DEVELOPMENT AT 18 MONTHS

18 months	Normal	Doubtful	Abnormal
Alertness			
Pincer grip			
Right			
Left			
Simple commands			
Standing			
Walking			
2-cube tower			

During the second year infants begin to walk and talk. Mobility enables them to explore the shapes and textures of objects in their environment but brings with it the dangers of swallowing or aspirating objects they find. These activities enable them to wean themselves from close maternal attachment, and this process is sometimes accompanied by rebellion against the mother.

History

The mother should be asked whether she has any problems and whether the child has had any illnesses since the previous visit. She should be asked when he started to stand, walk, and feed himself with a spoon and drink from a cup. The number of words he says with meaning is noted.

Walking

Nearly all infants will be walking by the age of 18 months. An exception are those who were "bottom-shufflers"; since they already move around fast on their bottoms they tend to learn to walk later than average. Other infants who are not walking by this age should be seen every two months and if they are not walking by the age of 2 years they should be seen by a developmental specialist.

When walking begins there is a wide gait and the toes often point outwards or inwards. Occasionally infants start walking on their toes, but within a month the whole sole should be on the ground. Some infants fear letting go of a hand but may become independent by being allowed to push a toy pram or a wheeled toy. The infant will enjoy taking the pots and pans out of the cupboard, and the provision of a special cupboard to do this will encourage him.

Language

Words are only the final stage in the development of language, and the ability to communicate is more important than the number of words a child can say distinctly. He should be able to obey simple commands—to take an object out of a cup and give it to his mother or to put it into the cup—and failure to communicate in this or in similar ways is abnormal. Long babbled conversations which are unintelligible are normal and are called jargon.

He enjoys looking at simple picture books and points at objects in them with his finger. He starts showing his independence, albeit capriciously; by refusing certain foods or refusing to conform to his mother's wishes.

Manipulation

About this time the child will start to help to take off his shoes and socks and become aware of the different parts of his body. He can feed himself with a spoon without tipping the food all over the table. He sees and picks up small objects with his thumb and index finger (pincer grip). He is able to build one-inch cubes into a tower of two or three, provided he has had previous experience of trying to do it.

Inability to stand by himself or lack of a pincer grip in each hand are indications for referral to a developmental specialist. Failure to make spontaneous sounds or to obey simple commands are other indications that further advice is needed.

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