



TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... A Parent Newsletter for Toddlers, Preschoolers and beyond! *2007 Issue Six*

TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... a learn-at-home parent newsletter created by Penn State Cooperative Extension welcomes you. This newsletter is designed to assist parents, grandparents, caregivers and all adults who care about and for children in all their interactions with children. We will continue to make these issues available on-line as well as in hard copy format.

We hope you will find helpful tips and techniques to improve your family's time together while providing you with information that will enrich your children's learning process. **Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county for information on other educational programs of interest to you and your family.**

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Editor

In this issue:

- **I Feel Great! (part 2)**
- **Make Junk Food Healthy**
- **Change It Up!**
- **It's All About the Mess**
- **Happy Birthday**
- **Lead Poisoning – Keep Your Child Safe**

I Feel Great! (part 2)
Cynthia Pollich, MEd
Lancaster County

Tips for Supporting Early Social-Emotional Development by Promoting Language And Literacy

Make speech and language learning a priority from day one. Remember that just because your infant can't speak does not mean that she doesn't begin to understand the fundamentals of language.

Hearing is critical to normal language development. Even if your child's hearing appears normal at birth – ear infections and allergies can easily compromise hearing in the first few years of life.

Receptive Language (understood) almost always exceeds Expressive Language (spoken). This means that many babies are actually a few steps ahead of where their parents believe they are, linguistically speaking.

Your interactions with your child are the most important components of Language Development. Begin speaking to your child early, and converse with your child often. Your positive and loving interactions are critical to your baby's social, emotional and intellectual development.



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I Feel Great! (part 2) (Continued)

Respond to your baby's attempts at communication. Encourage your child's vocalizations. You can play an early game of imitation with soft vowel sounds with your baby. Encourage your baby to make vowel-like and consonant-vowel sounds such as "ma," "da," and "ba." Reinforce attempts at communication by maintaining eye contact, responding with speech, and imitating your baby's vocalizations. Speak to your infant as you go about your everyday routine.

Use Verbal Labeling with your child. Verbal Labeling means pointing out and naming objects for your child. You can use books to do this, and you can do this as you walk around with your child. Point to and name objects for your child. This is a very important component of language learning for your child and can be an incredibly effective way to teach new words. Be on the look out for interesting pictures and words in your child's books, in stores, or on street signs, then point to them. Use the new words in sentences again and again. Make reading aloud a daily habit! It's a wonderful routine to help your child prepare for bedtime. Like all habits, this one may take a while to get established, but hang in there until it's a daily (or nightly) routine.

Play interactive games with your child. Teach your baby to imitate you as you clap, throw kisses, Wave Bye, Bye, etc. Play hand and finger games such as pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo, and the itsy-bitsy-spider. Hide objects from your baby and have her find them.

Talk to your baby. Talk as you bathe, feed, carry, and dress your baby. Talk about what you are doing and about the people, places and things around you. Identify colors for your baby. Count things with your baby. Mix it up. Use a variety of words each day. Instead of using the word nice, say, "It's a marvelous day." Explain the word to your child and use it again in another way. Follow your child's lead. Provide the words to describe his interests. If your child notices a bug, say, "What do you see? A caterpillar? Yes. It's a caterpillar. A small, fuzzy, brown caterpillar."

Select an enjoyable core of books your child can choose from. Remember to keep it fun! Try to allow your child to select the books to be read. Your child will gain a lot from these repeated readings -- both emotionally and in preparation for his or her own reading development.



Previewing books with your children is part of the fun! Look at the pictures and talk about them. As you chat about the pictures, you prepare your children to enjoy the book, and you can explain some words or names they will hear when you begin reading. Leave out a word or phrase on each page. (Ex. Little Red Riding Hood said, "Oh, what big sharp _____ you have, Grandma!") Have your child think of a new ending to the story. When reading a non-fiction book, ask your child what they know about the topic and what they want to learn.

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I Feel Great! (part 2) (Continued)

Discuss similarities and differences between stories. This works great with Fairy Tales. Alternate reading; you read a page then your child reads a page, etc. From time to time, invite other adults or older children to listen in or join in reading aloud. When you read, involve your child by having him point out objects in the pictures and follow the words with his finger.

