• toys with action or sound – jack-in-the-box, music boxes, telephone with dial that clicks and rings, children’s records or tapes
• toys for creating – tool bench with toy hammer and pegs for pounding, blocks for stacking
• bathtub play – cups, sponges, boats and unbreakable bottles are perfect for filling and pouring water
• fitting toys – rings or balls on rods, nesting cups

Toddlers like to make things happen. They are learning to control objects, so avoid toys that do too much on their own. Simple sturdy toys that let your child be creative are important now. These toys teach him to think and try new ways of doing things.

FEEDING TIME FOR LITTLE FOLKS
Your toddler is probably ready to try feeding herself. Expect a mess! This is not a time for manners. Young toddlers need to practice and experiment until their fingers, hands, arms and eyes all work together. Adults take these simple actions for granted, but baby is working very hard at this new task.

Your goals during this stage are to make eating fun and to provide a healthy variety of foods. Prepare yourself for mealtime by spreading an old towel, tablecloth or newspapers on the floor for easy cleanup. Match your toddler’s foods and utensils to his abilities. Foods that can be picked up with fingers cause less frustration. As your child begins to use a spoon, try the type with a thick, sturdy handle or molded grip. A deep bowl instead of a flat plate makes scooping foods easier, too. Make sure food is cut into small bite-size pieces.

Many 1-year-olds still drink from a bottle, especially at bedtime. When a child falls asleep with milk (or other sweet liquid) in his mouth, the milk may cause dental cavities. Cavities in baby teeth may affect their permanent teeth later. If your child likes a bottle for comfort at bedtime, try substituting water or a pacifier.

JUST FOR PARENTS
A toddler in the house is lots of fun, but sometimes frustrating, too. Toddlers can be very demanding. Although they want to be independent, they still need supervision and positive attention.

If you find yourself becoming more tired and less patient in caring for your toddler, that is a signal to take a break. Often, just a few minutes to catch your breath is all you need.

How do you cope with stress? Some people like quiet activities such as sewing, reading or TV. Physical activities like aerobics or taking your toddler for a walk are good, too. Keeping in good physical shape is a proven stress-fighter. Do you have a friend or relative who could watch your toddler a while? Learn to recognize when your “fuse” is getting short. Take care of yourself so you can take care of your toddler!

Next Issue: Talking, sleeping, brothers and sisters, and more!
Welcome to 1-2-3 GROW! This 12-issue newsletter series is designed to help you grow along with your child during the next three years. Many exciting changes are about to take place as your child grows from a baby into toddlerhood, and then into the preschool years.

Over the past year, your child has grown from a dependent baby into a lively, energetic individual ready to explore his world. This means that your child requires a different kind of attention from you. In addition to loving hugs, your toddler now needs encouragement and freedom to explore — safely. Providing gentle but firm guidance will also be a new role for you during the coming years. Your toddler will also benefit from your willingness to be child-like yourself. Enjoying the small pleasures of life, laughing at the silliest rhymes, getting down on your hands and knees to watch a bug — these are all part of providing a stimulating environment for learning. And now, as your 1-year-old takes three wobbly steps toward you, you may wonder...

WHAT IS A TODDLER LIKE?

Most children learn to walk between 12 and 15 months. But they still crawl often, especially when in a hurry. At first, walking is a way to stand and walk. Soon the child learns that all sorts of new objects are now within reach. Little hands can hold, explore and throw many more things, so check carefully for dangerous items within his reach.

CURIOUSITY

Now that your child can move around more easily, a whole new world can be explored. Children are born with a built-in need to look, touch and experiment with everything. This is important for learning, so your toddler needs freedom to exercise and explore safely.

GROWING SENSE OF SELF

Your toddler is beginning to see that she can control things and is becoming aware of herself as separate from Mom and Dad. This growing physical and emotional independence sometimes brings temper tantrums and defiance. This may be exhausting and difficult for you. Your child is not being “bad” on purpose. She is just immature and still unable to control her own actions. Be patient with her!

TALKING

A 1-year-old understands many more words than she can say. Each child has a few favorites that only family can understand. New words and phrases will be added every day as you speak and your child repeats what you say. She learns her speaking habits from you — be sure you model what you want her to learn! Many toddlers also develop their own special “sign language” before actually talking. By pointing, putting fingers in their mouth, tapping their head or other motions, they are communicating their needs without words. By paying close attention, you will soon learn what these gestures mean.

ANXIETIES AND FEARS

Along with a need to explore comes much uncertainty about the big, scary world of toddlerhood. Your toddler still does not understand many things. A clingy, whiny, or troublesome child may be telling you that she is worried, uncomfortable or afraid. This is the time for comfort, hugs and understanding words. Don’t make fun of her fears — she really believes there is an alligator under the bed! Also, be careful not to frighten her with threats from the “boogie man.”

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Although all toddlers grow through the same stages, the rate is very different for each child. This is especially true after the first birthday. Some children learn faster in one area and slower in others. For example, 15-month-old Timmy may be able to feed himself and speak several words, but is still wobbly and reluctant to walk. On the other hand, Timmy’s 15-month-old cousin has been walking steadily for several months, but will not talk and her little fingers drop even large objects. Both are still normal!

SAFETY

Make your home an exciting but safe place for your toddler to explore. Make sure to:

- Empty cabinets, drawers and closets of poisons and sharp, breakable or heavy objects.
- Use safety locks on doors and drawers that cannot be emptied.
- Keep small objects out of reach. Baby still likes to “taste” new objects.
- Store medicines and cleaning fluids on high shelves or in locked cabinets.
- Cover unused electric outlets. Children love to poke objects into small spaces.
- Store sewing equipment (scissors, needles, pins, knitting needles) out of reach.
- Put drapery cords on a hook on the wall so they do not dangle where a child can get tangled or strangled.
- Throw away dry cleaning bags immediately.
- Don’t leave a stroller or walker where child can climb on it and pull it over.

Remember, a toddler’s curiosity can lead to injuries such as poisoning, choking, falling, drowning and burns. Supervise a toddler at all times. Keep emergency numbers, including your poison control center, next to the phone.

TOYS FOR TOTS

When your toddler can walk, it is time for push/pull toys, wagons and animals on wheels. Hand coordination is also improving, so simple pull-apart shapes and objects that are easy to hold and interesting to look at are appropriate. Your toddler wants to discover parts of objects and see what they will do. Toys that make noise and are safe to throw are fun. Other popular toys include:

- household items – pots with lids, a handbag to put things in, plastic or wooden spoon to “mix” with, cardboard boxes, rigid plastic containers to stack

12-15 Months