



## **Eighteen Month Preventive Exam**

### **Development**

Your child's coordination should be improving. Your toddler should be running, climbing, and jumping. 18-month-olds may be able to kick or throw a ball. He should be able to imitate housework (dust or vacuum with you) and feed himself with a spoon or fork. If you hand your child a book, he should show you the pictures. Speech should also be improving, using more single words and repeating words heard. By two years of age, he should be putting words together to make phrases and short sentences. Remember, you can help your child's developmental progress by talking to him, singing, and reading. Throughout childhood, reading to kids is one of the best things we can do for them. Research shows toddlers at this age cannot learn information from screens. Don't have the TV on during meals or as background noise. Consider making a family media plan to limit screen time for all family members (see <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>).

### **Behavior**

Some of the triggers for tantrums and conflict between parents and toddlers can be avoided through creative strategies. Play with your child, spending time on activities your toddler shows interest in and enjoys. Reinforce appropriate actions by praising him for good behaviors and accomplishments. Decide what limits are important and try to be realistic and consistent in your expectations and discipline. When your child is engaging in unwanted behavior, use positive directives such as "please sit down" rather than the word "no."

Time-out is an effective technique to avoid negative attention, but use it only for troublesome behaviors. Time-out should be brief (1-2 minutes). Effective time-out techniques have the following 3 components: use a calm voice; use as few words as possible, such as "children who hit must do a time-out;" and end time-outs by looking forward to the future, such as "let's have a hug and go play." Try not to recall the negative behavior because it indicates you will pay attention to that negative behavior. Research shows physical punishment, such as spanking, has adverse outcomes and shows no long term benefit. It increases the risk for injury and can lead to increased aggression in your child now and in the future.

### **Diet**

Continue to offer your child all types of foods. You should avoid hard, small foods like nuts, popcorn, and peanuts that could be choked on. Offer a wide variety of foods, but don't worry if your toddler is a picky eater. Continue to offer her a healthy variety of foods and resist the temptation to get a different food if she rejects what you have already offered. Kids don't grow as fast this year as they did in the first year of life, so they often don't need to eat nearly as much. Children this age rarely eat "3 square meals" a day, but more likely 1 good meal and multiple smaller meals and snacks. Include high protein foods like meat, eggs, and bone free fish twice a week. Your child should drink 16-24 oz of milk per day, or have other calcium rich foods.

## Oral health

Gently clean your toddler's gums and any teeth that have erupted twice a day. Use a smear of fluoridated toothpaste, no larger than a grain of rice. Allow your child to try brushing on occasion to avoid conflict, but children at this age do not have the dexterity to brush effectively. Avoid sharing utensils or cups with him because it introduces your own bacteria into his mouth, which can contribute to tooth decay.

## Safety

Keep baby powder, household cleaners, tide pods, and E-Cigarettes out of reach as accidental ingestions and aspirations may occur. Nicotine cartridges from e-cigarettes are especially dangerous. Keep firearms locked up. It's important to keep your car, home, and other places where your baby spends time free of tobacco smoke and E-cigarette vapor. Ensure your house is child-proofed if you have not already done so. Make sure the crib mattress is at the lowest level. Move dangerous chemicals such as drain cleaners and dish-washing detergents out of your baby's reach. If your child ingests anything potentially poisonous, **call Poison Control at 800-222-1222**. Kitchen safety includes turning pot handles towards the back of the stove, making sure your child cannot reach the microwave so she cannot remove hot liquid or food, and not leaving hot liquids or heavy objects on a table with a tablecloth that she may pull down.

Continue to use an approved, rear-facing car seat until your child outgrows the manufacturer limits (for height/weight) as it provides the best protection for your child's neck, spine, and head. This should be beyond 2 years old. It is safe for your child's feet to touch the seat in front of her and for her legs to bend/hang over the sides as this position does not put your child at risk for injuries. Your own safe driving behaviors are important as well. Use a seat belt, do not drive under the influence of drugs/alcohol, and do not text/use mobile devices while driving.

As your child becomes more mobile, it is extremely important to supervise her around any body of water. If you have a pool, it should be fully enclosed and equipped with self-closing gates. Buckets of water and kiddie pools should be emptied when not in use. REMEMBER, IT ONLY TAKES SECONDS TO DROWN. Sun exposure should be limited at any age, but a toddler's skin can be especially sensitive. When outside, protective clothing should be worn and sunscreen should be applied. See the [Sunscreen](#) page in the parent information section of our website.

## Toilet Training

The average age for a child to be potty trained is 2 ½ years and night time dryness is the last step. Wait to start toilet training until your toddler is dry for periods of ~2 hours, knows the difference between wet and dry, and can pull his bottoms up and down, wants to learn, and can indicate when a bowel movement is coming. You can bring books to the potty, elevate her feet, and praise any attempts he makes. Try initially with clothes and diaper or underwear on before undressing. Many children enjoy a special trip to buy "big kid" underwear when they feel ready to stop using diapers during the day.

## What to expect at this visit

Two developmental screens should be completed before the visit, one is specific for autism. Please let us know if your child has any exposure to lead or you're worried about the iron in her diet. We will apply fluoride varnish at this visit if your child is not established with a dentist. Immunizations given at this visit include: Hepatitis A. Flu vaccine may be given at this visit, if in season. See our [Medication Dosing Guide](#) for dosing of acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

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