

3 Ways to Carry a Toddler

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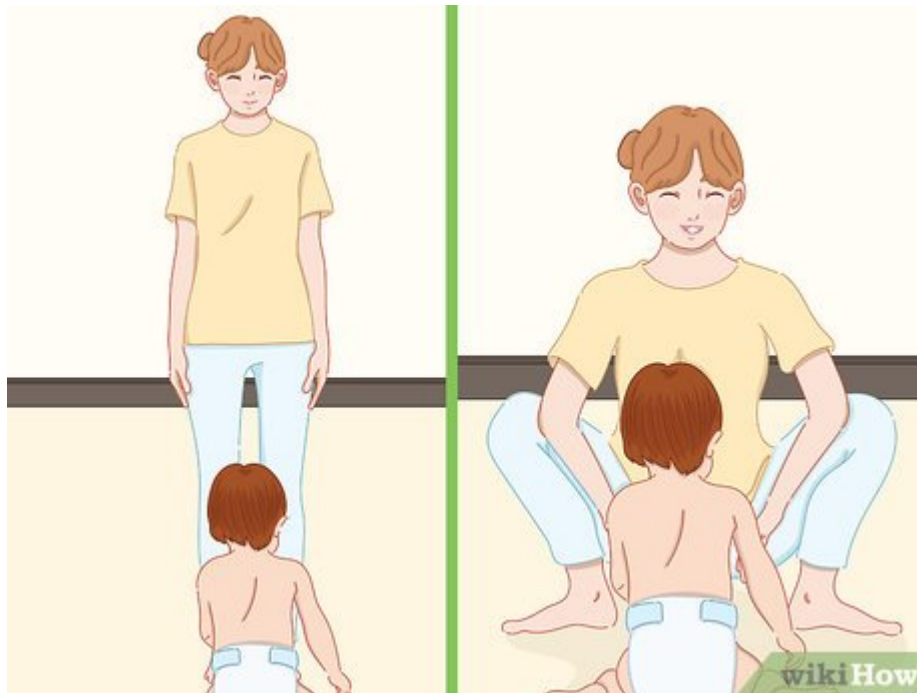
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Method 1

Method 1 of 3:

Picking up a Toddler Safely

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1. 1

Stand in front of your toddler and squat down. Position yourself so that your legs are about shoulder-width apart, and squat down to be about eye-level with them. Keep your back and neck straight and relaxed.^[1]

- If you feel unstable while squatting, put one knee on the ground to steady yourself.
- Never bend at the waist to pick up your toddler. This can cause unnecessary strain on your back and makes lifting much more difficult.



2. 2

Place one arm around their back and the other just below their backside.^[2] Keep your head facing forward as you bring them to your chest. Secure their back and legs, positioning them on your body for when you'll pick them up. ^[3] ^[4]

- Reaching out to pick them up can strain your back. Never lift a child from their armpits, which can be painful for them and you.
- Avoid lifting up a child by their forearms or hands, as this can cause an injury known as “nursemaid's elbow.”



3. 3

Use the muscles in your legs to stand and lift them off of the ground. Engage your leg and core muscles to slowly return to a standing position. Be sure to keep your back straight, and hold the toddler close to your body as you're standing up.^[5]

- If you can, ask your toddler to hold onto you with their arms on your shoulders and legs around your waist awhile you stand. This will help keep them in place, and will allow you to use one of your hands to stabilize yourself with a wall or piece of furniture if necessary.
- Try to avoid twisting your back or torso while standing, which can cause an injury.



4. 4

Hold them close to you, at the front of your body.^[6] The easiest way to carry a toddler is at the front of your body, with their weight resting on your chest and arms. Keep your arms around their back and under their backside.^[7]

- Having your child face backwards over your shoulder is a great position to soothe a toddler who is getting ready for nap time or bedtime.^[8]
- You can face your toddler forwards by supporting under the toddler's bottom with one hand and putting your other hand across their chest. This position is great for playing with a toddler by pretending they are driving a car or flying an airplane.^[9]
- For extra support, ask your toddler to hold onto you with their legs. If possible, try to keep them from wrapping their arms around your neck, which can cause you to bend forward.
- If you need to shift your toddler to one side, wait until you're in a standing position, and use your arms to move them. Avoid twisting your back or torso to shift them to your side.



5. 5

Avoid carrying them on one side of your body for long periods of time. Some parents develop hip problems from carrying their toddler on one hip. Keep your toddler at the front of your body whenever possible, and switch between hips every few minutes if you do need to hold your toddler to the side.^[10]^[11]

- The advantage of carrying your toddler on your hip is that it's easy to gently rock the toddler by swaying back and forth.^[12]
- Remember to use your arms, rather than your back or torso, to move your toddler from one side to another.

Expert Answer

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How do you hold your child on your lap?



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Jessie Davidson is a Child Care Specialist and the CEO and Founder of BabysitPro, which provides online courses for current and aspiring babysitters. Jessie has over 20 years of childcare experience and specializes in best practices for sitters of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and grade-schoolers. BabysitPro's courses are unique and age-specific so babysitters can learn detailed information relevant to the children they