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## Well Child Care at 18 Months

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**Nutrition:** Family meals are important for your child. Let him eat with you. This helps him learn. Don't make mealtime a battle; rather, make it a fun family time. Let your child feed himself. Your child should now be starting to use a spoon and drink from a cup.

**Development and Discipline:** Children at this age should be learning many new words. You can help your child's vocabulary grow by showing and naming lots of things. Children may have different feelings and behaviors such as pleasure, anger, joy, curiosity, warmth, and assertiveness. It is important at this age to praise your child for doing things that you like.

Toddlers often seem out of control or overly stubborn or demanding. At this age, children often say "no" or refuse to do what you want them to do. Here are some good methods for helping children learn about rules and keep them safe:

1. Child-proof the home. Go through every room in your house and remove anything that is either valuable, dangerous, or messy. Preventive child-proofing will stop many possible discipline problems. Don't expect a child not to get into things just because you say no.
2. Divert and substitute. If a child is playing with something you don't want him to have, replace it with another object or toy that he enjoys. This approach avoids a fight and does not place children in a situation where they'll say "no."
3. Teach and lead. Have as few rules as necessary and enforce them. These rules should be rules important for the child's safety. If a rule is broken, after a short, clear, and gentle explanation, immediately find a place for your child to sit alone for 1 minute. It is very important that a "time-out" comes immediately after a rule is broken.
4. Make consequence as logical as possible. For example, if you don't stay in your car seat, the car doesn't go. If you throw your food, you don't get any more and you may be hungry.
5. Be consistent with discipline. Don't make threats that you cannot carry out. If you say you're going to do it, do it.

At 18 months, most toddlers are not yet showing signs that they are 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 dryness. This is a good sign and you should praise your child. Toddlers are naturally curious about the use of the bathroom by other people. Let them watch you and other family members use the toilet. It is important not to put too many demands on a child or shame the child during toilet training.

## Safety tips

### Avoid Choking and Suffocation

- Keep plastic bags, balloons, and small hard objects out of reach.
- Cut foods into small pieces. Avoid foods on which a child might choke until age 4 years (eg: popcorn, peanuts, hotdogs and chewing gum).
- Store toys in a chest without a dropping lid.

### Prevent Fires and Burns

- Keep hot appliances and cords out of reach.
- Don't cook with your child at your feet.
- Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Turn the water heater down to 120°F (50°C).

### Pedestrian Safety

- Hold onto your child when you are near traffic.
- Provide a play area where balls and riding toys cannot roll into the street.

### Prevent Drowning

- Never leave an infant or toddler in a bathtub alone - **NEVER**.
- Continuously watch your child around any water, including toilets and buckets. Keep toilet seats down, never leave water in an unattended bucket, and store buckets upside down.

### Avoid Falls

- Check the stability of drawers, furniture, televisions and lamps. Avoid placing furniture (on which children may climb) near windows or on balconies.
- Install window guards on windows above the first floor (unless this is against your local fire codes).

- Make sure windows are closed or have screens that cannot be pushed out.
- Don't underestimate your child's ability to climb.

### **Car Safety**

- Keep your child's car seat rear-facing until he is 2 years of age.

### **Poisons**

- Lock away all medicines, vitamins, cleaning fluids.
- Put the poison center number on all phones. Phone number: 1 (800) 222-1222.
- Purchase all medicines in containers with safety caps.
- Do not store poisons in drink bottles, glasses, or jars.

## **Immunizations**

At the 18 month visit, your baby may receive shots. Your baby may run a fever and be irritable for about 1 day after the shots. Your baby may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling in the area where the shots were given. You may give your child acetaminophen drops to treat for fever and irritability. For swelling and soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed for comfort.

Call your physician if:

- Your child has a rash or any reaction to the shots other than fever and mild irritability.
- Your child has a fever that lasts more than 36 hours.

## **Picky Eaters**

**What is a picky eater?** The peak time for picky eating is the toddler or preschool years. A picky eater:

- may complain or whine about what is being served
- refuses certain foods, especially vegetables and meats
- pushes foods around the plate
- hides foods or gives them to a pet under the table

**What causes it?** Children of all ages (and adults) commonly have a few food dislikes. A picky eater is a child with many food dislikes. At age 2 or 3, up to 20 percent of children are picky eaters. It is normal for most young children to dislike foods with a bitter or spicy taste. Sometimes children dislike foods because of their color, but more often it's because they are difficult to chew. Children accept tender meats better than tough ones, and well-cooked vegetables better than raw.

**How long does it last?** Most children who are picky eaters will grow out of it. They start trying new foods during the early school years because of peer pressure. The voracious appetite during the adolescent years also increases the willingness to experiment. If you try to force a child to eat a food he doesn't like, he may gag or even vomit. Force feedings always interfere with the normal pleasure of eating and eventually decrease the appetite. Learning to accept new foods should not be expected before the teenage years.

