



FIRST CONNECTIONS
with Families

Learning Begins at Birth



FIRST CONNECTIONS
With Families

Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.

- Emilie Buchwald

First Connections with Families is a statewide initiative developed by the Nebraska Department of Education, in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services, to meet the requirements of LB 326, the Nebraska Read, Education and Develop Youth Act. This booklet contains information about child development, reading to your child, and child health and safety.

First Connections with Families is distributed to families in Nebraska with newborn babies. It can also be found on the web at www.education.ne.gov/ECH/fcwf.html

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FIRST CONNECTIONS
With Families



FIRST CONNECTIONS With Families

Birth
to
18 Months

Growing and Learning

Although development follows a general pattern, all babies grow and develop at different rates. Some will be learning and doing things at different times than other babies, even their own brothers and sisters. Some babies do not develop typically or have been diagnosed with a health condition that may result in a developmental delay. If you have concerns about your baby's ability to hear, see, move, talk, eat or play, call the **Early Development Network at 1-888-806-6287**. Don't hurry your baby along. She needs to practice what she has learned before moving to the next skill.



Supporting Growing and Learning

Here are some things your baby will typically learn to do.

Birth - 4 Months:

- ★ Vary cries to tell you what she needs
- ★ Coo back and forth in conversation with you
- ★ Roll from side to back
- ★ Hold and swipe at objects
- ★ Smile and laugh when you play
- ★ Know and prefer your voice

4 - 8 Months:

- ★ Touch you and her toys to signal for more
- ★ Recognize names of familiar people, daily routines
- ★ Roll over in both directions
- ★ Pick up toys of all sizes
- ★ Move objects from hand to hand
- ★ Explore toys
- ★ Turn and look toward sounds
- ★ Sit without support

8 - 12 Months:

- ★ Combine many different sounds
- ★ Move forward to explore the environment
- ★ Stand with support
- ★ Place toys in containers and take them out again
- ★ Cry and fuss when separating from you

12 - 18 Months:

- ★ Use a few words to tell you what she wants
- ★ Make simple choices
- ★ Walk independently
- ★ Learn how to make simple things work
- ★ Place pegs or forms into boards or shape boxes
- ★ Express many types of emotion with more intensity

At birth, your baby's brain is not yet fully developed. Babies are born with over 100 billion brain cells. Some of these cells are connected, but most are not. During the first five years of life (and after that at a slower rate), your child's brain is hard at work connecting these brain cells.

Each time your baby uses one of her senses - seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, and smelling - a connection is made. When different kinds of experiences are repeated over and over again, the connections in your baby's brain become stronger. These connections shape the way she thinks, feels, behaves, and learns.

It is important for babies to "attach" or connect strongly with a small, consistent group of people to build secure, meaningful relationships.

- ★ To develop trust, your baby needs to know that her needs will be met.
- ★ Respond to your baby's cries- it is her form of communication.
- ★ Hold and cuddle your baby; you won't spoil her.
- ★ Use a soft tone of voice; smile and express positive emotions with your baby.
- ★ Be reassuring when your baby starts to notice the difference between friends and strangers.

Birth to 18 Months



Supporting Growing and Learning

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Nurturing your baby actually assists in brain development. If your baby was born too early or with a disability, it is especially important to provide experiences that "feed" the brain.

Here are some things you can do to help your baby grow and learn.

- ★ Protect your baby from being over stimulated. You'll learn to read his signals that he's ready to play (smiling, cooing or looking) or that he needs a change of activity (looking away, yawning or fussing).
- ★ Pace your timing when you play with your baby. When you talk to him... pause...and wait for him to talk back to you.
- ★ When he is awake, time on his tummy helps your baby strengthen his neck, legs and upper body.
- ★ Help your baby learn to communicate by reading his expressions, body movements and sounds. When he smiles, smile back, and when he is upset, comfort him. As he gets older, name things in his world, like rattle, book or bath.
- ★ Look directly at your baby when you talk and play together.
- ★ Play games with your baby. He especially likes those he can join, like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.
- ★ Give your baby safe opportunities to move and explore. He loves "floor time" where he can reach, roll and crawl.
- ★ Babies have very short memories, so you will need to repeat things many times before he understands and learns what you are saying.
- ★ As your baby gets older, help him learn to stop when you say "no" by leading him to a more appropriate activity.
- ★ Tiny babies like toys with bright colors or contrasting patterns. Small, soft rattles that are easy to hold are fun.
- ★ As your baby becomes more active, he will like toys that make music, pop-up, roll, or make other sounds.
- ★ As he becomes more mobile, your baby will like push-and-pull toys, stacking and nesting toys, balls, dolls and stuffed animals, and large building blocks.

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers.



Sharing Books With Your Baby

It is never too early to introduce books to your baby. He will enjoy being held and playing with the book as he listens to the sounds of the words. Your baby will learn that looking at books is enjoyable and special.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you share books with your baby.

- ★ Choose sturdy books with simple, bright, uncluttered pictures against solid backgrounds.
- ★ As he learns to grasp things, pick light, washable, nontoxic cloth or soft vinyl books.
- ★ Hold your baby in your lap and circle your arms gently around him as you read or point to and talk about the pictures in the book.
- ★ Choose books with rhythm, rhyme and repetition.
- ★ Choose books with large pictures that look like the real thing.

Keeping Your Baby Healthy

Parents can help their children develop many healthy practices/habits.



Here are some things you can do to make sure your baby stays healthy.

- ★ Keep the environment smoke-free to reduce the chance of respiratory illness, ear infection, and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- ★ Keep your baby at a safe temperature that is not too hot or too cold.
- ★ Wash your hands and your baby's hands often to prevent the spread of germs.
- ★ Keep up with your baby's well-baby visits to the doctor.
- ★ If your baby's eyes were not examined for signs of eye health and congenital eye problems before you left the hospital, ask your doctor to check when you go for a well-baby check.
- ★ If your baby did not pass the hearing screening before you left the hospital, ask your doctor to check when you go for a well-baby check.

