

TABLE 1.
Gross Motor Abilities

18 Months
• Walking fast, seldom falling
• Running stiffly
• Walking up stairs with one hand held
• Seating self in a small chair
• Climbing into an adult chair
• Hurling a ball
24 Months
• Running well without falling
• Walking up and down stairs alone
• Kicking a large ball
36 Months
• Walking up stairs by alternating feet
• Walking well on toes
• Pedaling a tricycle
• Jumping from a step
• Hopping two or three times

At approximately age 2 years, the stiff, wide-leg gait of early toddlerhood becomes a flexible, steady walking pattern, with an adult-like heel-toe progression. By 36 months, they have developed their balance and can stand on one foot briefly. Toddlers delight in their new-found skills and often can be seen experimenting with them. As any person who has cared for a toddler can attest, they climb, they jump, and they run. Supervision is key to preventing injury because toddlers sometimes test their skills beyond their abilities in an attempt to learn and do more.

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Increasing fine motor abilities during toddlerhood result from refinements in reaching, grasping, and manipulating small objects. The average 18-month-old can make a tower of four blocks. Just 1 year later, with practice and improved control, he or she can stack eight blocks (Fig. 2). Most 18-month-olds have developed an interest in crayons and, if given the opportunity, will hold the crayon in a fist and scribble spontaneously on paper

TABLE 2.
Fine Motor Abilities

18 Months
• Making a tower of four cubes
• Releasing 10 cubes into a cup
• Scribbling spontaneously
• Imitating a vertical drawing stroke
• Piling three blocks on a formboard
24 Months
• Building a six to seven cube tower
• Aligning two or more cubes to form a train
• Imitating a horizontal drawing stroke
• Beginning circular strokes
• Inserting a square block into a performance box
36 Months
• Copying a circle
• Copying bridges with cubes
• Building a tower of 9 to 10 blocks
• Drawing a person's head

(or anywhere else). Only 1.5 years later, the toddler has developed the control and sophistication to pick up a crayon by placing the thumb at the left and fingers at the right of the shaft and make a circle; by age 3, the child even may begin to draw a primitive stick figure.

Affective Development

AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Fostered by improved motor skills, the transition from infancy to toddlerhood is marked by a new drive for autonomy and independence. The child finds that he or she can move freely and easily away from the parent and begins to test boundaries and limits. Struggles over autonomy may occur daily. The toddler may refuse to eat unless allowed to feed him- or herself. In addition, the child no longer may be willing to try new foods, despite parental coaxing. The classic manifestation of the struggle for autonomy is the temper tantrum. The

TABLE 3.
Social/Emotional Skills

18 Months
• Removing a garment
• Feeding self and spilling food
• Offering an empty plate
• Hugging a doll
• Pulling a toy
24 Months
• Using a spoon; spilling little food
• Verbalizing toileting needs
• Pulling on a simple garment
• Verbalizing immediate experiences
• Referring to self by name
36 Months
• Showing concern about the actions of others
• Playing cooperatively in small groups
• Developing the beginnings of true friendships
• Playing with imaginary friends

toddler develops unbridled opinions and preferences about everyday activities. If he does not get his way, he may cry, hit, or throw himself on the ground.

IMPULSE CONTROL

Toddlers also begin to develop impulse control, which may be described as “the process of becoming civilized.” The 18-month-old may have minimal impulse control and display several temper tantrums each day. Two-year-olds typically exhibit wide variations in impulse control, with the degree of control often varying with the struggle for autonomy. Most 3-year-olds have mastered some degree of self-control, in part because they are developing the ability to delay gratification. From experience, they learn that sometimes they must wait for rewards.

Impulse control, improved motor skills, and the struggle for autonomy are highly evident during toilet training. Successful toileting usually

TABLE 4.
Intellectual Abilities

18 Months
• Pointing to named body parts
• Developing an understanding of object permanence
• Beginning to understand cause and effect
24 Months
• Forming mental images of objects
• Solving problems by trial and error
• Understanding simple time concepts
36 Months
• Asking “why” questions
• Understanding daily routine
• Appreciating special events, such as birthdays
• Remembering and reciting nursery rhymes
• Repeating three digits

occurs toward the end of the third year. At this time, the necessary physical skills (ie, controlling the sphincter, walking to the bathroom, undressing, and getting onto the potty) come together with the emotional willingness to participate. Although toilet training may be introduced at an earlier age, success with consistent daytime dryness usually is not achieved until about 2.5 years of age.

ATTACHMENT

Although toddlers strive for autonomy, issues of attachment remain important developmental themes. Attachment refers to the bond that forms in time between an infant and a caregiver. A secure bond is important in both social and emotional development during infancy and the preschool years. The toddler who seeks autonomy and independence relies on secure parental ties for the confidence to venture out and explore the environment. Although he or she may wander, the toddler always is cognizant of the caregiver’s presence and intermittently returns for reassurance. If the care-

TABLE 5.
Language Skills

18 Months
• Looking selectively at a book
• Using 10 to 20 words
• Naming and pointing to one picture card
• Naming a test object (eg, ball)
• Following two-directional commands
24 Months
• Discarding jargon from speech
• Using two to three word sentences
• Using “I,” “me,” “you”
• Naming three picture cards
• Naming two test objects
• Knowing four-directional commands
36 Months
• Using four to five word sentences
• Telling stories
• Using plurals
• Recognizing and naming most common objects

giver cannot be found, the toddler likely will become distressed.

Disorders of attachment may result from inconsistent caregiving and are more common in the presence of family stressors, such as poverty, drug use, or emotional illness. Affected toddlers may not show interest in exploring the environment, may display separation problems, or may distrust the primary caregiver. It should be particularly worrisome when a 2-year-old does not seek out the primary caregiver for reassurance in a stressful situation, such as during a physical examination or painful procedure.

TEMPERAMENT

How a child approaches a given situation is influenced by his or her behavioral style, also known as temperament. Pediatric clinicians are acutely aware of the wide variability in behavioral style among toddlers during health supervision visits.

Some 2-year-olds sit close to their parents and shy away from the approaching stethoscope. Others bounce all over the room, showing a fleeting, although intense, interest in their surroundings but wanting no part of the physical examination. Then there are those who sit on the floor, methodically flipping the pages of their cardboard book, nearly unfazed by the examination. Temperament has strong genetic elements and often is apparent during earliest infancy. By the toddler years, the child’s behavioral style is generally evident and predictable.

Temperament influences all toddler interactions. Chess and Thomas followed more than 100 children from birth into adulthood, focusing on nine characteristics of temperament, among them a child’s adaptability, activity level, quality of mood, and distractibility. They found these characteristics to define three temperamental constellations: “difficult,” “easy,” and “slow-to-warm-up.” About 10% of children were generally less adaptable, had increased activity levels, and tended to be emotionally negative. These children were considered “difficult.” “Easy” children, about 40% of the group, had regular eating and sleeping schedules, adapted well to new situations, and tended to have positive moods. A third group, compris-



FIGURE 2. A 24-month-old demonstrates fine motor skills by stacking blocks. By this age, most children can build a tower of seven blocks.