

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR 18 MONTH-OLDS

VACCINES:

Usually we do not give vaccines at this visit. At times, toddlers who have missed a vaccine(s) can make up any missing doses at this visit. Flu vaccine may be offered during the months of October – March.

SCREENING TESTS done at 18 months of age:

Some children felt to be at higher risk may have testing for anemia (low red blood cell counts) or lead poisoning.

DEVELOPMENT and PARENTING TIPS:

Your child is a toddler!! His/her world has no limits. Are you ready?

Here are some developmental milestones and parenting tips for typical one year old toddlers:

Speech/language:

- * Most 18 month old toddlers can follow simple commands and understand statements that you make.
- * Toddlers of this age babble a lot and know at least 5 or 6 words besides “mama” or “dada” (or “papa”). They can identify body parts.
- * In the next several months, by 24 months of age, nearly all toddlers will be able to understand more simple commands and learn many new words. By 24 months of age, most will start using two-word phrases.

Physical ability:

- * Most 18 month old toddlers can walk well alone. They should be starting to run and climb stairs while holding a hand.
- * Toddlers at this age start to show increased coordination and can kick a ball or stack multiple blocks.
- * In the next several months, by 24 months of age, most toddlers will be able to feed themselves with a fork or spoon, walk up or down stairs unassisted, help put clothes on, and turn pages of a book.

Social/play:

- * Most toddlers of this age are starting to be more socially engaged. They like to greet people with hugs and kisses, wave “bye bye” and play with other children.
- * Toddlers also enjoy pretend and imitative play and may start to be able to play by themselves for brief amounts of time. For example, pretending to make a telephone call on a toy phone, or pretending to vacuum while you clean the house.

- * Toddlers love picture books! They enjoy looking at books and pointing to objects as you describe the picture. This should become a fun and important part of the bedtime routine (after tooth brushing). Teach your toddler new words and try letting your toddler turn the pages, too.
- * In the next several months, most toddlers start to become even more social and may begin to show sympathy and comfort to others. Also, your toddler might even begin to respond appropriately when you correct bad behavior!

Behavior:

- * Your toddler will become more independent and love to explore. Your toddler will test you to see what behaviors you will tolerate. Remember that a safe play environment is important. Your child will want to get into cabinets, open doors/drawers, and climb onto objects. (See **Safety Issues**, below).
- * Many toddlers of this age continue to say “no” if you interfere with them. This is called “oppositional behavior” and is normal at this age.
- * Setting limits consistently is very important. When your toddler is misbehaving, try distracting him with something she likes. Be consistent but flexible. Let your toddler make choices within the limits or rules that you have set.
- * Toddlers love being praised!! Saying things like “Yeah! That’s great!” or “You did it!” can reinforce good behavior and accomplishments. Over time, your toddler will become more responsive to this type of praise or corrections of behavior. Keep at it! Be consistent!
- * Some toddlers will respond to a “time-out” for bad behavior. This means removing your toddler from what she is doing, usually by having him sit down somewhere. Time-outs work best if immediate and brief, no more than one or two minutes! Be sure to offer your toddler a simple explanation about why the time-out is happening. For example, say “no hitting; time out.” Don’t expect your toddler to remember the lesson right away. Attention spans are very short at this age!
- * In the next several months, your toddler may continue to be shy around strangers and when separated from you. It helps to stay with your toddler for the first few times in new environments or with new people. Expect that oppositional behavior and temper tantrums will continue. Try not to overreact. It is best to ignore tantrums while keeping your child from harming himself. Either offering comfort or getting angry will encourage further tantrums or misbehavior. Distraction and re-direction still will work. Offer alternatives to your child.

