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**W E E L E A R N**

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## Wee Beginner (0 – 18 months) – Check the Iron Level's in your Babies Food

Making your tot's food at home is a great way to save money and ensure kids are getting all of the nutrients they need (and avoid the additives they don't need). But despite good intentions, Dr. Tommy Ho, a Toronto based pediatrician, says many parents may be missing the mark when it comes to including enough iron in homemade foods.

“While homemade food can be a great idea, many parents don't realize they may not be incorporating enough iron in meals for their babies,” says Dr. Ho. “At about six months, baby's iron stores start to deplete and breast milk can no longer meet all of their nutritional requirements.”

Iron is an essential nutrient in an infant's growth and motor development, as well as cognitive, behavioural and nervous system development. Popular foods like brown rice, vegetables and fruit are healthy, but are low in iron. If you're making your own baby food, make sure you're offering enough iron.

To be sure your little one is getting all he or she needs for healthy growth from homemade food: Aim for the recommended daily intake of iron for babies 7 - 12 months of 11 mg. Feed your baby iron-rich foods like beef, chicken, egg yolks, legumes and iron-fortified baby cereals.

If introducing cow's milk, delay until baby is nine to 12 months old, and limit to 2 to 3 cups per day.

To learn more visit [hc-sc.gc.ca](http://hc-sc.gc.ca)

<http://www.parentscanada.com/baby/check-the-iron-levels-on-your-baby-s-food>





## Wee Explorer (18 months – 3 years) – Why Toddler’s Love Repetition

Your child’s favourite word during this year will be “More!” Toddlers take special delight in doing the same thing over and over again because it’s their own scientific way of investigating the world and mastering new skills.

While your child’s insistence on doing things over and over again can seem tedious to you, she is actually introducing subtle changes into each repetition. For example, your child might bang a wooden block on the table and pay attention to how the sound changes when she bangs harder.

While adults crave variety, a toddler needs repeated confirmation that things stay the same. So much is new and overwhelming for a toddler, but repeating an activity helps her learn what to expect. That’s why repetitive songs such as “Old McDonald Had a Farm” are such a big hit at this age; there’s a predictable pattern that empowers little ones with the knowledge of what’s going to happen next. This is why your child may want you to read the same story over and over again night after night. Knowing what comes next is the fun part. Being able to predict what characters are going to do is a skill one-year-olds don’t possess in most other circumstances.

Repeated experience also seems to inoculate toddlers against forgetting. Even for adults, learning any new skill, from playing the piano to playing tennis, takes repeated practice. To your toddler, so much of what she does is a new skill, and repetition is her way of remembering how to perform it the next time.

Understanding your toddler’s need for repetition may make it easier for you to grin-and-bear through one more reading of her favourite book. But don’t hesitate to put limits on some activities also. If your child wants you to read the bedtime story for the tenth time, it’s okay to put an end to the marathon and promise another reading in the morning.

<http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/development/behavioural/why-toddlers-love-repetition/>





### Wee Builder (3 – 4 years) – Teach your Child to Deal with Disappointment

Your child walks in the door, drops her backpack on the floor and bursts into tears. She didn't get picked to be a special helper today. Your heart breaks for her – do you tell her you're going to call the teacher right this minute and find out what happened? Mask your own disappointment and tell her nonchalantly that it's no big deal, and that she will probably be the special helper tomorrow? Or give her a big hug and burst into tears yourself?

Answer: none of the above.

“Disappointments – from mild to severe – are part of everyday living,” says Sara Dimerman, a child and family therapist in Toronto and author of *Character is the Key*. “If you are always rescuing your children or overreacting to the situation, they won't develop the crucial life skills to deal with disappointment in the future.” So set these patterns at an early age to help your child better handle the track team letdown later.

When your child is disappointed, start by acknowledging your child's feelings, saying something like, “I know you must really be disappointed. I would be too.” Try to match your emotional tone to the situation – don't embellish or undervalue the disappointment. “Just express genuine emotion,” says Sara. “Sometimes hugging them or putting your arm around them is enough. The bottom line is you want to validate their feelings.” Try not to say things like “Well, not everything's perfect”, or “That's life.” That type of terminology, although well intended, may actually make them feel worse. “It makes them feel unsupported and like their feelings don't matter. Disappointment doesn't go away that easily. In fact, it's okay to be disappointed – it's healthy. Not all bad feelings need to be replaced with happy feelings right away.”

Then, ask your child what they would like to do next. Offer some suggestions: Do you want to write your feelings down or try to draw how you're feeling? Write a letter to the person who disappointed you? Come up with a list of other activities you'd like to try instead? “By allowing your child to feel the disappointment and think of ways to handle it, it puts them in control and helps them deal with bumps in the road in the future.”





### Teach your Child to Deal with Disappointment continued....

Also think about how you model disappointment as an adult. How resilient are you? How flexible? How do you deal with change? Kids look to their parents to figure out how to deal with difficult emotions. "It's OK for your kids to see you upset, or even shedding a tear. But if that's how you always handle any disappointing situation in your house, your child might follow suit and end up being called a cry baby at school."

The coming middle school years are filled with highs and lows, as kids try to navigate the social and physical changes as they transition from kid to teen. Teaching them to acknowledge their feelings, to communicate and to be resilient now will help them deal with the inevitable curveballs that are likely to come their way in the future.

