



BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

18 MONTH VISIT

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

✓ YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

- Expect your child to cling to you in new situations or to be anxious around strangers.
- Play with your child each day by doing things she likes.
- Be consistent in discipline and setting limits for your child.
- Plan ahead for difficult situations and try things that can make them easier. Think about your day and your child's energy and mood.
- Wait until your child is ready for toilet training. Signs of being ready for toilet training include
 - Staying dry for 2 hours
 - Knowing if she is wet or dry
 - Can pull pants down and up
 - Wanting to learn
 - Can tell you if she is going to have a bowel movement
- Read books about toilet training with your child.
- Praise sitting on the potty or toilet.
- If you are expecting a new baby, you can read books about being a big brother or sister.
- Recognize what your child is able to do. Don't ask her to do things she is not ready to do at this age.

✓ YOUR CHILD AND TV

- Do activities with your child such as reading, playing games, and singing.
- Be active together as a family. Make sure your child is active at home, in child care, and with sitters.
- If you choose to introduce media now,
 - Choose high-quality programs and apps.
 - Use them together.
 - Limit viewing to 1 hour or less each day.
- Avoid using TV, tablets, or smartphones to keep your child busy.
- Be aware of how much media you use.

✓ TALKING AND HEARING

- Read and sing to your child often.
- Talk about and describe pictures in books.
- Use simple words with your child.
- Suggest words that describe emotions to help your child learn the language of feelings.
- Ask your child simple questions, offer praise for answers, and explain simply.
- Use simple, clear words to tell your child what you want him to do.

✓ HEALTHY EATING

- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods and snacks, especially vegetables, fruits, and lean protein.
- Give one bigger meal and a few smaller snacks or meals each day.
- Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Give your child 16 to 24 oz of milk each day.
- Know that you don't need to give your child juice. If you do, don't give more than 4 oz a day of 100% juice and serve it with meals.
- Give your toddler many chances to try a new food. Allow her to touch and put new food into her mouth so she can learn about them.

Helpful Resources: Poison Help Line: 800-222-1222

Information About Car Safety Seats: www.safercar.gov/parents | Toll-free Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236

18 MONTH VISIT—PARENT

✓ SAFETY

- Make sure your child's car safety seat is rear facing until he reaches the highest weight or height allowed by the car safety seat's manufacturer. This will probably be after the second birthday.
- Never put your child in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger airbag. The back seat is the safest.
- Everyone should wear a seat belt in the car.
- Keep poisons, medicines, and lawn and cleaning supplies in locked cabinets, out of your child's sight and reach.
- Put the Poison Help number into all phones, including cell phones. Call if you are worried your child has swallowed something harmful. Do not make your child vomit.
- When you go out, put a hat on your child, have him wear sun protection clothing, and apply sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher on his exposed skin. Limit time outside when the sun is strongest (11:00 am–3:00 pm).
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR CHILD'S 2 YEAR VISIT

We will talk about

- Caring for your child, your family, and yourself
- Handling your child's behavior
- Supporting your talking child
- Starting toilet training
- Keeping your child safe at home, outside, and in the car

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 4th Edition*

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

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Toilet Training

Each child learns to use the toilet in his or her own time.

Teaching your child how to use the toilet takes time and patience. Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help guide you and your child through the process.

When is a child ready?

Children have no control over bladder or bowel movements before age 12 months. Many children start to show signs of being ready between 18 and 24 months of age. Some children may not be ready until 36 months or older. Remember that it's normal for time frames to vary.

Most children can control their bowels and daytime urine by 3 to 4 years of age. Your child is able to stay dry during the day before being able to be dry at night. Most children are able to stay dry at night between 5 and 7 years of age.

Is your child ready?

Here are signs that your child may be ready.

- Your child is dry at least 2 hours at a time during the day or is dry after naps.
- You can tell when your child is about to urinate or have a bowel movement.
- Your child can follow simple instructions.
- Your child can walk to and from the bathroom and help undress.
- Your child does not like wet diapers and wants to be changed.
- Your child asks to use the toilet or potty chair.
- Your child asks to wear "big-kid" underwear.

If your child has issues with constipation, talk with your child's doctor.

Toilet Training Tips

- 1. Decide which words to use.** Choose the words your family will use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. Don't use the words *dirty*, *naughty*, or *stinky*.
- 2. Pick a potty chair.** A child's feet should be able to reach the floor. Books or toys for "potty time" may help make this time more fun.
- 3. Be a role model.** Let your child see you use the toilet and wash your hands afterward.
- 4. Know the signs.** Your child may grunt or make other noises, or squat, or stop playing for a moment. When pushing, his face may turn red. Explain briefly to your child that these signs mean a bowel movement is about to come. If your child waits to tell you about a wet diaper, praise him for telling you. Suggest that "next time" he let you know in advance. It may take longer for a child to notice the need to urinate than the need to move bowels.
- 5. Make trips to the potty a routine.** Take your child to the potty when you see him showing signs of readiness. Go at

other times, too, such as first thing in the morning. Boys can urinate sitting down first and can stand up to urinate when they are better at it.

