

# Healthy Child Development and Behavior



Below are milestones most children will reach between now and 18 months of age. Talk with your doctor at your child's next well-visit if your child is not yet reaching these milestones or there are skills your child no longer shows each day.

## Social and Emotional Milestones

- Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by
- Points to show you something interesting
- Puts their hands out for you to wash them
- Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- Helps you dress them by pushing their arm through the sleeve or lifting up their foot

## Language and Communication Milestones

- Tries to say 3 or more words (besides "mama" or "dada")
- Follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you the toy when you say, "give it to me"

## Thinking and Learning Milestones

- Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom
- Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car

## Physical Development Milestones

- Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- Scribbles with a crayon
- Drinks from a cup without a lid (may spill sometimes)
- Feeds themselves with their fingers
- Tries to use a spoon
- Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help

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## Healthy Ways to Help Your Child Learn and Grow

### Development

- Teach your child to talk by using simple words and phrases. Repeat and add to what your child says. Describe feelings and emotions. Read books together and use simple words to talk about the pictures.
- Encourage empathy for others by teaching your child to comfort someone who is sad with a hug or pat on the back.
- Play with puzzles and blocks to encourage problem-solving. Practice throwing, rolling and kicking a ball. Use pretend play toys that require imagination like dolls or play telephones.
- Nurture independence by letting your child dress and feed themselves.

### Behavior

- Teach your child "wanted behaviors." Give your child attention and praise when behaving well.
- Tantrums are common at this age. Below are tips to help you manage tantrums:
  - Use distraction to stop tantrums when you can.
  - Set limits to teach and protect your child, not to punish them. Always tell or show your child what they should do instead.
  - Limit the need to say "no" by making your home and yard safe for play.
  - Let your child choose between 2 good options when possible.
- It is normal for your child to be anxious or shy around new people. Be sure to comfort your child.

## Feeding

- Give water and 16–24 ounces of whole milk each day. Avoid sugary drinks like juice.
- Cut food into small pieces to help prevent choking.
- Offer your child 3 meals and 2–3 healthy snacks each day. Encourage drinking from a cup and using a spoon or fork. Wean your child from the bottle.
- Toddlers need less food because they don't grow as fast as babies. Don't worry if your child is picky or eats inconsistently. Let your child choose between healthy options.

## Sleep

- Your child may sleep up to 12–14 hours in a 24-hour period, including 1–2 naps during the day.
- Have a consistent routine for bed (bathing, brushing teeth, books, bedtime). The hour before bedtime should be calm. Avoid giving your child a bottle or cup in bed.
- If your child wakes during the night, avoid giving enjoyable attention. Use words to reassure them and give a blanket or toy to hold for comfort.

## Digital Media Use

- Limit screen time. Smart phones, tablets and TVs are not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Children learn best by talking and playing with others.

## Water Safety

- Drowning is silent and can happen quickly. Do NOT leave your child alone near any water (including buckets, bathtubs, toilets, pools, ponds, whirlpools). Install a 4-foot-tall fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate around home pools. Learn more about water safety. *Scan the QR code*

## Vehicle Safety

- Your child's car seat should stay rear-facing in the back seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer. Learn more about car seat safety and installation. *Scan the QR code*

## Home Safety

- Lock up medicines and cleaning supplies. Save the Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) in all phones.
- Keep small electronics that use button batteries out of reach (for example, remote controls, key fobs, calculators, musical greeting cards, flashing holiday jewelry). Learn more about swallowing hazards. *Scan the QR code*
- Store any guns unloaded and locked in a safe. Keep the ammunition locked separately.

Find more useful, healthy tips for your family:

### Cincinnati Children's Blog

Visit: [blog.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://blog.cincinnatichildrens.org)

### Young & Healthy Podcast

Listen on:



*This information is meant to support your visit with your child's doctor. It should not take the place of the advice of your pediatrician.*

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents, 4th Edition* | American Academy of Pediatrics

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