

## TODDLER CARE FROM AGE 18 TO 24 MONTHS

[www.northfultonpediatrics.com](http://www.northfultonpediatrics.com)

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**SUGGESTED DIET:** Your toddler should be on table foods and whole milk now. The following is an “ideal” diet selected from the four food groups, but recognize that your child will not always eat a “balanced diet” every day.

1. **Milk:** 2 to 3 servings (6-8 oz. per serving) per day. Whole milk is recommended until your child is two years old unless we recommend otherwise. 1 ounce of cheese is equivalent to about 6 oz. milk. Other milk products include whole milk yogurt, cottage cheese or pudding.
2. **Meats/Proteins:** 2 servings per day. A serving size is 1 ounce (2 tablespoons). Meat, poultry, fish, tofu, beans or eggs are good choices. You get the same amount of protein from 1 oz. meat as from 2 T. peanut butter, 1oz. cheese, or ½ cup cooked beans or peas.
3. **Fruits & Vegetables:** 4 servings of each every day, with a serving size being ¼ cup. Try for 1 serving of a fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin A, such as peaches, broccoli, carrots, squash, or sweet potatoes. Serve at least 1 fruit or vegetable high in Vitamin C, such as orange juice, broccoli, or spinach.
4. **Breads & Cereals:** 4 servings per day, with a serving size being ½ slice of whole grain bread, ½ cup whole grain cereal, or ¼ cup pasta.

### **FEEDING TIPS**

- A decreased appetite or “picky eater” at this age is normal, but if you offer the appropriate foods at each meal, your toddler will have an adequate diet.
- Try to avoid making mealtime a battleground. Respect their food preferences. Many toddlers are “grazers” and do better eating 3 smaller meals along with 2 - 3 healthy snacks a day.
- To avoid choking, don’t give nuts, fruits with seeds, raw carrots, popcorn, hard candy, gum, and whole grapes or hot dogs.
- Remember to supervise mealtime, making it free from excitement and running. Children should be seated in a highchair or booster for all meals and snacks.
- Continuing infant cereal during the second year of life ensures that your child will have adequate iron intake.

### **DENTAL HEALTH**

Continue good dental care. Brush your child’s teeth daily using a small, soft toothbrush and fluoride free infant/toddler tooth paste. Floss between their teeth afterward if they will permit you. It is important that this become part of your toddler’s routine to instill habits for a lifetime. The first dental checkup should be at age 2.

### **SLEEPING**

An afternoon nap is usually still required for your toddler as well as an early bedtime. Because of your toddler’s need for independence, bedtime problems can surface. Bedtime should be consistent and follow a particular routine (bath, brush and floss teeth, stories, hug and kisses, etc.). The routine should end with your toddler quiet, but awake, in their crib and ready to fall asleep on their own.

A change in routine, changing rooms or beds, losing a favorite cuddly toy or blanket, or taking a trip away from home may all disrupt sleep. Teething and dreaming may also awaken them. These are all valid reasons for your toddler to wake up. Reassure them, but try not to pick them up or bring them to your bed unless they are sick. If your child awakens during the night, check on safety and comfort, have as little interaction as possible, and quickly leave the room. They will learn to put themselves back to sleep, but it may mean crying at first. If you stay calm and follow a consistent pattern every night, they will soon be putting themselves back to sleep. In most cases, changing from a crib to a bed can wait until age 2 or 3.

### **ELIMINATION**

As your child approaches two, you will begin to think about toilet training. Girls often train earlier than boys. Before you commit to this project, be forewarned that toilet training generally becomes easier after your child’s second birthday. Usually by then they have achieved the necessary bowel and bladder control as well as the motor skills needed to remove their clothes quickly and reliably before using the toilet. Signs of readiness include: bowel movements occur on a fairly predictable schedule, his/her diaper is not always wet (which indicates that the bladder is able to store urine), willingness to follow simple instructions, an interest in imitating other family members in toileting activities, possessing good motor skills for walking and sitting well, and a desire to please their parents. Even if your toddler is not quite ready, you can still familiarize them with the process by keeping the potty chair handy and, in very simple terms, explaining how it works.

