

A Newsletter for Parents

18 Month Check Up

Well Child Appointments can be made online at AustinRegionalClinic.com.



Your baby's length, weight, head size, along with health screens and immunizations performed will be in the **After Visit Summary (AVS)** that your baby's provider or nurse will give you at the end of the visit. You can also view this information on MyChartARC.com

NUTRITION

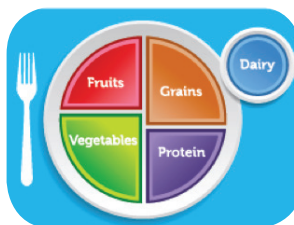
Remember this year is an important time when your child develops food preferences that may predict their eating preferences for life. As early as 12 months, your toddler's diet begins mirroring some of the unhealthy eating patterns seen in older children and adults, including eating limited fruits and vegetables and consuming too much sugar and fat. It is important that as parents we provide a variety of healthy, nutritious foods at mealtime and snack-time to avoid developing an unhealthy eating pattern for your child. Families have a tremendous influence on developing their children's food preferences, so please model the healthiest eating habits you can.

Here are a few tips:

- 1. Children thrive with structure and predictability.** This fosters a sense of security for your child. A set schedule of 3 meals and 2-3 snacks per day should be part of your child's diet. With set times for meals and snacks you can avoid your child grazing throughout the day. **Grazing can lead to unhealthy eating.** Your child may not be hungry every meal. Many children this age only eat 1-2 meals per day, since their rate of growth is slowing down.
- 2. "Parents provide and the child decides."** This is an important, easy-to-remember expression for us as parents. **As a parent, our job is to provide optimal nutrition for our child. Parents are responsible for what the family eats, when the family eats, and where the family eats.** Your child's job is to decide how much of the correct portion to eat. Children are responsible for whether they eat what is offered or wait until the next meal/snack. Picky eating and food refusal (or "food jags"—liking something one day and not the next) are normal parts of

your child's development, but as parents we need to avoid falling into a pattern of offering only what the child "likes" or offering less nutritious alternative foods because your child refuses what is offered to them.

3. One way to remember how to give your child nutritious, healthful choices is to **utilize the MyPlate visual diagram** to include all 5 food groups in meals and snacks. For the 3 meals of the day try to make half their plate fruits and vegetables. Remember: it can take up to 12-15 times of presenting a vegetable before a child will eat it. Never force a child to eat a vegetable—this will just create a battle and control issue—and try not to reward a child eating their vegetables with dessert. **Remember: the child decides how much to eat. Parents decide to keep offering it to them.** For more information and tips please visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.
4. **Snacks:** Today, the most popular snack choices among toddlers and preschoolers are crackers, cookies, and candy. But children's stomachs are small and they will not eat very much at each meal, so snacks should be thought of as "mini-meals." Fruits, vegetables, and protein are better choices for snack times to keep your child's diet healthy. Sweets can be part of a healthy diet, but they should be thought of as an occasional treat and not offered everyday.



For more information on how to encourage healthy habits for children 0-5 years of age, please visit: www.healthychildren.org/growinghealthy



Online Access: Day or Night

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- Print your child's shot records any time
- Book your child's next appointment
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DEVELOPMENT Social/Emotional

Successful parenting of an 18 month old requires patience, consistent limits, and daily routines. Communication and social skills are developing rapidly in most 18 month olds. Despite this rapid development, most 18 month olds still have limited communication skills and tend to get frustrated easily. The defiance and negativism of children this age reflect a desire for choice and independence. At the same time, children need to have strong emotional ties and feel loved by parents. To venture out into the world and test independence, a child must know that they have a safe and emotionally secure place at home.



To help with emotional and social development, allow your child to make simple choices, such as which fruit for snack-time or what book at nap time. Praise your child when you see them being cooperative and friendly. Comfort your child when they have fears or are afraid. Reassure your child that you are there.

While your child may engage you in play, children don't generally involve other children in their imaginary play until around 2 ½ years. However, children this age often enjoy having another child around during play. They watch each other and learn from each other by imitation. It is not expected that your child will share at this age.

