



4147 Westport Road
Louisville, KY 40207

6112 Crestwood Station
Crestwood, KY 40014

(502) 896-8868

www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com

12-15 Months

Your child is changing from a baby to a mobile toddler. He/she will acquire a few meaningful words and communicate by gestures, pointing, and sounds. Your child will begin to understand more of your words and be able to follow simple directions such as “come here” or “hand it to me.”

The use of small muscles and hand-eye coordination improves. Children roll balls, put objects in and dump objects out of containers, play with blocks and small toys, and use hands or utensils for feeding. Ability improves with practice and your child will learn they can play with objects and toys in new and interesting ways.

Your toddler does not realize that objects have only one use. To adults, a cup is just a cup for drinking but to a child of this age objects have limitless possibilities. A cup can be used for drinking as well as for pouring, throwing, putting food in, or wearing on top of their head! Your furniture looks like a jungle gym and, therefore, may be climbed on just like the outdoor type. This no-limit thinking is very creative! It has many implications for how your child sees everyday activities you take for granted and how you insure their safety at home.

Enjoy this newly emerging activity and personality – and try to keep up with all the action!

Behavior and Guidance

Your child is beginning to develop a sense of being separated from you. He/she is learning to move away from your lap to try to touch, see, and reach. Be generous with praise for efforts. Accept their normal curiosity. Children must learn by doing on their own but still need your help, protection, and appreciation.



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Discipline is necessary at this age. Remember, discipline means, “to teach or guide.” It is not necessarily mean to punish. Think back on your own childhood. You may not have positive thoughts about how you were disciplined. Possibly because it involved pain, punishment, or embarrassment. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend spanking. Spanking can increase aggression and anger instead of teaching responsibility. Research shows that while many adults today who were spanked as children are well adjusted and caring people, children who are spanked have a higher risk of becoming adults who are depressed, use alcohol, have more anger, and hit their own children.

Regardless of your experience, you have the opportunity to turn discipline into a form of caring teaching that will minimize those uncomfortable feelings from your childhood for your own child. Try the following methods:

- Distraction: simply direct your child to something new or somewhere else safer and more appropriate.
- Child-proof your home: make sure your home is as safe and comfortable for your child as possible. It is far better to move a few things than to say, “no” all day.
- Physical removal: pick up your child and move them, take them to another room, or sit on the floor with them to play. This will allow your child to focus on you and not the inappropriate activity.

Nutrition and Transition to Table Foods

At 12 months of age, being weaning off formula and start the transition to whole milk.

Bottle fed babies are usually weaned (including the nighttime bottles) by 15 months of age. Nursing babies may be weaned, or nursing may continue but frequency decreases to a few times per day. Introduce sippy cups or straw cups as a replacement.

Appetite generally decreases due to slower growth rate. To increase the appetite for food, we discourage excess liquids. By 15 months milk intake should be approximately 16-24 ounces of



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whole milk is recommended (unless otherwise indicated by your pediatrician.) Encourage water intake. No juice is needed. Milk and water is most healthy for your child.

Offer your baby a variety of pureed or safe table foods and allow self-feeding with fingers, spoons, or forks. Encourage use of a sippy cup or one with a straw, if desired.

Soft foods are needed and should be cut into small pieces to avoid choking.

It is okay to begin whole eggs, citrus, and tomato products if not introduced yet. Monitor for the effect of the new foods.

Peanut butter is okay if your child is not allergic. Due to the potential for choking only a thin amount should be used on toast or crackers. Monitor closely for reaction.

It is okay to try white fish.

Peel or cut very fine any fruit with a skin.

Sleep

A schedule and routine will become more important at this stage. Carry out a predictable pre-bedtime routine done in your child's bedroom. The goal should be a pleasant time in the period before sleep. Try to have no more than 6-8 steps (bath, books, hug, kiss, etc.) that your child can count on nightly. Security objects such as a stuffed animal, small blanket, and/or toy may be useful. No bumpers are recommended including the mesh bumpers.

Safety

- Your infant should remain in a car seat that is rear-facing for a minimum of 2 years. Check the height and weight requirements as you may need to invest in a larger rear facing convertible car seat as your child grows.



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- Lock back doors and use gates for potentially dangerous areas such as bathrooms, basements, etc. Install window guards on upstairs windows and place outlet covers in all electrical outlets.
- Always directly supervise children around swimming pools, bathtubs, treadmills, exercise bikes, etc. Near or in water, keep your child close enough to touch to prevent drowning.
- Lock away poisons, cleaning and lawn supplies, medications (even over-the-counter medications), etc. Poison control may be reached at 1-800-222-1222.
- Report to us if your child eats paint chips, especially during renovations, or if you have any reason to suspect lead poisoning in your child.
- Keep small chokeable objects away from your child.
- Prevent burns and scalds. Turn the hot water thermostat to 120 degrees or less. This will help prevent severe scalding even if your child turned on the hot water accidentally. Keep all hot liquids out of reach and do not carry your child while carrying a hot liquid. Turn pan handles to the back of the stove and be especially cautious around irons, space heaters, fireplaces, and curling irons/hair straighteners.
- Remember plastic bags and un-inflated balloons or balloon pieces are potential choking and suffocation hazards.
- Consider carefully the safest method of carrying your child on a bicycle. If you decide to carry your child on a bicycle, helmets are needed for both of you!
- If guns are owned, store unloaded and locked with ammunition locked separately from the gun.

A Few Words on Being a Parent

Congratulations on your first year of being a parent! Even though it has undoubtedly been busy we hope you have developed confidence in your abilities and have found great joy in seeing your child develop and change.

Here are a few tips for the second year:



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- Enjoy your child. Use play with your child to get in touch with the fun inside of yourself.
- Help your child explore their world. Allow push-pull toys, coloring with large crayons, name and talk about objects in your surroundings, go on outings, etc.
- Use your sense of humor. Laugh with your child and your spouse/partner daily.
- Enjoy your child's new skills without putting too much pressure to perform. Follow his/her lead on repetition, when to move on to other activities, etc.
- Set limits to help initiate early self-control.
- Encourage speech development. Name body parts, talk about what you are doing, use and value books in your home, encourage initiation of household activities, and do not forget how much children enjoy rhymes and songs.
- Try not to misread new independent behavior. The autonomy that children are seeking normally is not misbehavior or undesirable and it is certainly not a rejection of loving parents. Normal children must seek and try on their own. This is worthy of praise because toddlers do it so well.

We are available to discuss any issues you have concerning your toddler.