

# What Is in the Parents Guide

Dear Parent or Caregiver	1
What Is in the Parents Guide	2
Index	4
Welcome to the Parents Guide	5

## Becoming a Parent

Pregnancy	6
Staying Healthy During Pregnancy	8
Birth	10
Tips for New Parents	12
Tips for Teen Parents	14
For Parents with a Disability or Chronic Illness	16

## Your Infant from Birth to 6 Months

Caring for Your Infant	18
Breastfeeding and Bottlefeeding	20
Infant Safety	22

## Your Baby from 6 to 12 Months

Your Baby Grows and Learns	24
Starting Solid Food	26
Safety When Your Baby Starts to Crawl	28

## Your Toddler, 1 to 2 Years

Toddlers Age 1 to 2	30
Feeding Toddlers	32
Guiding Toddlers	34

## Your Toddler, 2 to 3 Years

Toddlers Age 2 to 3	36
Learning to Use the Toilet	38
Child Safety	40





## Your Preschooler, 3 to 5 Years

- 42** Preschoolers
- 44** Guiding Preschoolers
- 46** If Your Child Has a Special Need

## Child Care and Preschool

- 48** Child Care for Babies
- 50** Child Care for Toddlers
- 52** Preschool
- 54** Starting School

## Your Family's Health

- 56** Children's Health Care
- 58** Finding and Using Health Care
- 60** Emotional Health
- 62** Oral Health
- 64** Eating Well
- 66** Staying Active

## Your Family's Well-Being

- 68** Family Finances
- 70** When Parents Live Apart
- 72** Balancing Work and Family
- 74** Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Addictions
- 76** Violence and Abuse
- 78** Disasters and Emergencies

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- 80** Resources in the Guide
- 83** Your Baby's Check-ups
- 84** Home Safety Checklist

# Guiding Toddlers



## Helping Dad

Hank loves to help his dad. Teaching children to help takes time, but it is how they learn to be responsible.

**N**ext to love, guidance is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child. A good time to start is after the first year. By 15 months, children begin to understand what is OK and what is not. Start by setting a few simple guidelines, such as holding hands when walking across the street, treating pets and other people kindly, and not breaking things. If you set a good example and praise good behavior, your job will be easier.

## Give Children Limited Choices

When children have choices, they feel more in control and get less frustrated. Let your child choose her blue or green socks, or an apple or a banana for a snack. Offer only 2 or 3 choices. Too many choices can confuse young children.

## Make Your Home Safe

Toddlers do not understand why it is bad or dangerous to do something. Try to make your home safe for your child to play freely. Look around each room. Remove things that could harm him or get broken. That way you will not have to say “No” all the time. See the Home Safety Checklist on page 84.

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### Temper Tantrums Are Normal

A tantrum is your child's way of asking for help. He is upset and he does not know how to help himself. He needs you to help him learn self-control and find ways to solve problems.

### When Your Child Has a Tantrum

When your child has a tantrum, he needs your help to calm down. You may need to pick him up and take him away from the problem. You can also try to distract him with something else to do. Some toddlers need a firm hug. And some do best with a few minutes of "time-out" in a quiet, safe place.

After your toddler has calmed down, talk about what happened. Show that you understand his frustration and help him find other ways to express his feelings.

## Things You Can Do

### Setting Limits: Guidance and Discipline

- Be patient. It takes toddlers a long time to learn.
- Be consistent. For example, always hold your child's hand when you cross the street.
- Make sure that what you expect fits your child's age. For example, most toddlers will have toilet accidents.
- Be specific. "Draw on the paper, not on the wall" is better than "Stop that."
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. "Do not run into the street. You could get hurt!" is better than "You are a bad boy!"
- Help your child express his feelings in words, not in hitting, kicking or screaming.
- Praise and hug your child for good behavior.
- Make your house safe, so you will not need to say "No" all the time. See page 84.

### If You Feel You Are Going to Lose Your Temper

- Do not hit or yell at your child. You can hurt her physically and emotionally.
- If you are too angry to talk, wait until you calm down.
- If you are having trouble dealing with a difficult behavior, you can call **Childhelp** and ask to talk to a counselor. Your conversation is private.
- Ask other parents what works for them. Look for a parenting class. And see the Community Pages in the back pocket of this Guide.

