

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.

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.

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 either 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, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit alone for 1 minute. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Make consequences as logical as possible. For example, if you don't stay in your car seat, the car doesn't go. If you throw your food, you don't get any more and may be hungry.
5. 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.

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.

Prevent 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 (50°C).

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.

Prevent Drowning

- Never leave an infant or toddler in a bathtub alone -- NEVER.
- Continuously watch your child around any water, including toilets and buckets. Keep toilet seats down, never leave water in an unattended bucket, and store buckets upside down.

Avoid Falls

- Check the stability of drawers, furniture, and lamps. Avoid placing furniture (on which children may climb) near windows or on balconies.
- Install window guards on windows above the first floor (unless this is against your local fire codes.)
- 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.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not store poisons in drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

Immunizations

At the 18-month visit, your baby may receive shots. 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 (1 and 1/2 dropperfuls, or 1.2 ml, every 4 to 6 hours) to prevent fever and irritability. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed for comfort.

Call your child's physician if:

- Your child has a rash or any reaction to the shots other than fever and mild irritability.
- Your child has a fever that lasts more than 36 hours.

Next Visit

Your child's next visit should be at the age of 2 years. Please remember to bring your shot card.

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Published by [**McKesson Health Solutions LLC.**](#)

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