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12 – 15 Months

Your child is changing from a baby to a going and doing little walker. 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 such as “come here” or “hand it to mommy” etc.

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.

Discipline is necessary at this age. Remember, discipline means “to learn”. It is not necessarily punishment. 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.

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



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- ✓ 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

Bottle fed babies are usually weaned (no night bottles either). Nursing babies may be weaned or nursing may continue but frequency decreases to a few times per day.

Appetite generally decreases due to slower growth rate. To increase the appetite for food we discourage excess liquids. No more than 16 ounces of milk (whole or 2%) and no more than 4 ounces of water daily.

Offer your baby a variety of pureed or safe table foods and allow self-feeding with fingers, spoon, or fork. Encourage use of a sippy cup or one with a straw, if desired. (See Finger Foods and Toddler Mealtime Handouts)

Transition to Table Foods

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

It is OK to begin whole eggs, citrus, and tomato products. Monitor for the effect of new foods.

Peanut butter is OK as long as your child is not at high risk for allergy. Due to the potential for choking only a thin amount should be used on toast or crackers. Monitor closely for a reaction.

It is OK to try white fish.

Peel or cut very fine any fruit with a skin.



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Begin weaning off formula and start the transition to whole or 2% milk.

Sleep

A schedule and routine will become a bit more important. 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 to 8 steps (bath, books, hug, kiss, etc.) that your child can count on nightly. Security objects such as a stuffed animal, blanket, and/or toy may be useful.

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:

- ✓ Enjoy your child. Use play with your child to get in touch with fun in yourself.
- ✓ Help your child explore their world. Allow push-pull toys, coloring with large crayons, name and talk about things in your surroundings, go on outing, 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 don't 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 have to 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.



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NEXT CHECKUP: 15 MONTHS OF AGE

**(NOTE: this visit is typically immunization only but we will be happy to see your child for a full
checkup if desired)**