



# PPOD™

## Parents & Pediatricians Optimizing Development

### PPOD TIP OF THE MONTH: GETTING DRESSED

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By three years of age, most toddlers get dressed all by themselves. They do, however, still need help with Velcro®, snaps, zippers, and buttons on the back of outfits. The key to successful dressing at this age is time. Please allow enough time for your child to dress herself.

#### IDEAS



Be sure to allow enough time at bath time for your toddler to dress himself after his bath. Dressing himself will take a little longer but it's important that he practice. Stay close by because he is likely to get tangled, every once in a while, and need your help. Remember, he will still need help with fasteners on the back of pajamas.

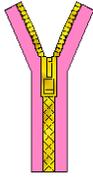


Your toddler needs to learn to do the fasteners on the front of her outfits on my own, if she doesn't already know how to do so. In addition, she should also have the opportunity to try to do fasteners on the back of outfits. The following are some helpful hints to use when teaching your child how to dress:

1. Position yourself behind your toddler when dressing her. By putting her back toward your chest, you will teach her how to dress from her perspective. She will be able to see your hand positioning and copy you the correct way.
2. Verbally describe what you are doing when you fasten Velcro®, zippers, snaps, and buttons. If she doesn't know how to do a fastener, teach her.



**Velcro®:** Teach her to hold the bottom piece with one hand and to grasp the top piece with the other hand. Once her hands are in place, show her how to line up the two pieces of Velcro®. Tell her to make the top piece touch the bottom piece. Then have her pat the Velcro® to make sure it is closed.



**Zippers:** Teach her to zip zippers that are connected at the bottom first. Teach your child to grasp her clothes, near the bottom of the zipper, with one hand. Show her how to grasp the zipper tab with her other hand. Once her hands are in place, tell her to pull the zipper tab up. Once the zipper is up, show her how to push the tab down to lock the zipper in place.

**Snaps:** Teach her to hold the bottom piece with one hand and to grasp the top piece with her other hand. Once her hands are in place, show her how to line up the snaps. Tell her to make the top piece touch the bottom piece. Then have her push the top snap into the bottom snap.



**Buttons:** Teach her to use the index finger and thumb of one hand to pinch the bottom piece as close to the button as possible. Next, teach her to pinch the top piece with her other hand while putting her thumb into the buttonhole to open the hole. Then, have her touch the button with her thumb (the one that is in the button hole). Finally, have her slide the buttonhole over the button so that the button pops through the hole. Fastening a button is very difficult to describe with words. Showing her and letting her practice may be the easiest way for her to learn. She will do better with larger buttons in the beginning.

3. Describe what you are doing as you fasten zippers, snaps, and buttons on the back of her outfits. When you have extra time, let her practice reaching behind herself to touch the fastener. Once she is good at reaching behind herself, you can let her try to zip, snap, or button. Be sure to let your child know that this is hard work and that even adults sometimes need help.
4. When teaching your child how to put on a new item of clothing, overalls for instance, do so slowly using the same sequence of movements that she needs to

learn. Also, tell her what you are doing. Seeing and hearing help your child learn best.

5. Allow your toddler enough time to practice dressing. It will take a little longer; but soon you will hear “I can do it myself!”
6. Let your child look at herself in the mirror after she is done dressing. If she did everything correctly, tell her how nice she looks in her outfit. If she made a mistake, perhaps she put her shirt on backwards, she can use the mirror to find her mistake. She may do this on her own; laughing while saying “Me silly. My shirt on wrong.” Or she may need your help to find the mistake. If your toddler needs your help, you can say, “Uh oh, something’s silly. Can you look in the mirror and see what needs to be fixed?”



During pretend play, let your child undress a stuffed animal or doll, give them a pretend bath, and then let your child practice putting the clothes back on.



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