### **How can I help my child?**

- **Try to prepare a main dish that everyone likes.** Once your child expresses a strong dislike for a particular food, do not force him to eat it. Instead, try reintroducing such dishes when your child is older.
- **Allow occasional substitutes for the main dish.** If your child refuses to eat the main dish and this is an unusual request, you may allow a substitute dish. An acceptable substitute would be breakfast cereal or a simple sandwich the child prepares for himself. Never become a short-order cook and prepare any extra foods for the mealtime. The child should know that you expect him to learn to eat the main dish that has been prepared for the family.
- **Respect any strong food dislikes.**

If your child has a few strong food dislikes (especially any food that makes her gag), do not continue to pressure your child to eat these foods. It will only lead to a power struggle, gagging, or even vomiting.

- **Don't force vegetables that your child dislikes.** Because vegetables tend to be hard to chew and some of them are bitter, they are commonly rejected by children and also by many adults. Instead, find creative recipes such as mashed cauliflower.
- **Don't allow complaining about food at mealtimes.** Have a rule that it's okay to decline a serving of a particular food or to push it to the side of the plate, but complaining about it is unacceptable.
- **Encourage your child to taste new foods.** Many tastes are acquired. Your child may eventually learn that she likes a food that she initially refuses. Research shows that it may take seeing other people eat a new food 10 times before they're even willing to taste it, and another 10 times of tasting it before they develop a liking for it. Don't try to rush this normal process of adapting to new foods. Don't talk about bites because trying to force a child to eat one bite of food per year of age is not helpful with most picky eaters. Instead, it's better to simply serve it repeatedly, ask your child to taste it, then trust him when he says that he did.
- **Avoid pressure or punishment at mealtimes.**

Never pressure, beg, or bribe your child to eat all foods. Never punish your child for refusing to take one bite of a new food. It will only lead to liking that food less over time, gagging or even vomiting. If your child has a stubborn, strong-willed nature, pressure around eating can progress to a power struggle which in turn prolongs the picky eating.

- **Don't argue about dessert, in fact, dessert does not have to be part of any of your child's meals.** An unnecessary area of friction for picky eaters is a rule that if you don't clean your plate, you can't have any dessert. Since desserts are not necessarily harmful, a better approach is to allow your child one serving of dessert regardless of what he eats. However, there are no seconds on dessert for children who don't eat an adequate amount of the main course. Desserts don't have to be sweets;

they can be nutritious desserts such as fruits.

- **Don't argue about a bedtime snack.** If your child complains about bedtime hunger, avoid a long discussion. Give him a small, plain snack (such as an apple) before it is time to brush his teeth.
- **Don't extend mealtime.** Don't keep your child sitting at the dinner table after the rest of the family is done. This will only cause your child to develop unpleasant associations with mealtimes. If he suddenly wants to eat, give him 5 extra minutes.
- **Keep the mealtime atmosphere pleasant.**

Make it an important family event. Draw your children into friendly conversation. Tell them about your day and ask about their day. Talk about fun subjects unrelated to food. Avoid making it a time for criticism or struggle over control.

- **Avoid conversations about eating at any time.** Don't discuss what your child eats in your child's presence. Trust your child's appetite to look after your child's caloric needs. Also don't give praise for appropriate eating. Don't give bribes or rewards for meeting your eating expectations. Children should eat to satisfy their appetite, not to please the parent. Occasionally you might praise your child for trying a new food that he does not like the taste or texture of.
- **Give your child a daily multivitamin containing 400 iu of vitamin D or vitamin D alone.** This recommendation is based upon recent findings that most people do not get enough Vitamin D and low levels of Vitamin D has been linked to a variety of diseases.

**Toilet Training:** Bowel and bladder control is a necessary social skill. Teaching your child to use a toilet takes time, understanding, and patience. The important thing to remember is that you cannot rush your child into using the toilet.

**When is a child ready for toilet training?** There is no set age at which toilet training should begin. The right time depends on your child's physical and psychological development. Children younger than 12 months have no control over bladder or bowel movements and little control for 6 months or so after that. Between 18 and 24 months, children often start to show signs of being ready, but some children may not be ready until 30 months or older. Your child must also be emotionally ready. He needs to be willing, not fighting you or showing signs of fear. If your child resists strongly, it is best to wait for awhile.

It is best to be relaxed about toilet training and avoid becoming upset. Remember that no one can control when and where a child urinates or has a bowel movement except the child. Try to avoid a power struggle. Children at the toilet-training age are becoming aware of their individuality. They look for ways to test their limits. Some children may do this by holding back bowel movements.

Look for any of the following signs that your child is ready:

- Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time during the day or is dry after naps.
- Bowel movements become regular and predictable.
- Facial expressions, posture, or words reveal that your child is about to urinate or have a bowel movement.
- Your child can follow simple instructions.
- Your child can walk to and from the bathroom and help undress.
- Your child seems uncomfortable with soiled diapers and wants to be changed.
- Your child asks to use the toilet or potty chair.
- Your child asks to wear grown-up underwear.

Stress in the home may make learning this important new skill more difficult. Sometimes it is a good idea to delay toilet training in the following situations:

- Your family has just moved or will in the near future.
- You are expecting a baby or you have recently had a new baby.
- There is a major illness, a recent death, or some other family crisis.

