## Season Intro and Two-Year-Old Overview

Hi, welcome to season two of the Baby Manual podcast for parents of toddlers. This season will help you feel confident as you navigate the difficulties of toddlerhood, from tantrums to sleep schedules to potty training.

I'm your host, a pediatrician and mom, Dr. Carol Keim. Hello and welcome to episode 204, all about your two-year-old. Oh my gosh, two year olds are just the cutest, aren't they?

So let's talk a little bit about what's going on at this age and why they call it the terrible twos. Gosh, I really don't like that term. So from a social standpoint, your child is probably starting to do some parallel play, which is really cute.

It's where they'll go and play next to a child. And they both be doing the same thing, but not really interacting with each other, just kind of playing side by side.

Most two-year-olds can speak at least 50 words, and if you really think about it, this is just enough to be putting two words together at a time. So you might hear them say things like, mommy juice, or go out, things that.

They might be having these little two word phrases that they're putting together. And they should be able to follow a two step command at this age. For example, go get that book over there and put it on the shelf.

Those are like, you know, two separate things that they can do.

## Language and Social Milestones

Their speech should be about 50% intelligible to strangers. So the sort of the cool thing about like speech and the way that I remember it is it's in over out of four.

so at two years old, 2 fourths or one half is understandable. At age three, three fourth is understandable. And by age four, four fourth or all of their speech to be understandable to a stranger.

So, yeah, at this age, don't worry if they're still making up words or if only you can understand what they are saying most of the time. Only about half should be understandable to a stranger.

They should able to name at least five body parts at his age. And a lot of two-year-olds will like familiarity. So you might find that you're reading the same book every single night for bedtime or they want to watch the thing over and over again or do the things or play the game over.

That is really normal. Most children will start preschool around age two to three, and we'll just talk really quickly about the difference between preschool and daycare.

So day care is just a place for your child to be watched during the day with other children where they'll be safe and get to play. And usually they're not doing much teaching at day.

Whereas with preschool, they do need to be accredited and they to do teaching there. And so it's really just up to you as to what you think would be best for your child.

The three main types of preschools that we have in the US at least are Montessori, Waldorf and Reggio Emilia. When you're choosing between those types preschool.

just a few kind of highlights. So Montessori preschools, the children, they don't call it play, They call It work.

## Preschool Options and Learning Styles

And so the Children do their work and a Montissori classroom is laid out in such a way that as your eyes go from left to right and top to bottom, in the same way That you would read a book, things get more difficult and they build on the Same skills.

It's kind Of cool. Everything in Montassori is very intentional to teach Children how to become good workers later in life. and how to learn in a way that is sort of a natural progression.

Also, the Montessori children will help teach each other. There's mixed classes and the teachers are mostly there to watch and only intervene if they need to.

So the children are really taught to do a lot of like self-directed learning. For Waldorf, this is a more natural type of preschool where you might find it decorated with things like sticks and pine cones and pretty leaves and things from outside.

These children are, it's almost the opposite of Montessori. They are not forced to learn anything in any sort of a way. When they show interest, they can start to learning stuff, but they start learning things, like letters and numbers, much later than they would at a Montesori school.

And Waldorf Moore has a focus on things like handcrafts and almost more like old-fashioned stuff that has been lost a lot in our society. So it's sort of neat from that perspective.

Waldorff families typically are not watching TV. They're usually even not allowed to have a TV in their main room and definitely not in the bedrooms at home.

And yeah, just a different approach to learning. And then Reggio Emilia is a play-based learning. So that one, you might see these schools decorated with things like artwork from the children.

These children are not given templates or examples of like, this is what your art projects should look like. They're more given free rein of, like we're going to make, a picture of a snowman.

Here are some crayons and some paper. to do it or whatever. The Reggio Emilia style, they will pick a topic and then they'll learn to play different ways around that topic, and different way of approaching it rather than just say like reading about something.

They'll learned about it in lots of different. So sorry, this is not a great explanation. There are many better ones out there, but those are the three main approaches and what I would consider for your child when you're choosing a Montessori Waldorf or Regio Emila school.

