



# Early Learning Digest

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## The Importance of Routines

Consistent routines, activities that happen about the same time and in about the same way each day, provide comfort and a sense of safety to young children. Whether it is time to play, time for a snack, a nap, or a loved one to return, knowing what will happen next gives babies and toddlers security and emotional stability.

Routines are like instructions –they guide children’s actions toward a specific goal. Two of the most important reasons for using routines are ensuring children’s health and safety and helping children learn positive, responsible behavior. For example, children wash hands before they have a snack, or must hold an adult’s hand when crossing the street.

As babies grow, they begin to learn patterns and routines for social interaction. Greetings, good-byes, and chatting with others are examples of routine interactions that teach social skills, as well as language skills. During mealtime and play-time, children are learning through talking, taking turns, sharing toys, learning to wait, and helping others.

Routines can also make transitions easier. Going from play to lunch, lunch to the store, the store to home,



and especially transitioning to bed time can be challenging. However, using a “5- minute warning” to prepare toddlers for a change in activity, books, songs, or special games can help smooth these transitions.

Daily routines such as meal time, running errands, getting ready for bed, and taking baths are rich opportunities to support your child’s learning and development. Routines offer the chance to build self-confidence, curiosity, social skills, self-control, communication skills, and more.

Enjoy these routine moments with your child. If she is having fun with you, she is learning, too!

Source: “Love, Learning and Routines,” Zero to Three, <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/love-learning-and-routines.html>.

## Is My Child’s Appetite Normal?

Growth slows during the preschool years which can result in a smaller appetite for your child. Your child is eating enough if they are full of energy, growing and seem healthy. Most young children do best when fed four to six mini-meals a day. Healthy kids usually eat when they are hungry, and stop when they feel full. Follow these tips below to help your child form healthy meal habits:

- Decide what foods to offer and plan regular times to eat. Perhaps suggest two kinds of fruit for snacks.
- Let your child pick from foods you offer and decide how much to eat.
- Learn your child’s hunger cues.
- Offer small portions. Let your child ask for more.
- Allow enough time. This may give your child a chance to feel full.
- Take food away when your child stops eating.
- Offer small, healthy snacks throughout the day.

Your child learns how to eat by watching you. Keep your own portions sensible. Eat when you are hungry, not just bored or stressed. When you take care of yourself, you take care of your child, too!

Source: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles\\_Newsletter\\_17.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_17.pdf).



If you have concerns about your child’s growth and development, please talk to your child’s health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

## Registration is Now Open for **FREE** Fall Parenting Webinars!

Tell your friends and family! The Minnesota Department of Education and Working Family Resource Center are pleased to bring you the 2012-13 Early Learning Counts webinar series created for parents of young children, ages 0-5. Each webinar, excluding special webinar events, is recorded and archived for your listening convenience. Check out this year's line up at [www.workingfam.org/events](http://www.workingfam.org/events).

## Test your knowledge on Toilet Training?

- T F Once you begin toilet training a child, don't stop. Keep going for as long as it takes.
- T F The optimal age to begin toilet training is age 2.
- T F Kids' nighttime bladder and bowel control often lag behind their daytime control.

Answers: 1) F, 2) F, 3) T



## Tips for Toilet Training

Toilet-training success hinges on physical and emotional readiness, not a specific age. Many children show interest in potty training by age 2, but others might not be ready until age 2 1/2 or even older — and if you start too early, it might take longer. Some experts like to use the term “toilet learning,” since children need to learn how to use the toilet when they are ready, not to be trained according to the parent’s schedule.

Look for signs that your child may be ready, such as the ability to:

- follow simple instructions,
- understand words about the toileting process,
- control the muscles responsible for elimination,
- express a need to go verbally,
- keep a diaper dry for 2 hours or more,
- get to the potty, sit on it, and then get off the potty,
- pull down diapers, disposable training pants, or underpants.

Don't make your child sit on the toilet against his or her will. If he isn't getting the hang of it within a few weeks, take a break. Chances are he isn't ready yet. Try again in a few months.

After several weeks of success, she might be ready to trade diapers for training pants or regular underwear.



Celebrate this transition. Go on a special outing. Let her select "big kid" underwear. Call close friends or loved ones and let her spread the news.

Experts sometimes disagree about the use of disposable training pants. Some think that they're just bigger diapers and might make kids think it's OK to use them like diapers, thus slowing the process. Others feel they are a helpful step between diapers and underwear. Because kids' nighttime bladder and bowel control often lags behind their daytime control, some parents like using training pants at night.

Praise all attempts to use the toilet, even if nothing happens. And remember not to punish potty-training children or show disappointment when they wet themselves or the bed.

Source: articles retrieved from Tufts University Child and Family Web Guide, August, 2012.

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