Immunizations are important to protect your baby from diseases. It is very important to keep a copy of your baby's immunization record among your important papers. Your baby will need this record throughout her life to prove she has had immunizations. If your baby attends a licensed child care program, you will be required to provide a record of her current immunizations. In Nebraska it is recommended that your baby have these shots:

At Birth	Hep-B
1-2 Months	Hep-B
2 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota
4 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota
6 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota Hep-B
12 Months	MMR Hib Chickenpox PCV7 Hep-A
15-18 Months	DTaP Hep-A

The influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended each flu season. Children as young as 6 months may receive the flu vaccine. The first time your child receives the flu vaccine she needs two doses separated by at least one month.

Hep-B = Hepatitis B
 DTaP = Diphtheria, Tetanus and Acellular Pertussis
 Hib = Haemophilus Influenzae Type B
 PCV7 = Pneumococcal Disease
 MMR = Measles, Mumps and Rubella
 Polio = Polio
 Chickenpox = Chickenpox or Varicella
 Rota = Rotavirus
 Hep-A = Hepatitis A

For information about each of these immunizations and possible reactions, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.

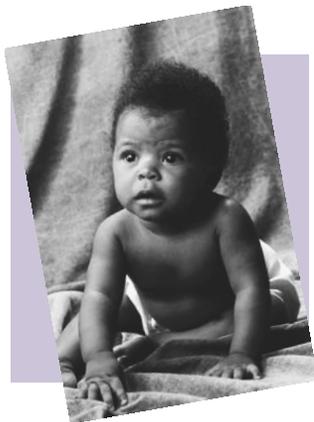
Keeping Your Baby Healthy

- ★ Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for your baby and provides all the nutrition he needs for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding helps protect your baby against colds, ear infections, diarrhea, allergies and other illnesses.
- ★ When your baby can sit with support and has good head and neck control, solid foods can be introduced. It is recommended that solid foods be introduced in this order: iron fortified infant cereal, vegetables and fruits, and then meats.
- ★ Gradually introduce a cup beginning about 6 months of age. By 12 - 14 months most babies can drink from a cup.
- ★ After your baby is 1 year old, you can offer small portions of what the rest of the family is eating. Bread, pasta or rice, fruits and vegetables, cheese or yogurt and cooked lean meat, poultry, or eggs are all good choices. Make sure the pieces are small enough so he will not choke.
- ★ Mouth care begins at birth. Clean his mouth with a soft damp washcloth.
- ★ First teeth appear at about 6 months of age. Clean his teeth gently with a soft-bristled toothbrush. (No toothpaste is needed until age 2, unless your dentist recommends it.)
- ★ Dentists recommend that if your baby takes a bottle before bedtime, you should give only water to prevent tooth decay.
- ★ Your baby's first dental visit should be by age one.



- ★ New parents often wonder when it is appropriate to call the doctor. Over time you will learn what is normal for your baby. If you think your baby might be sick, take his temperature, then call your health care provider. Call the doctor if he has any of these symptoms:
 - diarrhea or very small, hard stools
 - vomiting for more than 12 hours
 - cries more than normal and is hard to comfort in the usual ways
 - skin is yellow, bluish or pale
 - does not wake up on his own for feedings or seems too tired to eat
 - eyes are pink, bloodshot, have a sticky, yellow discharge or the eye lashes stick together
 - ears have drainage or he is pulling/tugging at his ears

Keeping Your Baby Safe



NEVER SHAKE YOUR BABY!

It won't stop her from crying, and she could suffer permanent brain damage or even death.



Here are some things you can do to make sure your baby stays safe.

- ★ Nebraska law requires that children up to 6 years of age be in restraints when riding in a vehicle. From birth to at least one year old and at least 20 pounds, your baby should be in a rear-facing infant or convertible seat in the back seat of the car.
- ★ Make sure you have a federally approved car seat that is installed correctly. To be sure that the seat is installed correctly you can contact a Child Passenger Safety Technician. Call 1-800-745-9311 to find one in your area.
- ★ Make sure the crib is safe. The mattress should be firm, have a fitted sheet and fit snugly so you can get no more than the width of your two fingers between the mattress and crib. A soda can should not fit through the railings. Fluffy blankets, comforters, stuffed animals, and bumper pads pose a real danger of suffocation and should not be in the crib. Make sure your baby's face remains uncovered during sleep.
- ★ Keep the sleeping room at a temperature comfortable for a lightly clothed adult. Your baby can wear a one-piece sleeper with nothing over her. If it's cold, layer her clothing.
- ★ Make sure your baby is never left alone on any surface from which she can fall, such as the changing table, couch or the bed.
- ★ Remember to strap your baby into the swing, stroller and highchair.
- ★ Use a stationary activity center rather than a baby walker. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends not using walkers because they can tip over easily and allow your baby to get into dangerous places that she otherwise would not be able to reach.
- ★ As your baby becomes more active and can move around on her own, watch out for poisonous plants, dangling cords, open stairways, electric outlets, pieces of plastic or a balloon, poisons or medicine, sharp edges, and small objects on the floor. Use baby gates and outlet covers to keep her safe.
- ★ Avoid foods that can cause choking, such as popcorn, pretzels, chips, hot dogs, spoonfuls of peanut butter, raw carrots, celery, mini-marshmallows, raisins and other dried fruits, and whole grapes.
- ★ If your house was built before 1978, check that all the paint in your home is lead free and non-toxic.
- ★ Learn infant/toddler CPR and first aid.
- ★ Never leave your baby unattended in the bathtub or around any water. Empty all containers with water immediately after use. Babies can drown in as little as 1" of water.
- ★ Babies under the age of 1 should stay out of the direct sunlight.
- ★ Apply a generous amount of sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15, or higher, 15-30 minutes before going outside. Sunscreen should not be used on babies under 6 months.

