

P E D I A T R I C S

of
Northeastern Pennsylvania

920 Viewmont Drive Dickson City, PA, 18519- 570-346-1464

YOUR 18 MONTH OLD CHILD

What an exciting time this is! This is "toddler-time" at its finest, with the magical revealing of a developing mind and distinct personality. This period of your child's development is truly a challenge of your patience and fortitude. Hang in there, this too shall pass. In the meantime, included in this handout is some general "baby info." to keep you going.

NUTRITION

Encourage mealtime as a family, recognizing your child's emerging autonomy. Don't enter into a power battle over food . . . you'll lose. Negativism may invade the food area all of a sudden like an unexpected tornado. Your wonderful, pleasant eater suddenly becomes a whining tyrant.

Refusing certain kinds of food, refusing lumpy foods, regressing to baby foods or to a bottle or to being fed are all signs and symptoms of this turmoil. As a parent you will do well to go with the flow, to retain a sense of humor and try to ignore the full force of the tornado. If you try to meet this situation head on by pressuring your child to eat or cajoling or inventing ingenious attempts to get around the negativism, the chances are good that the feeding area will become a battle ground. Many unnecessary feeding problems are laid down in this year. Of course we all want our children to eat properly, but if we look a little bit more closely at our motive, it's the giving up of power that we have the most trouble with. It's important for your child to explore, to establish their own infant power and its limits and to be able to say yes and no to certain foods and various kinds of foods. Although this may last for most of a year, your child will learn a kind of autonomy in the feeding area, which is as important for their ultimate development, as it is for a sound diet. Very few feeding problems can exist in an accepting environment. Remember this too shall pass.

EXTRA!!! EXTRA!!!

- Weaning should be complete at this point.
- Fluoride is still necessary; discuss optimal vitamins with your doctor.

SAFETY

POISON CONTROL #1-800-222-1222.

Your car seat is still essential for your child's safety. Your negative toddler may fight you about being restricted in the car, but remember the least safe place for your baby is in your arms while driving.

Secure unsafe areas with gate and/or locked doors. Supervise all outdoor play very, very closely. Children of this age do not recognize or understand danger, nor do they remember "NO".

Never, ever leave this child unattended in the car or house alone. Remember, your child can and will climb and climb quickly. Be on your guard not to leave the means for injury. For example, kitchen chairs pulled out from under the table, dresser drawers open, etc.

Remember how enticing dangling electrical cords and unprotected sockets are to a curious toddler "doing

research". Keep those cords as inaccessible as possible and use cord protectors.

A child this age is not water safe even if they know how to swim. It is absolutely necessary for close supervision when your child is around any body of water.

SLEEP

Night awakening due to night fears may occur. Rely on your bed-time ritual and don't resort to excessive rocking, bottles, etc. during this period. Reassure your child with soothing words and a calm manner.

Be aware of changing nap schedules. Your child may take two naps a day or none at all. Be flexible and remember, this too shall pass.

PARENTING TIPS

Your predictable, pleasant child is fast becoming unpredictable and full of "no's". These "no's" needn't all be taken literally. Rather than indicating that a decision has been made, it's a marker for the beginning of decision making. It's more effort to establish, in your child's minds, and in yours, that he knows he has a choice available. The "no" seems to affirm his new power to master his own decision making.

It's hard as a parent to see why a child needs to be punished or rejected to establish himself as a separate person, but maybe it's just that simple. When a child is intensely loved, it's even more difficult to separate from that person. When his behavior creates even a temporary ambivalence in you then they can more easily feel their own separateness.

So, allow your child some choices tempered with firm, consistent limits on the important issues. Remember, discipline is teaching desired behavior by following verbal prohibitions, if necessary, with physical reinforcement, (holding your child, moving the object asked not to touch or removing the child from the dangerous or a conflicting situation).

Praise what your child does for themselves, such as eating with a fork, putting their hands in their sleeve, etc. Your child is highly pleased by your approval.

You may see your child revert to thumb sucking or "lovies" like blankets or stuffed toys during the second year, which subsides naturally by about 2 1/2 years. This is part of your child's support system to deal with the stress of this period of development and does NOT leave distorted mouths and habits that persist into school years. This is a rough time for both you and your 18 month old, but hang in there . . . this too shall pass.

"The job of being an all important anchor, or being a source of strength, which can allow the child his negativism, his swings in ambivalence, his testing of the environment and of his own ego resources is a vital one in a child's life."

Dr. T. Barry Brazelton

EXTRA!!! EXTRA!!!

- Don't expect your child to share toys.
- Make sure their toys are durable with no small removable parts.
- Read to your child.

- Promote both quiet and active play and encourage imagination through pretend games.
- Encourage simple household tasks, like picking up their own toys.
- And Mom!!!! Make time for yourself so you can give your best time!

TOILET TRAINING

Your child may have been cooperative and compliant before, but if negativism is dominant now, its going to make this developmental stage into a battleground. Your child's autonomy and own motivation are of primary importance to any real success in toilet training. If you, Mom, try to over control the situation, your child's determination and strength will always win either in constipation, holding back stools, wetting their pants after being taken off the potty or hiding in the corner to produce a BM. These are all clues signaling too much parental control at a time when your child is searching for their own controls. The simplest and most full-proof method for successful toilet training at this age is none at all. If you can wait out this initial surge of negativism, there are more cooperative times ahead.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Refer to immunization chart in baby book for immunizations due.

Immunizations and their schedules change according to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. Check with your physician for changes/updates.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Motor

Walks fast, may run stiffly, walks up stairs with one hand held, walks backwards, sits in small chair, climbs into an adult chair, kicks and throws a ball

May stack 3-4 blocks, may place rings on a comb then dump them and try again

Language

Use of vocabulary of 4-10 words with specificity. May combine two-word phrases, understands and follows some simple directions.

May voice two or more wants, understands and repeats many more words than are used in spontaneous speech.

Identifies, points to some body parts on request

Mental

Stacks 3-4 blocks, may place rings on a comb, dump them and try again

Turns single pages in books or magazine, looks selectively at pictures and names some objects.

Pulls a toy, feeds himself, uses a spoon appropriately, holds and drinks from a cup adequately, imitates a crayon stroke on a paper.

Social

Holds and loves doll or stuffed animal, may use a household-type toy like a telephone functionally. Puckers lips and kisses Mommy and Daddy on the cheek.

Please remember these are "typical" milestones for this particular aged child, but every baby is an individual and variations are to be expected.

Please call out office between 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. with ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS. That's what OUR part of YOUR team is all about.