

What's Up? Your Baby's Development

18-Month Visit



This is a delightful stage for parents as children begin to talk and talk and then talk some more. Toddlers are also starting to pretend. This is a big step in their development and makes life really fun and often very funny. *How do you see your child starting to use his imagination?*

What Your Baby Can Do

I am learning new words everyday.

- I may say as many as 50–100 words by my second birthday.
- I may even put two words together to make my first sentences!

I need help to begin learning self-control.

- I understand *no* but I still can't control my feelings and actions.
- I may get frustrated when I can't do something by myself. Please be patient with me!

I am beginning to use my imagination.

- I may feed my doll pretend food.
- I might make *brrrummm* noises when I play cars.

I am a little scientist, always testing things out!

- I love to fill and dump and open and close things to see how they work.
- I may start to sort objects. I might put all my trains in one pile and all my cars in another.

I am becoming an even better problem-solver.

- I might blow on my food when you tell me dinner is hot or try to get my own jacket on.

What You Can Do

Turn your child's words and phrases into sentences. When she says "More milk," you can say: "May I have more milk? Yes, of course!" This modeling helps your child learn to use longer sentences.

Talk as you read. Ask your child questions about the pictures and stories you read together.

Put your child's feelings into words. "I know you're really mad that I turned the TV off. It's okay to feel mad. Instead of TV, would you like to read or play blocks now?"

Read stories about feelings. Helping your child to learn the words to describe his feelings helps him learn to manage them.

Play pretend with your toddler. You might be a puppy, barking and running after a ball.

Jumpstart your child's imagination with dress-up clothes, animal figures, blocks, and plastic food and dishes.

Help your child practice sorting. Ask your child to help you sort the laundry by putting socks in one pile and shirts in another.

Encourage lots of exploration. Fill-and-dump with water or sand. Make an indoor "sandbox" of dry oatmeal or fall leaves.

Use lots of math words such as big/small, tall/short, fast/slow as you go about your day. Count steps or food items to teach the number sequence.

Help your child solve a problem but don't do it all for her. The more she does, the more she learns.

Play games that use problem-solving skills. Try three- or four-piece puzzles or building with blocks.

As you use the HealthySteps handouts, remember that your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated and still be growing just fine. Every child develops at her own pace—and your HealthySteps Specialist will be available to answer any questions you may have. Your family's cultural beliefs and values are also important factors that shape your child's development.



Spotlight on Language Development

Learning to talk is one of the most important milestones of the first few years. How and when young children learn to use spoken words is different for every child. Some children may use words early and often, while others may take longer to speak. (If you have questions about your child's language development, talk with your pediatric primary care provider, HealthySteps Specialist, or other trusted professional.)

Build your child's vocabulary through repetition. When your child uses the same sound over and over to name an object, it is considered a "word." If your child always says muh when she wants milk, it means that she understands this sound stands for a specific object—that yummy white stuff. Correct pronunciation will come over time. You can help her learn how to pronounce words by saying what you know she means: "You want more milk?"

Notice how your child uses his actions to communicate. Nonverbal communication is very important. When a toddler takes your hand and leads you to a toy, he is using his actions to say, "I want to play with this toy." If your child is communicating through a series of actions like this, his language skills will likely follow. You can help by repeating the message your child is sending: "You'd like me to play with you. Here I come!"

Talk together with your child. The more you talk with your child, the more words she will learn. She's learning language from you—her first, and best, teacher.

Young children benefit from learning two languages at the same time This is a wonderful way for children to develop a close bond with their family, community, and culture. As your child's language skills grow, be prepared for some "language mixing." It is common for children to combine words in English and in their home language in the same sentence.

Did you know...

Parents may encounter challenging behavior in their toddlers every 3 to 9 minutes!

What It Means for You:

Testing is part of a toddler's healthy development. They do this by trying out different behaviors and seeing what reaction they get. How you respond makes a big difference in what your child learns and how he behaves. When you set limits:

Be clear about rules. Toddlers need lots of reminders about rules because their memory is still developing.

Be specific. Say "Please put the blocks in the box." instead of "Clean up your toys."

Be consistent. Use the same consequences to help your toddler learn cause-and-effect. For example, every time your child throws the ball in the house, put it away for a few minutes.

Stay calm. All children test the rules. The more calmly you respond, the more effective you will be at teaching your child self-control.

What is most challenging about limit-setting for you? Why? What might you do differently to feel more successful?

18–24 Months: What's on Your Mind

My toddler definitely understands the word "no" because he uses it all the time. But when I say, "No touching the lamp!" he stops for a minute but then does it anyway.

Toddlers do understand a lot of what you tell them. But they don't have much self-control yet. So while he may stop when he hears you say "No," he cannot stop himself from doing it again. He can't tell himself, "I really want to play with this lamp, but it's against the rules so I better not." For now, make your home as child-safe as possible so you can say fewer Nos. When you do set a limit (*no touching the lamp*), guide your child away from it and offer a substitute item to play with. Self-control takes years to develop. Your child will need lots of patience and consistency from you along the way.

At this visit the pediatric team will measure your baby's length, weight, and head. They'll listen to your baby's heart and look at his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Your baby will receive any needed immunizations. We will talk about your baby's development and routines like sleeping and eating. We'll also review safety guidelines. And, of course, we'll make time to discuss any questions or concerns you might have!