

## **PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES OF SPRINGFIELD, INC**

1000 E. Primrose, Suite 560, Springfield, MO 65807 (417) 882-1600

### **TWELVE, FIFTEEN AND EIGHTEEN-MONTH CHECK-UPS**

**DIET:** Healthy children of this age group frequently demonstrate decreasing appetite, due to normally slowed growth and developing food preferences. Offering a balanced diet at regular meal and snack-times teaches the child that a variety of foods taste good and satisfy hunger. Typically, a toddler eats one good meal a day or eats well one day but not the next. Forcing a child to eat or frequently making special favorite meals can lead to later problems. Restricting food you do not want your child to eat will be more effective in developing proper nutritional habits. Continuing to periodically offer foods a child has previously refused can result in eventual acceptance. Learning to use the cup, fork, and spoon is messy but fun at this time of growing independence. Finger foods will be popular now but choking hazards are abundant. Pay special attention to avoid peanuts, hot dogs, popcorn, whole grapes, raisins, candy and chewing gum for the next several years. Food safety guidelines recommend avoiding unpasteurized juice and milk, processed meats (for example, hot dogs, ham and bacon), and unwashed fruits and vegetables. The arrival of molars at this age allows true chewing of foods and subsequently the introduction of more fiber to the diet.

Whole milk provides calcium, protein and healthy fat to the diet. Toddlers require only 2-3 total dairy servings a day. Too much can lead to constipation and anemia. If family members have high cholesterol or early heart attacks, low fat milk is acceptable. Water intake should increase at this age. Balanced intake of water and milk, as well as the addition of fiber mentioned above, will help prepare for toilet training in the future. Juice has very poor nutritional value and should be used only occasionally.

If the home water supply is not fluoridated, please request an annual prescription for fluoride. Brushing teeth with a small amount of fluoridated toothpaste at least at bedtime is suggested as well as after eating sticky foods. Pacifiers and bottles should be weaned by now. Ask your dentist when he would like to see your child for his first "happy visit".

**DEVELOPMENT:** Toddlers love to play and learn many new skills and behaviors. Early in this time, they initiate play, demand attention, and begin

to accept limits. Later they learn to play games, understand the use of objects (such as a comb for dolly), and enjoy social interaction and new experiences.

Naming common objects, talking about what you are seeing and doing, and especially **READING** will build language skills. These skills progress from a few words and imitating vocalizations at 12 months to using a dozen words, mimicking even more words, following commands, and starting to use phrases at 18-24 months.

Toys that your child can push/pull, empty/fill, open/close and put together/take apart as well as soft balls and riding toys will help develop motor skills. Walking, climbing, running and kicking/throwing a ball are mastered in this second year. Crayons, washable markers and puzzles are popular after 15-18 months when children are no longer exploring objects with their mouths.

Give attention to encouraging both quiet and active play as well as playing alone and with a parent or sibling. Play that imitates your actions will evolve into pretend play. Giving small chores such as folding towels and dusting promotes learning and self-esteem.

Music and dance are great fun now. They can substitute for TV, video and computer time which should be limited to thirty minutes a day. Please let us know if your child's development is not progressing normally or if you have concerns about vision or hearing.

**SLEEP:** Toddlers benefit from a predictable bedtime routine. It is best to put the child into bed while awake but tired rather than waiting until he falls asleep away from his bed. They favor "transitional objects" such as a favorite blanket to comfort themselves. This can help with bedtime avoidance and night walking. Naps occur less frequently during this second year. Sleep problems can be complex. If your family is having major sleep concerns, please schedule a separate appointment so we may give your concerns all the time they require.

**DISCIPLINE:** A growing sense of self and independence, as well as a natural curiosity, lead to self-confidence. Teaching discipline during this time requires consistency, clear limits, avoiding meaningless threats and lots of praise for good behavior. Parents and caregivers should openly discuss

their child-rearing ideas and support each other's actions. As an example, a child who throws himself down in the store aisle kicking and screaming in frustration that he didn't receive the cookie he demanded would be best moved to a safe place and ignored from a short distance away or removed from the store altogether. When he is calm, he should be praised for regaining control but not rewarded with the cookie. A threat to never again bring the child to the store or give him a cookie would be difficult to carry out and undermine credibility and trust. A threat of delayed punishment is often forgotten by the adult or the "crime" forgotten by the child and again ruins credibility. Distraction and avoidance of conflict situations are the best techniques for this age group. Brief time-outs can be useful, also. Behavior problems are often complicated. We are happy to discuss them with parents but a special appointment may be necessary to give appropriate time and attention to your concerns. It is sometimes helpful to schedule a conference where the child stays home with a sitter to reduce distraction.

**ILLNESS:** Management of fever, colds, and vomiting and diarrhea are similar to younger children and reviewed via other links in the Well Child Care page of this website. A dosage chart for acetaminophen and ibuprofen is included also. "Cold" medicines should be avoided at this age although honey by mouth every 4 hours and nasal saline spray every 2 hours while awake can relieve cold symptoms safely. This is the time to begin teaching and continue demonstrating good hand-washing techniques. Teaching the child to sing a brief song may help achieve the goal of scrubbing 20 seconds.

**Regular exposure to cigarette smoke is harmful.** The American Cancer Society can provide information on stop-smoking programs.

When planning a trip away from your child, please leave a letter with her caregivers including medical conditions, past surgeries, current medications, allergies and immunizations as well as a copy of your insurance card.

**SAFETY:** Accident and poisoning prevention are very challenging in this age group. Childproofing should be updated as the child's skills grow. Special concerns in this age include: guarding against falls, close supervision around water, preventing burns, avoiding plastic bags and balloons, close supervision near streets and driveways, lowering the crib mattress, keeping the Poison Control Center number in every home [(800)

392-9111], keeping medicines and hazardous materials out of reach even to a climbing child and avoiding machinery, tractors, ATV's and mowers.

Please use an approved car seat in the rear-facing position until age four. A link to the recall website is located under the Parent Resources tab of this website.

**IMMUNIZATIONS:** Measles (MMR) and chickenpox vaccines are due after the first birthday, as well as Hepatitis A. Booster doses for whooping cough, meningitis, pneumonia, polio and flu are due during this period also. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen will help relieve side effects such as fever, fussiness or redness/discomfort at the injection site. Remember the MMR and chickenpox vaccines may cause rash and fever 10-14 days after they are given.

**OFFICE CALLS:** When calling for advice, please have your questions organized with a pencil and paper handy. If the child is ill, please take his temperature before calling (no need to add a degree). Routine calls should be made during regular weekday office hours. Emergency calls may be placed through the office number whenever we are not in the office.

**APPOINTMENTS:** Preventive care visits (well child check-ups) are an essential part of your child's health. These are an opportunity to discuss changes and concerns about diet, sleep, developing skills, safety, and immunization issues. The next few visits at this age will be at 15 months, 18 months and 2 years. Please see the Appointments page of this website for details on scheduling well and sick visits.

**IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:**

Office (417) 882-1600

After hours (877) 599-8962

Fax (417) 631-0119

Poison Control Center (800) 392-9111