Season 2 Introduction

Hi, welcome to season two of the Baby Manual podcast for parents of toddlers. This season will help you feel confident as you navigate the difficulties of toddlerhood from tantrums to sleep schedules to potty training.

I'm your host, a pediatrician and mom, Dr. Carol Keim. this is the first episode of season 2, about the 15 month old. So this a really fun age and also a hard age in a lot of ways because the terrible twos are actually starting right now.

So I'm going to start off with a little bit of what you should be doing as a parent. Make sure you're engaging with your child often by speaking to them and telling them the names of things.

They love to copy everything you do at this age. So this is a great time to be modeling good behavior and encouraging them to keep doing the things that you want them be to doing.

When they spill something, you can let them clean it up. when something needs to go in the trash, they can go and put it there themselves. they might even be able to help with feeding pets at his age and they love feeling helpful.

Parenting Basics and Discipline

Make sure you're supporting their need for safety and reassurance at this age as well. And actually, boundaries are reassuring at his age. So if you hold a boundary or if say that you are going to do something, you need to follow through and actually do it.

We can talk a little bit about natural consequences versus logical consequences. As far as discipline goes, it's never okay to hit your child or hurt them in any way.

You don't want to be taking things away that are not related at all to what they're doing. But if your child is, say, throwing something around that they shouldn't be, it's okay to take that thing away from them and say hey, this needs to not be thrown around.

If they are doing something that is unsafe, definitely stop them. Like if they're about to run into the street, its okay grab their arm. But you need to also explain to them why you're doing that and why it is not safe to him.

And when they're doing something that you just don't like, you don t want to threaten them with I'm going to hit you or I m going do this thing. You just give them a logical consequence to that.

So, for example, let's say they don' t wanna put on their jacket to go outside. It's okay to let them have these small fails and go outside and be cold.

You don't have to control everything for them and you don' have make everything perfect for the. And it's OK for th to feel a little bit cold, it' not going to hurt them, and they'll understand, oh, this is why I'm supposed to put a jacket on every time I go out side.

It' OK to le them go without shoes if that's what they want. So go ahead and let them have these small fails now, because when they become older children and teenagers, you don't want their first big fail to be something like a car accident or something really dangerous.

So let's them do that now when their little. Your child should be able to separate from you for a little bit of time, but usually it's just for few moments.

They're starting to test boundaries at this age, so they're staring to see how far they can go away before you call

them back, and also what they get away with without you correcting them at that age.

So definitely expect a lot of that from them. And this is a good time to be looking for parent and toddler play groups. They usually won't play with children, but they'll play next to them.

So it's called parallel play, and they will often copy what someone else is doing, or you'll see two children at the same kind of toy station doing their own thing as they're playing near each other.

And they like doing that at this age. Make sure you're using consistent positive disciplines. So that means things like noticing good behavior and then avoiding the use of the word no and telling them what they can do instead.

For example, instead of saying stop running or no, don't run, you should say something like walk, please, or use your walking feet. so that they understand what they should be doing instead.

Because a lot of times, if you tell them to stop, they'll stop for a moment, and then they will keep doing what their doing, because they listened to you.

They stopped, but then, then you don't know that you need to keep stopping, whatever that is. So you can also use distraction for this. If they grab something that their not supposed to have, you could swap it out for something else, or if they're starting to melt down about something, You can distract them by giving them something else that makes them happy, that that works really well.

Make sure that they're getting regular downtime during the day. A lot of children at 15 months are dropping their nap, but they still need that time to kind of relax around the early afternoon.

Toddler Social Development and Play

So you can have them have quiet time in their room. You could even read with them or play something that's like quiet sitting down on the floor. They love that sort of stuff.

I would try to avoid screen time as much as possible. I know it's really tempting. And if you need it for your mental health, if need a little bit of a break, it is okay to have a bit screentime with them.

Ideally something that's educational. I'm a big fan of the PBS Kids programming station. They have an app on the TV that you can watch and they're all shows that are really good for kids and are safe to watch.

So you want to keep it to 10 to 20 minutes at the most at a time. According to the Academy of Pediatrics, The only screen time that children less than two are supposed to have are things like video chatting with relatives.

So try to keep it to only that, but I know being realistic in this day and age, you might also want to help them watch a little bit of a show. And so something that's definitely geared towards children for a very short amount of time is good.

They don't have very long attention spans at this age. As far as development goes, they're starting to get stranger anxiety back again at 15 months. And so you might notice them being apprehensive about strangers and also a little bit of separation anxiety where if you try to go to the bathroom by yourself and you close the door, or they get really upset or the they stand outside and cry until you come back out.

