

Developmental Milestones: Your Infant at 18 Months

What are developmental milestones?

Developmental milestones are skills most children achieve by a certain age. Developmental milestones include physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and communication skills that are appropriate for the child's age. Milestones give important clues about a child's health and well-being. Any child whose milestones are delayed should be evaluated by a health or developmental professional.

- **Social and emotional** milestones include how children learn about their own emotions and the emotions of others. These milestones also involve learning how to interact and play with other people.
- **Language and communication** milestones involve language, speech, and nonverbal communication (for example, hand gestures or facial expressions). These milestones include a baby's babbling, their first words, and their ability to listen to others and hold a conversation.
- **Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)** milestones are centered on a child's ability to think, learn, and solve problems. Cognitive milestones include an infant learning how to react to different facial expressions and a preschooler learning to say the alphabet.
- **Movement/physical development** involves both gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills are typically the first to develop. They include your child's ability to support their head, sit up, stand, crawl, and walk. Fine motor skills involve precise movements such as grasping a spoon, picking up small objects, and drawing.

As a parent or caregiver, you spend the most time with your child and know them the best. If your child is not meeting these age-related milestones, or if you think there could be a problem with the way your child plays, learns, speaks, or acts, it is important to tell your child's primary care provider so they can assess your child's development. Discuss these concerns with them at your child's 18-month well-child exam.

Here are the milestones to expect from your child based on what most children do at this age:

Social/emotional

- Likes to hand things to others while playing
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- May cling to caregivers in new situations
- Points to show others something interesting
- Explores alone but with parent close by

Language/communication

- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head "no"
- Points to something they want

Developmental Milestones: Your Infant at 18 Months

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Knows what ordinary things are for; for example, a telephone, brush, or spoon
- Points to get others' attention
- Shows interest in a doll or stuffed animal by pretending to feed it
- Points to one body part
- Scribbles independently
- Can follow 1-step verbal commands without any gestures; for example, sits when you say "sit down"

Movement/physical development

- Walks alone
- May walk up steps and run
- Pulls toys while walking
- Can help undress himself or herself
- Drinks from a cup
- Eats with a spoon

Tell your child's doctor if you notice any signs of developmental delay for this age. Most communities also have early childhood intervention programs that can help assess your child.

Resources and References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/developmentalscreening.pdf

<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services> (Texas Early Childhood Intervention services)