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19 Months

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children

19 MONTHS

Your Child Is Special

Your child is like no other in the whole world. Perfectly normal children differ in the ways they develop. Those who study young children agree that the one predictable thing about children's development is its variability. Normally developing children may walk as early as 7 months, but many do not walk before they are 18 months old. Normal children may begin talking at 8 months or at 24 months, and so it is with all learning.

Your child naturally enjoys learning new skills. You can support and encourage this learning, not by pushing or criticizing or comparing your child with other children but by teaching, encouraging, and celebrating her own successes.

Happy Dancing

Toddlers like to do things with their parents. They like music and rhythm and body movement. Happy dancing combines all these things.

Turn on some music. Teach your child to do a happy dance. Dance to fast music and to slow music. Hold hands and dance together.

Clap your hands to music or use large wooden spoons or beat on something that makes a nice noise. Show your little one how to keep the rhythm and play along with the beat.

Children grow up to like the kind of music they hear when they are little. Play different kinds of music and your child will learn to like many kinds of music.

Nutrition: Mealtime Is Mess Time

Toddlers are messy eaters. You can bet that a lot of food will end up on the floor. If you are worried about the carpet or floor, put an old sheet under the high chair. You can shake it out after meals. When it gets really dirty, you can wash it.

Things that make eating easier for your toddler are small, unbreakable items, such as a:

- Spoon with a short handle.
- Bowl with sides to push food up against.
- Cup that your toddler can circle his hands around and pick up. (This cup shouldn't tip over easily. If you use a training cup with a lid, it can make drinking easier.)

There will be lots of spills. Most of the time they will be accidental. If it happens three and four times in a row, your toddler might be playing or trying to get your attention. This means it is probably time to end the meal.

Serve your toddler food at the same time everyone else is eating. Your toddler will learn how to eat by watching you and other family members eat. Don't expect good table manners yet. Your child will learn

these gradually by watching you over the next few years.

A high chair can help. Toddlers are such busy little people they might not want to stop to eat when it's time for a meal or snack. When you put your child in a high chair, he knows that it's time to stop what he is doing and eat.

Homemade Toys that Teach: Milk Carton Blocks

Block play allows young children to experiment with patterns, shapes, and sizes. They learn what happens when stacks are knocked down. These lightweight building blocks, which cost almost nothing to make, are very popular with children.

Materials

- Milk or cream cartons
- Heavy plastic or duct tape

Making the Toy

Take any two cartons of equal size and cut them to the same height. Turn one over and slip it inside the other so that it makes a block. Secure the edges with duct tape or heavy mailing tape—a kind children can't peel off and swallow. You can cover the blocks with adhesive paper or you can paste letters, numbers, or pictures on them.

What's It Like to Be 19 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I explore a lot.
- I may be able to kick a large ball.
- I like being independent but sometimes I want to act like a baby.

How I Talk

- I'm very good at saying "no."
- I love to name things.
- I can follow simple directions.
- I like to be read to.

What I Have Learned

- I can pull the toilet paper wa-a-a-y out.
- I can put two pieces together to form a simple figure.

How I Get Along with Others

- I love cuddling.
- I like to help you do simple things.
- I'm still not much interested in other children.
- I may treat others children like they were things; I may hurt them.
- Even when I'm with other children, I like to play alone.

What I Can Do for Myself

- I can brush my own teeth.
- Sometimes I will let you know when I'm going to have a bowel movement.

Play I Enjoy

- I like to play alone but I like adults to be near me.
- I like picture books and I love looking at pictures of myself.
- I enjoy swinging on a swing.
- I like dressing up in adult's clothes and pretending I am an adult.

Special Toy or Blanket

Lots of children have special blankets, teddy bears, or toys. Some children take up with the strangest things. They claim them and call them their own forever—or at least until someone makes fun of them.

The most common favorite object is a blanket. Your little one may appear every morning with one thumb in the mouth and the other hand clutching a ratty, tattered blanket.

There are some stories about security blankets that would truly surprise you. Heaven forbid if it should get lost, stolen (who'd want it?), or washed. Yet that

blanket or teddy bear or toy represents a friend who has shared your child's life through thick and thin, in sickness and health, in good times and bad. Most of us would welcome such a friend if it could do as much for us.

What do you do about these comforts and attachments? You leave them alone, because in time your child will realize the blanket or bear or other toy isn't going to solve life's problems. He will come to realize he can solve his problems by himself. For now let him enjoy his comforting "friends."

Be Good to Yourself: Give Yourself a Present

Taking care of a toddler can leave you feeling you never have a moment for yourself. If you're feeling stressed out, give yourself a present—some time just for you. Trade babysitting with another parent, or trade a service like cooking a meal in return for a few hours of babysitting. You've earned it, you deserve it, and you don't need to be embarrassed to ask for it.

