

18 Months

Glacier Medical Associates

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Normal Activity and Development

Children this age have great games and body control. They may walk more quickly, or even run though stiffly. They may sit and “bump” their way downstairs or revert to all fours and creep down backward.

Children of this age inquisitively open doors and drawers and delight in taking things apart. They also enjoy playing with sand and in water. They must be constantly supervised in all play and other activity inside and out, alone and with other children. Safety education should be under way. However, sometimes it is easier to simply pick up a child and deposit him/her in a safer place. Children are establishing independence at this time, but still need close ties to familiar objects and people. Often they will play “run away and come back.” Parents can play active games with their children like catch, kick, and throw. Parents can also encourage young children to help around the house.

Children may have a favorite toy or doll they carry with them wherever they go. They enjoy listening to short songs and rhymes. Their attention may be more intense. But they may be easily distracted because their attention span still may be short. They are likely to be easily frustrated when they can’t do something they want.

Your child will likely have a vocabulary of 10 words by now. It is not unusual however for a normal child to have few or no sounds conveying definite meaning until 18 months or later. Those children in whom speech is delayed to 18-20 months there is often rapid development of words and meanings after this time, with a result that most normal children by their second birthday have a vocabulary of 250 words and are able to put 2 or 3 words together in a sentence. They will continue to understand more and more and they will be able to verbalize their needs.

Diet

Children at this age may continue to have 2-3 bottles or cups of milk a day during specific times, like before naps or bed. However in general they should be eating mostly from the family menu which should be a balanced diet. Children this age are often picky eaters and like to feed themselves. Meals should be fun and not a battle zone. Feeding difficulties in the future often result from excessive forced feeding by parents and subsequent anxiety when the child is not able to meet the parents demand. It may not seem like it, but kids will continue to regulate their own intake in order to provide adequate growth.

Sleep

Many children this age can get out of their cribs and this may become more of a problem in the months to come. At some point the transition will be made to a small bed, preferably one with a bed rail which will prevent the child from rolling onto the floor. Your child should continue to be sleeping alone without difficulty.

Safety tips

- Car seat – Always use it!
- Poison control – Post the phone number by the telephone : 1-800-732-6985
- IPECAC – Have this on hand for accidental poisonings. First call poison control. Be sure all poisons, cleaning products, and medicines are unreachable by infants and children. Use drawer locks.
- Baby proof – Protect your baby from stairs, cabinets, sharp corners on furniture, things they can pull down or over on themselves.
- Baths – **Never** leave your baby alone.
- Safe toys – no sharp edges or small pieces that come off (like doll's eyes!).
- Water heater – Turn it down to 120F.
- Electrical outlet covers – Install them.
- Choking – You should watch out for several common things which cause accidental choking; hot dogs, nuts, popcorn, candy, buttons, coins, plastic bags, and balloons. Beware of what is lying on the floor or what siblings will give them.

Household Safety

Plants should be kept out of your child's reach. Some house plants are poisonous. Call your local poison center to find out if your plants are poisonous.

Keep plastic bags and deflated balloons away from young children. Also keep alcohol and cigarettes out of reach of young toddlers.

Guns and ammunition should be stored in separate places so there is no chance of your child finding a real gun accidentally. They should be stored unloaded in a locked place with the keys kept out of your child's reach.

Lock matches and lighters in a cabinet that is higher than your shoulders. Children as young as two can start fires with lighters. Always be careful when friends are visiting with children that are older than your children. The older children can get into things you haven't thought of yet.

All pools, including hot tubs, swimming pools, and "kiddie" pools, must have locked covers or fences. When the family goes to the lake or river, a designated adult should be in charge of watching your children at all times. In addition, it is a good habit to require children wear life jackets at all times whenever they are around water.

Be sure to teach your child to look carefully before crossing streets and to always hold onto an adult hand.

Immunizations

If immunizations have been given on schedule, your baby does not need vaccinations at this visit. If you think your baby is behind schedule, or your baby has had any reactions to past immunizations, please notify your doctor.

What to expect

In the coming months discipline will continue to be an important issue. Distraction and moving out of the troublesome situation is still the mainstay of discipline at this age, but you can spend more effort explaining things to the child. Decide which issues are important enough to struggle over (like car seats) and which you can simply remove the problem. Don't dwell on misbehavior. Catch them being good, so they don't have to misbehave to get attention.

It's a little early at this stage to begin toilet training, but you can begin talking to them about wet and dirty. Most kids will let you know when they are ready. Girls usually are able to control their bowel and bladder function sooner than boys.

MEDICATIONS

- Flouride – 0.25 mg per day
- Tylenol (acetaminophen) – 120 mg
 - 1 ½ dropper of infant drops
 - ¾ tsp of elixir

Suggested books

Little people; Dr. Edward Christopherson

Baby Owner's Manual; Dr. E. Christopherson

Infants and Mothers; T. Berry Brazelton

Your Baby and Child; Birth to Age Five; P. Leach

Your Child's Health; Dr. Barton D. Schmitt