So they like to be together with you a lot of the time and they might have a preferred parent at this age. Remember, it's not always going to be like this.

They do love both parents equally. It's just they might prefer one over the other at this age. They'll usually bring you things or point things out to you.

A lot of pointing happens at 15 months where they're showing you something that they want you to take interest in,

or they are giving you a toy that want to play with you, Or they give you book that you want them to read to them.

They can usually follow simple directions without gestures anymore at this age. So if you say something like, go get me a book, they will go and get one without you having to point at it.

They love imitating, as I've said, so they'll try to act like adults at this age. They'll do things like pretend to talk on a phone or feed a doll or pretend take pictures with their hands.

It's super cute. And I'd say definitely take advantage of their wanting to help by letting them actually help you around the house. So if you need to sweep the kitchen, let them have a broom and sweep themselves as well.

You don't wanna sweep for them and then have them go and do it again. Because they will know if they're actually being helpful or not. So do things that will actually be helpful, but you have to have a lot of patience because they make a lotta mistakes at this age, and they don't do it as quickly or efficiently as you would do.

But these toddlers, they love to be in charge of how things are done and what is getting done, so try to give them as much freedom in that sense as possible.

One of the big motor milestones at this age is that they can bend down and pick things up off the floor. So that's a really cute thing to see them starting to do.

Sleep, Screen Time, and Daily Routine

They'll be standing and walking, and then they'll bend, down pick something up, then keep walking. The can also crawl upstairs. Keep in mind, if you don't have stairway gates, it's good idea to have them at the bottom of stairs because they will try to go up and also at top because the don' know how to safely get downstairs yet at that age.

you'll see their vocabulary just starting to explode a lot of times around 15 months. So they should be saying at least three words and jabbering with inflection.

You'll hear them saying things like that ball, that cup, like this where it's going up and down and there's a couple of words thrown in there. But it seems like around this age, every day they're just getting more and more words.

I love to keep a running list around what they can say because it is so fascinating to see how many new things they start to pick up. and they can understand almost everything that you say.

So this is the age where if you don't want them to hear what you're saying, you might want to spell it out to your partner. At 15 months, they start to scribble with a crayon or a marker.

Usually it's just straight line scribbling that they're doing, but they are usually putting it on the paper more than in their mouth at this age. And they should be able to feed themselves pretty well with their hands and drink from a cup without spilling.

So for behavior stuff at 15 months, remember terrible twos are starting and that's because they start to learn how to use the word no. They start have preferences and they get mad when their preferences are not met.

So one really good way to help avoid tantrums at this age is to offer two suitable choices throughout the day. So any instance you can think of to offers them a choice, do it.

Do you want this spoon or this one? Even if they look like the same spoon to you, the toddler will have a preference and they love being able to make that choice.

When they ask you for a cup of milk, Do want it in this cup or cup? They like to choose how things are done, so when they need to put their shoes on, rather than saying, come on we're putting your shoes, on you can say, would you like, to, put your, shoes.

On by yourself or would, you, like me to help you or even, Would you. Like to start with this shoe or this, shoe first or which pair of shoes would. You rather wear.

There are so many choices you can offer them. And I know it's so much quicker just to do it yourself. But the more things that you do for them or to them, the frustrated they get throughout the day and the most likely they are to throw a tantrum, especially when they know you're not in control, like at a grocery store or in a quiet place.

You can try to modify their environment a bit to avoid conflict. So if there's something that they're are not allowed to have, just don't have it out where they can see it.

That's a great way to And if they're doing something like hitting or biting, which I do see pretty commonly at this age, it's an attempt to communicate.

So children who don't know how to say exactly what they want will find other ways to express that they are upset. And often that comes out as hitting, or fighting, kicking.

If you give them these choices, you let them see the two different choices. That's one great way to avoid that. But then also just teach them how to communicate what they need and what's OK to do when they meet your attention.

Language, Motor Skills, and Behavior

So, for example, if you're in the kitchen cooking and you really can't be looking at them right now, You can tell them, If You Need Me, pat me on the leg and I will turn around and look at you.

So things like that, if you give them expectations before you go into certain situations of what is okay to do, they can usually understand that really well and ask for things in a way that's a little bit safer than biting or hitting.

For sleep at 15 months, it ranges pretty widely, but typical is between 10 and 14 hours of sleep a night. They might be napping during the day or they might not.

And it can be pretty awkward when they're dropping that nap. It's not like they go all of a sudden, you know, napping every day to not nappin at all. Sometimes it takes a couple of weeks to transition.

