



# TODDLER TOPICS PLUS



Penn State Cooperative Extension

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2009 Issue #6

## Welcome to Toddler Topics Plus!

Our goal is to provide easy access to information that will help enhance parenting via tips, strategies and alternative actions that can brighten your child's world. Whether you are reading this issue on-line or in print, we intend to bolster you when you're tired, answer your questions when you're confused and direct you to more details when needed.

Yours in caring for children,

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Editor

## In this issue...

- **Fit Reading into Your Family's Day**
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- **Are They Eating Enough?**

## FIT READING INTO YOUR FAMILY'S DAY

*Dr. Elisabeth L. Grinder, Early Childhood Specialist; Maria Marvin, Family Literacy Specialist; Margaret Grumm, Family Literacy Specialist - Goodling Institute For Research in Family Literacy, Penn State University*

**Reading with your young child is an important building block for future reading success.** Reading together introduces children to the sounds of language, new words, and how stories work. Sometimes it is hard to find that 15 or 20 minutes to read to your child at one time. Plus, it's hard to get very young children to focus. Instead, fit a little reading into the activities you share as the day goes on. Reading and talking with your child brings you closer. Make reading a part of your daily routines. There are many routines you do with your child every day or every few days - add a book.

- ✓ Mealtime is a perfect time for shared family reading. Read an imaginative story that you can talk about. Take an extra few minutes to read either before a meal is served or as everyone is finishing.
- ✓ Most children love to take a bath. Pick up a book and read to them while they soak in the warm tub.
- ✓ While your child is learning to use the potty, spend time reading about it. It will help your child understand what it means to use the potty.
- ✓ Bedtime and naptime is an ideal time to snuggle with your child and read a book.
- ✓ Keep a few books in the car to read together between errands and trips.
- ✓ Bring a book along to read while you wait at the doctor's office or stand in line at the bank.

**Establish the reading habit with young children and they will make it their own habit as they grow.**

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## **FIT READING INTO YOUR FAMILY'S DAY**

*(Continued from page 1)*

### **Toddler's Daily Routine Booklist:**

#### **Daily Life**

What Mommies Do Best / What Daddies Do Best

by Laura Numberoff

Peekaboo Morning by Rachel Isadora

Sunshine by Jan Ormerod

#### **Getting Dressed**

Ella Sarah Gets Dressed by Margaret Chodos-Irvine

Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed by Mo Willems

Ruby's Rainy Day by Rosemary Wells

#### **Mealtime**

Orange Pear Apple Bear by Emily Gravett

Max's Breakfast by Rosemary Wells

Yummy Yucky by Leslie Patricelli

#### **Going Potty**

I Have To Go! by Robert Munsch

Once Upon a Potty (Boy/Girl) by Alona Frankel

Time to Pee! by Mo Willems

#### **Nap Time**

The Napping House by Audrey Wood

Hush! by Minfong Ho

Baby Danced the Polka by Karen Beaumont

#### **Hugs & Kisses**

Counting Kisses by Karen Katz

Hug by Jez Alborough

More, More, More, Said the Baby

by Vera B. Williams

#### **Clean-up Time**

How Do Dinosaurs Clean Their Rooms?

by Jane Yolen

Just a Mess by Mercer Mayer

Wash Your Hands! by Tony Ross

#### **Bath Time**

Harry the Dirty Dog by Gene Zion

Bathtime for Biscuit by Alyssa Satin Capucilli

Maisy Takes a Bath by Lucy Cousins

#### **Bedtime**

Ten, Nine, Eight by Molly Bang

The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boynton

Good Night, Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

#### **FOLLOW ME!**

*Denise H. Continenza, Extension Educator, Lehigh County*

**Working parents often agonize over the little amount of time they have to spend teaching their child important concepts.** By the time dinner is over, the kitchen cleaned up, and laundry put away, there is barely any time leftover. Plus, both parents and children are exhausted. During the week, there seems to be almost no place in the hectic schedule to carve out time to sit down and play. The good news is that you can do all the household upkeep tasks while still teaching your child! **All you have to do is say, "Follow me!"**

Let's re-think how parents can interact with and "teach" their children. We tend to think of this as an activity all by itself. **However, anything we do as parents is a golden opportunity to teach children important learning concepts and skills as well as build the parent-child relationship.**

So, when you come home from work, definitely spend a few moments talking with your child about his day. This is also a good time for cuddling or enjoying a small snack together. Then it's on with the show! Invite your child to "follow" you as you go about your work. She can join you in the kitchen as you prepare dinner, help you sort laundry or gather the mail.

Talk with your child about what you are doing, and give her tasks that are appropriate for her age. This keeps her busy, and it teaches her some skills.