NUTRITION and EATING BEHAVIORS:

- * Milk is important for calcium and vitamin D. Some children who may be at risk of being overweight should switch to low-fat milk. Make sure your child is drinking milk with meals. For children who cannot drink milk, be sure that alternatives like soy milk are fortified with vitamin D. Toddlers who do not drink at least 32 ounces of milk fortified with vitamin D each day will need extra vitamin D. If you have concerns that your child is not getting enough vitamin D, she may benefit from a multivitamin or vitamin D supplement.
- * Avoid juice: one cup per day is enough. At other times give milk or water in a cup or sippy cup. No more bottles.
- * Sleeping with a bottle (or cup) of milk or juice will cause cavities in your child's teeth and prevent him or her from learning to sleep through the night. No more bottles! For nearly all children this age, feeding at night is not necessary.
- * At this point, your child can eat most foods. Try to serve your child the same foods that you eat. Avoid making separate meals for your toddler.
- * Make sure your toddler is sitting at the table with the family for meals and learning to use a spoon and fork.
- * In the next several months your child may seem not to be eating enough. Don't worry as long as your child's growth is good! Toddlers grow slower than infants. Nutrition in the second year is about QUALITY, not QUANTITY. Toddlers are usually picky eaters. Think about the "big picture" and don't focus on any one meal or even any one day. Appetites change from day to day and vary with level of activity. Focus on healthy food choices and eating behaviors. It is OK to stick with a favorite food for a short period of time (like a week or two) as long as you keep offering alternatives and introducing new foods.

HYGIENE:

- * You should be brushing your toddler's teeth before bed. Ideally, start trying to brush after breakfast and even lunch, too. You can brush with just water or start using a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste once daily. Start to teach your toddler to spit out the toothpaste after brushing. Do not try to have your child rinse with water because most toddlers will just swallow it. If you have any concerns about your child's teeth, consider taking him/her to see a dentist.
- * Drink your tap water! Most of the towns in our area have clean and safe tap water that comes from state reservoirs. This water contains fluoride to make your teeth strong. If you're not sure

- about your town's water supply or whether it has fluoride, ask your child's doctor. Bottled water usually is NOT necessary.
- * In the next several months, it will be important to identify a dentist for your child. Ask you child's care team if you need suggestions.
 - * Some toddlers may approach a big milestone by two years of age: starting toilet ("potty") training. Don't rush. Very few children are ready before 2 years of age. Many children are not toilet trained until 3 years of age. Signs that your child may be ready include showing interest, being able to tell you that she or he needs to urinate or defecate BEFORE it happens, and having a dry diaper in the morning. Many toddlers like to have their own "potty seat" that you can put wherever they may be, not necessarily the bathroom. Others, particularly those with older brothers or sisters, may prefer the type of potty seat that fits onto a regular toilet. For more information on potty training, see <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/toilet-training/Pages/default.aspx>.

SAFETY ISSUES:

- * Always have a mature adult supervising your child.
- * Never leave your toddler unattended in or near water, even the bathtub.
- * Avoid choking hazards. Anything that can fit through a roll of toilet paper is too small for a toddler to play with.
- * Keep all medicines, poisons, and cleaning supplies stored in an upper, locked cabinet.

>>>POISON CONTROL CENTER: 1-800-222-1222<<<

(Call this number if your child eats something that might be dangerous.)

- * Always use a car seat. Toddlers should face the rear of the car until two years of age. The middle of the back seat is the safest location. Toddlers should ALWAYS ride in the back seat.
- * Well-fitting safety gates on all stairways will prevent falls.
- * You can prevent falls by putting window guards on upper story windows that can be reached by your child. Avoid putting beds or sofas next to windows on upper floors. Remember: KIDS CAN'T FLY.
- * Find out if there are lead hazards in your home. If you rent an apartment, your landlord should know. Ask your child's doctor or nurse if you have questions about this.
- * No smoking in the house! We strongly encourage parents who smoke to try to quit. Even the smoke on your clothes, hair, and breath can affect your child. Ask us for information on how to quit.

NEXT VISIT: age 24 months (2 years) for a check-up/physical and as needed for other problems, illnesses, and injuries

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

The internet can be an excellent source of information on child health and development. Be sure that the websites you visit are reputable! If you have questions, please ask us.

Check out *Bright Futures* parent information from the American Academy of Pediatrics at:

<http://brightfutures.aap.org/pdfs/Other%203/B.ECh.PH.18month.pdf>

Check out *Healthy Children* parent information from the American Academy of Pediatrics at:

www.healthychildren.org/

Find more information and tools on our CHA website page for parent resources at:

<http://www.challiance.org/Services/PediatricsResourcesforParents.aspx>

Find us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/CHAPediatrics>

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