

## ***YOUR 12 MONTH OLD***

Congratulations! Celebrate! You have survived your first year as a parent! We hope you have enjoyed the journey and are experiencing the excitement and fun of watching your one year old explore the world. This next year of life will hold many wonderful changes and we hope that the following guidelines will help you as you navigate the ups and downs of toddlerhood.

### ***FEEDING***

Now that your baby is one year old, there are important changes that will happen in regards to feeding. For her first year of life, you, as parents, were responsible for feeding your baby – for deciding what you offered her, how much you offered, and when you offered the food. But now your toddler will decide what she eats, how much she eats, and whether or not she even wants to eat. You, as parents, are just responsible for offering her healthy food. She will not starve herself, even though there are days when she just takes a few bites of food.

The idea that your toddler will make decisions about eating is a difficult one for parents to accept. But it is important that you allow your child to be “in charge” in this area for several reasons.

First, your toddler will not be growing very much between now and his second birthday. So his appetite will slow down, and, at times, he may become a “picky eater”. Since he will grow in spurts, only he will know when he is hungry and needs to eat and when he doesn’t need extra energy. If you force him to eat, he will not learn to regulate his intake.

The other reason it is important to allow your toddler to decide when, what, and how much she will eat is because this is one of the first areas of her life in which she can demonstrate independence. During her second year of life she will need to demonstrate that she is a different person than her parents, and this is one area in which it is easy for her to do that. Please allow her to feed herself most of the time. Toddlers usually need 6 small meals a day – breakfast, lunch, dinner, plus snacks at mid-morning, afternoon, and before bedtime. They “graze”, so you should be prepared to have small food items available throughout the day.

### ***Milk***

Another big change is that after your child’s first birthday, he no longer NEEDS milk. It is absolutely fine to give him milk – and it can be any kind of milk that you prefer. You can offer breast milk, cow’s milk (whole or low fat), goat’s milk, soy milk, rice milk, or almond milk. But your toddler does not actually need milk. He does need the nutrients that are in milk, like protein and calcium, but these nutrients can be obtained from other foods. If you have been giving your baby formula, you can stop now that he is one year old. If you are still breastfeeding and would like to continue, you and your baby will continue to benefit for as long as you are nursing.

### *Juice*

Your toddler does not need juice. Juice is a source of “empty calories” – it does not provide good nourishment for your toddler. If you do choose to give juice to your toddler, please do not give her more than 2 ounces a day.

### *Bottles*

This is a good time to begin weaning your baby from using a bottle. If you haven't already done so, let your baby try using a cup. A great way to practice is to give your baby a cup of water while he is in the bathtub. If he spills, he won't make a mess. When your toddler wants milk or water, put it into the cup. If you only put water in the bottle, he will become less interested in the bottle and might start preferring the cup.

Toddlers often need a way to comfort themselves during this next year that will have so many emotional challenges for them. Often a bottle before a nap or bedtime helps them settle down for sleep. If you do provide a bottle at these times, make sure your toddler finishes the bottle before falling asleep and does not keep the bottle in bed with her. The sugar in milk (and juice) will stick to your child's teeth and will not be washed away by saliva while he is sleeping, so it is important that a child not suck on a bottle (even an empty one) while sleeping.

### *Teeth*

Your toddler probably has a few teeth by now – so it is a good time to start the habit of brushing / washing teeth. You can use a toothbrush or washcloth to clean your baby's teeth and gums. This will help her become comfortable with you putting something in her mouth, so do this at least once a day. Check with your pediatrician to find out whether you should use a toothpaste with fluoride.

*See the Toddler Nutrition Handout at Prescriptions for Parents for additional information*

## **DEVELOPMENT**

*Muscles* – During the next 3 -6 months, your toddler will learn to walk - and then run and climb. Some toddlers do not start walking until 17 – 18 months, so be patient if your toddler is not yet showing signs of walking. Toddlers often work on one aspect of development at a time, so if she is working on her language development, she may not be interested in walking.

*Language* – This is the year he will demonstrate a huge explosion in his ability to communicate with you in words. But children vary tremendously in this area of development. Most children have at least 10 words by 18 months of age, but children in bilingual families may not meet this milestone until a few months later. (They should, however, show you that they understand most of what is said to them in both languages.) You can help your child's language development by naming objects in books and in his world, taking time to read books, especially before bedtime, talking in sentences with your child and answering his babblings.