However, if your child is learning how to use the toilet without problems, there is no need to stop because of these situations.

### **How to teach your child to use a toilet**

**Decide what words to use:** You should decide carefully what words you want to use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. Remember that friends, neighbors, teachers, and other caregivers also will hear these words. It is best to use proper terms that will not offend, confuse, or embarrass your child or others. Avoid using words like "dirty", "naughty", or "stinky" to describe waste products. These negative terms can make your child feel ashamed and self-conscious. Treat bowel movements and urination in a simple, matter-of-fact manner. Your child may be curious and try to play with the feces. You can prevent this without making her feel upset by simply saying, "This is not something to be played with."

**Pick a potty chair:** Once your child is ready, you should choose a potty chair. A potty chair is easier for a small child to use, because there is no problem getting on to it and the child's feet can reach the floor. Children are often interested in their family's bathroom activities. It is sometimes helpful to let children watch parents when they go to the bathroom. Seeing grown-ups use the toilet makes children want to do the same. If possible, mothers should show the correct skills to their daughters, and fathers to their sons. Children can also learn these skills from older brothers and sisters, friends, and relatives.

**Help your child recognize signs of needing to use the potty:** Encourage your child to tell you when he is about to urinate or have a bowel movement. Your child will often tell you about a wet diaper or bowel movement after the fact. This is a sign that your child is beginning to recognize these bodily functions. Praise your child for telling you, and suggest that "next time" he let you know in advance. Before having a bowel movement, your child may grunt or make other straining noises, squat, or stop playing for a moment. When pushing, his face may turn red. Explain to your child that these signs mean that a bowel movement is about to come. It often takes longer for a child to recognize the need to urinate than the need to move bowels. Some children do not gain complete bladder control for many months after they have learned to control bowel movements. Some children achieve bladder control first. It is usually better for boys to learn to urinate sitting down first, and then change to standing up after they use the potty for stools. Remember that all children are different!

**Making trips to the potty routine:** When your child seems to need to urinate or have a bowel movement, take her to the potty. Keep your child seated on the potty for only a few minutes at a time. Explain what you want to happen. Be cheerful and casual. If she protests strongly, do not insist. Such resistance may mean it is not the right time to start training. It may be helpful to make trips to the potty a regular part of your child's daily routine, such as first thing in the morning when your child wakes up, after meals, or before naps. Remember that you cannot control when your child urinates or has a bowel movement.

Success at toilet training depends on teaching at a pace that suits your child. You must support your child's efforts. Do not try to force quick results. Encourage your child with lots of hugs and praise when success occurs. When mistakes happen, treat it lightly and try not to get upset. Punishment and scolding will often make children feel bad and may make toilet training take longer.

Teach your child proper hygiene habits. Show your child how to wipe carefully. (Girls should wipe thoroughly from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder.) Make sure both boys and girls learn to wash their hands well after urinating or having a bowel movement.

Some children believe that their wastes are part of their bodies; seeing their stools flushed away may be frightening and hard for them to understand. Some also fear they will be sucked into the toilet if it is flushed while they are sitting on it. Parents should explain the purpose of bodily wastes. To give your child a feeling of control, let her flush pieces of toilet paper. This will lessen the fear of the sound of rushing water and the sight of things disappearing.

**Encourage the use of training pants:** Once your child has repeated successes, encourage the use of training pants. This moment will be special. Your child will feel proud of this sign of trust and growing up. However, be prepared for "accidents." It may take weeks, even months, before toilet training is completed. Continue to have your child sit on the potty at specific times during the day. If your child uses the potty successfully, it is an opportunity for praise. If not, it is still good practice.

In the beginning, many children will have a bowel movement or will urinate right after being taken off the toilet. It may take time for your child to learn how to relax the muscles that control the bowel and bladder. If these "accidents" happen a lot, it may mean your child is not really ready for toilet training.

Sometimes your child will ask for a diaper when a bowel movement is expected and stand in a special place to defecate. Instead of considering this a failure, praise your child for recognizing the bowel signals. Suggest that he have the bowel movement in the bathroom while wearing the diaper. Encourage improvements and work toward sitting on the potty without the diaper. If this behavior continues for more than a few weeks, it may represent a power struggle or fear.

Stooling patterns vary. Some children move their bowels 2 or 3 times a day. Others may go 2 to 3 days between movements.

Soft, comfortable stools brought about by a well-balanced diet make training easier for both child and parent. Do not use laxatives, suppositories, or enemas unless your pediatrician advises these for your child.

Most children achieve bowel control by 3 to 4 years of age. Even after your child is able to stay dry during the day, it may take months or years before he achieves the same success at night. Most girls and 75% of boys will be able to stay dry at night after 5 years of age.

Most of the time, your child will let you know when he is ready to move from the potty chair to the "big toilet". Make sure your child is tall enough, and practice the actual steps with him. Provide a stool to brace his feet.

**Next Visit:** Your child's next visit should be at the age of 2 years. Please remember to bring your child's shot card.