

Your Baby at 18 Months

Medications: Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen can be given as needed for discomfort or fever. No other medications are recommended for this age unless directed by your doctor. Please see our dosing chart for the right dose based on your baby's weight today.

Next Visit: 2 years of age unless there are other concerns

Immunizations

You should receive a specific handout for each vaccine given, and if you don't, please let us know. Side-effects are uncommon but can include:

- Discomfort at the injection site
- Mild fatigue if any
- Low grade fever for up to 24-36 hours, usually < 101.
- Redness and warmth at the injection site for a few days; this is not an infection
- A small lump where the vaccine was given, which may last several weeks
- You can help your baby feel better after vaccines by giving lots of tender loving care, allowing for extra rest, and giving Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen as needed for significant discomfort or fever. We recommend that you only give it as needed, rather than around the clock. Recent studies indicate that Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen, given too frequently, may blunt the immune system's response to the vaccines, making them less effective.

See immunization schedule here:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-pocket-pr.pdf>

Promoting Language Skills

When your toddler learns to communicate better, they gain confidence and you finally get a bit more insight about what they've been thinking about. A child who can communicate often has much less anxiety as well, and their behavior shows it. Using signs is a good way to give your child another way to communicate their needs/wants, but it shouldn't be a substitute for promoting verbal communication as well.

Perhaps the most important way you can promote language is by reading to your child daily and consistently every day. Provide your child with a variety of books that involve touch/feel/texture as well as cause/effect (flaps, wheels, etc) to encourage their interest of books as a preferred activity. Don't worry if your child has only a few minutes of attention span at a time – you don't have to finish the story each time. Stories that have a predictable pattern (Brown Bear, Brown Bear) give your child the excitement of knowing what's coming next – it's cool to watch them "reading" the book to themselves later.

Other ways to promote language at this age:

- Encourage a verbal response – gently push but don't frustrate
- Sing! Lots of music in the car as you run errands. Turn the TV off and have music playing instead. Luckily we have some really good kids' music that parents can tolerate (and maybe even enjoy).
- Nursery Rhymes are excellent pre-literacy activities – they have a predictable lilt and rhythm
- Make a habit to count snaps, buttons as you get dressed – your child will learn to anticipate when you say, "One...two....(pause) – THREE!" The same goes for sayings like "Ready...Set....(pause) – GO!"

A Note on Bilingual Families

Many of our families are bilingual and we are actually quite happy about that. Many children who are being raised bilingually are slightly slower than their one-language peers, but not by much. As long as they're making steady progress in one language and seem to have a good understanding of both, we're generally pleased about that. An effective technique is for each parent to choose different dominant languages and speak to the child in that language almost exclusively.

Toilet Training

We've covered the other 2 "battle zones" of toddlerhood so far – feeding issues and sleep issues; potty training is the 3rd. Many families who have dreamy eaters and dreamy sleepers are surprised and very disappointed when they have to deal with this 3rd battle.

We know that many parents are longing to be done buying and changing diapers. Parents also get an inevitable pressure-filled question about 18 months or so, "When are you going to potty train?" There are two problems with this question: 1) Most kids aren't really ready at 18 months to be potty trained and 2) Generally parents don't get to decide when their children are ready.

A better question than "When are you going to potty train" is really, "Is your child ready to potty train?" Here are some ways to know that your child may be getting to the ready point:

- Is your toddler dry for at least 2 hr stretches?
- Does your toddler understand the difference between wet and dry?
- Can your toddler pull pants up and down and wash their own hands?
- Is your toddler interested in the potty?
- Can your toddler indicate that a bowel movement is about to happen?
- Can your toddler sign or use words to ask for help?

Watch for these signs, but the reality is that you need to be able to say "yes" for all of them to really be "ready." Your child should also not be showing fear of toileting or withholding bowel movements. You can certainly read books about toileting; videos are available on YouTube and on DVD to encourage and make it fun. Have your child accompany you to the bathroom and let them know what you're doing. Buy a potty chair and have it available as part of their bath and/or bedtime routine. You might have noticed that toddlers can be pretty negative, so don't

ask a question that you don't want a "no" answer for. For example, don't ask "Do you want to sit on the potty?" Instead, state, "Please sit on the potty while I fill up the bath tub."

It also might be helpful to know that the average girl potty trains at 2 ½ and boys near age 3 years. And remember that's an average! Some are later than that and are still quite normal. If your child trains early, consider yourself lucky and enjoy it. If your child is later than average, it has absolutely no reflection on their intelligence.

Finally, it's really critical to note that no punishment is ever appropriate for toileting accidents or failure to train. Only positive reinforcement has been shown to be truly effective. Rarely we have real challenges to potty training, and some alternative techniques can be used. If your child is 3 years and shows almost no interest in toileting, we can certainly start the conversation about how to help the process along.

More insights into potty training can be found at this link:

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/toilet-training/Pages/Its-Potty-Time.aspx>

Car Seats

Once again, please keep your child backwards as long as you can – we know it's safer and recommend that they stay backwards-facing at least until age 2 years.

Other Safety Issues

The key issue at this age is that your child's skills are changing rapidly now and you need to try to stay one step ahead. Anticipate as best you can and think like a curious toddler. Make sure that they can't escape from areas that you have made safe for them to play with safety gates/latches. This is unfortunately a common age for poisonings and ingestions. Toddlers are not safe in garages, back yards, kitchens, etc. without direct supervision.

Quick Note About Firearms: We recommend that firearms not be kept in a home where there is a child. If you choose to have a firearm in your home, we recommend that the firearm and its ammunition be kept in separate and locked containers and have keys/combinations that are additionally secured. Additionally, it is really important to know about the security measures taken where your child visits: grandparents, aunts/uncles, play dates, babysitters. Please do not feel ashamed to ask about this; if this is an offensive question, we may have other issues to address. The links below will give you a little more to think about.

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Gun-Safety-Keeping-Children-Safe.aspx>

<http://safehome411.homestead.com/>