Early on, many children have bowel movements or urinate right after getting off the toilet. If this happens a lot, it may mean your child is not really ready for training. Learning how to relax the muscles that control the bowel and bladder takes time.

- 6. Teach your child proper hygiene habits.** Show your child how to wipe carefully. Girls should spread their legs apart when wiping. They should wipe thoroughly from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder. Make sure both boys and girls learn to wash their hands well after urinating or after a bowel movement.
- 7. Praise your child.** Encourage your child with a lot of hugs and praise when success occurs. When a mistake happens, treat it lightly. Punishment and scolding will often make children feel bad and may make toilet training take longer.
- 8. Wait to try training pants.** Keep using diapers until your child is able to remain dry during the day for 2 weeks. However, be prepared for "accidents." It may take weeks, even months, before toilet training is completed. Continue to have your child sit on the potty once during the day. If your child uses the potty, praise her. If not, it is still good practice. Some children who are not ready for cloth training pants will still feel that they are more "grown up" if they wear disposable training pants.

Some children will want to go back to diapers, especially for bowel movements. Do not look at this setback as a failure. Instead, praise your child for knowing when she needs to go.

- 9. Avoid a power struggle.** Children at toilet training ages are becoming aware of their individuality. They look for ways to test their limits. Some children may do this by holding back bowel movements. Try to stay calm about toilet training. Remember that no one can control when and where a child urinates or has a bowel movement except the child.
- 10. Understand their fear.** Some children believe that their bowel movements and urine are part of their bodies. They may be scared of the toilet flushing parts of them away. Some also fear they will be sucked into the toilet if it is flushed while they are sitting on it. To give your child a feeling of control, let him flush the toilet.
- 11. Watch for a desire to move up.** Most of the time, your child will let you know when she is ready to move from the potty chair to the "big toilet." Provide a stool to brace her feet.

When Toilet Training Should Be Put on Hold

Major changes in the home may make toilet training more difficult. Sometimes it is a good idea to delay toilet training if

- Your family has just moved or will move in the near future.
- You are expecting a baby or have recently had a new baby.
- There is a major illness, a recent death, or some other family crisis.

Remember

If any concern comes up before, during, or after toilet training, talk with your child's doctor or pediatric health care professional. Often the problem is minor and can be resolved quickly. Sometimes physical or emotional causes will require treatment. Getting professional help can make the process easier.

From Your Doctor

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2 of 2



Building "Piece" of Mind

The 18-month visit Tantrums, time out, and time in

Toddlers are happier and healthier when they feel safe and connected. The way you and others relate to your child affects the many new connections that are forming in the toddler's brain. These early brain connections are the basis for learning, behavior and health. Early, caring relationships prepare your child's brain for the future.

Tantrums

By the time children are 18 months old, they may start to have tantrums. Many times, these tantrums happen because they can't tell you what they want in words ("I want you to read to me NOW!"). As they begin to talk more, this type of tantrum may happen less.

Encourage children to use words:

- Smile when they use happy sounds or words to get your attention.
- Look at them when they use words (even if they are interrupting).
- Answer them when they use words and they are not interrupting.

When you do this, you are teaching your child that using words is the best way to get what he wants.

Tantrums may also happen when you set limits by saying no. When you say no, distract your child with something else to do. "How about we pound on these noisy pots and pans instead?"

If the tantrum continues, ignore it as much as possible. If tantrums result in more attention, the tantrums will likely continue.

Time-out

Consider teaching "time-out" if your child starts to:

- hit
- kick
- spit

Time-out must mean "quiet and still." If your child isn't being quiet and still, it isn't time-out. Very few 18-month-olds know how to be quiet and still. You will teach him this by ending time-out the moment he is quiet and still.

Step one

- When your child is hitting, kicking, spitting or losing control, pick him up but look away so he knows this is not a hug.
- Gently hold him in your lap.
- Sit until he becomes quiet and still. At first, it may just be a brief moment.
- As soon as he is quiet and still, time-out is over. He is allowed off your lap.

Over time, your child will learn that time-out is shorter if he is simply quiet and still. Once your child is able to calm himself quickly and consistently in your lap, it is time for step two.

Step two

- Have your child sit by himself in a chair.
- You can put your hand on his lap or shoulder, but look away.
- Have your child sit there until he is quiet and still.
- As soon as he is quiet and still, time-out is over.

Once your child is able put himself in the chair and quickly calm himself, then you can begin to use a timer. Time-out should last about one minute per year of age. Only try this when your child understands that time-out means being quiet and still.

Time-out works best when:

- You use it for one or two behaviors at a time
- There is a lot of "time in"

As your child ages, time-out may work because, when in time-out, your child is being ignored. No child likes that! This is especially true if he knows what time-in feels like.

Time-in

Time-in occurs when your child is the center of your attention! Teach him that picking up a book or a toy results in reading and snuggles or play time together (time-in). If hitting results in time-out, but picking up a book results in time-in, he will learn to stop hitting and to start picking up a book instead.

Calm down

Time out teaches your child to calm down. It helps him remain in control despite strong emotions.

Time out is healthier and safer than spanking or other forms of punishment. Physical punishment teaches children that "adults hit when they are angry".

Time out teaches children "this is how I calm myself."