Always place your baby on her **back** to sleep and be sure to tell other caregivers about a safe sleep place. Your baby should not sleep with another child or adult. A close but separate sleeping environment in the parent's room is recommended.



Choosing Quality Child Care

Finding the “right place” for your baby is an important decision for a family. You can choose a child care center or you might prefer a smaller family child care home. The names of licensed caregivers in your area can be obtained from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at **1-800-600-1289**.

Here are some things to look for when selecting child care for your baby.

- ☆ A state child care license
- ☆ Strict health and sanitation policies
- ☆ An emergency plan, including staff trained in pediatric first aid and infant CPR
- ☆ A handbook or written policies for parents
- ☆ A good adult-baby ratio (1 adult for every 3-4 babies is ideal)
- ☆ A good group size (no more than 12 is ideal)
- ☆ Staff who have training in early childhood education, child development, or other specialized training
- ☆ Staff who have experience working with babies
- ☆ Staff who are warm and responsive
- ☆ Happy, alert and clean babies
- ☆ Toys that are safe and age appropriate
- ☆ A philosophy of child rearing similar to yours
- ☆ Accommodations for breastfeeding mothers

Supporting Families

Who would ever believe that a baby would make such a difference in your family! Many of your relationships are changing. Your new responsibilities and interests may lead to changes in the way you relate to friends and family. When a baby comes into your lives, it's important for parents to find time for themselves and for their special others.

Don't be surprised if things are harder than you thought. Make sure you are eating well, sleeping whenever you can and keeping yourself physically active. Many new moms have feelings of sadness, mood changes or lack of appetite. These “post-partum blues” are common and should go away in a few weeks. If they last longer or get worse, tell your doctor or other health care provider.

If you are working, you may be very tired when you pick up your baby from child care. He may demand your attention because he missed you. This may be the hardest part of your day. Spend a few minutes with him when you first get home. Help him establish a routine. He may like playing with his sister or playing with toys in the kitchen drawer while you fix supper. This may help him learn other ways to play until you can take time to play together.

Older children may be resentful or jealous of a new baby. They may start doing things you don't like to get your attention. Take time to be with them - your new baby will be just fine. Point out to your other children that the baby really likes them. Older children can be good helpers, but remember they need a special time with you, too. Accept their offers of help. As your baby gets older and becomes mobile, brothers and sisters need room to play away from the baby.



FIRST CONNECTIONS With Families

18 Months
to
3 Years

Growing and Learning

Although development follows a general pattern, all toddlers grow and develop at different rates. Some will be learning and doing things at different times than other toddlers, even their own brothers and sisters. Some children do not develop typically or have been diagnosed with a health condition that may result in a developmental delay. If you have concerns about your child's ability to hear, see, move, talk, eat or play, call the **Early Development Network at 1-888-806-6287**. Don't hurry your toddler along. He needs to practice what he has learned before moving to the next skill.



Here are some things your toddler will typically learn to do.

18 - 24 Months:

- ◆ Say two-word phrases
- ◆ Climb on the furniture
- ◆ Throw a ball
- ◆ Pretend with dolls and household items
- ◆ Complete simple puzzles and fit toys together
- ◆ Play side by side with other children
- ◆ Show independence through strong emotions

2 Years:

- ◆ Combine three to four words in phrases
- ◆ Ask questions
- ◆ Balance on one foot and learn to jump
- ◆ Climb up and down stairs
- ◆ Fit together objects of different sizes and shapes
- ◆ Learn about quantities
- ◆ Act out daily experiences
- ◆ Play with other children of the same age

Supporting Growing and Learning

Your toddler's brain is still hard at work connecting all the brain cells. These connections will determine a lifetime of skills and potential. How you play and talk with him, plus the experiences you provide, can have a long-lasting impact on intelligence and character. A young child is very tuned in to his surroundings. He absorbs what is going on around him, including positive and negative conversations, expressions, and tone of voice. Be mindful of the environment that you create for your child.

All toddlers grow and
develop at
different rates.

18 Months to 3 Years

Supporting Growing and Learning

Here are some things you can do to help your toddler grow and learn.

- ◆ Let your child take the lead while you respond to the play she selects.
- ◆ A toddler likes to play by pretending to do the same things that she sees others do, such as cooking a meal, dressing up (especially in hats and shoes), or talking on the telephone.
- ◆ Sit with your child for brief periods of time at a small table to play with a toy or draw. Toddlers may think they are forming letters when they scribble; encourage this first step toward writing.
- ◆ Experiment with art materials. Toddlers like using finger paint and fat crayons on large sheets of paper.
- ◆ Sing, count, talk, listen and READ, READ, READ to your child.
- ◆ Play with toy trucks, dolls, ride-on toys, blocks, and simple puzzles and shape toys.
- ◆ Daily routines can be fun. Use bath time as a time to talk about the way the water feels, see what sinks or floats, what bubbles, and what happens when you gently splash.
- ◆ Give your child simple tasks such as finding a book or getting her jacket.
- ◆ Although your child enjoys being with other children, sharing is still difficult. You might provide duplicate toys, when possible, to avoid incidents.
- ◆ Children enjoy going to the grocery store, and on other outings. If your toddler is well rested and in a good mood, the outing will be enjoyable for both of you.
- ◆ Help your toddler become independent in a positive way. Keep the rules simple, repeat the rules frequently, stay calm and have patience, and don't expect too much - she is still learning.
- ◆ By age 2½, your toddler may be ready to learn about using the potty/toilet. During the day, suggest she sit on the potty/toilet. It is important that she wears training pants (not diapers) while she is learning. Encourage and praise her for her efforts and for her successes. Do not pressure or scold her.