Around 18 months, children begin developing a sense of self awareness. They are learning that they are individuals with their own feelings, thoughts, likes, and dislikes. Next, they realize that other people have their own feelings, thoughts, and preferences as well. This helps children learn empathy. They start to imagine how another person feels. To help your child develop empathy: Talk about other's feelings. "Susie is sad because you took her doll. Let's give Susie her doll back and we can find you another one." Demonstrate empathy: "Oh no, Johnny hurt his knee. Let's bring him some ice."

Learning

Children this age enjoy imaginary play and will eventually involve other people in their pretend play. Provide toys that encourage imaginary play such as simple dolls, toy phone, cars, musical instruments, play kitchens, and dress-up clothes. Join in the fun if your child wants you to play. You can play puppy, wear a silly hat, or let your child serve you "food." Enjoy such moments.

This is also an age when children become problem-solvers. You will see your child filling and dumping, opening and closing, shaking and throwing, as they explore and try to make sense of their world. Three and four piece puzzles or blocks also help develop problem solving skills.

Talking skills

Communication skills should be rapidly improving at this age. Nonverbal communication is starting to be supported by language. Your child should be pointing and starting to use words to indicate needs and show you items of interest. Squeals of laughter and pointing at a puppy is a happy example of nonverbal communication.

Respond to nonverbal communication with the appropriate word or phrase, "Look at the doggie!" Soon your toddler will add "dog" or "doggie" as they point to the puppy.

Most 18 month old children say 10–25 words. Soon after 18 months, language abilities explode. By 2 years most children can say at least 50 words. Reading at least 30 minutes a day to your child will help speech and language development. **The more words your child hears, the more words the child will learn.**

Talk to you child, and ask questions about the pictures and stories as you read. There are many apps or shows for kids that aim to improve their development, but your voice explaining their world around them is more helpful than any product.

Children benefit from learning two languages at the same time. This is a wonderful opportunity for your child and is a way to bond with their community and culture. Don't worry when you hear some language mixing. Eventually they will sort out the words.



Movement skills

Your child's ability to move about and effectively use their arms and legs is rapidly improving. Most 18 month olds run well, can throw objects while standing up, and seat themselves in a small chair. Over the next few months your toddler will start carrying large objects, squatting while playing and going up stairs placing both feet on each step.

Hand and finger skills

Your child's ability to use their hands and fingers are rapidly improving. By this age, your child should be able to use a spoon and cup without spilling all of the time, stack 2 or 3 blocks, and may even imitate scribbling with a crayon.



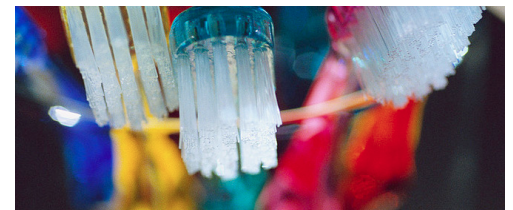
Developmental Concerns?

If you believe that your child is delayed or has a condition that could lead to delays, please ask your doctor to refer you.

You may also call **1-800-628-5115** or visit the ECI website at **dars.state.tx.us/ecis** for the ECI program closest to you.

CARE OF YOUR CHILD

Dental



Now we know that dental caries ("cavities" or tooth decay) are an infectious disease transmitted from other people. Babies usually pick up the germs that cause cavities from family members. Not sharing spoons, forks and drinks with your baby will help reduce cavities. For the same reason, do not clean your toddler's pacifier with your mouth and put it back in their mouth. This will share your mouth germs and cause more cavities for them.

Brush your child's teeth twice daily with small amount (smear) of fluoride-containing toothpaste.

Eliminate all bottle use. It is time for the "cold turkey" approach if your child is still using a bottle. Bottle use at this age, especially during the night, causes cavities. Breast-feeding during the night also causes cavities.

Make healthy food choices throughout the day. Frequent sweets, including fruit juices, increase tooth decay. Dentists recommend that your toddler drink their milk (or juices) at meal-time and drink only water between meals to get less cavities.