So you can kind of feel it out as a parent. Like, is it better to let them fall asleep at six or seven at night and take the chance that they are going to sleep through the night or that might wake up at 10 or 11 at you can just sort of feel out what is best for you and your schedule.

But if you're allowing them that downtime in the early afternoon, a lot of times they will take a nap if they need one at that time. It is normal for them to wake up at night at this age.

So the best way to handle that is to just go into their room, reassure them briefly, let them know that everything's okay, and then give them a stuffed animal or a blanket to snuggle with.

And typically they'll be able to self-soothe themselves. They should be sleeping in a crib in their own room, and you can go to a toddler bed at any time, but keep in mind that the disadvantage with the toddler is that they can get up whenever they want.

So when it's okay with you for them to get out of bed and walk around, like if they're walking independently and they are able to safely get to your room and wake you up if you need you, then it is okay to switch to toddler beds.

If you want them to be in a safe space in their room and not get out in the middle of the night, then you should keep them in crib. And it's okay to do that even up until age two or three if you wanted to.

If your child is crawling out of crib or climbing over it and getting out, Then it is time to put them into a toddler bed because that's not safe anymore.

One life hack for when you're potty training toddlers, if you are potting training at this age, and they're sometimes sleeping without a diaper, is you can layer the sheets with some absorbent pads in between, like we call them chucks.

So you put like a sheet down and then chuck over it, then another sheet and another one. And so if they do wet the bed at night, you just pull off the top layer and throw away that disposable pad, wash that one sheet so you don't have to wash the whole bedding every time.

Remember, blankets are okay at this age, but no pillows until they turn two. And they should not have any food or drinks in bed, so no bottles, no snacks.

Beds should be strictly for sleeping. It's not playtime. When you're reading them a book before bedtime, do it out of the bed and then put them into the bedroom afterwards.

Also, try not to have electronic devices in their bedroom. So that means no TVs, Try not to be on your phone while they're falling asleep because that light can be distracting and can keep them up longer.

So, yeah, we want to keep out of the habit of having any electronics in the bedroom. For nutrition at 15 months, they'll typically be eating three meals and two or three snacks per day at the same time as the rest of the family.

So their food is basically just adult food at this age, just cut into toddler size pieces and portions. Remember choking hazards are things that are round, so things like blueberries or grapes or peanuts.

Anything that's circular like that that they can accidentally inhale and could get lodged in their trachea is considered a choking hazard.

Nutrition and Dental Care

So anything that soft enough to be mashed between your fingers is soft to enough be chewed even if they don't have their molars in yet. And then once they do have the molers in they're able to chew a lot of different textures.

You wanna encourage them to feed themselves and to drink out of a cup. You should be giving a Cup of water with every meal and every snack. And they don't actually need anything other than water and food.

So they Don't need milk at this age. I know that we in the past have been really in a habit of giving milk to children, but they actually don' need it.

It is okay to give it to them. But keep in mind that you wanna keep the limit below 24 ounces per day. Because if they drink more than that, children will tend to fill up on milk and not eat as many nutritious foods.

And also the milk competes with iron in their gut for absorption, and so they get iron deficiency anemia. They can be pretty anemic from drinking too much milk.

So water is the very healthiest thing that they can drink. They don't need juice. Juice is not healthy. It's almost as bad as soda in terms of tooth decay and sugar and obesity.

So juice is really just very high in sugar, and it just takes out the chewing. Give them fresh fruits and vegetables. Those are much better than juices.

Even if you're juicing things yourself, you are still concentrating out sugar. And taking away all the fiber that helps with the digestion and the absorption.

And so they get that sugar rush from it. So if your child is already drinking juice and you want to start to back off on it, like if they don't like water, you can start watering down the juice.

Start with three-quarter juice, one- quarter water. Then go half and half for about a week at a time. And then one quarter juice or three quarters water and then entirely water after that.

If they still really don' t want the water it's okay to put maybe just a tiny splash of juice in it for flavor. But water is still the very healthiest thing you could do.

Remember that you get to decide what is offered to your child and when it is offer to them, but you can't force anything in or out of their bodies. So you'll can force them to eat anything and you shouldn't try to coerce them into eating anything that they don't want.

Just offer a variety of foods and try avoid using words like this is good for you and this bad for, because when you start to associate emotion with foods, it sets them up for eating disorders later in life.

So typically 15 month olds are not very picky and they will typically want to try everything that is on their plate. And they might not like everything and that's okay.

