



ABC's of the toddler

- Airway/Breathing respiratory rates: **20–40/minute**.
 - Essential to note respiratory distress before color changes.
 - Note retractions, nasal flaring as signs of respiratory distress.
- Circulation: Heart rate: **80–120/minute**. (May be higher if toddler is crying or febrile.) Blood pressure: **76–105/39–69**. (BP will be elevated in heightened metabolic states.)

Physical characteristics

- Gross motor skills developing rapidly, fine motor skills more advanced by preschool age.
- Feeding: Whole milk, 16–24 oz/day; 3 meals/day; 2–3 nutritious snacks/day.
 - Avoid giving large quantities of milk, because milk is poor in protein and iron.
 - Avoid foods and drinks with high sugar content. These can increase bowel motility and are mostly non-nutritious.

Safety

- Toddlers are curious and able to get into dangerous situations quickly.
 - Good climbers—consider a high climber crib and keep side rails up at all times.
- Everything goes in the mouth or nose. Do not leave anything harmful within reach, including:
 - Medications, tools, or syringe caps.
 - Foods that may result in choking, such as hot dogs, hard candy, popcorn, and grapes.

Social

- Discourage any media exposure (TV, computers and other technology) for children under 24 months old.
- Limit media exposure (TV, computers and other technology) to 1-2 hours a day for children older than 24 months.
- Following a schedule or home routine can help during stressful hospitalization.
- Allow simple choices.
- Promote supervised play.
- Be prepared for frustration: this is the age of temper tantrums.

Communication

- Toddlers tend to gesture more than use words.
 - Check with the family or chart for special words or hand signals used at home to communicate.
- Action helps with communication. Show them!

Hospital considerations/family-centered care

- Collaborate with the family:
 - Create an age-appropriate coping plan (levels 5-7) with the family.
 - Use distraction, parent comfort holds can be helpful.
 - Advocate for adequate physical and emotional preparation for procedures.
- Utilize treatment rooms in order to maintain safe havens (for example, the patient's room and playrooms) whenever possible.
- Regression is common for toddlers. Toilet training and sleep patterns are often disrupted. Remind parents that this is normal, and that patterns generally return to normal after the child returns home.