For more information about dental care look at the pediatric dentistry website, www.aapd.org. For patients insured by Medicaid, you can find a dental provider for your child www.tmhp.com, or calling the THSteps Hotline at 877-847-8377.

Toilet Training

Most children are ready to toilet train between 2 and 3 years of age. On occasion children less than 2 years are ready to toilet train; however, many children are not ready until age 3. The normal age range for toilet training is quite large.

Signs of being ready to toilet train:

1. Your child is dry for two hours or dry after naps.
2. Your child shows an interest in toilet training.

Preparing your child for toilet training:

1. Read books about using the toilet to your child.
2. Have a parent or sibling of the same sex take your child to the bathroom.
3. Take your child with you to buy a floor level potty chair. Make it clear that this is a special chair. At first let your child keep the chair in the play area and let your child sit on it fully clothed. Help your child develop good feelings about the potty chair.

Sleep



Most children this age need between 11-14 hours of sleep per day (including naps). They are often taking one nap or in the process of transitioning from two naps to one.

Having regular times for bedtime and naptime is very important to your child and your family. Predictable schedules are comforting to children and help them develop normal day-night patterns. Your child should not wake at night, for milk or comfort, on a regular basis.

If you want to read more about sleep problems, we recommend [Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems](#) by Richard Ferber, [Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child](#) by Marc Weissbluth, or [Sleep: What Every Parent Needs to Know](#) by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Discipline



Praise your child when they are behaving well. A way to think about this is “catch them being good.” Give specific praise about the behavior, “You wiped the table clean!” rather than general comments such as “You are so good.” Rewards and praise are better than punishments when trying to promote the behavior you would like to see in your child.

Testing limits is normal toddler development. It is not unusual for parents to deal with challenging behavior by their toddler every 5–10 minutes. Toddlers try different behaviors and see what reaction they get. If you are having an adult conversation, give your child brief attention every 2-3 minutes before the misbehavior happens. This might be a quick smile, eye contact or a light touch to their shoulder.

Set limits that are important to you and ask others to enforce the same limits with your toddler. Be clear about the rules. A toddler's memory is still developing so they need many reminders. They remember actions even better than words. For example, put the toy they just threw into time out for the rest of the day (out of their reach), to prevent them from throwing toys.

Be specific. For example, say “please put your blocks in the box” instead of “clean up your toys.” Use simple words and a nice tone when you tell your child what to do. Staying calm will teach your child self-control.

Change your child's focus to another toy or activity if they are getting too upset. Distract them before they melt down.

Be consistent. Use the same consequences for misbehavior. For example, every time your child hurts themselves or someone else, they might have time-out in a playpen or highchair. Keep time-outs brief, no more than a minute or two.

Spanking is not recommended by your child's physician or the American Academy of Pediatrics. Although many Americans were spanked as children, there are several important reasons not to spank:

- Even though spanking may seem to “work” at first, it loses its impact after a while.

- Because most parents do not want to spank, they are less likely to be consistent.
- Spanking increases aggression and anger instead of teaching responsibility.
- Parents may intend to stay calm, but often do not. They then regret their actions later.
- Spanking can lead to physical struggles and even grow to the point of harming your child.

SAFETY

Children need constant supervision at this age. Rapidly improving motor skills along with very little judgment is a combination that results in lots of accidents. Parents and other caretakers have to be vigilant. Also, watch more videos on how to protect your child on the YouTube channel SafeKidsAustin and www.safekids.org.

Car Safety

Most injuries and deaths caused by car crashes can be prevented by the use of car seats every time your child is in the car.

- **Keep your child in a rear-facing car seat until at least 2 years of age** and, even better, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed for your car seat when it's facing toward the rear.
- Never place your child's car seat in the front seat. **Children less than 13 years of age should sit properly restrained in the back seat.**
- Questions about how to install your car seat should be answered by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. You can find a Child Safety Technician closest to you by checking the Child Safety Seat Inspection Station Locator: www.seatcheck.org or 866-seatcheck (866-732-8243).