But they like to eat a wide variety so take advantage of this. Make sure you're offering greens at least once per day and or red meat three times per week to get them enough iron.

There's also calcium in dark green veggies and most toddler foods are fortified with calcium so that also why you don't really need milk. But yeah, make sure you're giving a big variety.

Focus on fresh fruits and vegetables. Those are the healthiest things that they can eat. And also just whatever you are having for dinner, you can give them some of that as well.

For dental care at this age, you wanna be brushing their teeth twice a day and it's okay to use fluoride toothpaste. You wanna just do a tiny smear of it, about the amount of a grain of rice on a toothbrush and use a soft toothbrush.

And also they should be drinking water that ideally has fluorite in the water source and they won't be consuming too much fluorine if they have fluoridated water and the fluorided toothpaste If there is not any fluoride in your water, just double check with your pediatrician or your dentist to see whether you need to do a fluorid varnish or a fluid supplement.

And they should be seeing a dentist about once or twice per year at this age. Some dentists will see you even four times a year. So if they haven't seen a dentist yet, make sure you make that appointment right away.

For peeing and pooping at this age, they're typically voiding at least four to six times per day and pooping about once or twice per days on average.

Potty Training and Skin Care

If your baby is constipated, so if they are straining to poop, if the cry when they poop or if there's blood in there or it's every couple of days, you want to first increase their water and then increase fiber, that's the fresh fruits and veggies especially, and you could consider doing something like prune juice or pear juice.

You'd give them about two to four ounces once or twice a day. And with that kind of juice, unlike other fruit juices, you're using it like a medication.

So you want to just give it straight. It works kind like laxative, like an irritant in the gut. it makes everything flush through. If you do too much of it, they will start to get diarrhea.

And if that's not working, you can always talk to your pediatrician about Miralax. Mirallax is clear and so they can't see it and they cant taste it. It has no texture.

it dissolves completely in liquids and it works sort of like those Orbeez gel beads. Its soaks up water and puffs up in

the intestines. So you want to make sure they're having lots of water.

Again, optimizing water intake first for constipation. But yeah, the Miralax will pull water into the gut. It will make your poop a little bit softer and make it pass through a bit easier.

So that's one that we often give to children because it's not absorbed into their bodies at all. Um, it really just stays in the got and pulls water in to the guts.

If you're wanting to start potty training, this is a great time to. You can also wait until later. It's okay. And also if you go back to my first season of the baby manual, you can start as early as a few months of age.

I mentioned that earlier on, it's called elimination communication. But at this age, if your starting at 15 months, One of the first things you can do is put your toddler on the potty after they eat and when they first wake up because those are natural times to want to go to the bathroom.

If they're resistant to going to toilet and they are not wanting to sit for you, you could start off with them fully clothed and then entertain them there with like a book or a toy and try having them sit with the pants and the diaper off and just get really excited if anything comes out.

You don't need to be bribing them at this age. You Don't Need to do sticker tarts or treats or anything like that for the potty at This age a lot of times they just want to Be helpful and they want To do what they're supposed to Do so this should be enough to help them At this Age to learn to use the Potty and another thing you Can do is keep the baby pot in your Bathroom and go at the same time because They'll watch you and then they'll say oh I want, to, do that too and They sit on their little toilet and try to try, To use it as, well as far as skin care goes.

They just need a bath as often as they get dirty, which is usually every day at this age. And it's okay to use lotion after a bathe if they have dry skin.

You should be using sunblock if there gonna be outside for more than half an hour. Remember that sun block takes a half hour to kick in. So you need to do it before they go out.

If you to reapply while you're out, do when you guys are eating or you have a few moments where you can sit in the shade and so they that good half-hour to let that Sunblock kick-in again.

Home Safety and Childproofing

You can use insect repellent that is safe for children. I usually recommend one that's citronella based because the ones that have DEET in them are pretty toxic.

Citronello works really well and is safer for kids. Just remember they can't eat that as well. For safety, make sure you childproof the house. You know, they're running at this age and getting into everything.

So things like outlet covers are great, stairway gates, barriers around space heaters. Make sure your cleaning products and other poisons are in a place where they can't reach them because they will try to open everything and at the stage they often figure out how to get through child locks if they get enough time.

You wanna keep electrical cords out of reach. And if you have a pool, make sure you a gate around the pool that they are not able to get into because drowning is big at this age.

Don't take any medicines in front of your child because as they're copying everything you do, they gonna learn that when you open those types of bottles, whether it's prescription or over-the-counter medicines, that you're supposed to put those things into your mouth.