Here are some suggestions for spending time on yourself:

- Take a long bubble bath, a walk, or a swim, see a movie, or read a book.
- Plan your future—investigate classes you might take, jobs you might like, activities you enjoy.
- Spend time with a friend—without children.
- Talk to someone about the stress you feel and what you might do to reduce it.

The time you take just for yourself will help you feel refreshed and ready to face parenthood again.

Sometimes Change Takes Time

Does it sometimes seem that your child changes almost too fast, while at other times he learns important things so-o-o-o slowly? Believe it or not, your little one wants to learn and is doing his best. Some things are just hard for him to get the hang of. You can help by being patient and calm and by encouraging and praising each tiny accomplishment. That way, he won't get upset and have trouble learning.

If your messy eater gets two spoonfuls of applesauce in his mouth without spilling much, let him know you are pleased. If he plays with another child just 5 minutes without squabbling, compliment him.

Let him know you appreciate what he can do. Try not to criticize what he cannot do. He'll learn faster and you'll both feel better.

> Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth. Look for your child's growth in each area. Encourage each new ability. If you are concerned about your child's development, talk with your doctor.

Games for Growing: Big and Little

Purpose of the Game: To teach your child about opposites and sizes.

How to Play:

- Sit in any relaxed position.
- Place three big and three little blocks on the floor.
- Pile the blocks up in different patterns and describe what you are doing. For example, "Now I'll take the big block. Now I'll put the little block on it" and so on.
- Now say something like, "We need a big block. Give me a big block" or ask for the little blocks so that your child learns the difference between big and little. Encourage your child to make up other block games or big and little games you can play together.

Questions

Q: "When is my toddler ready for playmates?"

A: Any time you set the stage properly.

Q: "How does my toddler learn to get along with other children?"

A: Three ways:

- By practicing with you.
- By watching and imitating other people.
- By being with playmates the same age.

Adult-child play is important. According to University of Delaware's Dr. Mary Jane Stratner-Gregory, early play among children is much like play between a familiar adult and a toddler. Here are ways a child can learn by playing with you:

- You take turns handing things back and forth.
- One of you does something that's fun and you laugh together.
- You imitate each other—such as making noises with a truck, kissing a doll, rolling a ball back and forth, or fingering each other's hair. Happy experiences like these provide models for interacting with playmates.

Learn by imitating. Small children are people-watchers. They learn quickly to imitate the attitudes and actions of those around them, especially people who are important to them. Children tend to mimic their parents' mannerisms and ways of interacting with others.

Learn by doing. Adults are often surprised that healthy, well rested, well fed, one and two-year-olds can play together with many more happy interactions than squabbles. Watch for more ideas in future issues for helping your toddler have happy play times.

Safety Tips: Poison

Make sure to keep hazardous objects out of your little one's reach. Household products, medicines, and sharp objects should be stored in high places that are out of a toddler's sight and preferably locked.

Dispose of old medicines. All old medications should be safely disposed of by flushing them down the toilet.

Do not store any household products in harmless-looking containers. Household products should be kept in their original containers and never in food or drink containers. You can obtain "Mr. Yuck" warning stickers from your local hospital or poison control center. These are bright green stickers that let your child know that he should not touch the container the sticker is on.

Purchase medicines with child-proof safety caps. Remember to securely replace the cap, and store the medicine out of reach of your toddler.

Inspect walls for peeling paint. Paint that is peeling and chipped or is on chewable surfaces less than four feet from the floor is a potential hazard to your child. Paint contains lead, and if your child chews on or swallows it, he may get lead poisoning. Pre-World War II housing poses particular risk for lead availability.

Learn first aid for poisoning. You should learn about what to do if your child swallows something poisonous. You should ask your child's physician about writing you a prescription for Syrup of Ipecac. However, in case of an emergency, a physician or poison control center should be contacted before the Syrup of Ipecac is given to your child. Always keep the local poison control number near the telephone.

Check the yard and house for poisonous plants. Many household plants are poisonous, including castor bean, Caladium, dumb cane, and mistletoe. Keep house plants separated from the play area and hang them out of your child's reach. Outdoor plants such as Lily of the Valley, foxglove, rhododendron, mountain laurel, jimsonweed, and elderberry leaves are hazardous; the leaf blades of rhubarb and all parts of the potato plant other than the potato itself are poisonous. Fence off these and other poisonous shrubs and flowers so your little one can't get at them. (For more information, refer to the plant poisoning section in the AAP **Handbook of Common Poisonings in Children**, 1983.)

Check ventilation systems at least once a year. This yearly inspection will help prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

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