

Why I let my child run around naked

“I have triumphed over the Kingdom of M at the battle of Onesie,” my Facebook status reads. “It was a long and arduous battle. There were many casualties on each side, but we have prevailed! M has now retreated to the castle keep at Crib and is undoubtedly planning the strategy for the next battle.”

“Glad to see that child is finally dressed,” a friend comments. “It’s not good for her to be nude all the time.”

M hates being dressed. She wasn't nine months old when she figured out how to pull her shirt off her head. By a year, she was taking her diapers off. I can certainly dress her, but what's the point if I have to secure her clothing with duct tape? I'm kidding about the duct tape – maybe. But is my friend right? Am I doing actual harm to my daughter?

There are two commonly held positions on this. The first is that babies are not able to self-regulate temperature the way adults can and so hypothermia is a risk. This is only the [case in very young children](#). Typically, by a month they are able to self-regulate body temperature. Actually, the danger from [overheating is higher](#) and is thought to be one of the reasons behind SIDS. The second position against baby nudity is that pedophiles might see her. I suppose this is true, but since she's always supervised, I'm minimally concerned.

As it turns out, it's [pretty common](#) for toddlers to want to be naked. According to [What to Expect](#), toddlers like to be naked because it feels good and because it allows them to show off that they can undress. If the parent continuously dresses them back up, they get more opportunities to show off their new-found skill. The article also says that reacting with shame or immediately putting clothes back on the child reinforces the idea that the body is something to be ashamed of. That's not the message I want to give my daughter. There's also the independence factor. Mayo Clinic talks about "the terrible twos" as a time when toddlers are [asserting their independence and preferences to their parents](#). While I don't believe in giving in to her every whim, letting her be naked at home seems to be a pretty reasonable way of letting her have some independence without putting her in danger. Clothes may also present physical detriment to her development. A recent study in [Scientific American](#) found that there is some indication that clothes impede a toddler's ability to learn to walk, by affecting balance and gait. Those are some pretty compelling reasons to let my daughter walk around in the nude.

As a bonus, it also teaches her about consequences. If she takes off her clothes and is then cold – well, she's learned that clothes keep her warm. Also, if my whole day involves dressing her, I figure I don't have time to do actual parenting. Worrying about whether she's dressed every second of the day means that I'm stressed out all the time and not focusing on important things – like reading to her or playing games. And what lesson does that ultimately teach her? Clothes are more important than substance? That's certainly not a lesson I want her to learn. I also save time

and money on laundry as well.

M is happily playing with her bunny. Her clothes from my earlier triumph are in a pile to the side, along with her used diaper. I sigh and pick up her diaper, but don't worry about dressing her. I'll worry about that later.