### **DEVELOPMENT/PLAY**

Your toddler is a great imitator and this should be encouraged. Provide safe toys that allow for the expression of feelings and imitation. These include: dolls, safe tools, and house ware articles. Appliance boxes make great pretend houses, etc. Make sure objects have no sharp edges or small removable parts. Water play, such as washing plastic dishes, a bath, or small pool (all with supervision) also provide for imaginative play.

Your toddler can throw a ball overhand without falling and may enjoy push-pull toys. He/she may be able to climb stairs holding on to your hand but usually only one step at a time. Your child is able to put blocks on top of each other, perhaps 3 or 4 at a time. Toddlers continue to enjoy “scribbling”.

As your toddler's vocabulary increases they are able to identify parts of the body, and are often beginning to use directional words such as "up, down, in, out, and come." Since he/she is also becoming aware of sexual differences, you should use and teach correct terms for bodily functions and parts. Curiosity with sexual anatomy is common, as is genital exploration.

Toddlers do not know how to share yet. Therefore, toys taken from each other will cause great disturbances including biting, pinching, hitting and temper tantrums. Continue to read to your toddler to increase vocabulary, instill a love of reading, and provide the closeness of one on one.

The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends protecting the developing brains of children younger than 2 years of age by avoiding screen media (TV/computer/video) altogether. This includes educational material that comes in these forms. Continue to read to your child daily.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Having a toddler is a humbling experience. Remember when you used to watch someone else's toddler throwing a temper tantrum and say, "My child will never do that!" Now you realize there are times when any child acts up unexpectedly. At this age, your toddler has no idea of what "good" and "bad" mean, nor the concept of rules. They simply act on the impulse of the moment. It will take years of firm but gentle guidance before they understand what you expect from them and the self control to meet those expectations.

Discipline involves setting limits which help your toddler learn right from wrong and aids in the development of self-control. In order to avoid frustration for you and your toddler, establish some priorities and then gradually build your list of rules. Give precedence to issues of safety, such as not running into the street, and to the prevention of harm to other (hitting, biting, etc.). Once they master these rules, you can then turn your attention to "nuisance" behavior such as throwing food, screaming in public, etc. You want displays of affection to greatly outnumber punishments and corrections. Pleasing you is very important to your toddler, so praise and attention are powerful rewards that can motivate them to obey the reasonable rules you set for them.

It is important to have realistic expectations for your toddler's behavior. They should reflect his/her own temperament and personality, not your fantasies. He/she may be more active than you would like them to be, but insisting that he spend long stretches in the playpen may be too confining and frustrating to your toddler. Pay extra attention to your toddler when they are tired, hungry, sick, or in an unfamiliar setting.

Despite all of your best efforts, your toddler will sometimes misbehave. **Time out** is a form of discipline used to interrupt unacceptable behavior by removing your child from the scene to a boring place, such as a playpen, corner of a room, chair, or bedroom for a brief period of time. **Time out** is the best form of discipline for many of the irrational behaviors of toddlers. It is much more effective than spanking, threatening, or shouting at your child. **Time out** has the advantage of providing a cooling off period for both the child and the parent. **Time out** should last about 1 minute per year of age and not more than 5 minutes. Above all, remember a child out of control needs a parent in control of his/her emotions.

### **SAFETY**

Safety measures in your house and outdoors cannot be emphasized enough. Still the greatest risk to your child's health is a car accident. Always use an approved car seat. All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat in the backseat until they are 2 years old.

Accidents are more common when your child is not adequately supervised or in a different setting such as a relative's or friend's house. It is important to continuously reassess the safety of your toddler's play area and update it as necessary. In less safe areas and circumstances, closer supervision is necessary. Beware of objects/toys with small batteries or magnets as these can be very dangerous if swallowed.

Post the **Poison Control Number (404) 616-9000** by your phone. In case your toddler ingests medication or any other poisonous substance, call poison control first for instructions.

### **FEVER AND PAIN RELIEF**

Please call our office if you have any concerns about your child's temperature. You may treat your child's fever with either of the following:

**Tylenol** (Active ingredient is acetaminophen)

**Advil, Motrin** (Active ingredient is ibuprofen)

**Your toddler's next well child care visit should be at 2 years of age.**

### **Additional Resource for Parents**

AAP Guide to Potty Training [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

[www.chop.edu/service/vaccine](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine)

[www.aap.org/bookstore](http://www.aap.org/bookstore)

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