

EARLY CHILDHOOD – 18 MONTHS

Promotion of healthy habits

Injury prevention

All toddlers should be in a rear facing car safety seat until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat's manufacturer. The car safety seat must be secured in the back seat and your child must remain securely in it at all times during travel.

Test the hot water heater thermostat to ensure that it is set at less than 120°F. Continue to test the water temperature with your wrist to make sure it is not hot before bathing your child.

Supervise your child constantly and be sure they are always within an arms reach whenever they are in or around water, buckets, the toilet, or the bathtub. Young siblings should not be left alone to supervise (e.g., in the bathtub or in the house). Empty buckets, tubs, or small pools immediately after use.

Ensure that swimming pools have a four-sided fence with a self closing, self-latching gate.

Put sunscreen on your child before they go outside.

Ensure that your child wears a life vest if boating. Inflatable flotation devices or "knowing how to swim" does not make your child safe in the water.

Ensure that electric wires, outlets, and appliances are inaccessible or protected.

Do not leave heavy objects or containers of hot liquids on tables with tablecloths that your child may pull down.

Turn pan handles toward the back of the stove. Keep your child away from hot stoves, fireplaces, irons, curling irons, and space heaters

Keep your child's environment free of smoke. Keep your home and car nonsmoking zones

Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches, alcohol, firearms, and electrical tools locked up and/or out of your child's sight and reach.

Remove poisons, medications, and toxic household products from the home or keep them in locked cabinets. Have safety caps on all medications.

Keep the number of the poison control center near the telephone.

Continue to use gates at the top and bottom of stairs and safety devices on windows. Supervise your child closely when they are on stairs.

Never leave your child alone in the car or in the house.

Do not expect young children to supervise your child (e.g., in the house, apartment, playground, or yard).

Keep your child away from moving machinery, lawn mowers, overhead garage doors, driveways, and streets.

Ensure that your child is wearing a helmet if riding in a seat on an adult's bicycle. Wear a helmet yourself.

Teach your child to use caution when approaching dogs, especially if the dogs are unknown or eating.

Discuss with your health professional what to do for falls, cuts, puncture wounds, bites, bumps on the head, bleeding, and broken bones.

Choose caregivers carefully. Discuss with them their attitudes about and behavior in relation to discipline. Prohibit corporal punishment.

Ensure that guns, if in the home, are locked up and that ammunition is stored separately. A trigger lock is an additional important precaution.

Nutrition

Encourage your child to eat with the family by serving them in a highchair or booster seat at table height. A toddler will often eat better with a trusted adult nearby.

Make mealtimes pleasant and companionable. Encourage conversation.

Encourage your child to eat at family mealtimes and give them 2-3 nutritious snacks per day. Provide snacks rich in complex carbohydrates, and limit sweets and high-fat snacks. Avoid using snacks as a reward or giving your child cookies or sweets because they "haven't eaten all day."

Continue encouraging your child to feed them self with their hands and drink from a cup. They may also be using utensils.

Encourage your child to experiment with food, deciding what and how much to eat from the nutritious foods that you offer. Children at this age will eat a lot at one time, not much the next. Food jags are common. Your child's intake will vary considerably over any 24-hour period, but it should be balanced over several days.

Let your child develop clear likes and dislikes.

Do not allow feeding to serve as the focus of a power struggle.

Ensure that your child's caregiver feeds her nutritious foods.

Avoid giving your child foods or small toys that may be aspirated or cause choking (e.g., peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs or sausages, carrot sticks, celery sticks, whole grapes, raisins, corn, whole beans, hard candy, large pieces of raw vegetables or fruit, or tough meat).

Oral health

Brush your child's teeth with a small, pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste.

Give your child fluoride supplements as recommended by the health professional based on the level of fluoride in the toddler's drinking water.

Schedule your child's first dental visit if it has not already occurred.

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Promotion of social competence

Praise your child for good behavior and accomplishments.

Model appropriate language. Encourage language development by reading books to your child, singing songs, and talking about what you are seeing and doing together.

Reinforce self-care and self-expression.

To promote a sense of competence and control, invite your child to make choices whenever possible. (The choices should be ones you can live with, e.g., "Red pants or blue ones?")

Encourage your child to be assertive in appropriate situations, yet provide limits when they are needed.

Decide what limits are important to you and your child. Be specific when setting these limits. Briefly tell your child why they are being disciplined. Attempt to be as consistent as possible when enforcing limits.

Keep time out or other disciplinary measures brief. Do not hesitate to pick your child up, hold them, or remove them from dangerous or conflictual situations. Reassure your child once the negative behavior has stopped.

When disciplining your child, make a verbal separation between them and their behavior: "I love you, but I don't like it when you do ___."

When possible, give your child a "yes" as well as a "no." For example: "No, you can't play with the remote control, but you can play with the blocks."

Do not get into a power struggle with your child. Prepare strategies for sidestepping conflicts and appropriately asserting your power. You can control only your own responses to your child's behavior. For example, you cannot make a child sleep, but you can insist that they stay in their room.

Teach your child about disciplinary measures such as time out when they are most capable of learning (i.e., when they are rested, fed, and not angry).

Prepare strategies to deal with night awakening, night fears, nightmares, and night terrors.

Encourage self-quieting behaviors, such as quiet play or the use of a transitional object (e.g. stuffed animal or favorite blanket)

Recognize that toilet training is part of developmentally appropriate learning. Delay toilet training until your child is dry for periods of about two hours, knows the difference between wet and dry, can pull their pants up and down, wants to learn, and can give a signal when they are about to have a bowel movement.

Limit television watching to less than one hour per day of appropriate programs. Watch programs with your child.

Promotion of constructive family relationships and parental health

Take some time for yourself and spend some individual time with your partner.

Spend some time playing with your child each day. Focus on activities that they express an interest in and enjoy.

Listen to and show respect for your child.

Show interest in child care activities.

Show affection in the family.

Spend some individual time with each child.

Help your child express such feelings as joy, anger, sadness, fear, and frustration.

Create opportunities for each family member to interact with and play with your child every day.

Keep family outings relatively short and simple. Lengthy activities tire your child and may lead to irritability or a temper tantrum.

Do not expect your child to share their toys.

Acknowledge conflicts between siblings. Whenever possible, attempt to resolve conflicts without taking sides. For example, if a conflict arises about a toy, the toy can be put away. Do not allow hitting, biting, or other violent behavior.

Allow older children to have objects that they do not have to share. Give them a storage space that your younger child cannot get into.

Share meals as a family whenever possible.

Reach agreement with all family members on how to support your child's emerging independence while maintaining consistent limits.

Discuss with your health professional your own preventive and health promoting practices (e.g., using seat belts, avoiding tobacco, eating properly, exercising and doing breast self-exams or testicular self exams).

Promotion of community interactions

Ask about resources or referrals for food (e.g., WIC), housing, or transportation if needed.

Learn about and consider attending parent-toddler play groups. Discuss with the health professional possible programs for your child: preschools, early intervention programs, or other community programs.

Learn about and consider attending parent education classes or parent support groups.

Maintain or expand ties to your community through social, religious, cultural, volunteer, and recreational organizations.

Discuss with your health professional choosing and evaluating child care programs. Discuss the child care arrangements you have made.

Find out what you can do to make your community safer. Advocate and participate in a neighborhood watch program.