

Health and Wellness: 18 Months

Development

In the next 6 months, your child should start to:

- pretend play
- use a spoon correctly
- be able to turn on a light switch
- follow a two-step command
- say two-word phrases
- run
- kick a ball.

Feeding Tips

- Teach your child to wash his or her hands and face often. This is especially important before eating and drinking.
- Your child's food likes and dislikes may change. Do not make mealtimes a battle. Give your child a good example with your own food choices.
- Continue to offer a variety of healthful foods, even those that your child was not previously interested in eating.
- Your child should decide how much he or she eats. Let him or her feed himself or herself.
- To see if your child has a healthful diet, look at a 4 or 5 day span to see if he or she is eating a good balance of foods from the food groups.
- Limit sweets and fast foods.
- Do not offer food as rewards.

- Your child should only be drinking milk or water. Other beverages, including juice, are not recommended.
- Give your child foods that are small enough or soft enough to prevent choking. High-risk foods include grapes, hot dogs and string cheese. Cut these foods lengthwise. Do not give your child whole nuts or popcorn.
- Milk is an excellent source of calcium and vitamin D.
- Your child should only eat when sitting at the table.

Toilet Training

- Your child may be ready for toilet training. Signs he or she may be ready include a dry diaper after naps, realizing and telling you he or she needs to go, or showing interest in sitting on the potty chair or toilet.
- For most children, interest in toilet training happens between the ages of 2 and 3.

Sleep

- Your child should still be taking at least one nap each day. If your child does not sleep, he or she should still have a quiet resting time in the afternoon with no screen time.
- Your child may have night fears. Using a night light or opening the bedroom door may help calm fears.
- Continue your calming bedtime routine. This can include giving a bath, reading books or singing songs.

(over)

Safety

■ Never shake or hit your child.

- If you are losing control, take a few deep breaths, put your child in a safe place and go into another room for a few minutes. If possible, have someone else watch your child so you can take a break. Call a friend, your local Crisis Nursery or United Way at 651-291-0211 or dial 211.

■ Use an approved car seat for the height and weight of your child every time he or she rides in a vehicle. The car seat must be properly secured in the back seat.

- The car seat should be rear-facing (facing the rear window) until your child is at least 2 years old. Ideally, your child should continue to be rear-facing until he or she passes the height and weight limits for his or her convertible (toddler) car seat.
- Car seat straps should fit snugly against your child. Layer blankets or car seat covers over your child for warmth. Snowsuits are not necessary.

■ Do not talk or text on your cellphone while driving.

■ Always put a helmet on your child if he or she rides in a bicycle carrier or behind you on a bike.

■ When your child is outside, use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15. Use a brand with the active ingredients titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. Avoid any that contain oxybenzone.

■ Keep all medicines, cleaning supplies and poisons locked and out of your child's reach.

■ Call the poison control center or your health provider for instructions in case your child swallows poison. Have these numbers handy by your phone or program them into your phone.

■ Create a safe area for your child to play. Use safety catches on drawers and cupboards. Cover electrical outlets with plastic covers.

■ Falls are common at this age. Put gates on all stairways and doors to dangerous areas.

■ Do not leave your child alone in the car or the house, even for a moment.

■ Never leave your child alone in the bathtub or near water. A child can drown in as little as 1 inch of water. The number one cause of death for children ages 1 to 4 is drowning.

■ Never put hot liquids near table or countertop edges. Keep your child away from a hot stove, oven and furnace.

■ Keep the crib mattress at its lowest setting. It's time to move your child to a toddler bed when he or she tries to climb out of the crib.

■ Never place a string or necklace around your child's neck due to the risk of strangulation. This also applies to attaching a pacifier to a string or cord.

■ Do not let anyone smoke or vape in your house or car at any time.

What To Know About Screen Time

■ The first two years of life are critical for the growth and development of your child's brain. Your child needs positive interaction with other children and adults.

■ Screen time includes watching television and using devices such as cellphones, video games, computers and other electronics.

■ Screen time has a negative effect on your child's development. This is especially true when your child is learning to talk and play with others.

■ If you choose to start allowing screen time, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting it to no more than 1 hour of high-quality programs each day. Watch these programs with your child to help him or her better understand them.

What Your Child Needs

- Toddlers are often stubborn and possessive. This is a good time to begin teaching him or her to share.
- Give your child sturdy toys that can be taken apart and put together or be used to build. Stay away from toys with small or sharp parts.
- Your child may become interested in doing the jobs you do at home. If possible, let him or her play with pots, pans and plastic dishes, or “help” with simple chores like sweeping.
- Make sure your child is getting consistent discipline from all caregivers.
- Praise your child for positive, appropriate behavior. Your child does not understand danger and cannot be trusted to obey the word “no.”
- Ignore temper tantrums. Make sure your child is in a safe place during the tantrum or you may hold your child gently, but firmly. If you give in to your child’s demands, you are teaching him or her that tantrums will get him or her what he or she wants.
- Talk, sing and read to your child often. Show your child picture books. Point to objects and name them. This time should be free of television, texting and other distractions.
- Consider joining a parent-child group such as Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) through your local school district.

Dental Care

- Make regular dental appointments for cleanings and checkups starting at age 3 years or earlier if there are questions or concerns. Your child may need fluoride supplements if you have well water.

- Brush your child’s teeth with a soft-bristled toothbrush when he or she wakes up and before he or she goes to bed. You should use a small amount (size of a grain of rice) of toothpaste with fluoride. Let your child play with the toothbrush after brushing.
- After brushing your child’s teeth in the evening, only give him or her water overnight. Other beverages, including milk, increase the risk of cavities.
- Your child should no longer be using a bottle. Using bottles increases the risk of cavities and ear infections.

Community and Health Information Resources

- **Healthy Children**
— healthychildren.org
- **Poison Control**
— 1-800-222-1222 or poison.org

Minnesota

- **MinnesotaHelp.info®**
— mnhelp.info
- **United Way**
— 211unitedway.org
— dial 211 or 651-291-0211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**
— health.state.mn.us/wic
- **Early Childhood Family Education**
— education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/elsprog/ECFE
- **Parent Aware**
— parentaware.org
- **Help Me Grow**
— helpmegrowmn.org

Wisconsin

- **211 Wisconsin**
 - 211wisconsin.communityos.org
 - dial 211 or 1-877-947-2211
- **Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program**
 - dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic
- **Early Childhood Family Education**
 - dpi.wi.gov/early-childhood
- **Child Aware of America (Wisconsin)**
 - childcareaware.org/state/wisconsin
- **Birth to 3 Program**
 - dhs.wisconsin.gov/birthto3

Your Child's Next Well Checkup

- Your child's next well checkup will be at age 2.
- Your baby may have his or her lead level checked.
 - This is a blood test to look for high levels of lead in the blood. Possible sources of lead can include paint in older homes, toys and other objects, and contaminated soil.
 - High levels of lead can lead to problems with brain development.
- Your child may need this vaccination:
 - influenza.

Information about the Vaccines For Children (VFC) program is available if your child is eligible for the program. VFC is a federally funded program that offers vaccines at no cost.

Talk with your health care provider about giving acetaminophen (Tylenol®) after your child's immunizations.