



5 Sensory Toddler Behaviors That Are Common and 'Normal'

YOUTUBE FREEBIE

Sometimes it can be confusing to know if what your toddler is doing is "normal" or if it's cause for concern.

Here are 5 things that toddlers do that are "normal," plus some tips!

1 AVOIDING FOODS / PICKY EATING

Toddlers begin their "picky eating phase" around 18 months. This is due to their new-found independence.

When to be concerned: if your toddler refuses foods to the point that they are not gaining weight, are not receiving proper nutrients, or will tolerate fewer than 10-15 foods.

Tips and tricks:

- Consistent exposure - don't stop exposing your toddler to a food just because they don't like it. Sometimes it takes multiple attempts to begin enjoying a new food or texture.
- Make mealtime fun and engaging.
- Set a consistent feeding schedule with consistent expectations.
- Engage your toddler in meal prep and clean up on a regular basis.

2 HESITANT AT THE PLAYGROUND

If your toddler is hesitant at the playground, have some empathy! Your toddler is small and playgrounds are big and often noisy!

When to be concerned: if your toddler consistently refuses to engage at the playground or seems extremely fearful and unsure of themselves on the equipment.

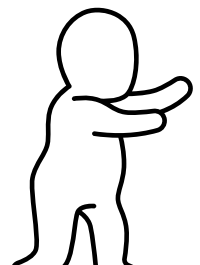
Tips and tricks:

- Go on the playground equipment WITH them.
- Consistent exposure to the playground can help build confidence.

3 TRIPPING AND BUMPING INTO THINGS

Toddlers are still learning about their body and environment, which means they are not fully coordinated yet!

When to be concerned: if your toddler seems to have low muscle tone, if they don't express pain when injured, or if they continually hit their head.



Tips and tricks:

- Set up simple obstacle courses that include climbing, crawling, and intentionally moving around obstacles.
- Use vibration to the arms and legs to improve body awareness.
- Sing body awareness songs, like "Head Shoulders Knees and Toes."

4 NOT SITTING STILL

Toddlers are designed to MOVE and they learn best through movement. This means they have shorter attention spans and may not sit still for more than a minute or two.

When to be concerned: if your toddler is unable to sustain attention to preferred activities or if they seem to be seeking out more movement than other toddlers.

Tips and tricks:

- Set up simple obstacle courses that provide intentional movement opportunities.
- Keep in mind the age-minute rule: however old your toddler is, expect that many minutes of sustained attention (if your toddler is 2 years old, expect 2 minutes of attention).
- Limit screen time, as this decreases attention span for tasks that are not on a screen.

5 ROCKING OR HEAD BANGING TO GO TO SLEEP

Toddlers learn different ways to self-regulate, especially to go to sleep. Rocking their body or soft head banging is often a strategy to provide proprioceptive input.

When to be concerned: if your toddler is banging their head and leaving a mark or seems to be concussed, if they attempt these strategies but is not successful, or if they display these behaviors throughout the day with no clear reason "why."

Tips and tricks:

- Set up a bedtime sensory diet with more of the input they are seeking - jumping and crashing, head and body massage, etc.
- Teach a safe way to head bang - on their pillow or a stuffed animal.

BONUS!

1 FAVORITE PRODUCTS FOR INFANT AND TODDLER DEVELOPMENT!

All Things Sensory Podcast Episode 5

<https://harkla.co/blogs/podcast/5-favorite-products-for-infant-and-toddler-development>

2 5 TIPS TO IMPROVE INDEPENDENT SELF-FEEDING

Watch this youTube video for ideas on how to help your toddler gain independence with feeding!

https://youtu.be/4YyywjswX_g

3 PICKY EATING FROM A WHOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

All Things Sensory Podcast Episode 249

<https://harkla.co/blogs/podcast/249-picky-eating-from-a-holistic-perspective-with-ashley-thurn-ms-otr-theholisticot>

Want more help?!

CHECK OUT OUR INFANT AND TODDLER SENSORY DEVELOPMENT COURSE!

Learn all about sensory development for your infant or toddler!

- Developmental Milestones
- Sensory Milestones
- Primitive Reflexes
- Activity Toolbox

<https://harkla.co/products/gross-motor-skills-activity-course>