

Key Developmental Stages for Your Child: 12 to 18 Months



Highlights

Development milestones in toddlers include social, emotional, and physical skills that children develop over time.

These milestones are important indicators of how children are growing and learning, although each child reaches them at their own pace.

Ensuring your toddler feels safe and loved, gets enough sleep, and eats a balanced diet supports their growth.

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What Are Development Milestones in Toddlers?

By the time children reach 12 months of age, they are considered toddlers. While they can vary in size, shape, and personality, most toddlers reach developmental milestones within a common timeframe. Just like babies, toddlers develop best when they feel safe and loved. They also need plenty of sleep and a variety of healthy foods. Ensuring they get 11 to 14 hours of sleep over a 24-hour period, with a long sleep overnight and 1 to 2 shorter naps during the day, supports their growth and development.

If you have concerns about whether your child is reaching these milestones within the expected period, consult a doctor or child health professional.

Physical and Skills Milestones

Your toddler may be able to stand up without help between 12 and 15 months. Once they can stand, they start exploring more. Many toddlers begin walking on their own between 12 and 15 months, though some may start between 15 and 18 months. As they gain confidence, they may begin climbing stairs, furniture, and even running.

Other physical milestones include:

12-15 months

Exploring objects by shaking, banging, and stacking them into piles or towers
Pointing to familiar people and objects when asked
Starting to drink from a cup and improving self-feeding skills

15-18 months

Gaining better hand and arm control, possibly attempting to help with dressing
Practicing skills such as using a pencil, spoon, or cup
Picking up very small objects, requiring close supervision to prevent swallowing or placing items in ears or nose

Emotional Milestones

At 12 months, toddlers form strong emotional attachments and begin to show

affection. Around 14 months, they may start experiencing separation anxiety when apart from caregivers. Some toddlers also begin having temper tantrums.

12-15 months

Showing awareness of others' emotions, such as appearing sad when someone else is upset

15-18 months

Becoming more self-aware and showing embarrassment when being watched

Thinking and Communication Milestones

Toddlers progress from babbling to speaking real words. Around 12 months, they may say 1 or 2 words, increasing to 6 or more words by 18 months. By 18 months, they also begin understanding the purpose of objects like phones and brushes.

12-15 months

Hugging caregivers

Pointing to body parts or favorite objects when named

Following simple instructions, such as handing an object when asked

15-18 months

Recognizing their own name

Following simple instructions without needing visual cues

Recognizing themselves in a mirror

Helping Your Toddler's Development

To support your toddler's growth, you can:

Show affection through hugs and kisses

Engage in play with blocks, containers, and simple games like peek-a-boo

Encourage pretend play, such as using a toy cup or playing with dolls

Talk to them and name objects, colors, and people around them

Read books, sing nursery rhymes, and play music
Support self-feeding skills with a spoon and cup \ (expect some mess\)
Encourage walking and exploration while staying close for reassurance
Introduce play with other children, though sharing is not yet understood
Offer a variety of healthy foods with different textures and colors

If You're Concerned

Consult a doctor or child health professional if, by 18 months, your toddler:

Avoids eye contact or cuddles
Does not use any single words
Does not follow simple instructions
Does not point, wave, or use gestures
Does not engage in pretend play
Does not walk
Shows signs of vision or hearing difficulties
Loses previously acquired skills
Does not react when you leave or return

Vaccinations

At 12 months, children typically receive vaccinations for measles, mumps, rubella \ (MMR\), pneumococcal disease, and meningococcal ACWY.

At 18 months, they may receive:

Measles, mumps, rubella, and chickenpox \ (MMRV\)
Diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough \ (pertussis\)
Haemophilus influenzae type b \ (Hib\) vaccine

Consult a healthcare professional for specific vaccination recommendations.

Tools And Assistance

Here are some resources to assist with your toddler's development:

Pediatrician or Child Health Professional: If you have concerns about your

child's development, a healthcare professional can provide personalized guidance and support.

Parenting Helplines: Available in many countries, these services offer advice and assistance for parents, including guidance on developmental milestones and addressing concerns.

Developmental Milestone Checklists: These can help you track your toddler's progress and identify any areas where they might need additional support.

Books and Online Resources: Reading books about toddler development can offer helpful tips and insights for managing challenges and encouraging growth.

Parenting Support Groups: Joining online or in-person groups can provide support and shared experiences from other parents.

Child Development Apps: Some apps are designed to help track your toddler's milestones and offer activities to foster development.