

# Your Child at Eighteen Months

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## DEVELOPMENT:

All children develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice your child:

- Walks steadier and faster
- Tries to kick or throw a ball
- Climbs stairs with help
- Stacks three to four blocks
- Turns pages of books
- Uses a spoon well
- Speaks five to 10 words and starts to use “I,” “me” and “you”
- Knows body parts
- Keeps good eye contact
- Points out interesting objects such as flowers, bugs and planes
- Copies your actions
- Says “no,” tests limits and has tantrums

**IMUNIZATIONS:** Your child is scheduled to receive this vaccine at today’s visit:  
Hepatitis A (two doses six months apart are needed by 24 months)

Possible vaccine side effects include:

- Fever
- More irritability or fussiness
- Redness or swelling at the site of the shot.
- Rash

*If needed, you can give your baby acetaminophen (Tylenol). Ask your Provider for the correct dose. Contact your Provider if your child’s symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.*

*NOTE: There is a slight risk of fever or rash seven to 12 days after your child is vaccinated. This shouldn’t be something to be concerned about for your child. But, if a fever or rash does develop, your child should not be around other people with a significantly weakened immune system.*

Next visit: Age two

- LABS: Your child may need to be tested for anemia, lead poisoning or tuberculosis. Talk with your Provider.

## NUTRITION:

By now you should not be giving your child bottles. Keep offering your child different foods even if he or she is picky. It can still take 10 to 15 tastes of a new food before your child will accept it.

- Let your child feed himself or herself.
- Offer mostly table foods. Do not give your child small, hard and round foods that he or she can choke on such as nuts, popcorn and whole grapes.
- Limit juice to no more than four ounces a day.
- Give your child whole milk but not more than 24 ounces a day. If your child does not drink at least 16 ounces of milk a day, serve other calcium-rich foods such as yogurt and cheese daily.
- Keep giving your child vitamin D and/or fluoride supplements as your Provider suggests.

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## SAFETY

- Children at this age need constant attention and guidance. They are explorers and have no sense of fear. This means that they can quickly climb playground equipment, go up stairs and explore electrical outlets and medicine cabinets.
- Use a car seat that is convertible and rear-facing for as long as your child meets the weight and height recommendations or at least until he or she is two years old.
- Keep following safety guidelines when your child is close to water, near stairs or on high surfaces. Kids can climb onto counters and tables at this age; some will climb out of their crib.
- Cook on the back burners of your stove to reduce the risk of burns.
- Make sure that all chemicals, medications, cleaners and other hazardous materials are out of your child's reach.
- Be sure to watch your child closely when visiting friends and family who have not babyproofed their home.
- Put a hat on your child and apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30 when he or she is outdoors.
- Make sure that the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are working.
- If you have guns in your home, keep them unloaded, locked and stored away from ammunition.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, speak with your Provider or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or [ndvh.org](http://ndvh.org).
- Keep the Poison Control Hotline posted on your refrigerator: 1-800-222-1222.

## SLEEP

- Encourage interest in books by reading a few with your child every night before bed.
- Nightmares or bedtime fears can start at this age, and it is OK to respond quickly and comfort your child. But continue to put your child down while awake and allow him or her to fall asleep in his or her own bed.
- Most children this age still nap during the day, although many may combine their daytime sleep into one nap.
- If you have questions about your child's sleep habits, ask your Provider for help.

## DISCIPLINE

You may feel as though the terrible twos arrived early. Your child may be testing limits, saying "no," and having temper tantrums. This is because your child is curious and feels more independent. Toddlers want to do things on their own. They may resist your help with getting dressed or eating. Your child may get easily frustrated and be independent at one moment and clingy the next.

Be patient and know what to expect of your child—this will make things easier. So will childproofing the house and creating spaces where he or she can play freely. Do not rush your child—let him or her eat with a fork even if mealtime takes longer. Before you switch from one activity to another, tell your child ahead of time. Do not spank or hit your child. Praise good behavior. Set consistent limits. During temper tantrums do not yell or give in. Encourage your child to express his/her emotions or redirect your child's attention to something else. If you get overly angry or frustrated

with your child, put him or her in a safe place and take a few moments to calm down. Try to keep a sense of humor and remind yourself that this is a phase that will pass.

## TOILET TRAINING

Some children will show signs that they are ready to be toilet trained. These include watching others in the bathroom, asking for diaper changes, copying others, pulling their pants up and down and using words for urine and bowel movements. If your child shows such signs, buy a potty and encourage him or her to sit on it at regular times. Praise your child's attempts to sit on the potty. If he or she resists, place the potty in the family room or let your child sit on it with clothes on to get used to it. Never force toilet training or punish children for accidents. Some children are not ready to start training until after age two.

## FOCUS ON FAMILY

- This age can be hard, especially if your child is strong-willed. It is normal to feel frustrated at times. Talk with your partner about how to handle these moments. You may want to talk about your parenting styles and how you were disciplined as a child. Taking time for yourself and sharing your feelings with friends or other parents helps.
- Make time for the whole family to be together. This may include mealtimes, bedtimes and vacations.
- Spend time alone with each of your children.

## PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

- Let your child choose between two options, both of which are OK with you. For example, he or she can choose between two snacks to eat, two books to read or two pairs of shoes to wear.
- Speak to your child clearly and in adult language—do not use baby talk. Ask questions.
- Encourage him or her to repeat words.
- Describe your child's activities. When he eats say, "Wow, Jack is eating his apple," for example.
- Scribble, sort shapes and stack blocks with your child.
- Keep reading to your child daily.
- Do not allow your child to watch TV or videos.
- Brush your child's teeth twice a day. Use only water or a pea-sized amount of toothpaste that does not have fluoride in it. Teach your child to spit after brushing.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: [aap.org](http://aap.org); American Academy of Family Physicians: [aafp.org](http://aafp.org); Immunization information: [immunize.org](http://immunize.org), [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines), [vaccine.chop.edu](http://vaccine.chop.edu), [familyProvider.org](http://familyProvider.org) and [vaccineinformation.org](http://vaccineinformation.org)
- Suggested reading:
  - 1, 2, 3, *The Toddler Years* by Irene DeZande
  - *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter
  - *Positive Discipline A–Z: From Toddlers to Teens, 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems* by Jane Nelsen, et al.
  - *Your One Year Old: The Fun Loving, Fussy 12–24 Month Old* by Louise Ames
- Other books are available at [aap.org/bookstore](http://aap.org/bookstore).