If Your Child Bites

Biting is not unusual for a toddler. Your child is more likely to bite if she is teething, hungry, tired, frustrated, angry or bored. She might bite out of simple curiosity to see how something tastes or feels in her mouth, or she may even bite to express affection.

- ◆ If your child bites, here are some things you can do:
- ◆ Watch for signs that your child might bite and give her a safe alternative such as a toy or teething ring to bite.
- ◆ Gently but firmly say to her: "Ouch! Biting hurts. Please don't bite."
- ◆ Praise your child for not biting.
- ◆ NEVER bite your child back. This will hurt and frighten her and she may learn that biting is okay if you are bigger.

Developing Good Feelings

Your child is becoming more independent and at times very stubborn.

- ◆ Your child may have strong feelings - be there to comfort her.
- ◆ Show pride and pleasure in the things she does well.
- ◆ Be firm with your child, but be in control of your own emotions.
- ◆ Enjoy special cuddly moments with your child - but you may need to wait until she is ready.
- ◆ Develop routines for bedtime and meals.
- ◆ Help her learn and use words to get what she needs.
- ◆ Help her find acceptable ways to express her feelings.

Sharing Books with Your Toddler

Reading aloud with your toddler helps to build his vocabulary with words he understands and can use. Books are fun and valuable play materials. Most of all, reading with your toddler is fun. Enjoy this special time together.



Here are some things to keep in mind as you share books with your toddler.

- ◆ Choose simple picture books that help him make sense of concepts such as size, color, shape and time.
- ◆ Choose books with flaps to lift and textures to feel.
- ◆ Read wordless picture books and storybooks with brief, simple plots and only a few words on each page.
- ◆ Choose books with rhymes and predictable words he can remember.
- ◆ Look for books with lots of pictures of things to name.
- ◆ Choose books you will enjoy reading over and over.
- ◆ Reading at bedtime will help your toddler "settle down" after a busy day and will bring a smooth, happy ending to the day.



Keeping Your Toddler Healthy

Parents can help their children develop many healthy practices/habits.

Here are some things you can do to make sure your toddler stays healthy.

- ◆ Keep your home smoke-free. Secondary smoke can increase the chances of respiratory illness.
- ◆ Wash your hands and your toddler's hands with soap and running water often to prevent the spread of germs. Help him learn the proper procedure for hand washing.
- ◆ Developing a naptime routine will help your toddler sleep better.
- ◆ Use a child-sized, soft bristle toothbrush, and after age 2 a pea-sized amount of toothpaste after each meal.
- ◆ Visit the dentist every 6 months or as indicated by his needs. Ask the dentist about the need for fluoride.
- ◆ Continue with well-child visits to the doctor.
- ◆ Unless you notice a need, your child's first visit to an eye doctor for a thorough vision examination should be by age three.

Immunizations are important to protect your child from diseases. It is very important to keep a copy of her immunization record among your important papers. Your child will need this record throughout her life to prove she has had immunizations. If your child has missed any shots, now is the time to catch up. If your child attends a licensed child care program, you will be required to provide a record of her current immunizations. In Nebraska it is recommended that your child have these shots:

At Birth	Hep-B
1 - 2 Months	Hep-B
2 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota
4 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota
6 Months	DTaP Hib Polio PCV7 Rota Hep-B
12 Months	MMR Hib Chickenpox PCV7 Hep-A
15-18 Months	DTaP Hep-A

The influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended each flu season. Children as young as 6 months may receive the flu vaccine. The first time your child receives the flu vaccine she needs two doses separated by at least one month.

Hep-B = Hepatitis B
 DTaP = Diphtheria, Tetanus and Acellular Pertussis
 Hib = Haemophilus Influenzae Type B
 PCV7 = Pneumonccocal Disease
 MMR = Measles, Mumps and Rubella
 Polio = Polio
 Chickenpox = Chickenpox or Varicella
 Rota = Rotavirus
 Hep-A = Hepatitis A

For information about each of these immunizations and possible reactions, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.

Building a Healthy Body

You can help your child learn to be healthy and active throughout her life.

- ◆ Serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner and 2 or 3 healthy snacks every day. Offer smaller amounts, about 1/4 to 1/3 the size of a grown up serving. Let your child decide when she has had enough to eat. If she is not hungry at a meal, she will eat again at snack time.
- ◆ Offer water between meals and when your child is thirsty. Serve milk at mealtime. Limit juice - she only needs about 4-6 ounces of 100% fruit juice per day.
- ◆ Your child depends upon you to learn new things. Offer her at least 5 fruits and vegetables each day. Offer some of her favorite foods and some new foods. She may or may not try a new food when first offered. If she does not eat it this time, she will try it some other time. Keep serving the food. Make trying new foods fun. Teach about the different colors and shapes of fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Make meals memorable. Take time to eat together and talk with your family. Family meals teach children to like healthy foods. They also teach children eye-hand coordination and table manners. Turn off the TV during meals. TV distracts children and makes them overeat.
- ◆ Set a good example. Offer healthy foods and let your child see you eating them too.
- ◆ Active kids are healthy kids. Encourage your child to play actively for one to two hours every day. She will like to run, jump and climb. Play active games with her.
- ◆ Provide time to play outdoors whenever possible.
- ◆ Limit TV viewing to no more than 1 hour per day.



Keeping Your Toddler Safe

Toddlers are quick explorers and can get into things in a blink.

Here are some things you can do to make sure your toddler stays safe.

