



## Your Toddlers Development 15-18 months

Your little toddler has progressed to a not so little toddler! He is a sociable little boy now and is starting to show interest in other children in his environment. He is also at the stage where he will challenge the limits of safety, by testing whether he can touch the electrical plug, or unbuckle his seat belt while riding in the car. Your toddler at this age has still not learned to share, nor have any understanding of the needs of anyone else other than himself. He still does not know that any other people exist separately from himself (much like a teenager!). At this age, your toddler will be able to point to objects that he is interested in, and will be trying desperately to process speech and language to some degree. He has also learned that there are two sides to his body, divided down the middle, and that he has two of the same body parts on either side (for example two arms, two legs), but only one of body parts positioned in the midline (for example one nose, one bellybutton). He's growing up!

### Language development

It is at this stage that your toddler will start to learn his first real words. These are different words to his first gobbledygook baby words. You will be amazed at how quickly his language development takes place, and by the time he is 18 months old he may have a vocabulary of about 10 or more words, and may even use two or three words together. Some toddlers, though, don't say much until the age of 2, so as long as there is communication and emotion, don't worry.

### Motor development

Your toddler should be able to stand and walk completely by himself by now, even though it may be on tip toe at times. He is definitely becoming more agile and is starting to climb. He will love being outdoors and can now master the art of rolling and catching a large ball (how clever!). He may also be able to throw and kick a small ball without falling over and will take great delight in doing it over and over again. Be sure to praise him – it is a big achievement for him. He should be able to recognise and point to body parts and learn what they are used for, so encourage him to show you his tummy, eyes and so on. His fine-motor development is also coming along, and he will love to scribble on any surface that is available. He is definitely becoming more dextrous and will handle play dough with ease and will attempt to do up his buttons, and feed himself with a spoon or fork.

### Emotional development

He will become quite clingy and possessive at this stage ("Mine!") and will exasperate you as his emotions vacillate from happy to miserable at the drop of a hat. However, his self-esteem is growing as he slowly begins to master his environment, which will help him to become less frustrated and insecure. Help him make sense of his feelings. It is amazing to think that many of life's important messages are learnt during this stage, for example love and approval as opposed to hate and rejection. Allow him to use facial expressions to reflect his moods without admonishing him. After all, this is how he tells you how he is feeling. This magic thread of communication enables him to keep in emotional contact with you. It is important, that you, as the parent help to make sense of any feelings your toddler may be feeling. It is unreasonable at this stage to expect him to be left alone to make sense of his feelings. The first step is to acknowledge the feeling, then give it a name. So when your child bursts into tears because the dog barked loudly, you could say to him, " I know that you are frightened of the dog, but it's OK." This way, you give him a message that whatever he is feeling or experiencing is manageable and is not out of control. These strategies, as well as non-verbal cues such as smiles and nods, will also reassure him. Allow him the space and freedom to explore and develop his unique personality traits.

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