### Try to Reduce Stress in Your Life

Guiding your toddler is often trying. If you feel stressed, you are more likely to lose your temper when your toddler has a tantrum or misbehaves.

Try to take breaks and get help with child care. For more tips to help you reduce stress in your own life, see page 61.

## Where To Find Help

### Childhelp

Advice about discipline and preventing child abuse; crisis counseling

1-800-422-4453

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org)



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**R**egular check-ups and shots can prevent many childhood health problems. They also help prevent costly visits to the emergency room.

Try to take your child to the same doctor or health center every time. Your doctor will get to know your child and you. And your child's medical records will be in one place. Children get better care when they visit the same doctor each time.

## Protect Your Child from the Sun

- Use baby-safe sunscreen and a hat with a brim.
- Make sure your stroller has a shade.
- Look for shady play areas.
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water.
- When the weather is very hot, keep children inside.

## Protect Your Child from the Cold

- Dress your child in layers.
- Protect fingers, toes and ears from frostbite.
- Do not cover the face of a baby.
- Use a stroller cover for cold weather.
- When it's too cold, keep children inside.



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## When You Take Your Child to the Doctor

- Bring a list of your questions and your child's medicines.
- Explain your concerns.
- Repeat what the doctor says in your own words to make sure you understand.
- Ask for a list of check-ups. See page 83.
- Make sure your child's shots are up to date. See page 83.
- Ask how to take your baby's temperature.
- Get a name and phone number to call if you have more questions.

## Doctor Visits

If you stay calm during doctor visits, your child is more likely to stay calm, too. Rock or hold her. It may help to bring a pacifier, blanket or toy.



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## CHIP

Kim is a working mom. She is insured through her work, but Toby is insured through CHIP. “It costs less and he gets better benefits.” Call **CHIP**.

## Is My Baby Sick?

Look for changes in your baby’s normal behavior. You will soon know his regular sleeping, eating and bowel habits. You will know his normal level of activity and fussiness. If he does not act normal, or his skin does not look normal, take his temperature. You may want to call the doctor.

## When Your Child Is Sick

At your baby’s first doctor visit, ask when you should call the doctor and when you should call 9-1-1.

- Always call the doctor or clinic if you are worried, or if your baby does not get better in a few days.
- Call the doctor if your infant is less than 3 months and has a fever.
- Call the doctor if your baby has ongoing diarrhea or vomiting. And make sure she gets plenty of liquids.
- Do not give cold or cough medicine to a child under 2.
- For fever, ask your doctor if you should give your child acetaminophen, like Tylenol, or another medicine. Do not give aspirin. It can cause a rare but serious disease called Reye’s Syndrome.
- For more information, visit [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) or [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

## Things You Can Do

### Low-Cost Health Care for Children

- CHIP is free or low-cost health, dental and vision insurance. The fee is based on how much you can pay. Children usually have to be documented immigrants or citizens. Call **CHIP**.
- Medical Assistance is free or low-cost health care. Your child may qualify even if you do not. Apply at your hospital or clinic. Call **Medical Assistance Program**.
- For other free or low-cost health care for children, call **Healthy Baby Helpline**.

### Hearing and Vision Care

Parents are usually the first to notice a hearing or vision problem. Talk to your child’s doctor if you are worried.

- Your child should have an eye exam at age 3 or 4, before starting school.
- For low-cost eye care for children, call **Sight for Students**.

## Where To Find Help

### American Academy of Pediatrics

Information on children’s health

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

### CHIP

Low-cost health insurance for children

1-800-986-5437

[www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com)

### Healthy Baby Helpline

Referrals to free or low-cost health care for children

1-800-986-2229

[www.helpinpa.state.pa.us](http://www.helpinpa.state.pa.us)

### Kids Health

Website on children’s health

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

### Medical Assistance Program

Health care for people with low incomes

1-800-692-7462

[www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/MedicalAssistance](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/MedicalAssistance)

### Sight for Students

Low-cost vision care for children under 18

1-888-290-4964

[www.sightforstudents.org](http://www.sightforstudents.org)