

# Bonding with Your Young Child

Parenting is hard work, but it's important to remember that it also can be fun.

As you focus on feeding, changing diapers, and eventually potty training and disciplining, be mindful that every time you touch your baby or talk to your toddler, it's an opportunity to strengthen a special bond. What young children need and want most are time, touch and love, in as many forms as you can express it. You can give them all of that, in abundance, as you go about your daily routine.

- **Make eye contact** with your infant throughout the day and share loving facial expressions. Pretty soon, the smiles and coos that seemed like a reflex will be just for you.
- **Touching** is important. Snuggle with your baby or toddler everyday. Gently massage your little one with lotion after a bath, or rub his tummy to comfort him if he seems unsettled.
- **Talk** to your baby in your normal voice about what you'll be doing for the day. She'll turn her head in your direction when she hears you speak, or he'll smile when you call his name.
- It's not too soon to start reading. Pick up a few picture books designed for babies and toddlers and give your little one a treat: a chance to curl up in your arms, listen to your voice and view images and words that stimulate his or her senses.



As your baby grows and becomes more independent, bonding should still be a priority. Playtime is an important way to nurture your relationship with your toddler.

Visit a local park and catch her at the end of the slide. Buy instant pudding and let him help you “cook.” Pull out a wooden spoon and a few pots or pans, and sing along as he or she makes music. The true music will be in both of your hearts, as you create memories, and a connection, that can last a lifetime.