But really, When you look at the numbers and you know how children do when they get to school into high school and college later in life The type of preschool honestly doesn't really matter and also the children who do daycare also do equally well So it's really just sort of how your child likes to interact and how they like to learn There's also homeschooling is a great idea.

So there's many many options for your childhood Yeah, I hope this helps to pick out one of those if you're thinking about one those kind of pre-schools All right, so motor skills at a two year old level, they can typically scoop with a spoon.

## Motor Skills and Physical Development

So it's really fun to make little activity boxes like with rice or sand and have tiny toys in there that you're watching, you know, because they they still choke on things.

You can see them kind of scoop and dig things out. Those are really fine. They can kick a ball. That can usually hop off the ground with two feet. They can run usually pretty well at age two, so that can be a little scary.

Make sure that you have locks on the front door so they're not running out into the street. And they can climb a ladder at a playground. They usually go up but can't get themselves back down.

So you need to keep a close eye on them when you're at the playground together. They love taking their clothing off, especially their socks at this age and shoes, and they can stack objects, usually at least six to eight objects into a pile.

They can turn pages in a book and draw a line if you give them a pencil or crayon. And they often don't have a mature pencil grasp yet. Sometimes they'll be grasping it with a whole hand, like a fist, that is totally fine.

for behavior at this age and why they call it the terrible twos. It's because they know how to use the word no, and they're starting to set boundaries for themselves and starting advocate for them.

They also start having desires that are not necessarily safe or things that they can have. And so they get really frustrated. Also because their speech is not fully there yet, it's hard for them to express that frustration.

So they might start lashing out by hitting or kicking or throwing things or screaming or just yelling no or pushing or biting. That is just all an attempt to communicate and to advocate for themselves.

They're also starting to explore boundaries at this age to see what they can get away with before you'll stop them.

## Behavior, Boundaries, and Screen Time

And so you need to be really clear on your boundaries on what's okay and what not okay, how far away from you they're allowed to walk, all those kind of things.

They'll get to learn that pretty quickly as long as you're consistent about it. You'll also start to notice their personality around certain situations and around meeting new people.

Sometimes their personalities can come into play a lot too with the terrible twos. So you want to make sure that you're supporting them as they're learning and encouraging at least up to one hour of free play per day where they get to choose what they want play with and what can do.

And make sure you're making time for them to learn in ways that don't involve screens. So things like reading to them, talking, singing, going, exploring together.

You can go to things, like the zoo or the museums or library, or take walks around town, walks in nature, and those are all great ways to connect with your two-year-old and also to make them feel really special.

And one way to help with their frustration and any sort of behavioral stuff is to give them choices. Make sure you're giving them two suitable choices as often as possible throughout the day.

For example, you want this cup or this Cup? Or do you wanna put your shoes on by yourself? You want me to Help you? Which foot should we start with when we do the shoes?

This jacket or This Jacket? When you give them two choices that you're okay with either answer, it gives them some framework to choose and makes them feel like they're in control of their life.

But also you are the one setting those two choice. Make sure you always okay either with answer. So a question like, do you want to put your shoes on?

And just leaving it like that, a yes and no. If they say no, you got to go with that no all right. Set it up in such a way that it doesn't matter what they answer you'll be okay.

And if they try to choose a third option, then you say, oh, I'll help you choose this time, and you can choose for

them. And then they'll learn that they really do need to chose one of those two options.

Don't let them pick something that wasn't offered. Other things with behavior, you want to try to limit TV time to one hour of high quality programming that you are watching together with your child.

So I do not recommend just leaving the TV on all day, leaving it running in the background. If you guys are going to be doing TV, time, do it together and be intentional about it and use it as a bonding thing and also talk to them about what you're watching.

Don't just sit there and let them veg out during it. Also, try to avoid TV during meal times and make sure that there are not TVs in any of the bedrooms in the house.

And just be aware of your own screen time use when you're around your child, because if you are on your phone all the time or on a tablet, they're going to learn that that's normal and they are going try do that as well.

## Potty Training Basics

All right, for potty training. So plan for frequent pottey breaks at this age if you are potting training at age two. Many families do start potter training by age 2 in the U. S.

so they might need to go up to 10 times per day that you want to be trying for those pottie breaks. And you have to do fairly often to avoid accidents, expect accidents.

