

# Toddler puberty

Information and tips





**A lot is happening with your child's development around the age of 1.5. We call this period 'toddler puberty'. If you know how to deal with your toddler and what they need, it will be easier to raise your child. This leaflet has tips for you.**

## **A will of their own**

At this age, your child discovers that they have a will of their own. Your toddler discovers that they are not a part of anyone but an individual. They will test their will in all kinds of ways and practise using it, by testing their boundaries, for example. Your child does this in the environment where they feel safest, with you: mom and/or dad. It is a good thing that your toddler dares to do this with the people they like best and cannot do without yet.

If your toddler often misbehaves, this can have a negative impact on the image you have of your child. Try to focus on the things that are going well. A child that doesn't listen three times in a row may seem like a child that never listens, but they may have already listened fifteen times that day.

## **Separation anxiety**

With the development of their own will, your toddler may suffer from separation anxiety. A sense of self, more independence and the ability to walk and run away can make your toddler feel abandoned.

Visit [www.cjgcapelle.nl](http://www.cjgcapelle.nl) for more information on separation anxiety.

## **Doing it on their own and tantrums**

Your child will try to find out what they can do on their own. You have probably heard your child say 'I can do it myself' or 'Mine'. Your child wants to be treated like other children. At this age, your toddler often understands

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a lot but is not yet able to say that they disagree with something. This is very frustrating for your child. They will try to tell you what the problem is in other ways, for example, by screaming, crying, lying on the floor, hitting or pinching. Your toddler may also have a tantrum.

Your child may be angry for whatever reason. Don't ignore your toddler's feelings or laugh at them. Tell your child what emotion you see them experiencing. For example: 'I see that you are angry, that is fine, but...'

## Dealing with tantrums

Sometimes it's good to let your toddler 'rage' for a while during a tantrum. Let them be angry and show emotion. Sometimes it helps to pick your child up and hold them, but it can also help to ignore their behaviour. Look at your child and consider what they need. Visit [www.cjgcapelle.nl](http://www.cjgcapelle.nl) for more tips on dealing with tantrums.

## Me, me, me

Toddlers often think that the world revolves around them. This makes it difficult to take other people's feelings into account. Your child may do things that are not allowed. Your child doesn't do this to annoy, but to try things out and push the boundaries. A toddler also can't remember things for very long. To know whether something is allowed or not, your toddler must know certain words and be able to remember them. So talking a lot, explaining rules and repeating them over and over again is important.

## A world of their own

Your toddler doesn't see danger, everything is fun and appealing. Life is one big party, a voyage of discovery with lots of possibilities. Your toddler lives in a world of their own and little of what you say will get through. Stand





close enough so that your child can hear you well, make eye contact and use body language (for example, touch your toddler).

### **Fantasy**

A toddler is very preoccupied with fantasy. We call this magical thinking. It means that your toddler sees things that are not there, for example, monsters under the bed. The big cuddly toy on the cupboard can look completely different to your toddler in the dark. Because your child cannot think logically yet, they see the world differently. Toddlers also take things literally. If you tell your child that they look good enough to eat, your toddler will think that this could actually happen.

### **Rules and boundaries**

Give your child security and clarity by setting rules and boundaries. This way your toddler knows what is expected of them and can try things out. The rules should fit the situation, the age of your child and their character. Setting boundaries is done when your toddler does not stick to the rules. It is very important to be consistent. That means: yes is yes, and no is no! It is also important for you and your partner to feel the same way about this. What is not allowed from you, is not allowed from your partner either.

### **Routine**

Routine can help with rules and boundaries. For example, going to bed is not fun and saying goodbye is difficult. If you have a routine before going to sleep, your toddler knows what is going to happen.

### **Be clear**

You have often already planned your day: you know, for example, when you want to go shopping. Your toddler doesn't know that. It helps if you tell



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them in advance what is going to happen. This gives your toddler clarity and stability. You could say: 'In five minutes, we are going to tidy up because we are going shopping.' But your toddler probably doesn't understand what five minutes is. To help with this, you can set an alarm clock on your phone. 'When the alarm goes off, we're going to tidy up.'

## Difficult things are part of life

Your toddler may also face difficulties during their development. Your child learns from these. Try not to spoil your toddler. Give your child the opportunity to gain experience and become more independent.

## Positive attention

By giving your child positive attention, you encourage them to behave in a positive way. This is good for your child's development and self-confidence. For example, if your child tries to undress themselves and you react enthusiastically and say that you are proud, your child will enjoy your attention and feel proud. They will try again next time.

## Imitation

Your toddler learns a lot by imitating things. Your child still finds it difficult to understand that there are different rules for their parents than for themselves. Examples:

- There are visitors in the evening and it is fun. Your child thinks it's unfair that they have to go to bed because mom and/or dad aren't going to bed.
- Your toddler has to sleep alone and you and your partner are in bed together. That isn't fair either, especially when there are scary creatures under the bed and you'd rather not be alone.



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- 'Mom can dish up, but I can't. Then I have to eat everything even if I don't want it or like it!'
- 'If dad says no, then it's no. If I say no, I have to do it anyway. That's not fair.'
- 'Mom eats a cracker in the morning standing at the kitchen counter, but I have to eat a whole sandwich sitting at the table. I don't understand.'

### No

Your toddler learns what 'no' is. At first, it's a magic word. When you say 'no', all sorts of fun things happen. For example, they will do their best to get you to eat anyway. And if you keep your mouth tightly shut, you might only have to eat the delicious dessert or get a sandwich instead of those nasty potatoes. Adults also do interesting things when you say 'no'. They may get angry, shout, touch you or become sad. 'No' is, therefore, a word that toddlers can use to test things out.

The word 'no' also expresses an opinion. Saying 'no' as an adult is a strength. You want to teach your child to have their own opinion, to become independent and stand up for themselves. You can teach your child early on what 'no' is and how to deal with it. Saying 'no' is allowed, even when you are little. But it does not mean that you will always get your way.



## **Make your own choices**

Everyone gets to choose, so your toddler wants that too. You can teach your child to make choices early on, for example, by letting your toddler choose which shirt they want to wear today. Don't make the choices too difficult. A choice of two things is already quite difficult for your child, a choice of five is way too much. As a parent, you can steer and set boundaries, but you can also give your child the feeling that they have chosen for themselves.

Be careful when giving them a choice that your child does not actually have one. For example, when asking your child to go grocery shopping with you, if you ask a question, your child may say no. So think carefully before you ask or say something.

## **Do you still have questions after reading this leaflet?**

You are welcome at the CJG. Drop by during our walk-in consultancy hours or call the advice line. Go to [www.cjgcapelle.nl/contact](http://www.cjgcapelle.nl/contact) for more information.





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