So if do need to take medicines when your is around, just turn around and don't let them see you actually doing it. You want to keep your toddler in arms or in a high chair whenever they're in the kitchen because they will try to get

into everything.

Or if you want, you can also just keep things down low that it's okay for them to go into. So like pots and pans are usually safe, but make sure there's not anything glass or any sharp objects in lower cabinets for then to them get in to.

And then also with the bathroom, the best way to baby proof a bathroom is to keep the door shut all the time. Kids can fall head first into toilets and drown.

They can turn on water in the bathtub and get burned or drown in there as well. And oftentimes there's poisonous stuff under the sink in bathrooms. So it's best if you can keep them out of the bedroom except when you're in their with them.

If you set your water temperature on your boiler to a hundred and twenty degrees, that's a temperature that you'll still get hot water for your showers and baths, but it won't get so hot like scalding hot.

And the baby, if they do put their hand in the hotwater when it's running, they'll be able to pull it out in time before getting a serious burn if it is a 120 degrees Fahrenheit or less.

You want to avoid secondhand smoke, of course, and make sure they're in a rear-facing car seat until they are two years old or until the outgrow the size limit for their carseat.

So it's actually safer for toddlers to be rear facing even if they over age too, because they do have pretty big heads and relatively weak necks. And when you hit on the brakes, if their forward facing, their head can go forward and back and cause whiplash.

But when they re facing their, head is just cushioned by the seat. When you get the breaks, they don't get that whiplash Make sure you're not leaving anything heavy or hot on tablecloths or in reach where they could pull things over.

I have seen babies that have gotten burns at this age from grabbing cups of coffee and things like that and pots off the stove and even splatter burns from things cooking on the Stove.

You want to save the poison control number in your phone if you haven't already done that because they do like to get into things at that age and they don't have any sense of safety yet and so they might accidentally ingest something that they shouldn't.

So just keep that number on hand where you can call it really quickly if you need to. If you have any guns in your home, you should remove them or put them in a safe locked away and make sure they're not loaded because children will pick up guns and point them at people and squeeze the trigger.

You just need keep it as far away from the baby as possible, ideally in place where they cannot get to the guns. And it's a good time to make a fire escape plan with the family.

So if you just talk about who's going to grab which person in the house and which animal, if have any pets, where you would meet if there was a firefight in middle of the night or if the smoke alarms went off.

And make sure you're checking your smoke detectors to see if they're working.

15-Month Checkup and Vaccines

For your 15 month checkup, so these children are typically able to sit on the table alone without falling over. Just stay close by because if they do fall off, it is still pretty high for them to fall down onto the floor.

We'll do a full head to toe exam and they will get vaccines at the 15-month visit and at 18- month visit. And those

vaccines vary based on offices. So the 12, 15 and 18 month vaccines can be divided up a lot of different ways.

It's typically either five or seven injections that they get total over those three visits. So just double check with your doctor and see what they're due for at this visit, but they should be getting shots.

And remember when you're talking to your child about the vaccines, remind them that this is something we do to keep them healthy. It's not any sort of negative consequence for them.

I've had parents say things to their kids like, you need to be quiet and sit still or else you're going to get a shot. And that's not why we give vaccines.

We give them vaccines to keep them healthy and to protect them. So if you talk to them about it in that way, in a positive way. Don't try to scare them, don't mention that it's going hurt a lot, but also don' t tell them that won't hurt at all because it will.

It'll hurt but just for a short while and it' s not going be too bad and you will get through this. They do understand everything that you' re telling them at this age even though they're not having a whole lot of words themselves typically.

You can talk to them about it in a really reassuring way and in positive way, and that can really help with the experience of getting the vaccines. Their next checkup is going to be at 18 months.

And then after that, it's every six months, so age one and a half and then two years and two and half years. So they're getting a little bit more spaced out now.

After the 18 month visit, your baby should be all cut up on routine vaccines other than things like annual flu shots and periodic COVID vaccines. As of the time of this recording, we still don't have a specific schedule set out for this age group.

Keep your eyes open for that. That should be coming up pretty soon, I hope. And just remember, if they have not yet had a visit with the dentist, that they should have one now, and it should about once or twice a year.

Some dentists will even see you four times a years. So just double check with a dentist. Make sure that their teeth are nice and not getting cavities.

Children can get cavites before they're even three years old. It's a good idea to get them those regular dental checkups. And also, if you have any family history of wearing glasses, it's a good time to go see an ophthalmologist and get a full eye exam.

So that is everything for 15 months old. Enjoy your toddler and stay tuned in two weeks for the next visit. Thank you for listening to the Baby Manual podcast.

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