*Social* – You will see more of your child's temperament during this next year. Is she shy around new people or does she love to join groups of other children or adults? Is she quick

to try something new, like walking or climbing, or is she more hesitant? Each child is unique, and we encourage you to enjoy who your child is and not try to change her temperament.

### ***SAFETY***

*Car seats* – Studies show that children are safer if they continue to travel facing backwards even if they meet the guidelines to face forwards. The new recommendations are that you keep your child in a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible, until your child weighs 35 pounds. You will need to check the instructions on your car seat to see if this is possible, or consider buying a convertible car seat that allows older children to face backwards. Remember as parents to buckle up, and never leave your child alone in the car.

*Water safety* – Even though your child can sit up by herself, never leave her alone in the bathtub. It is possible for a toddler to drown in a few inches of water. If you have a swimming pool or hot tub, your toddler is at increased risk of drowning. Please make sure there is a fence around the pool or spa, there is a child proof lid or cover if possible, and keep your back door closed and locked. If you visit a home with a pool or spa, make certain these protections are in place – or never let your child out of your sight. Toddlers who have had swimming lessons are never considered “water safe” as they may become frightened and forget what to do if they unexpectedly fall into a pool.

*Sun safety* – Remember to use sun block or sun screen when your toddler is outside.

*Violence* – Unfortunately, violence is affecting more families today. Parents, especially mothers, may find themselves in a relationship that is abusive or dangerous. If you are concerned about your safety, or the safety of your child, please talk with your pediatrician or family doctor. They will help you find resources in a confidential manner. To speak with someone by phone and find help near you, call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

### ***PARENTING***

There are many internal “conflicts” that your child will be working out during this year – especially during the second half of the year. Here are just a few:

1. He is learning to walk and can walk away from you. He wants to show he is different from you and can do things differently than you want. BUT, he also learns by imitating you – and so needs to copy you and learn how to take off his shoes, brush his hair, “wash the car”. So – he wants to be different from you while at the same time he wants to copy you. A real conflict!
2. Since she can walk, she is learning she can have fun exploring her world. She can go off on her own and find new things to enjoy. BUT, she also starts to learn that her world may be a little frightening. The cute dog barks at her and scares her, so she comes running back to you for reassurance that you are still there to protect her. SO – she wants to explore independently while at the same time she wants to know you are there to protect her. Another real conflict!
3. He thinks the world is all about him! He is at the center of his world and can do anything he wants. BUT, he is also learning that there are limits to his behavior. He cannot

just take the toy from the other child. SO – he wants to do anything but is learning there are limits. A real conflict!

As your child goes on this emotional “roller coaster” this year, parents often go on the same emotional ride. Your child will definitely have times during this next year that he is upset, crying, frustrated, or disappointed. He will show you his emotions in dramatic ways, including temper tantrums, throwing himself on the floor, becoming limp when you try to pick him up, or screaming. If you can understand and really believe that it is not your responsibility as a parent to make your child happy, you will have a much more relaxed attitude and will not become as distraught as your child.

### *TEACHING TOOLS*

At 9 months, we discussed the concept of “no”. As your child turns one, she will often try many new behaviors to see if they will help meet her needs. She will try “anti-social” behaviors like hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing, biting, or spitting. She is asking questions like, “If I hit, then can I have what I want?” Hopefully your response will be that those behaviors are not acceptable.

One way to show him that these behaviors won’t work is to simply turn your face away from him when he does hit or kick you. If you are holding him, put him down. Change your face so you look serious. Lower your voice and say, “No hitting.” Then turn your face away for just a few seconds. The message you are sending is that hitting is not acceptable and he will not receive your attention when he hits.

Parents often acknowledge that their toddler is biting, but dismiss the behavior by saying, “She’s teething,” “She’s trying to give me a kiss,” “She’s tired”. These may be reasons for her behavior – but the behavior is still probably not acceptable and hurts you. If she were to do this to another child, it would certainly not be acceptable. So, just follow the steps above to show her you disapprove of her biting. The biting behavior should gradually stop.

If you have concerns or questions about your toddler or your parenting, please talk with your pediatrician.

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