



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 smoothly.

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 at 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 with all screens off. Serve one healthy meal for the family and resist making something else if your child refuses. This only encourages picky eating. Try to always use a seat or highchair instead of offering food “on the go” or while playing.
- Allow your child to experiment with food, eat with their 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 18-24 ounces a day.** Juice provides no nutritional benefit and, if given at all, 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

- Brush your toddler's teeth twice a day with a rice grain-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. Let them brush first, then you do it again. Make it fun.
- To prevent tooth decay, **never let your child fall asleep with a bottle in their 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 years or earlier. 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.

Your toddler's next routine visit is recommended at 2 years old.

Safety Tips

1. Keep your child in a rear-facing car seat until age 2, or until they reach 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, dos, lawnmowers, driveways and streets. Children can drown in less than 2 inches of water in just seconds.
4. Hot liquids, foods and grease can cause serious burns. Watch your child very closely in the kitchen since they can now climb and reach up to higher areas on their own.
5. To protect from water burns, turn your hot water heater down to 120°F 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 with SPF30 or higher.
10. Keep any firearms unloaded and locked with ammunition locked separately.

Development

- Children can vary greatly in development. At this age, many toddlers will:
 - 1) Walk backward, throw a ball and pull a toy along the ground.
 - 2) Say 10-20 words and are 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 they are doing.
 - 4) Start to use their imagination more. (Feed dolls 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 them to use their words, even if you think you know what they want. Ask them questions about the pictures and stories you read together.
 - 2) If you choose to introduce digital media, limit it to 1 hour or less each day of high-quality apps or programming that you watch or do together. This is how toddlers learn best.
 - 3) Turn your child’s words into phrases. If they say “More water,” you can say “You want more water in your cup.”
 - 4) Play pretend. Be a train and choo-choo around the house.
 - 5) Help your child solve a problem, but don’t do it all for them. They’ll learn faster the more he does. Encourage independence.
 - 6) Encourage exploration. Fill and dump containers with water or sand.
 - 7) Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your child’s development.

Discipline and Temper Tantrums

- **Praise your child when they are behaving well and be a good role model.**
- 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 they get. 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 them try again.

Websites

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

Toilet Training

- Children will start to show signs of readiness to begin toilet training anytime between 22-30 months.
- Signs your child may be ready include:
 - Dry diapers for 2 hours or after naps
 - Poops that are regular and predictable, and you can tell when your child is about to poop.
 - Your child knows when they are 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.

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.

Important Numbers

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