

Wellness Guide at 18 Months Old

Helpful tips to support your child's development at this stage of life.



Development

- **Communication:** Toddlers are learning new words every day, using single words, and starting to point to communicate. Use everyday activities as opportunities to talk, read, and have fun together.
- **Pretend Play:** Pretend play together to build imagination. Toddlers like to imitate, problem solve, and figure things out. When you let them figure it out, with just enough help if your child is getting frustrated, it helps them learn and build confidence. Showing you appreciate their effort and hard work (not just the end result) helps build confidence.
- **Social Interactions:** Toddlers are interested in other children and usually watch or play nearby. They are beginning to learn to play with others. Your child doesn't know how to share, but you can introduce taking turns with balls/toys.
- **Independence:** Toddlers show their independence by walking, trying to get undressed, drinking from a cup, and using a spoon (try not to worry about the mess). Despite their independence, they may check

in often when exploring or be clingy when around new people/situations/strangers.

- **Toilet Training:** Toilet training begins when the toddler is very interested, usually after age 2.
- **Screen Time:** Limit screen time to 30-60 minutes a day, watching together with your child. Bedtime and mealtime should be electronic-free zones. Face-to-face interaction with caregivers will enhance your child's social and verbal development.

DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCES

TOILET TRAINING

THE 5 C_s OF MEDIA USE

WA STATE EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Safety & Child-proofing



Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death in this age group. Keep your toddler safe with constant supervision around water.



Hot foods/liquids, dangling cords, tablecloths, appliances, electrical outlets and stairs can all be dangers to a curious toddler that likes to explore.

Verify that smoke alarms are working properly and avoid smoke exposure.



Never leave your child alone in the car.

Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat, in the back seat of the car, as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their seat.



Toddlers need protection from moving cars, machines, garage doors.

Secure heavy furniture to the wall.

Keep household cleaners, vitamins, and medicines out of reach.

Keep sharp objects, small objects, small magnets, small batteries, balloons, and plastic bags out of reach.

Remove/lock up guns. Lock away cigarettes, lighters, alcohol, marijuana, and vaping devices.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

POISON CONTROL: (800) 222-1222

DROWNING PREVENTION

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE: 988

CAR SEAT SAFETY

Nutrition

- Toddlers can be picky and erratic eaters. Providing social support and calm, repeated exposures can help with acceptance of new foods.
- Try to eat family meals together and offer a variety of healthy foods the family eats, including one they like.
- Give Vitamin D (400 to 600 IU/day).
- Avoid screens during meals. Never force food in your child's mouth.
- Offer 3 predictable meals and 2-3 snacks per day, then your child can confidently decide how much to eat. Continue to avoid foods that can cause choking.
- Place a variety of options from your meal on their plate. Let them choose what to put in their mouth.
- Be patient as your toddler feeds themselves all or most of the time.
- Encourage cup use with milk and water, and limit juice. Avoid soda.
- Continue breastfeeding if desired.
- Prevent lead exposure by only using spices from the US and avoiding contaminated soil, dust, paint, and water. [Learn more](#) about lead toxicity and testing.

FEEDING A TODDLER

Family Well-being

- Toddler defiance is common at this time and can cause parents to feel frustrated and overwhelmed.
- Think of what might help you to calm down. Can you find a moment to calm yourself and take some deep breaths?
- Consider reaching out to a trusted friend or relative. Take care of yourself.

Overseas Travel

If your family will be traveling internationally, schedule a virtual eTravel consultation at least 4–6 weeks before departure to review travel health recommendations, vaccines, and medications.

TRAVEL CONSULTATION

Sleep

- Simple, calming, bedtime routines can help prepare your toddler for bedtime. Try to recognize signs that your toddler is getting tired.
- Help your toddler learn how to fall asleep on their own by putting them down when they are drowsy, but not fully asleep. Expect a protest if this is a new change for your child.
- Some toddlers establish a pattern of naps with long stretches of sleep, but others are fine taking shorter naps or napping at less regular times. Recognizing patterns and creating a nap ritual can be helpful. Nap patterns will change as your toddler grows and develops.

LEARNING TO SLEEP

Toddler Care

- Brush teeth with fluoride toothpaste the size of a grain of rice on a soft toothbrush 2 times per day. Make a dentist appointment.
- Your toddler should no longer be using a bottle.
- Use sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher).

Toddler Independence/Assertiveness

- Parents are learning how to balance following their toddler's lead versus taking charge of the situation.
- Toddlers are impulsively driven by their wants instead of logic and reason. Try putting your child's feelings into words for them. Be brief, calm and clear ("you seem sad that the cup spilled").
- Provide a calm, loving, and supportive presence when your child is distressed—this is not giving in/"spoiling". This can be balanced by being firm, not angry, and setting limits.
- Be clear about rules and be ready to provide lots of reminders. ("The car will not go unless you are buckled in your seat.") Redirect with the behavior you want to see. For example, try saying "Walk" instead of "Stop running". When your toddler is defiant you can try offering limited and acceptable choices.
- Sometimes the situation can also be lightened with humor or distraction. By staying calm, you are helping your toddler learn about self-control.

TODDLER EMOTIONS

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[DOSING TABLES](#) 

[COMMON ILLNESS SUPPORT](#) 

[PATIENT EDUCATION](#) 