

Caring for Your Baby!



Family Medical Center
of Hastings

15 to 18 Months

Length _____

Weight _____

Head Circumference _____

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Helping Your Baby Eat Right!

Ban the Bottle

Your toddler needs to be off the bottle by now. After 15 months of age, a bottle can significantly affect your baby's teeth.

Encourage your toddler to drink from a cup and gradually reduce his use of the bottle, especially at night. Do not let your baby fall asleep sucking on a bottle of milk, juice, or soft drink. The liquid pools around the teeth, leading to rapid tooth decay. Also, it can cause choking or lead to ear infections. Do not feed your baby juice or soft drinks in a bottle, even for snacks or at mealtimes. Too much milk, (more than three glasses a day) or juice may not leave enough room for other nutritious foods.



When using cow's milk, ask your doctor when to start and what type of milk to use.

What's on the Menu?

Your toddler should eat regular meals with the rest of the family and perhaps small snacks in between. It is important to let your child use a spoon and drink from a cup at this age. This will undoubtedly be messy, but it is important to help him develop coordination. Children at this age are often picky eaters, and their appetite drops off a bit. Discuss vitamins with your doctor. Remember to limit the amount of juice your child drinks to about 4 to 6 ounces a day. At this age, children often play with their food and dump it onto the floor during most meals. Table manners are developed at a much later time and should not be expected of a child this age. Do not let mealtimes become a battle; try to keep your toddler as calm as you can.

- Offer your toddler a balanced variety of healthy foods in small, finger-food sizes.
- *If you are still breast-feeding, there is no reason to stop if you do not want to.*
- Select real fruit juices, not fruit drinks that are heavily sugared and artificially flavored. And do not overdo it. Limit the amount of juice to four to six ounces per day.
- Consider dessert a normal part of a meal, not a reward for eating something else. Offer healthy foods for dessert, such as fruit, yogurt, or bits of raisin bread.
- Avoid small, hard chunks or round, slippery foods that can choke your toddler. These include whole peanuts, grapes, carrots, hot dogs, meat sticks, or hard candies. You can make hot dogs and cooked carrots safer by quartering them lengthwise and then slicing them into small pieces.

As your child gains more control over his hands, he will want more control over what and how he eats. As his physical growth slows in the second year, it is normal for his appetite to decrease as well.

Given a choice of healthy foods, toddlers will eat a balanced diet. It may not look like it because your child may insist on nothing but his favorite food for three days in a row – and then refuse to eat it at all! But he will eat what his body needs, if only healthy foods are put in front of him. Repeatedly offering him a few bites of new foods may help him keep an open mind about trying new things.

Mealtime Tips

- Let your toddler feed himself with his fingers or with a spoon. It may be messy at first, but most children master use of a spoon and cup by 24 months.
- Offer small amounts. If he finishes it all and still seems hungry, seconds are in order. Do not let him fill up on sweets between meals.
- Keep meals pleasant and avoid turning them into battles. Offer positive statements instead of criticisms, such as "Peas belong in your mouth or in your dish" when he starts dropping them onto the floor.
- Offer new foods gradually and in small amounts. Repeated, small bites are a good way to help him learn to eat new foods that do not seem too appetizing on the first or second try.
- Have your child eat with the family. It will help him learn that meals are for eating and socializing.
- Teach your toddler that eating is done sitting down. Trying to eat and run at the same time can lead to choking.
- Avoid using food as a reward or withholding food as punishment.

Sleep

Your child may cut out the morning nap at this age, but most still take an afternoon one. You should at least encourage some "quiet time" spent alone in the afternoon. Continue a consistent bedtime routine.



Your Toddler's Development

Your child will now be walking alone, exploring, and moving quickly. A child this age can easily dart into the street or downstairs. She will soon be able to go up stairs with one hand held, kick and throw a ball, and handle a cup and spoon more effectively. Vocabulary is expanding rapidly now. You can help your toddler's vocabulary grow by showing and naming lots of things.

Hand Signals

In the first few months of this second year, your baby will master picking up small items between her thumb and forefinger. In fact, she will probably enjoy a game of picking up raisins or pieces of dry cereal, putting them into a container, dumping them out, and eating them.

It's Playtime!

Remember to play at your toddler's level, not your own.



- Playing with fitting, stacking, and nesting toys.
- Filling and emptying containers of all kinds, especially pots and pans.
- Pulling and pushing toys with wheels, and hooking together trains of pull toys.
- Stacking

up to four blocks and knocking them down.

- Looking at and "reading" picture books with you.
- Playing with puzzles that have two or three pieces.
- Dancing and clapping to music, and banging pot lids or a toy instrument.
- "Helping" you around the house as you do household chores.
- Cuddling and "parenting" soft animals and dolls.
- Scribbling and painting.