Do not leave your child alone in the car.

Death from excess heat may occur quickly in warm weather.

Before backing up, always walk behind your car to be sure that your child is not there. You may not see a small child if you only rely on your rear view mirror.

Gun Safety

It is best to keep guns out of your home. Homes with guns in them have more accidents than homes without them. Your child is in more danger of being shot by yourself, a friend, or a family member than being shot by an intruder. If your family chooses to keep a gun, it should be stored unloaded and in a locked place, with ammunition stored separately.



Poisonings

Children continue to explore their world by putting everything in their mouths, even if it doesn't taste good.

You must use safety caps on all medicines and toxic household products.

- Be sure and keep all household products and medicines completely out of sight and reach. Keep all products in their original containers.
- Liquid laundry and dishwasher packets can be deadly to your toddler. Keep them up, out of your child's reach.
- Liquid nicotine found in e-cigarettes or vapes can also easily poison your child. Just touching liquid nicotine can be poisonous. E-cigarettes are also dangerous because there are small parts and are easily opened by small hands. Keep them away from your child.

If your child does have contact with a possible poison, call the Universal Poison Control Number, 1-800-222-1222.

Choking

Many food related choking deaths can be prevented by making sure food is always cut into small pieces and having your child eat while sitting down. Don't feed your child hard pieces of food. Remember: no chips, popcorn, or nuts until your child can grind them with their back teeth after four years old. Circular foods can block your baby's airway and cause choking. Cut grapes and hot dogs into small pieces and smash beans until your child is 4 years old.

Watch carefully to be sure that small objects are kept out of your child's reach. Some of the more worrisome choking risks are balloons, magnets, and button (circle) batteries.

Still have questions about how to keep your child safe? Check out www.redcross.org/take-a-class/first-aid for more information.

Burns

The kitchen is a dangerous place for your child during meal preparation time. It is best to keep your child out of the kitchen

while cooking. Safe places for your child while you are cooking include the playpen, crib, stationary activity center, or buckled into a high chair.

Never carry your child and hot liquids or food at the same time. You can't handle both.

To protect your child from tap water burns, set your water heater to no more than 120 degrees.

If your child does get burned, immediately put cold water on the burn and keep the burned area in cold water (not iced cold) for a few minutes to cool it off. Then cover the burn with a dry bandage or clean cloth.

Make sure that you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test the alarms monthly. It is best to use smoke alarms that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.

Drowning



Never leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, pail of water, wading or swimming pool, or any other water—even for a moment. Stay within an arm's length of your child around water.

If you have a swimming pool, fence it on all sides with a fence at least 4 feet high, and be sure the gates are self-latching. Most children drown when they wander out of the house and fall into a pool that is not fenced off from the house.

24-Hr Appointment Scheduling
visit MyChartARC.com or
ARCAppointments.com

Same-Day & After Hours Care
call your ARC clinic and press "1"

24-Hr Phone Nurse
call your ARC clinic and press "4"

A·R·C ACCESS

RESOURCES

Books

Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5, from The American Academy of Pediatrics.

Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age 5, by Penelope Leach

Toddler 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for Your Toddler, by Ari Brown, Denise Fields

Websites

www.healthychildren.org

A parenting website developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Now available in Spanish.

www.healthychildren.org/growinghealthy

Dynamic interactive website to help encourage healthy habits for children 0-5 years of age.

www.vaccineinformation.org

Answers to questions about vaccines.

www.seatcheck.org

Information about car safety for all ages but check the page on car seats for a listing of local car seat checks available.

www.mychildrensteeth.org

Information on caring for your child's teeth from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. Also check out www.ilikemyteeth.org for information on how fluoride protects your child's teeth.

www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials

Frustrated with discipline? This resource gives great how-to modules on parenting.

www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources

This is another parenting resource that discusses common parent struggles and solutions.

www.babybuffer.org

Parenting website with email updates for your child's age.

[Make Safe Happen](#)

An app available for iPhone and Android, that gives a room-by-room checklist of how to keep your child safe.