

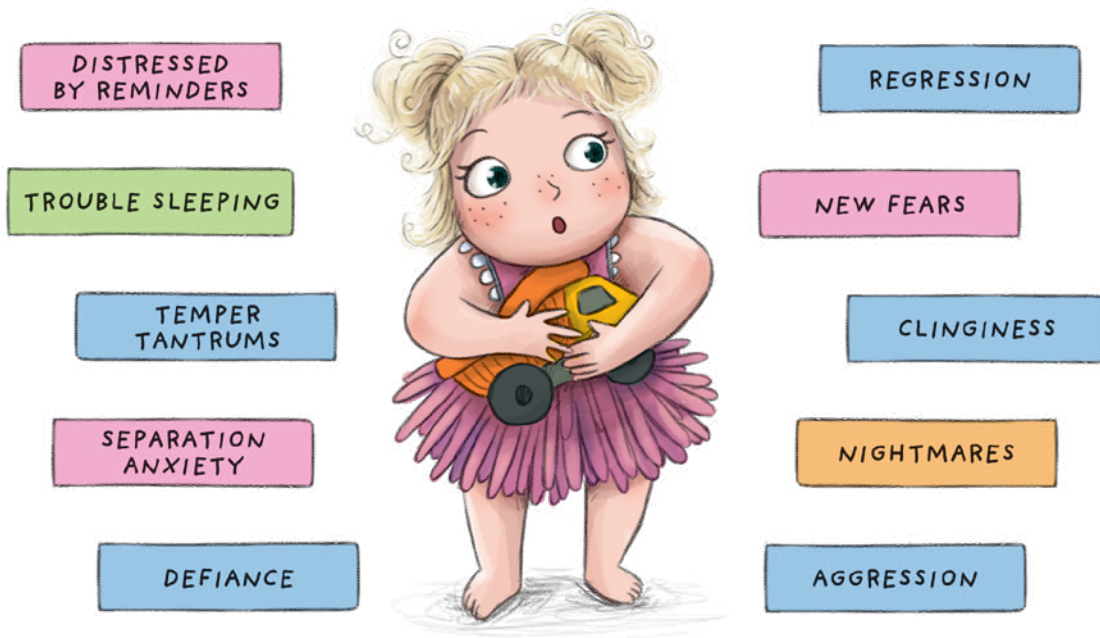


Helping your toddler (1-2 years)

Medical traumatic stress

It is common and normal for toddlers to experience medical traumatic stress. However, the way they understand their experience, communicate distress and respond over time depends on temperament, previous experiences, stage of development and support provided.

Developmental considerations: Important developmental tasks for toddlers include learning how to feed, dress, and toilet themselves and how to communicate and cope with big feelings. They are still highly dependent on their caregivers to help them feel safe, to understand their experiences, and to cope. Toddlers are becoming aware of how others think and feel and are highly sensitive to how family members and health care providers respond to their injury/illness and treatment. They are also highly sensitive to changes in their routines. Toddlers typically express their distress through behaviour.



Six ways you can support your toddler



Connection: Comfort with affection, quality time, fun, and closeness, offer choices and extra support at bedtime.



Targeted strategies: Use coping skills, relaxation and preparation to manage big feelings, and encourage and reward brave and positive behaviours.



Routine: Follow predictable family sleep, eating and play routines and clear expectations for behaviour.



Processing the event: Talk, read and play games with your toddler to help them understand their experience.



Identify emotions: Notice signs of distress or pain and name and validate feelings. Respond calmly with warmth and affection.



Seek extra help: If emotional distress continues and affecting relationships, medical care and daily activities seek extra help.

Scan this QR code for more information and resources. You can also talk to your child's treating team, GP, paediatrician or child health nurse for further advice.



Resource ID: 0017. Reviewed: November 2024.

Disclaimer: This information has been produced by healthcare professionals as a guideline only and is intended to support, not replace, discussion with your child's doctor or healthcare professionals. Information is updated regularly, so please check you are referring to the most recent version. Seek medical advice, as appropriate, for concerns regarding your child's health.



Queensland Government