

## **BABY ADVOCATE**

### **At 30 months**

#### **Health**

My toddler doesn't brush her teeth very well, and she won't let me brush them either. What should I do?

- It is important for oral hygiene that by age two, children are having their teeth brushed twice a day. Try to find something that will make her an enthusiastic participant such as a new toothbrush or toothpaste. You may even need to start with a very soft toothbrush and just plain water to get her used to the idea. What is most important is that each tooth is brushed and rinsed. Getting her into the habit of brushing teeth is necessary. It might take a game, a reward, or a sticker chart to give her some incentive to begin the routine.

My toddler is waking up at night and screaming and crying. Is this normal?

- It is very common for toddlers to wake at night. They are going through a lot of changes and are beginning to develop ideas about the world and a sense of fear. Much of these ideas and fears are worked out during the night. In order to help your toddler sleep better, you can make sure that he is in an environment that makes him feel safe. A predictable, calming bedtime routine is important. Your toddler can sleep with a comfort object such as a blanket or stuffed animal. He may want music or a familiar story played on repeat throughout the night. If he wakes up screaming, you can go into his room, comfort him, and then leave. You may have to repeat this several times, but it is important that your child knows you are always nearby and he can calm himself back to sleep. With consistent support, your child should outgrow this phase of night waking.

Our toddler is still not toilet trained. He refuses to go in the toilet, and I have tried everything the books say to do. What should I do?

- As you have read, there are many different methods of toilet training. The method that might work best for your child is the child-centered approach. This allows your child to take the lead to let you know when he is ready. If your child has been resisting so much, he probably needs a break. You will know he is ready when:
  - His bowel movements occur on a fairly regular and predictable schedule
  - His diaper is dry for at least two hours during the day or after naps.
  - He can follow simple instructions
  - He shows an interest in imitating others in the bathroom
  - He can show you or tell you when his bladder is full
  - He can help undress himself
- When he is ready, it is important to remember to be patient, praise successes, and not to criticize failure.

## Development

My first child talked so much by this age, but my toddler is hardly talking. Does this mean he has a speech problem?

- There is a wide range of normal language development in toddlers. A child at this age should have about 50 words in his vocabulary, and should start speaking in simple sentences (“I want mommy.”). It is important to identify how your toddler communicates if he is not using words. Does he babble, gesture, and point? Can he understand what you say and follow your direction? Keep a communication diary and make an appointment to discuss this with your doctor or nurse practitioner. If you have concerns, your healthcare provider can help you find extra evaluation and support. Early identification of speech problems is critically important to language development.

Our family is expecting another child, and my toddler is hitting my belly whenever I refer to the new baby. What should I do?

- There are some things you can do to help your child become more accustomed to the new baby. First, be honest with her about what is happening and what it will mean for your family. When you refer to the baby, refer to it as “our baby.” You might want to buy her a doll and allow her to act out his feelings through play. Use this time to reinforce your love for your toddler by saying “I love you” a lot. To ease the transition, you might want to put your child in a playgroup and allow her to spend time away from you since that will be the case once the baby is born.

My child has a blanket that he is very attached to. He won’t even let me take it to wash it. Isn’t he too old for a blanket?

- The relationship between your toddler and his blanket is a strong one and is perfectly normal behavior. Somewhere between the ages of two to five, most children give up their comfort objects, but you need to let him do that when he is ready. You can try to set limits on your child’s use of the object so that he can engage in other activities. You might say, “At the park, we need our hands to play with the diggers. And, your blanket is going to stay here so he will be all clean for you when we get back.” It will be helpful if you can get two of whatever your child is attached to.

My toddler's tantrums are worse. Everyone keeps telling me "she's spoiled, and needs a good spanking." I don't know what to do.

- It is normal for your child to go through stages where her tantrums seem worse. It is important for you to discuss how you were disciplined as a child and reflect on your upbringing with your partner. Each family must come to their own conclusions, but in today's violent world, it is very important to treat your child with respect from a young age. This will allow her to learn better ways to express herself. Many parents say that it worked for them, but it is a tradition that humiliates and provokes fear in children. If you find yourself so angry that you feel like you are going to hit her, put your hands together and clap—don't slap. As for the tantrums, they occur because she is developing intense feelings and doesn't know a better way to communicate them. The best way to avoid or lessen tantrums is to make sure that your toddler does not become overly frustrated, anxious, hungry, or tired. If one does occur and your child cannot be distracted, it is best to abandon your plans and remove your child from the situation. Your flexibility during this time will be important to teach your child that you are consistent and will not give in, regardless of the place. This is also an important age to make sure that you are only saying "no" to the non-negotiable, and that you pick your battles — don't be afraid to accommodate the small things both at home and in public.

I would like my child to go to a playgroup or preschool program. How do I pick the right one?

- Playgroups and preschool programs can be great social and learning experiences for you and your child. First, you should decide what kind of program you want. One where you are with him the whole time, something for a few hours, or something for each morning? In evaluating a program, it is important to make sure that the people working with your child show warmth and empathy. The environment should be one that allows your child to safely explore and keeps his interest. Visit many different programs and talk to teachers about their philosophies. Trust your feelings in making sure that both you and your child can connect.

### **Prevention**

When should I start to talk to my child about "being touched in private body areas" by strangers?

- You can use appropriate moments to remind children about their personal safety. For example, if you are having a talk about his private body area during bath time, you can talk about how those are not for anyone else to touch. **Your child will respond better to you using teachable moments than serious talks at this time.**

Are window guards really that important? My child stays away from the windows.

- Window guards are an important safety measure even as your child gets older. Children will always surprise you when they first do something. You don't want to be caught off guard when your child pushes a chair to a window to look for the airplane he hears.