It does happen and it can be very normal still at that age. Even if they know how to pot the pot by themselves, it's something that can happen for 6 to 12 months after being pot trained.

You wanna teach them how to wash their hands at this age and focus on doing it for long enough. You can sing the happy birthday song or the ABCs or just count for 20 to 30 seconds.

But also you can just focus where to watch. So make sure they're washing the front of the hands, the back of hands in between the fingers and also on the wrists and then their nails like on their palm.

And if they hit all of those areas, it'll take about that long to a wash with soap, of course, and teach how they dry their hand afterwards. In order to become fully independent on the toilet, they need to be able to get themselves to and from the toilets on and off, and they have to take off their clothing and put it back on.

And they don't always have all of those skills at this age, so they may still need some help, at least for parts of that, during the pottying at that age.

For safety at age two, remember their car seat can change to forward-facing at aged two. But also, if they still fit in the rear- facing as far as the size and the height and weight limits of the seat, it is safer for them to be rear facing longer.

So just check on your car seat, see when they have to change to forward facing in it. And when a baby is or when the child is rear facing, you hit on the brakes, their head is just cushioned by the carseat.

## Safety Tips for Toddlers

It just goes into the back of the seat and it just supports their neck there. But if they're forward-facing, when you had the breaks, they can get whiplash.

Their head goes forward and back pretty quickly, and that can cause whiplash in their necks. Rear-facing is safer. Toddlers have pretty big heads and pretty weak necs relatively.

Rear-facing as long as possible. You want to make sure they're using a helmet for anything that has wheels on it.

So bicycles, roller skates, scooters, skateboards, anything with a wheel.

If the wheels come out, the helmet also comes out. And if you have any firearms in the home, any guns, you want remove those from the house if possible, or if need to keep them in house, keep it stored in a safe that is locked.

and keep them unloaded and the ammunition somewhere else. Because studies have shown that if a child finds a gun, they will pick it up, point it at a person or a thing and pull the trigger.

I don't know how they all know to do it. They just do. And it's just very dangerous and accidental injuries are pretty serious. So if you can ideally remove the firearms from the home, that would be the safest to keep from hurting anybody accidentally, including themselves.

For preschool at this age, they don't necessarily need to go to preschool or daycare. They can be home with you and that's totally fine. But one of the big benefits of going to pre-school or take care is learning to interact with other children, other peers, and not always get their way all the time and learn how to share.

And so those can really valuable skills. But it's not absolutely necessary. So yeah, it is up to you if you want to decide to send your child to preschool or daycare or to keep them at home.

All are fine. Their two-year-old checkup, what we're going to check at this age, they don't typically have vaccines at age two. Sometimes they need their second hepatitis A, depending on when they got the first one.

But a lot of times they're all caught up by now. And we just do our seasonal vaccines, so COVID and flu vaccines. Then at the age of four, we do two routine boosters.

## Two-Year Checkup and Wrap-Up

For now, we're going to do checkups at age two and a half and age three, and they shouldn't be getting routine vaccines at those seasonal flu and COVID, depending on what time of year it is.

It is okay to let your child answer questions for their two-year checkup, but keep in mind that a lot of them are shy at this age, so they might give the wrong answer.

That's pretty common, as long as you're in there just to jump in. Actually, no, they do eat some food that's not just pizza, you know, for example, like you can go ahead and give some backup answers, but let them try to answer too.

It's pretty cute. They usually feel pretty comfortable during the physical exam. They don't often need a lot of help with this and they're usually fine being examined on the table by themselves.

But if they do feel really nervous or scared, it's okay to have them in your lap as well during examination. And then you can talk to your doctor specifically if you have any questions about things like behavior, tantrums, any nutrition questions to make sure that your child is getting enough good nutrition and whether they need vitamin or not.

potty training questions that are specific to your child, questions about constipation or diarrhea, and then also sleep routines. Your doctor should be able to help with all of these things during the checkup.

All right, I hope this was helpful and come back and check in again in two weeks for the next episode of the Baby Manual Podcast. Thank you for listening to the baby manual podcast.

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