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Baby Business (A publication of Concord Children's Clinic) 18 Month Edition

Toddler Tips 18 month edition: This month's Toddler Tips will discuss what parents should expect when the baby is around 18 months old.

Nutrition

Mealtime should be a happy time for the family. Offer your child a selection of healthy foods and let him/her decide how much they will eat. Children will not starve themselves; an appetite slump is normal at this age.

- Many babies fill up on milk and sugary juices and then eat less at the mealtime. Avoid catering to the demands of non-nutritious foods. Limit consumption to 15-20 ounces a day. Please use whole milk until 2 years of age.

Calcium Intake:

From 1-10 years of age children need 800 milligrams (or 3 servings) of calcium a day to help build strong bones and teeth.

- One cup of milk or yogurt 300 milligrams of calcium.
- A slice of cheese has 200 milligrams of calcium.
- A half-cup of calcium fortified orange juice supplies 160 milligrams of calcium. However, because orange juice does not contain Vitamin D protein it is not a substitute for milk.

Iron Intake:

Iron is equally important for babies this age to prevent anemia (iron deficiency).

- Good sources of iron are spinach, broccoli, other green leafy vegetables, whole grain breads, pasta, prunes, chicken, fish, red meat and liver.

Healthy Snacks

Healthy snacks include fresh fruits and vegetables, pretzels, cereals, bagels, low fat yogurt, turkey and cheese slices.

Development

At this age most children walk, climb, say 5-10 words and understand everything said to them.

- Please read to your child to stimulate language development. Language is learned very quickly at this age.

Potty Training

There is no magic age for potty training; most children are physically and emotionally ready between 18-30 months of age. Your baby is ready to potty train when she understands words like "pee", "wet" or "potty". She is ready when she can follow simple directions, is able to use a potty chair, undresses with little help, goes 2-3 hours during the day with dry diapers, and can indicate through words or body language that she is uncomfortable in wet diapers.

- Use a potty chair if possible because most children are comfortable with their feet on the floor. This special chair can be kept in the baby's room for reading or playing.
- Some children are predictable enough that you can take them to the potty at the same time each day, such as after meals, or before bed or bath time.

- When your baby indicates that he/she needs to use the potty, take her immediately but never force him/her to sit on the chair. Please **DO NOT** criticize, punish, or ridicule your child during potty training. Use only praise, encouragement and lots of hugs.

Healthy Teeth

Be sure to brush your baby's teeth twice a day. You should **NOT** use toothpaste containing fluoride. Be sure to brush the backsides of the front teeth because cavities often begin in this area.

- At this age, your baby should not be using a bottle, particularly at bedtime as it increases the risk of severe tooth decay and ear infections.

Home Safety

Please remember that the biggest threat to your baby's life and health are accidents.

- Use gates on all staircases and doors. **DO NOT** use a baby walker.
- Be sure there are plug protectors in **ALL** empty electrical outlets in your home.

Poison Control

Be aware of the poisonous substances in your home that your baby may ingest.

- Be sure that all medicines and cleaning supplies are locked up and out of your baby's reach.
- Call our office or the Poison Control Center **IMMEDIATELY** if your baby eats something poisonous. Keep the poison control # posted by your telephone. **1-800-222-1222**

Choking Safety

NEVER leave small objects or food within your baby's reach.

- Do not feed your baby hot dogs, raw carrots or grapes. Cut food into thin slices to prevent choking.
- **BE PREPARED:** Ask our office for instructions on choking first aid.

Drowning Safety

NEVER leave your baby alone near any water for any moment. Drowning can happen in the shallowest water.

- Please remember to empty water from bathtubs, pails or any other container of water immediately after use. Always keep the bathroom door and commode lid closed.
- If you have a swimming pool, install a fence to separate your house or baby's play area from the swimming pool.

Car Safety

Car crashes are a great risk to your baby's health and life. The correct use of a car seat will prevent injuries and deaths that occur in car crashes.

- Make sure that your baby's car seat is installed correctly.
- For this age, car seat should be **REAR** facing and placed in the **BACK** seat until your baby is 24 months old.
- Please remember, you **MUST** use your baby's car seat **EVERY** time your baby rides in a car.

Next Checkup: 24 MONTHS

Your baby's next checkup is at 24 months of age. Regular **WELL BABY** checkups are done at 12, 15, 18 & 24 months of age. These checkups usually involve immunizations and other preventive health services. Keeping your baby up to date on check ups and immunizations is one the of best things you can do for your baby's health.