

## Checkups and immunizations

Your child is developing quickly. Ask your doctor for a developmental screening to be sure your child is on track. Also check that immunizations are up to date. At 18 months, your child may receive some of the following vaccines:

- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- Inactivated poliovirus (IPV)
- Hepatitis A (HepA)
- Influenza (flu), yearly

Whooping cough (pertussis) cases continue to occur in Washington. For the best protection against whooping cough, your child needs four doses of DTaP by 18 months and a booster dose before kindergarten. If your child has not had his or her fourth DTaP vaccine, now is the time to get it.

Another whooping cough vaccine, called Tdap, is recommended for all 11- to 12-year-olds, teens, and adults. Pregnant women should also get Tdap with each pregnancy. Those in close contact with your child, such as you, older siblings, grandparents, and child care providers, should get this shot to help protect themselves and your child.



## Dental care and checkups

Your child's baby teeth are important because they hold the place for permanent teeth. Brush teeth after breakfast and before bed. Lift your child's lip and look at teeth near the gums and behind the front teeth. Take your child to a dentist if you see white or brown spots on the teeth. Spots may be a sign of tooth decay.

Snacking or sipping juices or sport drinks all day can cause cavities. Teeth need "breaks" between meals and snacks to prevent cavities. Eat and drink at specific meal and snack times instead of sipping and snacking all day long. This is as important as making sure you give your child healthy snacks.

If your child hasn't had a first dental checkup, it is time to take him or her to a dentist. Call the Family Health Hotline at the number below for help finding dental care.

## Tips for feeding your toddler

By this age, your child will be ready to enjoy the foods your family eats, however, your child will want to do it his or her own way. Your child is not growing as fast, so his or her appetite may not be as big as it once was. Here are some helpful tips for feeding your toddler:

- Encourage trying new foods by offering a favorite food along with new foods, but don't force him or her to eat.
- Eating along with your child helps him or her learn to like the foods your family likes. The whole family eats better when you sit down together.
- Offer small servings and let your child ask for more if he or she wants it.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks and offer water between meals and snacks. Your child will eat better when he or she comes to the table hungry.
- If you're breastfeeding, that's great! Breastfeeding continues to provide your child comfort and good nutrition.
- Offer something from each food group at meals. Add variety with cut up cooked vegetables and soft fruits.
- Snacks are little meals. Your child's stomach is small so he or she will need to eat every two or three hours. Include two or three foods (a protein, a fat, and a carbohydrate).
- Offer milk in a cup at meal-times. Milk provides protein, calcium, vitamin D, and magnesium for healthy bones and teeth. Juice can also be offered at meal-times but should be limited to about 1/2 cup (or 4 ounces) per day.

Being patient with your child and avoiding pressuring him or her into eating is the best way to raise a healthy eater. If you're worried about your child's growth or eating habits, talk with his or her doctor or nurse.

For more nutrition information and resources, visit:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/NutritionEducation](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/NutritionEducation).

# Keeping Your Toddler Healthy and Safe

## Help your toddler explore the world

It is important to make sure your child feels safe as he or she starts to explore. Keeping your home safe will help you say 'no' less often.

Your child will want to check in with you as he or she starts to explore. This lets your child know that you are still there, protecting him or her from possible danger.

Your child may want to do things you have said are off limits over and over again. This may feel like he or she is trying to disobey you or manipulate you, but is a normal part of how toddlers learn about the world around them.

## Help handling difficult behavior

When your child throws a tantrum or is very upset, try to step back and think about the situation. Is your child hungry, tired, or upset about something? Take a deep breath. Try to think calmly about how to help your child feel better.

Let your child know you can tell when he or she is feeling unhappy. Talk calmly about what is happening and offer some solutions. For example, "I see you are very upset. Let's sit together until you feel better". Or, "I can see you really wanted to play with the houseplants. They are not toys. Let's find something else to play with. What about these pots and pans?"

Notice the things your child does well. Tell him or her what you appreciate. This shows you care about what your child does.

## Feeling frustrated?

Sometimes it's hard to be the parent you would like to be. Have a plan for what to do when you feel frustrated or overwhelmed. Here are some things to try:

- Make sure your child is in a safe place.
- Walk a few feet away until you have calmed down.
- Take some deep breaths.
- Call a friend or relative who will listen and be caring.

It can also help to share your thoughts and feelings. Make sure others who care for your child also know what to do when they feel frustrated or angry.

You can get support by talking to your health care provider, taking a parenting class, or joining a parenting group. Ask about groups and classes at your local health department, community centers or college, place of worship, clinic, or hospital. You can also call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-4673 or visit [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org) for help and advice.

## Dangers in driveways and parking lots

Your child is so small that a driver may not be able to see him or her between cars or when backing up. You can help keep your child and others safe by doing these things:

- Walk all the way around your car to check for kids, toys, and pets before getting in and starting the motor.
- Keep a lookout for children in parking lots and driveways where children could be playing.
- Firmly hold your child's hand when near vehicles.

When you leave your car, even for a short time, take your child with you. Leaving a child in a parked car is very dangerous and can be deadly. Children left in a car can suffer heat stroke very quickly. They can also start the car rolling or lock themselves in.

## How to keep an active toddler in a car seat

Your child should sit in your car rear-facing in the back seat until he or she reaches the weight OR height maximum for the car seat, regardless of age. Once your child has reached the seat's rear-facing height or weight limit, use a forward-facing 5-point harness every time. Check the seat's instructions to find the height and weight limits.

At this age, it is normal for children to try to climb out of their car seats. Never let your child ride unbuckled! If you let your child climb out once, he or she will try to do it again and again. Make sure the harness is snug. (The harness is snug if you **cannot** pinch any slack in the strap at the shoulder.) If your child tries to get out, a good way to teach him or her to stay seated is to:

- Stop the car in a safe place right away.
- Tell your child firmly that the car will not go until he or she gets back in the seat.
- Wait until he or she sits down, then buckle the harness again.

Ask others who transport your child to be firm and to buckle up children in the back seat. Teach by example. Use your seat belt and make sure your passengers do, too.

## What makes a playground safe?

Always check the equipment before your child begins to play. Stay close to your child, especially when he or she is climbing. Safe play areas should have soft sand, wood chips, or rubber padding under climbing toys and swings. They should have small-sized slides and gyms made especially for toddlers that are separate from equipment for older children. Make sure that swings have seats that hold children in on all sides.

