



“I tell people that when my son was this age, all of the things he did that really aggravated me and got me upset were things that from the standpoint of healthy child development, I wanted him to do. I just didn’t want him to do them to me, or at those particular moments!”

*Lawrence Kutner,
US psychologist and author.
Toddlers and Preschoolers, Ch. 5 (1994).*

Your Eighteen-Month-Old

Development



DVD Chap 5

Socially, your young toddler will begin to imitate every thing that you do: carry a briefcase, sweep with a broom, vacuum with a toy or talk on the phone.

You will find your 18-month-old is very demanding of attention. He will test the effects he can have on the people around him and will begin to notice the various reactions different people have to him. Note - It’s common for toddlers to remove their clothing (not always when you want them to!)

Your 18-month-old has greatly improved fine motor skills, which enables him to scribble spontaneously, usually in zigzags or circular lines. Use fat toddler crayons or washable markers and a large piece of paper and demonstrate to your child by making a mark and allowing him to imitate.

Your child should be able to build a tower of three to four cubes or blocks, will enjoy stacking and nesting toys, will be able to empty small objects from a jar by turning it over and will turn the knobs on everything. She will be able to turn one or two pages of a magazine or book at a time, too.

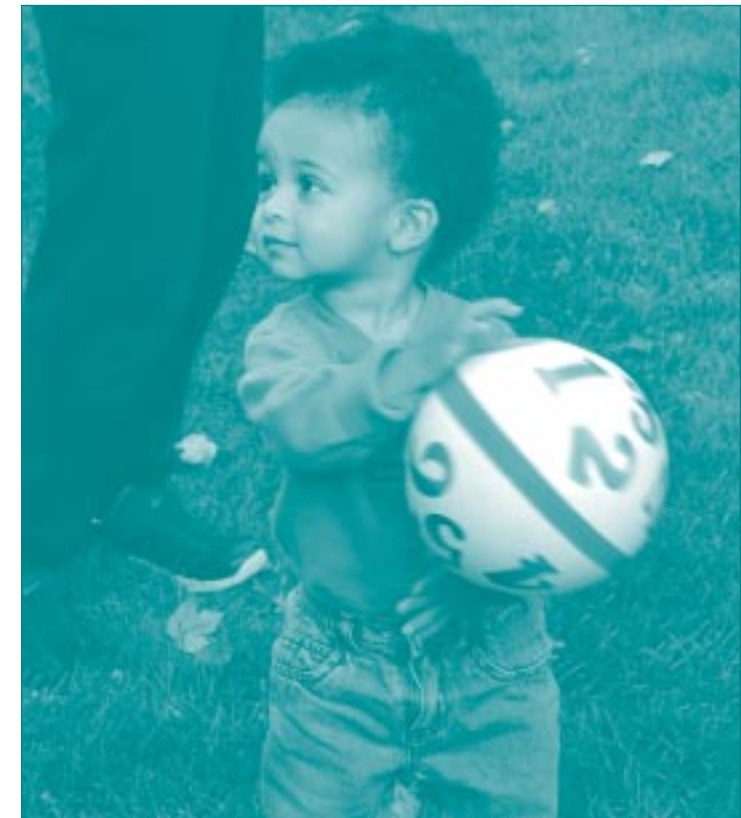


Your 18-month-old is beginning to appreciate shapes and will enjoy putting different shapes into a sorting box. He should be able to put a circle or square correctly in a form board (a board where the corresponding shape is cut out.) In addition, simple puzzles with small plastic holders in the center of the pieces will be enjoyable as your toddler learns to fit the pieces correctly.

The biggest milestone in motor skill development for this age group is climbing. It is also the most challenging milestone for parents. Once walking is achieved, your 18-month-old will be climbing everything like a mountain climber — he will climb the furniture “because it is there.” This is a necessary skill for your toddler to develop. However, it also leads to more falls, bumps and bruises. So, it is also necessary for an adult to supervise all climbing efforts. This may lead to conflicts

between the two of you, but with the right amount of supervision and limits, your toddler can enjoy safe exploration. Many areas now offer a play gym for children of this age to enjoy exploring and climbing in a padded environment. Check for one in your neighborhood.

Depending on when your child began walking, she may be walking quickly or even running by now. In addition, you will see her creeping backwards down stairs, scooping up toys from the floor without falling and making attempts at kicking a ball.





Your child will be able to point to body parts on request and may even name them. He may refer to himself by his own name, identify pictures in a book and say “bye-bye” when leaving. Over the next few months, some toddlers will begin to use two word phrases.

At this age, your 18-month-old will love to sing and listen to songs with repetitious phrases, such as “Old MacDonald’s Farm.” You may even hear him singing words and humming.

Language skills are also improving rapidly. Your toddler should be able to comprehend a great deal more than she can say. Most 18-month-olds have a vocabulary of four to ten words besides “Mama” and “Dada.” She will also begin to name what she wants - “cookie,” “juice.” For some toddlers, their favorite word is “no!”

There is great variability in speech development, even among children of equal intelligence. It is not unusual to find an 18-month-old who says few words but understands everything. Comprehension is a good sign and usually means the words will follow by age two.

Warning signs there may be a problem with language development:

- If your child is not answering to his or her name
- If your child is not pointing to objects
- If your child is not making attempts to ask for what he or she wants

Your pediatrician or family practitioner will follow your child’s language development carefully over the next few months. If you have concerns, please discuss them with your doctor.

Feeding and Nutrition

Continue to provide your toddler three meals and one to two snacks per day, recognizing that his appetite reflects his slower growth rate. Offer a wide variety of healthy food and allow him to select what and how much food he will eat. Resist the temptation to give junk food if your 18-month-old does not eat a meal. He simply may not be hungry.

Milk

Continue to limit milk to 16-24 oz per day. See section on whole milk vs. low fat (p 14).

Juice

Juice should be limited to 4-6 oz. per day. Use water and add a small amount of juice for flavoring. Most toddlers will drink very watered down juice. Remember to continue avoiding carbonated beverages.

Bottle vs. Cup

If your 18-month-old has not transitioned from a bottle to a cup, it is time to do so. Never let your child take a bottle of milk or juice to bed.



What To Eat?

At this age, your child should be included in family meals. She should be able to eat most foods that adults can eat as long as they are cut into small pieces. Avoid power struggles over food. You can't win. Respect your child's food preferences within reason and restrict her access to excessive amounts of milk, juice and junk food. A hungry appetite will take care of the rest.

What Not To Eat?

Continue to avoid choking hazards such as nuts, hard candy, gum, popcorn, whole grapes, raw vegetables, uncut hot dogs and meat sticks.

How Much To Eat?

One good meal a day is average at this age. A good rule of thumb for toddler portion sizes is this - approximately one quarter of an adult portion size. The caloric requirements for an 18-month-old are minimal. So, don't worry! How they are growing is more important than how much they are eating! If you have concerns about your child's growth, discuss them with your pediatrician or family practitioner.

Utensils

You will notice a big improvement in the use of a fork and spoon at this age. Your proud self-feeder may be insulted if you try to assist!

Too Busy to Eat?

Your busy 18-month-old may have a limited attention span at mealtime. Understand that it can be difficult to stay seated when there is so much to do. I suggest you make it clear that when she gets down from the table, the meal is over. Do not offer more food until the next scheduled meal or snack. It will not take long before your toddler realizes where her bread gets buttered!

Vitamins

Most toddlers who eat a nutritionally balanced diet will not need vitamin supplements. Discuss with your doctor if there are special circumstances that might require additional supplementation with a multi-vitamin or iron.