- ◆ Nebraska law requires that children up to 6 years of age be in restraints when riding in a vehicle. From age one to about age four and 20-40 pounds, your toddler can be in a forward-facing seat in the back seat of the car.
- ◆ Make sure you have a federally approved car seat that is installed correctly. To be sure that the seat is installed correctly you can contact a Child Passenger Safety Technician. Call **1-800-745-9311** to find one in your area.
- ◆ Provide close supervision wherever your child is playing. Toddlers are at an increased risk for fall-related injuries.
- ◆ Toddlers like to play outside. Make sure the yard fence is high enough and all gates are securely latched.
- ◆ If you have not already done so, now is the time to "toddler proof" your home. Place breakable things up high where your child can't reach them. Make sure that electrical outlets are covered and secure other things that might be dangerous. Use child-proof containers for toxic substances and keep them out of reach.
- ◆ Leave a night light on in case your toddler climbs out of bed or has a bad dream.
- ◆ Watch out for small objects (bugs, pins, jewelry, buttons) that might easily slip into your toddler's mouth. Anything small enough to fall through a toilet paper roll is too small for him.
- ◆ It is still easy for toddlers to choke on foods, so watch for foods such as popcorn, pretzels, chips, hot dogs, peanut butter, raw carrots, mini-marshmallows, raisins and other dried fruits, and whole grapes.
- ◆ Learn infant/toddler CPR and first aid.
- ◆ Never leave your toddler unsupervised around bodies of water, such as bathtubs and swimming pools. Don't rely on a life jacket to keep him safe.
- ◆ Always remove toys from swimming pools when finished swimming so that your toddler won't be tempted to reach in to retrieve them.
- ◆ Apply generous amounts of sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15, or higher, 15-30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sunscreen if it gets washed off due to swimming or sweating.
- ◆ Limit exposure to the sun between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.



Choosing Quality Child Care

Finding the "right place" for your toddler is an important decision for a family. You may choose a child care center or you might prefer a smaller family child care home. The names of licensed caregivers in your area can be obtained from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at **1-800-600-1289**.



Here are some things to look for when selecting child care for your toddler.

- ◆ A state child care license
- ◆ Strict health and sanitation policies
- ◆ An emergency plan, including staff trained in pediatric first aid and CPR
- ◆ A handbook or written policies for parents
- ◆ A good adult-child ratio (1 adult for every 5-6 toddlers is ideal)
- ◆ A good group size (no more than 12 is ideal)
- ◆ Healthy meals and snacks
- ◆ Staff with training in early childhood education, child development, or other specialized training
- ◆ Staff who are warm, responsive and respectful
- ◆ Staff with experience working with toddlers
- ◆ Sounds of happy children engaged in play
- ◆ Opportunities for children to interact in small groups
- ◆ A balance of active and quiet activities
- ◆ Enough toys that are safe and age appropriate
- ◆ Positive guidance and discipline practices

Supporting Families

As your baby becomes an active toddler, you may find that:

- ◆ There may be more struggles with brothers and sisters as your toddler becomes increasingly active. It's important to not take sides in disagreements and to spend special time with each of your children.
- ◆ You may miss the intimacy of babyhood. With your toddler's growing independence, you'll find many other rewards.
- ◆ The challenges of parenthood are becoming even more challenging. Talking with other adults can help make a difference.
- ◆ Conflicts can occur between parents or between a parent and grandparent as you decide on guidance and discipline approaches. Talk about discipline and agree on strategies you both will use.



FIRST CONNECTIONS With Families

3 to 5
Years

Growing and Learning

Although development follows a general pattern, all children grow and develop at different rates. Some will be learning and doing things at different times than other children, even their own brothers and sisters. Some preschoolers do not develop typically or have been diagnosed with a health condition that may result in a developmental delay. If you have concerns about your child's ability to see, hear, talk, eat or play, call your local school district or 1-888-806-6287. Don't hurry your child along. She needs to practice what she has learned before moving to the next skill.



Supporting Growing and Learning

Children learn best by doing. You can help your preschooler grow and learn to her optimum potential by remembering these suggestions.

Here are some things your preschooler will typically learn to do.

3 Years

- ♥ Learn many ideas and use new words in short sentences
- ♥ Ask many questions and tell stories
- ♥ Become more coordinated for running, climbing and riding a tricycle
- ♥ Learn about gender and family differences
- ♥ Match colors and shapes
- ♥ Learn to play with other children
- ♥ Learn to solve problems

4 Years

- ♥ Use words to respond to others
- ♥ Use longer sentences in conversations
- ♥ Improve drawing, building, and cutting skills
- ♥ Discover about sizes, volumes, shapes, and colors
- ♥ Learn to count
- ♥ Participate in dramatic play
- ♥ Play cooperatively with other children
- ♥ Recognize some numbers and letters

5 years

- ♥ Run, jump, hop, skip and climb with ease
- ♥ Follow three-step directions
- ♥ Recognize her printed name
- ♥ Ask and answer who, what, when, where questions
- ♥ Enjoy games and follow simple rules
- ♥ Understand right and wrong
- ♥ Draw with details

- ♥ Provide a variety of things to play with; this can include things from around the house.
- ♥ Cut the front of a cereal box into several pieces to make a simple puzzle and help your child put it back together.
- ♥ Put a blanket over a card table. Let your child create a house inside.
- ♥ Do exercises together to music — jumping jacks, toe touches, bend from side to side.
- ♥ Plant some seeds, care for them, and watch them grow.
- ♥ Make a sandwich together. First it's a square, then cut diagonally it becomes two triangles.
- ♥ Have your child help you set the table or match socks.
- ♥ Read books together.
- ♥ Children this age love to tell stories. They have great imaginations and can be very creative. Enjoy their *tall tales*.

