



Your Child at 12 to 18 Months

AT 12 TO 18 MONTHS, your child is still growing quickly, but not as noticeably as during the first year. This developmental stage will be filled with firsts. Some babies will learn to say their first words or take their first steps, while just about all toddlers will begin to make their first efforts at independence. As children begin to walk, run and climb, they will gain confidence and a greater sense of independence. Children this age are also curious about the nature of people and things. Your child needs encouragement and freedom to explore, as well as clear boundaries and limits to feel safe.

The developmental milestones typically reached at this age allow children to start placing things, people and actions in categories. For example, when you say you're going to the store, your toddler is beginning to create a mental picture of the supermarket, and of you in it.

Sleep At this age, your child needs about 14 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period. Most children will start giving up their morning nap and instead take one longer afternoon nap per day. As children adjust to less napping, they may be ready for bed a little earlier—anytime between 6 and 8 pm.

Nutrition

EATING: At 12 months, babies should eat a balanced diet of healthy foods such as: squash (vegetable), bananas (fruit), cheese (dairy), and chicken (protein). All foods should be cut into small pieces so children can feed themselves without the risk of choking. Foods you should still **AVOID** include:

- ▶ Raw carrots
- ▶ Popcorn
- ▶ Nuts
- ▶ Hot dogs
- ▶ Hard candy
- ▶ Whole grapes

Babies are still exploring most foods and probably won't eat a lot at a single sitting. Try to provide five or six small meals a day instead of three larger ones and avoid eating meals or snacks while watching TV.

DRINKING: By 12 months, your baby is ready to stop drinking formula and begin drinking up to 24 ounces of whole milk a day. Give your baby milk from a cup rather than a bottle. Don't forget to offer water throughout the day.



Keep in mind:
Now that your child has teeth, you should brush them daily with a baby toothbrush and water

Physical Development

- › Walks without help
- › Enjoys holding objects while walking—often one in each hand
- › Holds a crayon and scribbles (but with little control)
- › Gestures or points to indicate wants
- › Turns pages in a book
- › Likes to push, pull and dump things

Social and Emotional Development

- › Enjoys being held and read to
- › Imitates sounds and facial expressions
- › Plays alone with toys

Cognitive Development

- › Understands and follows simple, one-step directions
- › Says about 8 to 20 words, including “hi” and “bye”
- › Identifies objects in a book when asked
- › Pays attention to conversations

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR BABY AT 12 TO 18 MONTHS

Your child can move quickly and is able to get into many dangerous situations. Pay attention to your child’s surroundings and always provide adult supervision. A Home Safety Checklist should be completed at each stage of your child’s development. A sample checklist is provided for you on page 70.

- › Most toddler falls are from windows and balconies. Help prevent falls by moving furniture away from windows, installing window guards and securing balcony doors with child-resistant latches.
- › Prevent motor vehicle injuries by placing your baby in an appropriate rear-facing car seat. Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer. Never leave your child alone in the car, not even for a minute. The temperature inside a car can reach deadly levels in minutes, even in mild weather.
- › Prevent burns by blocking the kitchen with gates and keeping hot liquids out of reach.
- › Prevent drowning by installing safety latches on toilets, emptying buckets and keeping pet water bowls out of your child’s reach.
- › Prevent poisoning by installing latches on drawers, cabinets and anyplace where medications or cleaning materials are kept. Call Poison Control immediately if you think your child has swallowed something poisonous: 1-800-222-1222.

Positive Parenting Activities that Promote Nurturing and Attachment

- › Your child’s growing sense of independence will push him or her to test the limits of acceptable behavior. This is the right time to set a few limits that your child can understand and that you can consistently enforce. Children’s first rules should help protect their safety. You can also try these age-appropriate discipline techniques:
 - › Stay one step ahead. Distract or redirect your child from unsafe objects or activities.
 - › Save “no” primarily for safety issues. If children hear “no” too often, they start to tune it out.
 - › Use non-verbal communication. Give a stern or firm look for minor incidents.
 - › Allow time for your child to play alone. Independent play allows him or her to choose and direct the activity, and helps build confidence.
 - › Never use spanking or any other physical punishment. Spanking is never an effective form of discipline.



When to be Concerned

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, you should let your doctor know if at 12 months your baby:

- › Does not crawl
- › Drags one side of body while crawling for more than one month
- › Cannot stand while supported
- › Doesn’t search for objects that are hidden while he watches
- › Says no single words
- › Does not point to objects or pictures
- › Does not use gestures such as waving or shaking head

HERE'S HELP

Use the **Family Resources** on **pages 72–78** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.

