

18 Month Visit

NUTRITION

1. Encourage regular family meals with conversation at the table.
2. Children at this age are typically picky eaters. Distract them away from impulsive snacking. Make meal time a pleasant time.
3. Encourage a self-feeding and the use of utensils.
4. If you are still providing a bottle, stop. Prolonged bottle use can result in problems with dentition, behavior, speech development, and toilet training.

DEVELOPMENT

1. Recognize your child's emerging autonomy and sense of independence. Praise self-care and good behaviors. He/she can begin to help with simple household chores, such as picking up toys. Teach your child to feel good about him/herself.
2. Avoid battles by giving your child choices. Instead of saying, "Time to eat", and being met with firm resistance, try asking, "Do you want to eat applesauce or beans with your dinner?" or "Do you want to eat in your high chair or the sassy seat?" This way you avoid the issue of whether or not he is going to eat and you make him feel like he is really calling the shots, when, of course, he is not and you are! Another example, instead of saying, "It's time to go to sleep", try asking, "Do you want me to tell you the horse story or the dog story before you go to sleep?" If he tries to get out of the catch-22 by crying that he doesn't want to go to sleep at all, stick to your offer. "Well then, I guess you just want to go to sleep without any story at all." Physically pick him up, calmly put him into bed and turn to walk out. Most children, crying at this point, when re-offered, will gladly choose one of the stories rather than see Mommy vanish out of the door. This approach lets you structure your child's behavior the way you want to, but keeps him happy by creating the illusion of choice. Try applying this in many different situations.
3. Stick to a regular bed-time ritual. Separation fears are especially strong at this age. Night waking and nightmares are not unusual. Do the least that it takes to get your child back to sleep so that you don't unintentionally reinforce night waking behaviors.
4. Limit TV viewing. It is not recommended that children watch TV until 2 years old and then limited time each day.
5. It is usually okay to buy a potty seat at this age. At first just let your child get used to it being in the bathroom. If he shows an interest, let him get comfortable with sitting on it. Most children at this age still aren't as ready as they will be in a few months and you should not expect anything yet. Don't push it! If your child seems especially ready and actually takes the initiative, fine. Praise his willingness to sit on the potty, but never make a child feel badly simply because he is not developmentally ready to abandon the diaper. If you are interested, we can recommend several good sources which detailed advice regarding toilet training. For one, the section in Barton Schmitt's excellent book, "Your Child's Health", is very good. The whole idea is to follow your child's lead. Toilet training is a process that involves a number of steps, each taking time and patience. This is not just a matter of learning to use the toilet well. More importantly, your child's self image should be enhanced and his sense of control over his own body improved. You will be proud of him only if he's proud of himself.
6. Simple time outs may start now for misbehavior. Usually holding them for 10 seconds facing away from you is a good start. Praise children when they are playing quietly so they don't have to misbehave to get attention.
7. Independent Play: Children need to have time to themselves- time when they can play, or stare into space. Generally, children do not do nearly as well when their parents carry them around much of the time and constantly try to entertain them. Keep in mind that, although your baby may fuss when frustrated, she will never learn to deal with frustration if you are always there to help her out. Give children enough freedom to explore the environment on their own, and they will learn skills that they can use the rest of their lives.

SAFETY

1. Car safety seat every ride! Continue rear facing until age 2 years.
2. Supervise all play near the street. Children at this age do not remember "no" or understand danger.
3. Never leave your child unattended near water.
4. Be on guard against potential poisons in the house. Keep Poison Control Center number, 1-800-222-1222, posted near each telephone in the house, in case of an emergency.
5. Keep your child away from knives, power tools, mowers, and firearms. Keep locks on all windows/screens and keep from dangling cords.