3 to 5 Years

Guiding Behavior



Your child is just starting to understand the ideas of good and bad behavior, fairness, and taking turns. He is becoming independent, but still does not always know how to control his behavior. Your child needs to learn what he can and cannot do. Here are some guidelines:

- ♥ Set a few simple rules. Your child needs limits to feel secure.
- ♥ Provide a simple explanation for each rule.
- ♥ Be positive. Say, "walk in the house" rather than, "don't run".
- ♥ Be consistent. If the rule is to walk in the house, don't play running games inside.
- ♥ Use logical or natural consequences. If he doesn't wear mittens when playing in the snow, his hands will get cold.
- ♥ Model good behavior. Your child learns from watching you.
- ♥ Allow your child to make simple choices and then honor his decision. Ask him, "Do you want peas or carrots?"
- ♥ Some children may be aggressive — they try biting, hitting, pushing, and throwing things. Try to stop a situation before it gets to this point.
- ♥ Help your child find a different activity when things aren't going well.
- ♥ Always keep safety first. Stay close to your child during a tantrum.
- ♥ Help your child think of an acceptable solution to resolve his problem or conflict.
- ♥ Help your child verbalize his feelings of anger, frustration or sadness.
- ♥ Let your child know when you like the way he is behaving.



Acknowledge the good things your child is doing



Sharing Books With Your Preschooler

It is important to read aloud to children of all ages. Reading aloud presents books as sources of pleasant, valuable, and exciting experiences. Children who value books are motivated to read on their own. Reading aloud lets parents be role models for reading. When children see adults excited about reading, they will catch their enthusiasm. Books provide your preschooler with the quiet times she needs in her busy life.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you share books with your preschooler.

- ♥ Read stories with simple plots she can retell in her own words. Read books with rhymes, phrases, and story lines that let her participate.
- ♥ As she learns new concepts and self-help skills, read stories with characters who are having similar experiences.
- ♥ Read longer picture books, and around age five start to read chapter books that last for several sessions.
- ♥ Read books that let her use her knowledge to understand new information and ideas.
- ♥ Read poems and books with rhymes that help her learn about the sounds of letters and words.
- ♥ Visit your local library. Many libraries have a preschool story time. Check to see at what age your preschooler can get a library card.

Watching Television

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours per day of educational, non-violent quality programming. Time spent watching television takes away from important activities such as reading, playing, social development and family interaction. Your child can learn information from television that may be inappropriate or incorrect. She often can't tell the difference between the fantasy presented on TV and reality. Your child is impressionable and may assume that what she sees on television is typical, safe, and acceptable. Parents can help their child have a positive experience with TV by:

- ♥ viewing programs with her
- ♥ selecting shows appropriate for her age
- ♥ placing limits on the amount of daily and weekly viewing
- ♥ setting certain periods when the TV will be off

Parents need to also keep these suggestions in mind when using videos, DVDs or computer games with their child.

Keeping Your Preschooler Healthy

Parents can help their children develop many healthy practices/habits.

Here are some things you can do to make sure your child stays healthy.

- ♥ Continue to visit the dentist every 6 months or as needed by your child. Ask your dentist if there is enough fluoride in the drinking water or if you need to use toothpaste with fluoride.
- ♥ Assist your child with brushing teeth at least twice a day. Use a child-size, soft-bristle toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- ♥ Keep your home smoke-free. Secondary smoke can increase the chances of respiratory illness.
- ♥ Wash your hands and assist your child to wash his hands with soap and running water often to prevent the spread of germs. Help him learn the proper procedure for hand washing.
- ♥ Preschoolers may sleep 10 - 12 hours at night and may not need a nap.
- ♥ Serve healthy foods for meals and snacks.
- ♥ Let your child choose how much food to eat at a meal and let him stop eating when he is full.
- ♥ Your child should drink about 2 cups of milk each day. Give water to him between meals or whenever he is thirsty. You can offer him $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup 100% fruit juice per day. Drinking more than this can reduce his appetite for other healthy foods.
- ♥ Be a positive role model - practice healthy eating behaviors yourself.
- ♥ Continue with well-child visits to the doctor.
- ♥ Encourage your child to be physically active by playing tag or ball, and jumping, climbing and running.
- ♥ Active kids are healthy kids. Encourage your child to play actively for one to two hours every day.



Immunizations are important to protect your child from diseases. It is very important to keep a copy of his immunization record among your important papers. Your child will need this record throughout his life to prove he has had immunizations. If your child has missed any shots, now is the time to catch up. Every state has laws that require immunization for attending school. These are the shots your child needs before starting school in Nebraska:

- ♥ 3 DTaP (one given on or after 4th birthday)
- ♥ 3 Polio
- ♥ 2 MMR
- ♥ 3 Hep-B
- ♥ 1 Chickenpox (or documentation that child has had chickenpox)
- ♥ The influenza (flu) vaccine is recommended each flu season. The first time your child receives the flu vaccine he needs two doses separated by at least one month
- ♥ For information about each of these immunizations and possible reactions, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.

Hep-B = Hepatitis B
 DTaP = Diphtheria, Tetanus & Acellular Pertussis
 MMR = Measles, Mumps & Rubella
 Polio = Polio
 Chickenpox = Chickenpox or Varicella

Keeping Your Preschooler Safe

Here are some things you can do to make sure your preschooler stays safe.

- ♥ Nebraska law requires that children up to 6 years of age be in restraints when riding in a vehicle. From age one to about age four and 20-40 pounds, your child can be in a forward-facing seat in the back seat of the car.
- ♥ Once your child is six years old she can move to a booster seat. All children 12 and under should ride in the back seat. Make sure you have a federally approved seat that is installed correctly. To be sure that the seat is installed correctly you can contact a Child Passenger Safety Technician. Call **1-800-745-9311** to find one in your area.
- ♥ Provide close supervision. Make sure your child rides her tricycle away from the street and always wears a helmet.
- ♥ Keep matches and lighters, medicines, and hazardous materials out of reach.
- ♥ Leave a night light on in case your child wakes in the night or has a bad dream.
- ♥ Help your child learn to cross streets and walk safely through parking lots.
- ♥ Never leave your child unsupervised around bodies of water, such as bathtubs and swimming pools. Don't rely on a life jacket to keep her safe.
- ♥ Apply generous amounts of sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15, or higher, 15-30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sunscreen if it gets washed off due to swimming or sweating.
- ♥ Limit exposure to the sun between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.



