

Your Child at 18 Months

Talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What children do at this age



Social/Emotional

- Likes to hand things to others as play
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- May cling to caregivers in new situations
- Points to show others something interesting
- Explores alone but with parent close by

Language/Communication

- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head "no"
- Points to show someone what he wants

How you can help your child's development

- Provide a safe, loving environment. It's important to be consistent and predictable.
- Praise good behaviors more than you punish bad behaviors (use only very brief time outs).
- Describe her emotions. For example, say, "You are happy when we read this book."
- Encourage pretend play.
- Encourage empathy. For example, when he sees a child who is sad, encourage him to hug or pat the other child.
- Read books and talk about the pictures using simple words.
- Copy your child's words.
- Use words that describe feelings and emotions.
- Use simple, clear phrases.
- Ask simple questions.

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Knows what ordinary things are for; for example, telephone, brush, spoon
- Points to one body part
- Shows interest in a doll or stuffed animal by pretending to feed
- Points to get the attention of others
- Scribbles on his own
- Can follow 1-step verbal commands without any gestures; for example, sits when you say “sit down”

Movement/Physical Development

- Walks alone
- May walk up steps and run
- Pulls toys while walking
- Can help undress herself
- Drinks from a cup
- Eats with a spoon

Act early by talking to your child’s doctor if your child:

- Doesn’t point to show things to others
- Can’t walk
- Doesn’t know what familiar things are for
- Doesn’t copy others
- Doesn’t gain new words
- Doesn’t have at least 6 words
- Doesn’t notice or mind when a caregiver leaves or returns
- Loses skills he once had

How you can help your child’s development

- Hide things under blankets and pillows and encourage him to find them.
- Play with blocks, balls, puzzles, books, and toys that teach cause and effect and problem solving.
- Name pictures in books and body parts.
- Provide toys that encourage pretend play; for example, dolls, play telephones.
- Provide safe areas for your child to walk and move around in.
- Provide toys that she can push or pull safely.
- Provide balls for her to kick, roll, and throw.
- Encourage him to drink from his cup and use a spoon, no matter how messy.
- Blow bubbles and let your child pop them.

Tell your child’s doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your state’s public early intervention program. For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/concerned.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children be screened for general development and autism at the 18-month visit. Ask your child’s doctor about your child’s developmental screening.