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## **FOLLOW ME!** (Continued from page 2)

For example:

- As you prepare dinner, talk about the food you are making and what you are doing. *"Now I am going to wash four potatoes. Can you help me count them? Now we need to get all the dirt off of them. Will you dry them with a towel after I wash them?"* Your child is learning about foods, nutrition, sequencing of tasks, numbers, following directions and cooperation and more. Plus, you are also reconnecting after a day of work and pre-school or child care.
- As you do laundry, you can ask your son to empty the hamper and help put clothes in a basket, match socks, talk about the colors of pieces of clothing *"Please hand me the red shirt"*, count articles of clothing *"How many towels do we have here?"* Learning colors, matching, classifying and learning to follow directions are important skills that can be taught while still accomplishing housework.
- Have your child help you clean up after dinner. Ask him to take all the spoons off the table, then the plates, for example. This helps your child become familiar with the names of utensils and their categories.
- Bath time is a great time to teach self-help skills like getting dressed, closing buttons, naming body parts and proper hygiene. It's important despite busy schedules that you put enough time aside for these activities because children take longer to accomplish them. Little fingers can't maneuver buttons quite as well as adults yet. Resist the urge to do it for them right away, and give "kudos" for even the smallest efforts.

**Working and parenting means being creative about the way you do things with your children.** Think outside the box and give your children a strong foundation for learning, get your work done and build a great, loving relationship.

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## **FEEDING YOUR CHILDREN WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH**

*Fran Alloway, Nutrition and Family Living Educator, Delaware County*

When food dollars get short, most parents still make sure that their children are fed. During this stressful time it can be difficult to think about making healthy choices. However, healthy eating can still be achieved with a little planning.



Check grocery store flyers and food in your cupboard then get organized and create a meal plan for a week. If meal content is known, older children can start the preparation before adults get home from work. It should also eliminate family members snacking on ingredients intended for another day.

After you have planned your meals for the week, make a shopping list. Use grocery specials and food on hand to make meals that include rice, pasta or bread to stretch the more expensive ingredients like meat and vegetables. Use easy to cook canned or frozen vegetables often as they require less prep. Bags of fruit can be purchased for a more economical choice.

If your child attends public school or Head Start, they may qualify for free or reduced price breakfast and lunch. Check with WIC and see if you meet the income guidelines. New WIC food packages will include fresh fruits and vegetables this fall, as well as dairy, cereal and protein foods. Food stamps, now called SNAP, are another source of money to feed hungry children (and yourself).

**Times might be tight, but don't sacrifice your children's health to dollar store packaged foods of questionable nutritional quality.** Call Cooperative Extension for some easy recipes. Cooking on a budget can be challenging but your whole family will benefit.

## **ARE THEY EATING ENOUGH?**

*Rayna Cooper, MS, RD, LDN, Family and Consumer Sciences Educator, Adams County*

A toddler's tactics leave no doubt of their intentions when they refuse food - they are no longer hungry or they do not want to eat what is offered. Enticing or coercion can set the stage for power struggles and increased resistance to eating. Parents who try new foods and who eat a variety of foods are more likely to influence their children. Two years old have shown a preference for foods eaten by their mothers. Once a meal has been served, the child must know that another meal or snack won't be offered until the next scheduled time. The child's choice: whether to eat and how much to eat; the parent's duty: setting regular meal and snack times.

Offer small amounts of new foods as many as 15 times without remarking in a negative fashion (that may influence children to consume a lower variety of foods). Serve small portions of all foods - both unaccepted and favorite foods - to assure that the child will not go hungry. **Your child can't fill up on poor nutritional choices if you offer foods of high nutritional quality.** In other words, if all the choices are good, then the child's choices are less critical.

A good rule of thumb in the first few years of life is to offer one tablespoon of each food for each year of age. For example, a 2-year-old may be served two tablespoons of potato, two tablespoons of chicken, and two tablespoons of vegetable and a half cup of milk. A meal should be composed of at least 3 to 4 food groups, and snacks should offer at least two of the food groups. It is the total amount of food consumed over the days and weeks that is important, not the effects of one day's poor eating.

Appetite tends to wane as the rate of growth slows, typically as children enter their third year. The toddler who ate two bananas at a sitting may slow down and have smaller meals and snacks. This matches the Body Mass Index (BMI) shift that occurs in the early years. Typically, the BMI starts declining from the age of two until the child is about 5 years old, as the body fat decreases and

muscle mass builds. We observe this as a loss of "baby fat" and see our toddlers turn into string beans, much to the concern of parents. After the BMI declines to its lowest level, we see young children begin to add body fatness as they grow and age into adulthood and the BMI begins a normal, steady increase. Children's health professionals look at four growth charts to assess growth. Weight for Age and Height for Age show how a child is growing in stature in comparison to established norms. Weight for Height shows the child's relative body weight compared to other children the same height and sex. The BMI curve gives us the final piece of information. BMI shows that the weight for height declines initially, starting at age two, until a lower limit is reached. From this low point, the weight for height begins to increase and continues to increase into adulthood. These four growth charts will give a good picture of how the child is growing and also whether body fatness is age appropriate and following a normal curve. **If you have serious concerns about the adequacy of meal intake, consult your child's health care provider to assess growth adequacy.**

**References/Resources:** CDC - *What is BMI?* <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/>  
CDC Growth Charts: <http://www.cdc.gov/growthcharts/>  
*Great Beginnings: A series for Parents of Young Infants Children*, Univ. of Delaware Cooperative Extension: <http://ag.udel.edu/extension/fam/gb/gb-list.htm>  
*Literature Review on Obesity Prevention*, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension: <http://ag.udel.edu/extension/fam/gb/gb-list.htm>  
*MyPyramid for Preschoolers*: [www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers](http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers)

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