Choosing Quality Child Care

Finding the "right place" for your child is an important decision for a family. You may choose a child care center or you might prefer a smaller family child care home. The names of licensed caregivers in your area can be obtained from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at **1-800-600-1289**.

Here are some things to look for when selecting child care for your preschooler.

- ♥ A state child care license
- ♥ Strict health and sanitation policies
- ♥ An emergency plan, including staff trained in pediatric first aid and CPR
- ♥ A handbook or written policies for parents
- ♥ Healthy meals and snacks
- ♥ A good adult-child ratio (1 adult for every 10 children is ideal)
- ♥ A good group size (no more than 20 is ideal)
- ♥ Staff with training in early childhood education, child development, or other specialized training
- ♥ Staff who are warm, responsive, and respectful
- ♥ Staff with experience working with preschoolers
- ♥ Sounds of happy children engaged in play
- ♥ Opportunities for children to interact in small groups
- ♥ A balance of active and quiet activities
- ♥ Enough toys that are safe and age appropriate
- ♥ Positive guidance and discipline practices



Going to Kindergarten

Concerns are often expressed by parents about their child's readiness for school. Parents can help assure their child's readiness for kindergarten by making sure that their child:

- ♥ is well nourished and has his health, including dental health, needs met
- ♥ has plenty of opportunities to develop physically through vigorous play and use of building materials of various kinds
- ♥ has a language-rich environment through conversation and being read to on a daily basis
- ♥ has a wide variety of play-oriented experiences which add to his general knowledge about the world
- ♥ has a personal sense of well-being and confidence in his abilities
- ♥ is encouraged to be curious, creative, independent, cooperative, persistent and responsible in age-appropriate ways

When registering your child for kindergarten, you will need his official birth certificate, the results of a current physical exam, and an up-to-date record of his immunizations. Answers to some of the frequently asked questions and concerns of parents of about-to-be kindergarteners can be found in [Come As You Are: Kindergarten for Nebraska's Children](#). Copies are available from the Nebraska Department of Education.

Supporting Families

Being a parent presents many challenges and rewards. Sometimes you'll become frustrated at your child's independence or sad that your preschooler needs you less. These feelings are typical. If you're experiencing stress, see if you can leave him for a short time with your spouse or another trusted adult.

As a parent, you are likely to be a different parent with each child as you gain experience, your life changes, and you respond to the individual needs of each of your children. You may feel your relatives and friends are now more critical of your child's behavior, noise, or activity level. You, too, may wonder if you know how to make your child behave. Have confidence in the limits you set and firmly respond when tested. You should see progress over time.

Whether your child is the oldest, youngest or only child, his position in the family is a significant factor in his development. Having brothers and sisters, either older and/or younger, changes his experience in the family and the world.

Fighting is not unusual among brothers and sisters. Don't expect to eliminate fights entirely — just try to keep them under control. Restate the limits you set — no hitting, no name calling. Encourage your child to put his feelings into words rather than just acting on them. Have him come up with solutions everyone can feel good about.



The single most important activity for building knowledge for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to your child. Reading helps her learn about language. Reading to your child helps prepare her for school success. Reading to your child gives her new experiences. Reading strengthens your relationship with your child. Books help expand your child's understanding of the whole world. Books help develop her imagination. The books listed here include classics that are favorites of both children and adults as well as newer publications that are quickly becoming favorites. You can find these and many more books at your local bookstore or public library. Titles with an * indicate the book is available in Spanish.

Birth-18 Months

Time for Bed by Mem Fox
"More More More," Said The Baby by Vera B. Williams
Catch Me & Kiss Me & Say It Again by Clyde Watson
Jamberry by Bruce Degen
Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by Nancy White Carlstrom
Parade by Donald Crews
Trucks by Anne Rockwell
Early Morning in the Barn by Nancy Tafuri
Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw
Sam's Bath by Barbro Lindgren
***Goodnight Moon** by Margaret Wise Brown
Tomie's Little Mother Goose by Tomie de Paola
Max by Rosemary Wells
Pat the Bunny by Dorothy Kunhardt
***Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?** by Bill Martin, Jr.
Black on White. White on Black. by Tana Hoban
***The Runaway Bunny** by Margaret Wise Brown



18 Months-3 Years



***Corduroy** by Don Freeman
***Clifford** by Norman Bridwell
***Rosie's Walk** by Pat Hutchins
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin, Jr. & John Archambault
***If You Give a Mouse a Cookie** by Laura J. Numeroff
Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet & Allen Ahlberg
***Where's Spot** by Eric Hill
***Ten, Nine, Eight** by Molly Bang
***I Went Walking** by Sue Williams
Benny Bakes a Cake by Eve Rice
The Wheels on the Bus by Paul O. Zelinsky
Today is Monday by Eric Carle
***How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night?** by Jane Yolen
Flora's Blanket by Debi Gliori
Calling All Toddlers by Francesca Simon
Alphabet Soup by Kate Brooks
***Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born** by Jamie Lee Curtis

Reading with Children

3-5 Years

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey
The Little Red Hen by Paul Galdone
Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
Owl Moon by Jane Yolen
***Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ear** by Verna Aardema
***Caps for Sale** by Esphyr Slobodkina
Going to the Dentist by Fred Rogers
***Madeline** by Ludwig Bemelmans
***Frances** by Russell Hoban
***Curious George** by H. A. Rey
***Strega Nona** by Tomie de Paola
***Ira Sleeps Over** by Bernard Waber
***Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak
***Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel** by Virginia Lee Burton
***The Carrot Seed** by Beth Krause
***Harold and the Purple Crayon** by Crockett Johnson
***The Snowy Day** by Ezra Jack Keats
The Little House by Virginia Lee Burton
***Stone Soup** by Marcia Brown
The Mitten by Jan Brett
***Mama, Do You Love Me?** by Barbara M. Joosse
***The Very Hungry Caterpillar** by Eric Carle



