## Safe kids · Healthy kids · Happy kids

## Play Helps Toddlers Grow and Learn

Toddlers spend most of their day at play. It looks like fun, but they are hard at work. Toddlers grow and learn while they play.

Experts tell us that free play is crucial for healthy growth and development. It helps your toddler:

- Learn about his world.
- Practice and master new skills.
- Feel confident as she masters new skills.
- Learn how to interact with others.
- Find areas of interest.
- Master his fears.
- Develop big and small muscles.
- Improve hand/eye coordination.
- Learn how to make decisions.
- Burn calories and help keep her at a healthy weight.
- Express his feelings. Toddlers cannot express feelings in words.
- Learn how others feel.
- Learn how to share.
- Develop the skills to make and keep friends.
- Have fun.

Toddlers often sit and play alone, near their caregivers. They should also have daily one-on-one playtime with a parent.



Toddlers love to:

- Pretend play. Provide child-sized brooms, mowers, play phones and dishes. They love to mimic their parents and caregivers.
- Play make- believe. Provide hats, clothes, shoes and purses.
- Put objects inside of containers and dump them out. Provide boxes or containers with holes in the lid. Avoid sharp edges. Use clothespins, magnetic alphabets and other household objects to put in the holes.
- Run, jump and move around.
   Provide balls, bean bags and a tricycle. Play running games outside tag and catch. Build sandcastles in a sandbox. Dance to music, inside or out.

- Play with water. Provide a small bucket of water. Give your toddler cups, spoons, and plastic bottles. Use baby bath to provide some bubbles. Never leave your toddler alone with water not even for a second.
- Stack objects. Provide building blocks of all shapes and sizes.
- Draw and color. Provide plain paper, coloring books and large crayons.
- Pull and push toys. Provide big play trucks, push-pull toys and baby doll strollers.
- Create with play dough. Buy or make play dough. To make: mix 3 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 3 tablespoons cooking oil and 1 cup water together. Add food coloring. Store in a closed container.
- Read books. Enjoy story-time at least once a day.

Playtime with your child makes you a better parent and your child a better student. Enjoy playtime.

Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital



