

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

- Vaccines your child may need.
- Tips for feeding your toddler.
- Dental checkups.
- How to handle difficult behavior.
- What to do when you start to feel frustrated.
- Safe playgrounds.
- Locking up poisons.
- Driveway safety.
- Car seat safety.
- How to keep your home safe.

Happy reading!

Vaccines

Vaccines your child may need.

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

- Hepatitis B
- Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV)
- Hepatitis A
- Flu
- COVID-19

In the US and our state, we continue to have outbreaks of diseases that are prevented by vaccines. For the best protection, make sure your family is up to date on vaccines.

Check to make sure your child's current vaccines are in the Washington State Immunization Information System (WAIS). You have the right to review your child's records, ask questions, and make corrections. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions. You can ask them for a copy of your child's vaccine records.

To see and download your family's vaccine records online go to myirmobile.com.

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 their own way. Your child is not growing as fast, so their appetite may not be as big as it once was. Here are some helpful tips for feeding your toddler:

- Encourage them to try a new food by offering it along with a favorite food. Don't force them to eat the new food.
- Eat with your child to help them 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 they want it.
- Limit sugary snacks and drinks as they can cause cavities. Offer water between meals and snacks. Your child will eat better when they come to the table hungry.
- If you're breast or chest feeding, that's great! Your milk 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 they need to eat every 2 or 3 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. Drinking water with fluoride is best.

The best way to raise a healthy eater is to be patient with your child and avoid pressuring them to eat. If you're worried about your child's growth or eating habits, talk with their doctor or nurse. For more nutrition information and resources, visit doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/wic/nutrition-education.

Oral Health

Dental care and checkups are important.

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

Frequent snacking or sipping sweet drinks, including juices or sports drinks, can cause cavities. Teeth need "breaks" between meals and snacks to prevent cavities.

If your child has not had a first dental checkup, it's time. Call your child's dentist to make an appointment. For help finding dental care, call the Family Health Hotline at **1-800-322-2588** or go to parenthelp123.org/families/childrens-dental-health.



Lift my lip to check my teeth for pale or dark spots.

Growth and Development

Check in with your child's development.

Your child is developing quickly. Ask your doctor or nurse for a developmental screening. Talk with them when you have questions.

Tips for 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 they feel 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 them 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 and caregiver 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 doctor or nurse, 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. For help and advice, you can also call the Family Help Line at **1-800-932-4673** or visit parenttrust.org.

Safety

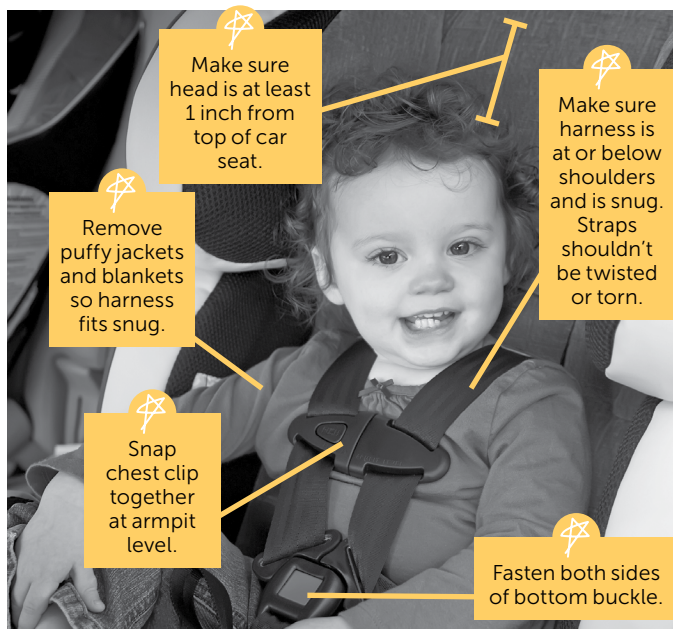
How to properly use a car seat.

Your child should sit in the backseat of the car in a rear-facing car seat until they reach 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 5-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 them 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 they get back in the seat.
- Wait until your child 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**. To find the nearest car seat inspection services visit, wacarseats.com.



Use a rear-facing car seat until your child reaches the maximum weight or height for the seat, regardless of age.

Dangers are in driveways and parking lots.

Your child is so small that a driver may not be able to see them 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 they climb. Safe play areas should have soft sand, wood chips, or rubber padding under climbing toys and swings. They should have small slides and gyms made for toddlers separate from 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 they start to explore. Your child will want to check in with you. Let your child know you are still there to protect them from possible danger.

Your child may continue to do things you have said are off limits over and over again. They are 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. 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 harmful 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.

Resources

- **See and download vaccine records:** myirmobile.com
- **Nutrition education:** doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/wic/nutrition-education
- **Find dental care:** 1-800-322-2588 (711 TTY relay) or ParentHelp123.org
- **Parenting resources:** 1-800-932-4673 and parenttrust.org/call-fhl
- **Car seat safety tips:** 360-725-9860 and wacarseats.com
- **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.

For the Health of All Our Children

Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health

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