<http://www.parentscanada.com/preschool/teach-your-child-to-deal-with-disappointment>





## Wee Learner (4 – 5 years) – Copycat Kids

Has life with your preschooler recently started to feel like an obnoxious game of Simon Says?

Kids of all ages are masters of imitation. Calgary parenting expert and author Judy Arnall says kids learn through observation. “Imitating is a very safe way to learn; it’s also necessary to help children learn which behaviours are acceptable in the society and culture they live in, and which are not.” Though most wee ones catch on early (remember when you’d stick your tongue out at your five-month-old and she’d follow suit?), tots in the preschool age group excel at copycat behaviour. They’re testing limits, they’re becoming more verbal and they’re picking up a lot from the world around them. “Children copy ‘grown-up behaviour’, such as occupations, dress and makeup, technology (like talking on the phone and tapping on a tablet), and act out roles, like being the mommy, teacher, fireman, etc.,” Arnall says. They learn by repeating pretty much everything they hear and see.

If your preschooler is clearly modeling his or her behaviour after his or her parents, Arnall says it’s up to Mom and Dad to cut it out first. “Then the parent should choose a quiet moment and have a talk with their preschooler about why the copycat behaviour is annoying, and ask them to stop.”

While some imitating is pretty laughable to the adults in the room, remember that there are less-than-silly words and actions kids can copy too, like the ways their parents show anger, including cursing or slamming doors. With impressionable kids around, Arnall adds that parents must make a conscious effort to change what we do and say. After all, monkey see, monkey do.”

*Excerpts taken from Today’s Parent Magazine*





## Wee Expert (5 – 6 years) – How Young is too Young for Internet Safety?

Kids as young as 5 should be given lessons in how to use the internet safely, say some experts.

Your child is obsessed with Star Wars Legos, and ever since he discovered the games and videos on the product website, he begs to play. You give him a 20-minute time limit and walk away. The thought of what he might accidentally encounter online has barely crossed your mind. Until now.

British charity ChildLine is urging that kids as young as 5 be taught Internet safety, telling the BBC that the issue is an “e-safety time bomb” and “one of the biggest child protection issues of our time.” The charity says its helpline received almost 4,000 calls about online and cell-phone abuse just last year, with the majority of calls coming from kids 12 to 15 years old. And there was a 70 percent spike in calls about Internet pornography, some from kids as young as 11.

Dr. Gwenn O’Keefe, pediatrician and author of Cybersafe, says that while the British charity is indulging in a bit of fear-mongering, we can and should be teaching kids “how to look out for issues, what to do when issues arise and, most importantly, how to avoid issues.”

“This is no different than how we teach our kids to be safe in the non-digital part of the world,” O’Keefe says. We don’t teach them to be fearful of crossing the street or driving a car or cooking in the kitchen because we teach them the skills needed to negotiate those spaces and do so over time. Similarly, we teach them how to interact with people safely and smartly and how to manage strangers, bullies, etc.”

As for starting young, O’Keefe says she’s all for it. Here’s her advice on how to handle online safety with kids as young as 5:

- Use the computer with your child. Talk them through the experience. “Mommy is sending a message to Grandma” or “I’m having a chat with Aunt Sarah.” Tell them that even though you are on the computer, you are interacting with another real person.
- Skip the scary predator talk for now. “Five-year-olds are still very grounded in fantasy.” Stick to games and sites geared toward your child’s age group. When they’re between 7 to 9, you can introduce worldlier topics.





### How Young is too Young for Internet Safety continued...

- Find a filtering program. Norton offers free parental control tools that will control what your child can see online, and that might ease your mind. You can upgrade to a paid version if you feel your kids need more oversight.
- Don't take it for granted. Just because iPhones and tablets and laptops are everywhere — and our kids take to them in a flash — we tend to think kids will just figure it out on their own. But just like we teach them to look both ways when crossing the street, we need to give them the tools they need to be safe online.

<http://www.parenting.com/blogs/children-and-technology-blog/kim-babytalk/safe-online>





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WE WE LEARN

## Wee Mentor (6+ years) – How to Deal with Jealousy in Kids

Your child really wants the scarlet-sweater Uggs her BFF wears and says she'll die without them—oh, and also without an iPhone. How should you respond? The answer depends “on the object of her envy,” says Phyllis Katz, Ph.D., a developmental psychologist in Miami Beach, FL. If your kid's coveting a particular item, maybe you could work out ways she could save up for it. But longing for another person's physical traits is trickier. No matter what's made her go green, here's how to help her deal:

**Listen up.** Let her speak freely about her feelings and simply empathize, rather than leaping in with advice. You could say, “I understand how much you love your friend's red curls.” Tell her about a time when you also felt envious of someone's looks or accomplishments, so she knows she's not the only person who's ever felt this way.

**Show her you value personalities over possessions.** Compliment your (or her) friend's sense of humour instead of her shoes. By doing so, you may gently steer her away from materialism.

**Help turn her envy into ambition.** If the object of her desire is a friend's grades or tennis swing, encourage her to work toward her own personal goal. Studying more could move her grade up on the next test, which may boost confidence and ease her away from the envy she feels.

**Read all about it.** Jealousy can cause resentment and can damage a friendship for good. Give your child another perspective to consider by reading a story about its effects. Try *The Hundred Dresses*, a classic tale about envy, bullying, courage, and forgiveness.

<http://www.parenting.com/article/how-to-deal-with-jealousy>

