



Eighteen-Month Visit

Congratulations – you are halfway through the second year! Toddlers at this age are becoming even more independent – be patient and encouraging! Have fun helping your child learn. Try these tips to help keep things running smooth.

Feeding and Nutrition

- Almost all toddlers are picky eaters! **Don't make eating a battle.** Your job is to offer healthy meals and snacks and let your child do the rest. Try to focus on a weekly average instead of how much is eaten each meal.
- Help your child develop good eating habits – avoid excessive sweets, fatty and fried items. Try not to offer food as a reward. Whenever possible, eat meals together as a family. Try to always use a seat or high chair instead of offering food “on the go” or while playing.
- Allow your child to experiment with food, eat with her hands and utensils and drink from a cup. Continue to avoid food that may be a choking risk such as peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs, whole grapes, hard candies and gum.
- Generally whole milk (the “red top”) is best until 2 years of age – **don't give more than 16-20 ounces a day.** Juice provides no nutritional benefit and should be limited to no more than 4 ounces a day (100% juice only). Don't give your child sweetened drinks (Capri Sun, Gatorade, Hawaiian Punch, soda, iced-tea, lemonade) – offer water in between meals instead.
- If you haven't already, now is the time to stop giving your child a bottle. Children who use bottles after 12 months have a higher rate of cavities, ear infections, anemia and speech delay.

Oral Health Tips



- Brush your toddler's teeth twice a day with a soft brush. Let him brush first then you do it again. Make it fun.
- To prevent tooth decay, **never let your child fall asleep with a bottle in his mouth.** You should brush your child's teeth **AFTER** the last food/drink of the night. Discuss with your doctor if your child needs extra fluoride.
- Now is the time to eliminate the pacifier.
- Most doctors recommend the first dental check up by 2-3 years. Ask if you need help finding a dentist.

Sleeping

- At this age, your child should sleep through the night and take 1-2 naps a day. Most children have switched to one nap by 18 months old.
- Bedtime routines should be consistent and enjoyable. Include time for reading. Give your child a comfort item/small blanket (never the bottle!) to take to bed.

Safety Tips

1. Keep your child in a rear-facing car seat until age 2, or until he reaches the highest weight AND height allowed by the maker of the seat. This is the safest position in the event of an accident.
2. Never leave your child alone in the car, even for a minute.
3. Don't let your child out of your sight - even for a second - near water, tubs, buckets, pools, dogs, lawnmowers, driveways and streets. Children can drown in less than 2 inches of water in just a few seconds.
4. Hot liquids, foods and grease can cause serious burns. Watch your child very closely in the kitchen since he can now climb and reach up to higher areas on his own.
5. To protect from water burns, turn your hot water heater down to 120° or less.
6. Use safety gates, cabinet locks and socket plugs. Install guards on all windows above the 1st floor (toddlers can climb up onto furniture that is close to windows and fall out).
7. Keep medicines completely out of reach and preferably locked. Remind other caregivers of this (medicine in grandma's purse looks like candy).
8. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change batteries yearly.
9. Limit direct sun exposure. Use a large hat and sunscreen SPF 30 or higher.

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Eighteen-Month Visit continued...

Development

- Children vary greatly in development. At this age, many toddlers will:
 - 1) Walk backwards, throw a ball and pull a toy along the ground.
 - 2) Say 10-20 words and learning new words regularly.
 - 3) Point to objects or pictures, bring objects over to show them to you and try to attract your attention to what she is doing.
 - 4) Start to use their imagination more (feed doll pretend food or make “brrmmm noises” when playing with cars).
- Try these tips to help with development:
 - 1) Read with your toddler every day and encourage her to use his words even if you think you know what he wants. Ask her questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
 - 2) Turn your child’s words into phrases. If he says, *more water*, you can say: *you want more water in your cup*.
 - 3) Play pretend. Be a train and choo-choo around the house.
 - 4) Help your child solve a problem but don’t do it all for him. He’ll learn faster the more he does. Encourage independence.
 - 5) Encourage exploration. Fill and dump containers with water or sand.
 - 6) Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your child’s development.

Immunizations

(*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)

Today:

-Hepatitis A

-The influenza vaccine is recommended during flu season.

-Your child may have a blood test to screen for lead poisoning and anemia.

Behavior/Discipline

- **Praise your child when she is behaving well.**
- Temper tantrums usually peak at 18-22 months and are a normal part of development. Stay calm, ignore the behavior and don’t give in. Reassure and play with your child again once the behavior has stopped.
- Your child will test different behaviors to see what reactions she gets. Set limits that are **clear** (remind your child of the rules), **specific** (say *put your toys in the box* instead of *clean up*) and **consistent** (use the same consequence every time – ex. whenever your child throws a toy, take it away for a few minutes then let her try again).

Toilet Training

- Children will start to show signs of readiness to begin toilet training anytime between 22-30 months.
- Signs that your child may be ready include:
 - Dry diaper for 2 hours or after naps.
 - Poops are regular and predictable and you can tell when your child is about to poop.
 - Your child knows when she is wet or dry.
 - Your child can walk to/from the bathroom, help undress and follow simple instructions.
- Read books about toilet training with your child.
- Praise your child for sitting on the potty or toilet even with clothes on.
- Never punish your child for toilet training accidents.

Websites

- AAP Healthy Children | <http://www.healthychildren.org> (Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- AAP Immunization Info | <http://www.aap.org/immunization> (Research-based information about childhood vaccines)
- One Tough Job | <http://www.onetoughjob.org> (Information on development and a variety of parenting topics created by the MA Children’s Trust Fund)
- Zero To Three | <http://www.zerotothree.org> (More information on health and development of toddlers)

Important Numbers

- Poison Control
1-800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line
1-800-632-8188
- HAVEN Domestic Violence Help Line
1-617-724-0054
- Smoking Quit Line (free):
1-800-TRY TO STOP
- Your doctor’s office

Your child’s next routine visit is recommended at 2 years old.