PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Your Child's Development From 12 to 18 Months

This information lists the skills your child will likely learn between 12 and 18 months.

Movement and physical development

Between 12 and 18 months, your child may learn to:

- Stand on their own.
- Pull or push toys, such as a grocery cart or stroller, while walking.
- Take steps with and without help.
- Play while in a squatted position.
- Climb on furniture.
- Scribble with a crayon, pen, or pencil.
- Take off their socks and shoes (without shoelaces).
- Put their arms through shirt sleeves and legs through pants.

Social-emotional and self-help skills

Between 12 and 18 months, your child may:

- Cry when their diaper is dirty.
- Sleep 10 to 12 hours at night.
- Show independence. They may not like adult control.
- Begin to show a sense of humor.

- Enjoy being the center of attention.
- Play ball with others.
- Play simple pretend games, such as feeding a doll.
- Bring a spoon up to their mouth without help.
- Hold a cup with both hands.

Learning, thinking, and problem solving skills

Between 12 and 18 months, your child may:

- Like to hand toys back to adults.
- Point to show others something of interest.
- Recognize several people other than their family members.
- Place round and square pieces into a puzzle.
- Turn pages of books.
- Match objects together.
- See themself in a mirror.
- Point out different body parts.
- Copy gestures.
- Follow simple spoken directions.

Speech, language, and communication skills

Between 12 and 18 months, your child may:

- Say several single words.
- Say and shake their head “no.”
- Point to show someone what they want.
- Point to a few body parts when you ask them to.
- Follow simple directions, such as “roll the ball” or “kiss the baby.”

- Respond to simple questions, such as “who’s that?” or “where’s your shoe?.”
- Listen to simple stories, songs, and rhymes.
- Point to pictures in a book when you name them.
- Start to name pictures in books.
- Have at least 10 words that they say and understand.

What you can do to help your child’s development

Your child may not have a lot of energy during their treatment. But it’s still important to help them move, communicate, and play as part of their daily routine. Here are some things you can do to help them:

- Give your child toys that have lights, sounds, and buttons to push.
- Have your child practice pointing and moving their fingers.
- Give your child blocks, puzzles, and shape sorters.
- Put toys at different heights around the room (such as on furniture) to get your child to move and change positions.
- Support and help your child climb and explore.
- Limit how much time your child spends watching TV or looking at your phone.
- Spend time having your child repeat sounds and words.
- Give your child options to choose from, such as “do you like this shirt or this shirt?”?

When to call your child’s healthcare provider

Call your child’s healthcare provider if your child:

- Falls often.
- Does not like to change positions.

- Cannot walk by 18 months.
- Does not copy others.
- Does not notice or mind when a caregiver leaves or returns.
- Loses skills they once had.
- Does not like changes in their environment, such as changes to the noise level or lighting in the room.
- Is not using words.
- Is not pointing or reaching for objects.
- Is not following directions.
- Is not transitioning to solid foods or is relying on bottle feeding.
- Is a picky eater.

Contact information

If you have questions about your child's development, talk with their healthcare provider. You can also ask for a referral to MSK's physical, occupational, or speech therapy.

You can reach MSK's Physical and Occupational Therapy department Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 212 639-5384. You can reach the Speech and Hearing Rehabilitation department Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 212-639-5856.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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