

## Well Child Care at 18 Months

### Nutrition

Family meals are important for your baby. Let him eat with you. This helps him learn. Don't make mealtime a battle. Let your baby feed himself. Your child should use a spoon and drink from a cup now. Your toddler should be off of the bottle even at bedtime.

### Development and Discipline

Children at this age should be learning many new words. You can help your child's vocabulary grow by showing and naming lots of things. Children have many different feelings and behaviors such as pleasure, anger, joy, curiosity, warmth, and assertiveness. It is important at this age to praise your child for doing things that you like. Make an effort to catch your children being good.

Toddlers often seem out of control, or overly stubborn or demanding. At this age, children often say "no" or refuse to do what you want them to do. Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe:

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that he enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say "no".
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short and clear explanation, punish immediately by having the child sit alone for 2 minutes. It is very important that punishment come immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Be consistent with discipline. Don't make threats that you cannot carry out. If you say you're going to do it, do it.

At 18 months, most toddlers are not yet showing signs that they are ready for toilet training. When toddlers report to parents that they have wet or soiled their diaper, they are beginning to be aware that they prefer dryness. This is a good sign and you should praise your child. Toddlers are naturally curious about the use of the bathroom by other people. Let them watch you or other family members use the toilet. It is important not to put too many demands on a child or shame the child during toilet training.

### Dental Care

You should be regularly brushing your child's teeth at this age. Be sure to not allow free access to toothpaste because of the fluoride present.

### Safety Tips

#### Avoid Choking and Suffocation

- ) Keep plastic bags, balloons, and small hard objects out of reach.
- ) Cut foods into small pieces.
- ) Store toys in a chest without a dropping lid.

#### Avoid Fires and Burns

- ) Keep hot appliances and cords out of reach.
- ) Don't cook with your child at your feet.
- ) Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.
- ) Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- ) Turn your water heater down to 120°F.
- ) Do not smoke or expose your child to smoke.

#### Pedestrian Safety

- ) Hold onto your child when you are near traffic.
- ) Provide a play area where balls and riding toys cannot roll into the street.

#### Avoid Drowning

- ) Always watch your child around any water, including toilets and buckets. Keep toilet seats down and store buckets upside down.
- ) Never leave an infant or toddler in a bathtub alone - - EVER
- ) Flotation devices are not recommended in swimming pools.

#### Avoid Falls

- ) Check the stability of drawers, furniture, lamps, and TV stands.
- ) Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.
- ) Don't underestimate your child's ability to climb.

#### Poisons

- ) Keep all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids, etc. locked away.
- ) Put the poison center number on all phones. The poison control number is **1-800-222-1222**.
- ) Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- ) Do not store poisons in drink bottles, glasses, or jars.
- ) Be aware that some houseplants are poisonous.

### **Immunizations**

At the 18-month visit, your baby will receive the Hep A injection. Your baby may run a fever and be irritable for about 1 day after the shots. Your baby may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling in the area where the shots were given. You may give your child acetaminophen drops (we will give you the dose) to prevent fever and irritability. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, cool washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed for comfort.

### **Next Visit**

**Your child's next visit should be at the age of 2 years.**

## **Normal Development: 18 Months Old**

**Here's what you might see your child doing between the ages of 18 and 24 months.**

### **Daily Activities**

- ) May begin toilet training if the child is showing and interest.
- ) Begins to eat with fork.
- ) Enjoys imitating parents.
- ) May favor father.

### **Motor Skills**

- ) Walks proficiently.
- ) Enjoys pushing and pulling toys while walking.
- ) Runs awkwardly and falls a lot.
- ) Walks backwards a short distance.

### **Cognitive (Thinking and Learning) Development**

- ) Understands that something can exist even when hidden
- ) Can picture objects and events mentally

### **Language Development**

- ) Speaks from 10 to 20 words.
- ) Wants to name everything.
- ) Uses a few two-word combinations.
- ) Repeats familiar and unfamiliar sounds and gestures.

### **Emotional and Behavioral Development**

- ) May begin to show frustration when not understood; biting is common.
- ) May show strong attachment to a toy or blanket.
- ) Resists bedtime.
- ) Responds with "no" constantly.
- ) Likes to show some independence (feeds self, undresses self).
- ) Begins to develop a self-concept.
- ) Responds to simple requests ("Bring me your book").

Each child is unique. It is therefore difficult to describe exactly what should be expected at each stage of a child's development. While certain behaviors and physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal. These guidelines are offered as a way of showing a general progression through the developmental stages rather than as fixed requirements for normal development at specific ages. It is perfectly natural for a child to attain some milestones earlier and other milestones later than the general trend. Keep this in mind as you review these milestones.

If you have any concerns related to your child's own pattern of development, please give us a call.