



4171 Westport Road
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(502)896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

18 – 24 Months

Your child is in the toddler age period – walking and toddling around and learning from all the activity and new experiences. Children are just beginning to think and know from thinking. These milestones make this an especially significant time. The new things your child knows – words, memories, and resulting personality – will fascinate you and your family.

There are many joys at this age: from the delight your child takes in new abilities to watching your child's increasing curiosity and competence. Certain areas like motor development and speech progress rapidly – usually much faster than emotional maturity. This is very normal. Children do not have an adult outlook on life especially in the areas of controlling emotions, sharing, patience, and concepts of time, just to name a few.

Behavior and Guidance

Even though children are acquiring new words regularly they are still unable to express their feelings in words especially negative ones – so, normal temper tantrums begin. Children express displeasure, anger, fatigue, hunger, and frustration by stiffening their bodies, crying, kicking, and sometimes by hitting or banging their heads. All of this behavior seems very negative to parents and is very upsetting to most; but remember, children of this age do not have mature ways to express these feelings.

Since we do not want to encourage this behavior we usually recommend ignoring temper tantrums by turning away or leaving the room until the tantrum stops. Then, reward the silence by a comment, smile, or other positive attention/distraction. It is a fact, if we want to change a child's behavior ignoring the undesirable activity should gradually teach your child "this temper tantrum is not getting me what I want; I will have to try something else". Occasionally, if your child is having a temper tantrum due to frustration or fatigue and is out of control for some time we suggest holding your child in a calm, firm bear hug to help him/her cease body activity and regain control.

Other, useful methods to help make behavior as desirable as possible include:



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- ✓ Arranging your home for your child's comfort. Remove breakables from the family room. Put toys only in places safe for play. Place stools near bathroom sinks, lower coat hooks, have small tables and chairs available, etc.
- ✓ Distract with humor. Remember, at his "NO" stage to try to ask questions that cannot be answered "NO". Use "It's time to _____" instead of "do you want to _____?"
- ✓ Ignore the small stuff. In other words, ignore as much as possible!
- ✓ Reinforce good behavior. Catch your child being good and comment on it. Make sure you give more positive responses to your child than negative ones. More "YES" than "NO". (See Positive Response Handout)
- ✓ Allow for as much curiosity and safe exploration as possible. Encourage trying with your guidance and watchful eye. Autonomy, the feeling of being able to "do on my own", is an especially important attitude at this age.
- ✓ Utilize TIMEOUT for misbehavior. Timeout allows for time away from the area of negative behavior then, returning to attempt better behavior. (See Timeout Handout)

VERY IMPORTANT: Remember, the word discipline involves teaching. Accept this important challenge to teach behavior that allows your child to be fun to be around!

Nutrition

Normally, growth rate slows down in the second year so appetites may drop off. Flexibility is important in providing a nutritious diet. Offer healthy snacks. Try lots of safe finger foods as well as continuing the use of a spoon and fork. Try to limit juice drinking to no more than 4 ounces per day. We strongly advise weaning from a bottle if your child is still taking one.

Try not to become anxious about your child's decreased appetite, small meals, playing with food, etc. It is more important to control what your child eats than it is how much he/she eats. Encourage a healthy variety. Limit sweets, fats, and junk food. Small portions will lead to feelings of success at mealtimes.

Mealtime manners will develop gradually through practice and example. Tension related to eating does not help anyone. Avoid force feeding and get in the habit of eating together as a family with the TV OFF. Try to discuss anything but the food (eaten or not eaten).



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General Health and Hygiene

Make baths fun and relaxing with toys for play, pouring, etc. Brushing teeth should be a routine by this age. Allow your child to brush your teeth or a doll's teeth to aid cooperation. Begin to teach hand washing as the best way to prevent infection especially after going to the bathroom and before meals.

Toilet Training

By this age, children are often aware before or as they urinate or have a bowel movement. However, it still may be awhile before they are aware in enough time to make it to the potty. It is fine to be getting used to a potty chair or big toilet (with support for hips and feet). Children usually accomplish toilet training by age 2 to 3 ½. We encourage gentle support for children while they learn. (See Potty Training handout)

Safety

Remember, normal curiosity can lead to accidents. It is your responsibility, as parents, to allow activity and exploration in safe surroundings. Here are some things to consider:

Climbing and running leads to falls with cuts and bruises to the head, face, and legs being most common. Falls are more likely to occur outdoors. Keep our phone number **(896-8868)** and the route to the emergency room handy.

Children will eat or drink many substances that are not food. Clean or lock cabinets and store ALL medicines and chemicals carefully. Keep the Poison Control Center number **(589-8222)** handy.

Watch all cords and plugs. Supervise children to avoid contact with any electrical source, appliances, or machinery. Remember, curling irons are a frequent source of burns.

A federally approved car seat is a **MUST** as are seatbelts for everyone in the car. Car seat straps should be adjusted for a snug fit. New regulations require children 2 years of age and younger to be in a rear facing car seat.



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Have smoke detectors and fire extinguishers on each level of your home and check regularly to make sure they are in proper working order. Turn hot water heaters down to 120 degrees or less to decrease the incidence of water burns. Supervise all matches and other sources of fire.

A Few Words on Being a Parent

Remember to enjoy your child! In the same storms and confusions of temper tantrums, the “NO” age, and independent behavior, remember, your child is carrying out a vital part of development. He/she is learning to deal with the world more independently – becoming separate from you. Allow this with your guidance, patience, and good humor! Be as positive about your response to behaviors as possible. Appreciate the new skills and personality evolving and remember there are many, many more years to learn and develop self-control!

We are available to discuss any concerns you have. Please consult with our office staff as questions arise.

Suggested Reading

Parents and Toddlers, by T. Brazleton

Your Child's Self Esteem, by Dorothy Briggs

Parent's Book of Toddlers, by Parents Magazine

NEXT CHECKUP: 2 YEARS OF AGE

Please ensure your child's immunizations are completed to this age. If not, please arrange to complete them.