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## **15 – 18 Months**

Your child is acquiring new motor skills and understanding. Children of this age are usually walking alone, crawling stairs, and showing more interest in objects and toys. They also roll balls, stack a few blocks, and begin simple shape sorting. Scribbling is fun (in safe places!). Your child's ability with self-feeding continues to grow.

An understanding of your words and language increases at this age. Children have a great deal of body action such as pointing, grunting, pulling you, struggling to open the refrigerator, etc. They use jabber or series of sounds you will not understand and may have words or sounds indicating their interest in words – “what’s that”, “see it”, or quizzical sounds as they point at objects. Jabbering and gestures may be the bulk of communication but many children acquire at least 6-15 words during this period.

Autonomy, a sense of self direction, is normal and necessary at this age. Appreciate this stage of your child's testing his/her abilities. Allow for success, accomplishments, and just plain fun every day!

### **Behavior and Guidance**

Children are most comfortable if they are in a child-appropriate, safe, and interesting environment. Having a variety of challenges and fun each day keeps children happily involved and prevents a great deal of misbehavior. Consider the following:

- ✓ Encourage speech by talking and reading to your child.
- ✓ Talk during routine car rides and shopping trips.
- ✓ Point out body parts on your child and on dolls, stuffed animals, etc.
- ✓ Name household objects.
- ✓ Encourage conversation (i.e. toy telephone).
- ✓ Use your child's name in conversation.
- ✓ Use picture books every day especially ones with familiar objects/animals and books that require actions like patting, touching, etc.
- ✓ Give one step requests – “bring the ball”, “get the book” – then test two step requests to see what your child is remembering.



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- ✓ Challenge curiosity with toys that reinforce interests – bus, airplane, miniature lawnmower, miniature kitchen, etc.
- ✓ Allow supervised water play both inside and out.
- ✓ Remember to blow some bubbles.
- ✓ Encourage cuddly toys such as animals and/or dolls for security and imaginative play.
- ✓ Bright balls of various sizes are fun.
- ✓ Allow a little mess making – play dough, helping parents cook, etc. (Hint: Daycare even allows finger painting with pudding and shaving cream!)
- ✓ Use active push-pull toys, shopping carts, wagons, etc.
- ✓ Allow for combining and changing toys – pop beads, blocks, large Legos, etc.

Remember, play has most value when encouraged by you. Allow some independent play and encourage self-direction a little every day. It is not too early to monitor and limit TV.

## **Nutrition**

Children are usually on table food and baby food at this age with the baby food steadily decreasing. They are using a cup for drinking (unless nursing) and should no longer be using a bottle (especially a bedtime bottle). If your child is still using a bottle we strongly encourage weaning at this time. Continue to expect a small appetite. Offer small portions and as much variety as possible.

Encourage utensils but expect hands to be used a lot. Continue to monitor juice intake – we advise no more than 4 ounces per day to encourage better food intake. Remember water is a great beverage.

Avoid choking hazards – peanuts, popcorn, hard candy, whole hot dogs, whole grapes, and similar food items. Monitor your child as he/she eats. Be very careful at parties and social occasions where dangerous food may be accessible to toddlers.

## **Sleep**

A predictable bedtime routine carried out in your child's bedroom is recommended. Sometimes there are nightmares at this age. Quick reassurance with the light out or dim is best. Minimal attention to



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waking is usually the best policy. If you are having difficulties with your child sleeping we will be glad to discuss them with you.

### **Toilet Training**

Early awareness of feelings of being wet and realizing when they “go” are normal at this age. Take notice of your child’s awareness. Use words for urine and bowel movements. Allow a potty chair or toilet adaptor and support for feet if your child wants to try the potty. No pressure is necessary – just support for learning and your help and encouragement.

### **Safety**

Always use an approved car seat for every ride! Your child should stay rear facing until two years of age.

Lock back doors or 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.

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.

ALL poisons, household cleaners, paints, and medications **MUST** be locked up and out of reach.

Prevent burns and scalds. Turn hot water thermostat to 120 degrees or less. This will help prevent severe scalding even if your child turned on the hot water. 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 concerned about irons, space heaters, and fireplaces.

Guard against electrical injuries from appliances, cords, and plugs.

Always directly supervise around swimming pools, bathtubs, treadmills, exercise bikes, etc.

Remember that plastic bags and un-inflated balloons or balloon pieces are a potential choking and suffocation hazard.



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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!

### **A Few Words on Being a Parent**

We hope you are developing confidence in dealing with normal misbehaviors. Remember, ignoring some misbehavior and distraction are two helpful techniques. Try to avoid criticism for curiosity and phrase your concerns in a positive manner. For instance, instead of “Don’t touch that plant!” use “Play over here”. Instead of “stop tearing the book” try “books are for looking and reading”. Other applications of this principle are “food is for eating” and “I’ll need to put it away”.

Parents need support and understanding from each other. Realize that dealing with the evolving personality and emerging development is a challenge and huge responsibility that can best be shared and handled together. The little person in your home will benefit from parents and a caring adult’s presence with consistent care and understanding. Keep your sense of humor! And don’t forget, we are available to discuss any concerns or issues you may have during this time.

### **Suggested Reading**

Parent’s Book for the Toddler Years, by Adrienne Popper, Ballantine Books

The Second 12 Months of Life, by Frank Caplan & the Princeton Center for Infancy and Early Childhood, Grosset and Dunlap

Toddlers and Parenting, by T. Brazleton, Dell Publishing

### **NEXT CHECKUP: 18 MONTHS OF AGE**

**Please ensure your child’s immunizations are completed to this age and if not please arrange to complete them.**