For Big Brothers and Big Sisters Up to 8 Years

***A Baby Sister for Frances** by Russell Hoban
***Peter's Chair** by Ezra Jack Keats
On Mother's Lap by Ann Herbert Scott
Welcoming Babies by Margy Burns Knight
Flip & Flop by Dawn Apperley
The New Baby at Your House by J. Cole
Nobody Asked Me if I Wanted a Baby Sister by Martha Alexander
The Baby Sister by Tomie de Paola
I'm A Big Sister by Joanna Cole
Buster by Denise Fleming
Happy Birth Day! by Robie H. Harris, Michael Emberley
Just Like a Baby by Rebecca Bond
Oh, Brother by Kathy Mallat



FIRST CONNECTIONS

With Families

Resource Directory

Agency/Organization	Phone	Website
American Red Cross <i>Provides information about CPR & First Aid classes and swimming lessons.</i>	Check your local phone book.	www.redcross.org
Answers4Families <i>Provides information, opportunities for dialogue, education, and support to Nebraskans with special needs and their families.</i>	1-800-746-8420	www.answers4families.org
Nebraska 2-1-1 <i>Provides information about health and human services for children and families.</i>	211	www.ne211.org
Child Abuse Hotline <i>Report suspected child abuse cases to Health and Human Services or local law enforcement.</i>	1-800-652-1999	www.dhhs.ne.gov/cha/chaindex.htm
Early Childhood Training Center <i>Call for library resources & parenting information, questions about quality child care, and other early childhood issues.</i>	1-800-89CHILD	http://ectc.education.ne.gov
Early Development Network <i>Provides information about services and support for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.</i>	1-888-806-6287	http://edn.ne.gov
Healthy Mothers/Healthy Babies Helpline <i>Trained nurses answer questions, provide referrals for medical, financial, emotional and other health related issues.</i>	1-800-862-1889	www.dhhs.ne.gov/lifespanHealth/HealthyMothersHealthyBabies.htm
My Baby's Hearing <i>A website to answer questions about newborn hearing screening and steps to take after diagnosis of hearing loss.</i>		www.babyhearing.org
Nebraska CHILDFIND <i>Answers questions about child development and provides information for parents of children (birth – 21) with disabilities about their rights, available resources and the responsibility of the local school district in providing services.</i>	1-888-806-6287	www.childfind.ne.gov
Nebraska Department of Education	402-471-2295	www.education.ne.gov
– Office of Early Childhood <i>Provides information about services and support to high quality early childhood programs.</i>	402-471-3184	www.education.ne.gov/ECH/ECH.html
– Office of Early Childhood Special Education <i>Provides information about services and support to children (birth-5) with disabilities through their local school district.</i>	402-471-2471	www.education.ne.gov/ECH/ECSE/ecse.html
– Head Start-State Collaboration Office <i>Provides information to find the location of a local Head Start Program.</i>	402-471-3501	www.education.ne.gov/ECH/HSSCO.html

Resource Directory

Agency/Organization	Phone	Website
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services	402-471-3121	www.dhhs.ne.gov/index.htm
– Child Care Licensing <i>Provides a listing of all licensed center, home and preschool programs. Request copies of inspection reports or make complaints against licensed or unlicensed child care and preschool programs.</i>	1-800-600-1289	www.dhhs.ne.gov/crl/childcare/childcareindex.htm
– Community Mental Health Services <i>Provides information to help locate community-based mental health providers.</i>	402-471-2851	www.dhhs.ne.gov/beh/mh/mh.htm
– Immunizations <i>Provides information regarding immunization for both adults and children.</i>	402-471-6423	www.dhhs.ne.gov/immunization
– Kids Connection <i>Provides information about health coverage to uninsured children under 19 years and children with minimal insurance across the state.</i>	1-877-632-5437	www.dhhs.ne.gov/med/kidsconx.htm
– Medically Handicapped Children’s Program <i>Provides family-focused services, coordination/case management, specialty medical team evaluations, access to specialty physicians, and payment of treatment services.</i>	1-800-358-8802	www.dhhs.ne.gov/hcs/programs/MHCP.htm
– Vital Records <i>Provides information to obtain a birth or death certificate.</i>	402-471-2871	www.dhhs.ne.gov/vital_records.htm
– WIC <i>Provides free food and nutrition information and referrals to other services to help keep pregnant women, infants and children under five healthy and strong.</i>	1-800-942-1171	www.dhhs.ne.gov/wic
– Commodity Supplemental Food Program <i>Provides a monthly nutritious food box to children, women who are breastfeeding and women up to 1 year postpartum. Referrals and nutrition education are also provided.</i>	1-800-942-1171	www.dhhs.ne.gov/Nutrition/csfp.htm
Nebraska Safe Kids Campaign <i>Promotes childhood safety through education & awareness, and distribution of safety devices.</i>	1-800-745-9311	www.dhhs.ne.gov/hpe/safekids.htm
Nebraska Library Commission <i>Provides information to locate a library in a local community or area.</i>	1-800-307-2665	www.nlc.state.ne.us
PTI Nebraska <i>Provides information and resources to parents of children with disabilities.</i>	1-800-284-8520	www.pti-nebraska.org
Poison Center <i>Provides information about all aspects of poisoning and referral to treatment centers.</i>	1-800-222-1222	http://www.nebraskamed.com/poison_center
See to Learn <i>Offers free vision assessments to 3 year olds.</i>	1-800-960-EYES	http://www.seetolearn.com/

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