You'll want to be physically close to your child as you share books together. One of the best parts about reading aloud is having your child sit on your lap, or snuggled up to you. An enjoyable alternative to reading aloud can be the stories that you tell yourself! But be sure to read books or tell a story EVERY DAY!



Continue reading to them long after they are capable of doing it independently. Reading aloud isn't just about reading. It's a warm, loving experience that we hope that you'll continue for as long as your child desires.

"Above all, children love to be read to. It is a special time for them to be close to the grown-ups who care for them, and a wonderful way to feel loved." (Bush, 1993)

Resources:

www.readingrockets.org
talaris.org/spotlight_bubbles.htm
LiteracyConnections.com
Zerotothree.org
Pbskids.org

Make Junk Food Healthy

Fran Alloway, Family Living and Nutrition Educator, Delaware County

Most of us like junk food! The combination of fat, sweet or salty appeals to our taste buds. Junk food has been used as a reward or as a special occasion food, making it more desired. If we only ate junk food as a treat, it would not be a problem.

Many junk foods can be given a healthy twist. The easiest route is to reduce portions. A smaller bag of movie popcorn can still be enjoyed. Single serving candy is a better choice than a candy bar. Chips come in small bags limiting portion size.



Think about how to add fruits or vegetables to junk food.

Toddlers are still making food preferences. Serve pizza with broccoli as a topping, canned spaghetti with frozen carrots and peas and cookies with slices of banana.

Purchase the lower fat, sugar or salt versions of many junk foods. Chips, cookies, ice cream, and more come in healthier versions. Read the labels to be sure that salt hasn't been replaced with sugar or that you aren't providing your child with artificial sweeteners. You won't feel that you are depriving your child if you select healthier versions.



Junk food will always be with us, tempting us while food shopping and at our activities. **Keep junk food in its place, as an occasional food, and your child will develop healthy food habits for life.**

Change It Up!

Lois Killcoyne, R.D., Extension Educator
Northampton County

Providing variety to the menu takes thought and planning. Exposure your child to new and different foods throughout the day, in order to expand the lists of foods they like.

Serving food from all the food groups ensures access to a variety. Every meal does not need to contain all the groups, but the foods offered over the course of breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks should have a balance. Each food group has important nutrients that are not found in large amounts in others. Be creative if your child tends to avoid particular groups. Provide the food in various forms like cooked versus raw carrots or milk versus yogurt.

Serve variety within food groups:

Grains: encourage whole grain choices such as oatmeal, whole wheat pita, cornbread, and brown rice cakes, cold cereal, as well as pasta.

Fruits & Vegetables: serve a rainbow of colors: orange peaches or sweet potatoes, red strawberries and tomatoes, green kiwi or broccoli, purple grapes and beets, etc. Each color has its own unique antioxidants and phytonutrients to keep you healthy.

Milk: cream soups, yogurt, and string cheese are good sources of calcium.

Meat & Beans: besides red meats, try poultry, fish, eggs and peanut butter.

It may take 10-15 tries before your child starts eating a new food. Don't give up if you have a picky eater! Encourage but don't force, fuss or bribe. Allowing them to help choose and prepare new foods may result in a more varied intake. Be a good role model and show a positive attitude toward trying new foods yourself. **Remember parents are responsible for what is served and when; the child decides if and how much they will eat.**

It's All About the Mess!

Cynthia Pollich, MEd
Lancaster County

Art is a way for children to communicate to the world in their own language. **Art is the process of creating.** Access to art materials and the ability to explore and create without a lot of adult direction or interference is vital. Introducing your child to art introduces them to all kinds of artistic expressions. Early art experiences should:

1. allow children to be personally creative and expressive,
2. allow discovery and experimentation,
3. provide active involvement, and
4. deliver opportunities for individual and group collaboration.



Help your child to be able to discuss works of art created by their peers, adult artists and their own work. Art provides development in all areas.

Not all children will become artists but we can help them to become visually literate and knowledgeable about their artistic heritage.

