



Preschoolers and Active Play

Physical Activity

- “Structured” play is when an adult plays a game with your child that has directions. This type of playing is a great way to bond with your toddler and help stimulate his brain. Make sure to have at least 30 minutes of structured play every day.
- “Unstructured” play is free play where your toddler can use his imagination. An hour of free play over the course of a day lets your toddler explore his world and gets out some of that extra toddler energy!
- Go for walks with your toddler. Instead of putting him in the stroller right away, let him walk beside you until he’s tired. As you walk, point out things to him: dogs, trees, and the different colors on the buildings.
- Dancing, “follow the leader,” and hide and seek are all good ways for kids to have fun indoors with each other. Older siblings can help toddlers learn to do “big kid” things like kicking a ball back and forth or jumping up and down

Screen Time

- Make time each day to turn off the TV, computer, smartphone, and iPad. Let your toddler play with other children his age or with his brothers and sisters.
- Keep the TV out of your child’s bedroom. Watching TV, especially before bed, can affect your child’s sleep. Instead of letting your toddler fall asleep to the TV, create a special bedtime routine that you do together every night, like reading books or singing soothing songs.
- If the only way you can get a break to do the dishes or talk on the phone is to let your child watch TV, set a timer for 30 minutes. Get as much done as you can in those 30 minutes, then turn off the TV.
- When you let your child watch TV, make sure the show is meant for toddlers and doesn’t have commercials for unhealthy foods. The easiest way to do this might be by using a DVD or On Demand programming

Sleep

- Sleep is important! Toddlers need plenty of sleep, about 11- 12 hours a day including naps, to grow up healthy. Children who don't get enough sleep are more likely to be overweight or obese. Start healthy sleep habits today.
- Set up a regular, soothing bedtime routine and a regular bedtime for your toddler. For example, starting around 7:00 PM, give your child a warm bath and brush his teeth, then change him into pajamas, read books together, and sing him a lullaby.
- If your toddler is in child care, insist on set naptimes. A well-rested toddler is less like to throw temper tantrums!
- As your toddler grows, he may start fighting nap time. If he really won't take a nap anymore, change his normal nap time into "quiet time." Read books together, or have him quietly play in his room with toys.