

# 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 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 themselves.
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, they are 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/she tries to get out of the catch-22 by crying that they do not 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 them up; calmly put them 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 them 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 do not unintentionally reinforce night waking behaviors.
4. Limit TV viewing. It is not recommended that children watch TV until 2 years old and even then, it should be 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 are not 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 to sit on the potty and actually takes the initiative, fine. Praise their 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 with 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 their sense of control over their own body improved. You will be proud of them only if they are proud of themselves.
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 nicely so they do not 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, they will never learn to deal with frustration if you are always there to help them 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. Limit the use of cell phones and snacks to keep your child quiet when they fuss.

## **SAFETY**

1. Car safety seats every ride! Continue rear facing for as long as possible. For information on the latest recommendations and considerations, please visit [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) and search for “Car Seat Safety”.
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 in the house in case of an emergency. There is also an app you can download for the Poison Control Center or you can visit them on the web at [www.poison.org](http://www.poison.org) for more information.
5. Keep your child away from knives, power tools, mowers, and firearms. Keep locks on all windows/screens and keep away from dangling cords.