In this letter you’ll find helpful resources and learn about:

- Immunizations your child may need.
- Tips to feed your toddler.
- Dental checkups.
- How to handle difficult behavior.
- What to do when you start to feel frustrated.
- Happy readings!

Immunizations

**Immunizations your child may need**

Make sure your child's immunizations are up to date. At 18 months, your child may receive some or all of the following vaccines:

- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV)
- Hepatitis A (HepA)
- Flu (influenza), yearly

In our state we continue to have outbreaks of diseases that vaccines can prevent. For the best protection, make sure you and your family are up to date on your immunizations. To find out, go to wa.myir.net to view your and your family’s immunization records online.

**Nutrition and Physical Activity**

**Tips for feeding your toddler**

By this age, your child is ready to enjoy the foods your family eats. However, your child will want to do it his or her own way. Your child is not growing as fast, so his or her appetite may not be as big as it once was. Here are some helpful tips for feeding your toddler:

- Encourage him or her to try a new food by offering it along with a favorite food. Don't force him or her to eat the new food.
- Eat with your child to help him or her learn to like the foods your family likes. The whole family eats better when you sit down together.
- Offer small servings and let your child ask for more if he or she wants it.
- Avoid sugary snacks and drinks as they can cause cavities. Offer water between meals and snacks. Your child will eat better when he or she comes to the table hungry.
- If you’re breastfeeding, that’s great! Breastfeeding provides your child comfort and good nutrition.
- Offer something from each food group at meals.
- Add variety. Offer different types of cut up, cooked vegetables and soft fruits.
- Snacks are little meals. Your child’s stomach is small so he or she needs to eat every two or three hours. Include different foods, such as small pieces of apples and cheese or whole-wheat crackers and orange slices.
- Offer whole milk in a cup at mealtime for children between 12 and 24 months. Milk provides protein, calcium, vitamin D, and magnesium for healthy bones and teeth. Offer water at snack time. Fluoridated water is best.

The best way to raise a healthy eater is to be patient with your child and avoid pressuring him or her to eat. If you’re worried about your child’s growth or eating habits, talk with his or her doctor or nurse. For more nutrition information and resources, visit doh.wa.gov/WIC/NutritionEducation.

**Oral Health**

**Dental care and checkups**

Your child’s baby teeth are important because they hold the place for permanent teeth. Brush his or her teeth after breakfast and before bed. Lift your child’s lip, look at teeth near the gums, and look behind the front teeth. Take your child to a dentist if you see white or brown spots on the teeth. Spots may be a sign of tooth decay.

**Growth and Development**

**Checkups**

Your child is developing quickly. Ask your doctor for a developmental screening to be sure your child is on track.

**Help handling difficult behavior**

When your child throws a tantrum or is very upset, try to step back and think about the situation. Is your child hungry, tired, or upset about something? Take a deep breath. Try to think calmly about how to help your child feel better.

Let your child know you can tell when he or she feels unhappy. Talk calmly about what is happening and offer some solutions. For example, “I see you are very upset. Let’s sit together until you feel better.” Or, “I can see you really wanted to play with the houseplants. They are not toys. Let’s find something else to play with. What about these pots and pans?” Notice the things your child does well. Tell him or her what you appreciate. This shows you care about what your child does.

**Family Support and Routines**

**Feeling frustrated?**

Sometimes it’s hard to be the parent you want to be. Have a plan for what to do when you feel frustrated or overwhelmed. Here are some things to try:

- Make sure your child is in a safe place.
- Walk a few feet away until you calm down.
- Take some deep breaths.
- Call a friend or relative who will listen and care. It can help to share your thoughts and feelings with someone.
Make sure others who care for your child also know what to do when they feel frustrated or angry. Talk to your healthcare provider, take a parenting class, or join a parenting group to get support. Ask about groups and classes at your local health department, community center, college, place of worship, clinic, or hospital. You can also call the Family Help Line at 1-800-932-4673 or visit parenttrust.org for help and advice.

**Safety**

**How to properly use a car seat**

Your child should sit in the backseat of the car in a rear-facing car seat until he or she reaches the maximum weight or height for the car seat, regardless of age. Check the car seat’s instructions to find the height and weight limits. After they are too big for a rear-facing car seat, use a forward-facing seat with a five-point harness. Make sure the harness is snug and the chest clip is at armpit level. (The harness is snug if you cannot pinch any slack in the strap at the shoulder.)

At this age, it is normal for children to try to climb out of their car seats. Never let your child ride unbuckled. Pack a special book or toy in the car to help keep your child occupied. If your child tries to get out, a good way to teach him or her to stay seated is to:

- Stop the car in a safe place right away.
- Tell your child firmly that the car will not go until he or she gets back in the seat.
- Wait until he or she sits down, then buckle the harness again.

Teach by example. Use your seat belt on every trip and make sure your passengers do, too. Contact Washington’s Child Passenger Safety Program with any concerns at 360-725-9860. Visit safercar.gov/parents to find the nearest car seat inspection services.

**Dangers in driveways and parking lots**

Your child is so small that a driver may not be able to see him or her between cars or when backing up. You can help keep your child and others safe by doing these things:

- Walk all the way around your car to check for kids, toys, and pets before you get in and start the motor. Roll down windows and turn off music so you can listen as you back up your car.
- Keep a lookout in parking lots and driveways where children play.
- Firmly hold your child’s hand near vehicles. Ask others to always do the same with your child.

Never leave children in a car without an adult, even for a short time. Leaving a child in a parked car is very dangerous and can be deadly. Children left in a car can suffer heat stroke very quickly. They can also start the car rolling or lock themselves in.

**What makes a playground safe?**

Always check playground equipment before your child begins to play. Stay close to your child, especially when he or she climbs. Safe play areas should have soft sand, wood chips, or rubber padding under climbing toys and swings. They should have small slides and gym apparatus so separate for equipment for older children. Make sure swings have seats that hold children in on all sides.

**Help your toddler explore the world**

It is important for your child to feel safe as he or she starts to explore. You will want your child to check in with you. Let your child know you are still there to protect him or her from possible danger.

Your child may continue to do things you have said are off limits over and over again. He or she is not trying to disobey or manipulate you. This is a normal part of how toddlers learn about the world around them.

Toddlers also explore the world with their mouths. If you keep your home safe it will help you say no less often. Keep things locked away or out of reach that you don’t want your child to have. Install cabinet locks in the kitchen and bathroom. Close doors or install gates to keep your toddler out of certain rooms. Install window stops or guards or keep windows closed in rooms where your toddler spends time. If you think your child has been exposed to a toxic product or substance or if you have questions, stay calm and call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Call 911 if your child has collapsed, has stopped breathing, has trouble breathing, or will not wake up.

**Referrals**

- Nutrition education resources: doh.wa.gov/WIC/NutritionEducation
- Find dental care: 1-800-322-2588 (711 TTY relay) or ParentHelp123.org
- Parenting resources: 1-800-932-4673 and parenttrust.org/call-fit
- Car seat safety tips: 360-725-9860 and safercar.gov/parents
- Washington Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222 (TTY 711) and wapc.org

**Thanks for reading!** Share this letter with other caregivers in your child’s life. You’ll hear from us again before your child is 2 years old with information on:

- Temper tantrums.
- Toilet training.
- Safe toys.

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**For the Health of All Our Children**

Child Profile is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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