solving together (“What can we do to help? Maybe it would help to say ‘sorry’.”).
- Continue to keep rules and limits simple and clear. Consider using suggestions before commands (“Would you like help putting on your coat, or do you want to do it?”).
- Preschoolers are starting to understand emotions, but still need help regulating them. When your child is having a tantrum, take time to consider what they might be feeling. Is your child tired or hungry? Frustrated or overwhelmed? What might have happened to lead up to this tantrum? What are ways you can help them cope with their feelings in a healthy way?

TODDLER EMOTIONS

Nutrition

- Try to eat family meals together and offer a variety of healthy foods the family eats, including one your child likes.
- Give Vitamin D (400 to 600 IU/day).
- When your child is offered 3 predictable meals and 2-3 snacks per day, then they can confidently decide how much to eat.
- Avoid distractions, including TV and videos, so that your child has an opportunity to eat, socialize, and have fun with you.
- Offer milk (with meals) or water. Limit juice.

NUTRITION RESOURCES

CHILDREN & NUTRITION

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[DOSING TABLES](#)

[COMMON ILLNESS SUPPORT](#)

[PATIENT EDUCATION](#)