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18 MONTH WELL CHILD CHECK



Eighteen Month Well Baby Visit

Name _____ Wt _____ Ht _____ Head _____

Walking: 18 month olds have mastered walking. Many are starting to walk quickly, and a few can even run. As long as it is safe, allow your toddler the freedom to explore by himself whenever possible. Put gates or other barriers up to block off stairways or other unsafe areas; if you have a yard or deck, fence it if possible. Watch as your 18 month old explores his world, clinging to your leg for safety one minute then heading out bravely to check out something the next. Allowing your child to explore his world, encourages self-confidence and independence.

Talking: Most 18 month olds are talking. Though your 18 month old may have only 6 words you understand, he understands a great deal of what is said to him. By the time your child is two he will have many more words. Continue to talk to your child often and read to your child every day. Children learn to talk by repeating what they hear. Listen to your child and respond when your child talks to you so she learns not only how to say words but how to be sociable.

Eating: 18 month olds are eating table food and drinking from cups. Your 18 month old no longer needs a bottle. She can get all she needs to drink from a cup. If you like cuddling with your child as she drinks a bottle, continue the cuddle time but sing to her or tell her a story. It's time for bottles to disappear.

18 month olds can feed themselves with a spoon or fork though many prefer to use their fingers. Finger feeding can be messy, but children learn about textures and temperatures as they feed themselves: soft, hard, slimy, crunchy, hot, cold. If your child starts throwing food on the floor most likely she is no longer hungry and it's time for the meal to end.

Eating should also be a social time. Sit and talk and eat with your child as he eats. Dinnertime is often the only meal families are able to eat together so value that time as a family. If you begin a routine of family mealtimes now, it will set the stage for later years when your child is a teen and together time becomes more rare.

18 month olds are often picky eaters. Parents say, "I don't understand it. He used to eat all kinds of fruits and vegetables and now he only wants to eat crackers." Though it is common for 18 month olds to be picky eaters, don't encourage the pickiness by offering only foods that you know your child will eat. Remember that you are the adult, and though your child probably has strong opinions about what he wants or doesn't want to eat, you know what he should be eating to be healthy. You don't

have to fight with your child about eating. You don't have to force him or bribe him to eat fruits or vegetables but you do have to put yourself in charge of what is offered and when it is offered.

The easiest way to begin putting yourself in charge of what your child eats is to set a schedule for when your child will be offered something to eat or drink and to plan ahead of time what those food and drink offerings will be.

18 month olds need to eat frequently so schedule meals and snack every 2 to 3 hours. For example, if breakfast is at 8 then schedule a snack at 10, lunch at noon, a snack at 3, dinner at 6 and perhaps a bedtime snack at 8. 18 months olds shouldn't have to eat or drink during the night. If you are offering your child food every 2 to 3 hours, your child won't "be starving" even if he refuses to eat what you have chosen.

Your child should eat a variety of foods. It doesn't matter how much he eats, but that he eat many different types of food. He should be offered fruits and vegetables, grains like cereals, breads and pastas, dairy products like cheese and yogurt, meats like beef, chicken or fish every day. A breakfast offering might be an unsugared cereal, and a banana with milk; the mid morning snack could be some slices of cheese and slices of apple; for lunch, macaroni and cheese with peas and a glass of milk or water; plain yogurt mixed with berries and a graham cracker for mid-afternoon snack; pasta with chicken and green beans, some carrot sticks, and a glass of milk for dinner; some orange slices and a piece of whole wheat toast for a bedtime snack. Don't think of snacks as a sugary treat like cookies or candy, but rather as a small meal with fruit or vegetables. Offer cups of water to drink between meals and snacks. Offer milk only at meals. Many 18 month olds don't eat well because they are too full of milk. Your child needs no more than 3 cups of milk a day.

If your child doesn't want what you offered, that's okay. Just put it away and tell her that's fine but she doesn't get anything else to eat until the next scheduled meal or snack. She may have a temper tantrum, but just ignore it. She may tell you 15 minutes later, "I'm hungry" but you know you'll be offering her something to eat again in 2 hours so she's not going to starve. Give her a hug and say "We're going to eat again at dinner" and don't pay attention to the screaming.

How much an 18 month old will eat varies from meal to meal, from day to day. Remember that your job as a parent is to decide when your child will be offered food and what that food will be. Your child's job is to decide if he wants it and how much he will eat. If he asks for more of what you've offered, certainly he can have more. Just don't run and get him something different to eat just because he demands something else.

Most importantly, remember what you eat is what your child will eat, so eat healthily. You too need to eat a good variety of foods every day, including fruits and vegetables.

Behavior: 18 month olds can be very demanding. They want things their way. Scheduling meals and snacks helps give order to both you and your child's day. Nap times, play time, reading time, cuddle time can all become part of the day's routine. As you and your child know what to expect, demands will lessen.