

Playtime from 18 months helps your toddler discover



Their Body

Toddlers are naturally active and busy which helps them to develop their ever growing brain and body systems. They need challenging activities as they are still finding out what they can do with their bodies. Every time they move their arm or leg they are developing a better understanding of movement helping them to develop the basic skills they will use for play, sport, dance and other activities later in life. Toddlers should spend at least 30 minutes a day in planned physical activity and at least one to several hours a day of unplanned physical activity, like riding their trike or pushing dolly around.

Continue to help them to develop their movement skills

Plan some physical activity

- Involve your toddler in daily chores:
 - Gardening - collect leaves in a box and empty them
 - Cleaning the car - dip the sponge in the bucket and clean the wheels
 - Hanging out washing - have them hand you pegs and small items of clothing, play basketball socks where you practise throwing paired socks into the clothes basket
 - Shopping - encourage your toddler to walk some of the way, give them jobs like placing items in the trolley or giving the money to the cashier.
- Encourage your child to try doing things for themselves like putting on socks (put the sock on their hand and get them to show you where it really goes). This assists with co-ordination and balance.
- Keep an activity box in the car with a ball, frisbee, kite, beach bucket and spade for times when you can encourage active play at the park, bike track or beach.
- Plan time to develop skills like throwing or kicking a ball at a large target, introduce ball catching by rolling the ball toward them.
- Help them jump, balance on one foot, go up and down stairs, play chasey outside or make up some silly walks.
- Practise trying to walk along the lines of your floor tiles or the paving stones.
- Go for regular walks or bike rides to the park (mum walks alongside bike).
- Remember if your child takes part in a swim class, dance group, play group, or gymnastics class this is part of your child's planned activity.
- As a family try walking instead of taking the car if possible.
- Put on some lively music when it's clean up time and dance the toys away.



Allow time for and encourage active unplanned play

- Create a safe place where your child can explore without you having to chase after them, always remain watchful as they are energetic and not aware of danger. Clothes and footwear that assist them to move freely and to play with minimal risk of trips and falls is best and don't forget sun safety when outside.

- Provide bikes and push/pull toys, streamers to wave in the air or obstacle courses made out of boxes, sheets or sand-filled plastic bottles to help them learn how their body moves and the effect of that movement.
- Set up pots and pans for a one man band.
- Give them a container to collect things in the garden.
- Ensure your toddler doesn't continually sit with their legs in a 'W' position as this can affect their balance and posture later on. Encourage them to sit with their legs in front of them or in a little chair for some activities.



The world around them

Toddlers need to relate and interact with people in their lives

- Toddlers need to spend most of their playtime in movement activities that support them to safely explore the world around them. Talk to them about what they are doing, for example, balancing along a garden edge and congratulate them when they try.
- Toddlers think that they can do things independently and can become frustrated when trying new things like catching a ball. It is important for them to take the lead and for you to step back and allow them to make mistakes. Toddlers need encouragement to try new things and to keep trying even when it seems difficult.
- Imaginative play is another way of trying out new things and talking through activities that your toddler may find scary or difficult. Toddlers may develop fears and it is important to acknowledge and talk them through these fears.
- This is a good time to set up patterns for leading an active life. Remember, unless your child is asleep, no more than 60 minutes at a time should be spent sitting still.
- Avoid using television as a form of play, for toddlers under 2 screen time is not recommended.
- If you allow television restrict it to shows which encourage them to be active by repeating words or phrases, singing and dancing along with characters or talking about what they are watching also dance games and action songs by groups like the Wiggles and Hi 5 where interaction with their audience plays a big part in their show. Research indicates that energy expenditure more than doubles when children watch active shows versus non-active.
- Try to limit your use of strollers or other equipment that takes the place of walking, time out of the stroller when shopping and on outings is important.
- You make a big difference in your child's life through play – join in, give them new challenges, encourage and support them, most of all have fun!