Toy Safety Alert

Your toddler is probably very curious. She is trying to master control of her own body and learn about the world around her at the same time. She has no concept of what is dangerous, so it is your job to provide her with safe toys and a protected environment. Here are some guidelines.

TOYS SHOULD:

- Be too large to be swallowed.
- Be labeled nontoxic.

TOYS SHOULD NOT:

- Have detachable small parts that can lodge in her ear, nose, or throat.
- Have sharp edges or points or be likely to break into pieces with jagged edges.
- Be held together with easily exposed pins, wires or nails.
- Be made of glass or brittle plastic.
- Have cords or strings over 12 inches long.

A World of Words

When your baby is 12 or 13 months old, a baby usually can say "Mama" and "Dada," plus a few other words. Very quickly, her vocabulary and understanding of words will expand, and suddenly she will be understanding a lot of what you say. You may find yourself spelling out words you don't want her to hear! Here are some ways to help her language develop:

- ✓ Use less and less baby talk.
- ✓ Speak softly and clearly.
- ✓ Talk to her a lot, about everything.
- ✓ Teach her the correct words for objects and parts of her body.
- ✓ Use words to describe what you are doing as you are doing it.
- ✓ Ask her to follow simple directions.
- ✓ Do not make fun of her mistakes; instead, repeat the word correctly and with enthusiasm ("Yes, that's right, it's a . . .!")
- ✓ Read books and nursery rhymes, introducing a variety of words and ideas.
- ✓ Look at picture books and magazines, and ask her to name objects or tell you what is happening in each picture.

Your 15 to 18-Month-Old Toddler's Health

Illness

Your child has likely had some sort of illness by now, and perhaps several. Most childhood illnesses are caused by viruses, and antibiotics don't kill them. They must therefore run their course. Sometimes bacterial infections can settle in on top of a viral infection and can cause ear infections, pneumonia, strep throat, or sinus infections. Then an antibiotic may be appropriate. We certainly do not want to give medicine unless it is needed and helpful. Antibiotics are expensive, can cause diarrhea, and can lead to resistant organisms if used too much.

Your Baby's Behavior

Toddlers often seem somewhat out of control, or overly demanding or stubborn. At this age, children often say "no" or refuse to do what you want them to do.

Here are some tips for helping children learn about rules and to keep them safe:

- 1. Child proof the home, picking up things that are valuable, dangerous, or messy. Do not expect a child to not get into things just because you say no.**
- 2. If a child is playing with something that you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy. This avoids a fight and does not place the child in a situation in which he will say "no."**
- 3. Have as few rules as possible and enforce them. These rules should be ones that are important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, give a short and clear explanation, and then punish immediately by having the child sit alone for two minutes. Always have your punishment come immediately after a rule is broken.**
- 4. Be consistent with your discipline. If you say you are going to do something, follow through.**

At this age, most toddlers are not ready for toilet training. When toddlers report to parents that they have wet or soiled their diaper, they are beginning to be aware that they prefer to be dry. This is a good sign, and you should praise your child for this. Let your child watch you or other family members use the toilet. Starting to toilet train too soon just makes everyone frustrated and usually is unsuccessful.

Safe and Sound

Because they are so active and curious, toddlers are at high risk for accidents. Here are a few safety hints:

- Use an appropriate car seat for every ride. This is not negotiable. NEVER leave him alone in a car.
- The back seat is the safest place to fasten your toddler's car seat. However, if you must put your child in the front seat, make sure the vehicle's seat is upright and as far back as it can go, away from the air bag.
- Keep his crib at the lowest setting. If he can climb out of his crib, move him to a low bed.
- Don't leave a chair near a railing, table, counter, stove, or window where a toddler might climb and fall, pull objects down, or get burned.
- Make sure all open windows have secure screens or barriers he can not push out.
- Make sure all medications are out of reach and have child-resistant caps.
- Keep all household cleaners, poisons, cosmetics, and medicines out of reach and in locked cabinets.



- Cover all unused electrical outlets with protective shields designed for that purpose. Avoid loose or dangling electrical cords.
- Post emergency phone numbers (poison control, hospital emergency room, pediatrician) near the phone. (The Poison Control Center number is 800-222-1222.)
- Never leave your toddler unattended near a bucket of water, a bathtub, or a wading or swimming pool – he can drown quickly in even a few inches of water.
- Continue to set the hot water heater temperature at 120°F. When filling the bath, run cold water last to prevent burns. Test the water before putting your child in it.
- Cut food into small pieces. Avoid foods the child is likely to choke on.
- Teach your child not to run into the street. Hold onto him when you are near traffic. Provide a play area where balls, etc., cannot roll out into the street.
- Lock up all guns, and keep them unloaded.
- No smoking.