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I's All About the Mess! (Continued)

Select books that are well illustrated. Expect a mess and expect your child to help clean up. Store art supplies together and keep them handy. Make a regular time and place for creative expression plus a place to display art. Help children learn to look at the beauty in nature. Have fun with them as you rediscover the joys color, paint and a little mess can bring.

These books will encourage art:

A Color of His Own Leo Lionni, 1997

Camille and the Sunflowers: A Story about Vincent van Gogh Lawrence Anholt, 1994

Colors Everywhere Tina Hoban, 1995

Draw Me A Star Eric Carle, 1984

Harold and the Purple Crayon Crockett Johnson, 1987

Little Blue and Little Yellow Leo Lionni, 1995

The Orange Book Richard McGuire, 1994

Sparkly Poster Paint

Needed: 1/2 cup liquid starch, 1/2 cup soap powder, 5/8 cup water, food coloring and glitter Method: Beat together until the consistency of whipped potatoes. Add more water if necessary.

Powdered Milk Paint

Needed: 1 part powdered nonfat milk, 1 part cup water, and powdered tempera Method: Mix milk and water until milk is dissolved. Separate mixture into different containers. Add in different colored powdered tempera and mix. This paint dries quickly to a glossy opaque finish and does not dust, chip or come off on your hands.

Happy Birthday

Susan L. Giachero, Extension Educator
Berks County

Birthdays are important milestones that deserve to be celebrated. **Birthday parties are held for the child and their friends to create special memories.**



You can do this without spending a lot of money. Consider the scale of what you do now and the years of parties and special events ahead of you.

Young children can be easily overwhelmed; inviting one friend for each year of age keeps it simple. Decide on family rules and stick with them. Some families choose to have family celebrations and only invite friends on certain milestones birthdays. Involve your child in the planning; their wishes may be simpler than you would think. **Working within limits is an important skill for children to learn.**

Enlist help at the party and find party games in books or on the internet. Simple crafts are also fun for the children. But don't overlook that children enjoy just playing together and tons of planned activities are not needed. Put away the toys your child is not willing to share before the guests arrive.

It is important to have emergency phone numbers and be informed of any allergies or special needs of your guests. **Take some time to stand back and enjoy the day, it will be one of many special memories your family will have for years to come.**

Lead Poisoning – Keep Your Child Safe

Penn State Publication – The ABC's of Growing Healthy Kids

Lead is poisonous to the mind and body. It can damage health and cause problems that make it hard for your child to learn. It can even kill.

Babies exposed to lead before birth may be born too small or too early. The harm lead can cause them may never go away.

Lead comes from many sources. Of these, contaminated dust is the most common. Dust can come from lead-based paint, auto exhaust residues, soil or from home remodeling. Other sources of lead include water that has traveled through old pipes containing lead solder.

Signs of Lead Poisoning Your child may:

- be grumpy,
- be restless,
- be sick to his stomach,
- daydream,
- not pay attention.

A child can be hurt by lead and have no obvious symptoms.

Prevent Lead Poisoning

Children may eat lead or breathe it in. Keep them from eating paint chips, dust or dirt. Clean dust with a wet mop or wet cloth, not with a vacuum cleaner. If you work around lead, avoid bringing lead dust into your home. Let water run 1 minute before drinking.

Keep areas where your children play clean. Have children wash their hands and toys often. Have children play in a sandbox instead of in the dirt. First check to be sure sand does not have lead in it.

Healthy eating is important too, because it helps protect the body against lead's effects. A



low-fat diet is best, especially one that includes foods with lots of calcium, iron and zinc. Have your child tested for lead. Every child under the age of 6 should be tested. All that is required is a simple blood test, which can be done at your doctor's office or a local health clinic. Pregnant women need to be tested, too. A woman with lead in her body may give it to her unborn child.

Take action in your home. To find out about having your house and water tested for lead, call your local health department, housing authority, or Water Company.

Get an expert to help if you have a problem with lead. Call the National Lead Info Center at 1-800-424-5323 for answers to specific questions about lead.

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