Ontario's enhanced 18-month well-baby visit

Information for physicians & other health professionals

Ontario

Introduction

Healthy child development is a key indicator of health and 18 months is a pivotal age in a child's growth.

The 18-month well-baby visit is a key appointment for immunization and may be the last regular check-up before a child starts school. This is a crucial opportunity to determine whether a child is meeting important developmental milestones and to make any necessary connections among primary care practitioners, parents and community resources.

The Ontario government recognizes that physicians and other health professionals are in a unique position, through their continuing contact with patients and families, to improve the odds that children will meet their developmental potential. Following the advice of an expert panel to expand the 18-month visit, the province now funds a longer and more in-depth 18-month well-baby visit. The new OHIP fee code came into effect in October 2009.

How is the enhanced 18-month well-baby visit different?

The goal of the enhanced visit is to promote increased communication between parents and physicians or other health professionals to improve outcomes for children.

The enhanced visit allows health professionals to engage in a broader discussion with parents on topics that include their child's motor and communications skills development, as well as feeding and behavioural issues. The visit is an opportunity to monitor growth and development for early identification of risk, and for referral for necessary early intervention and treatment.

The enhanced visit allows the physician or other health professional to take the time they need, using standardized tools, to:

- assess the child's progress
- help parents understand the influence they have on their child's development
- encourage parents to take advantage of local community resources that promote healthy learning, reading and age-appropriate play, such as the Ontario Early Years Centres.

Useful websites

- www.machealth.ca
  Resources available here include the Ontario Rourke Baby Record, the Nipissing District Development Screen™ and the Early Child Development and Parenting Resource System Pathway, which lists community services.
- Ontario Rourke Baby Record: Available at www.machealth.ca , www.cps.ca , www.cfpc.ca and www.rourkebabyrecord.ca
- Nipissing District Developmental Screen™: www.ndds.ca, www.machealth.ca
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services: www.ontario.ca/child
- Ministry of Health and Long-term Care: www.ontario.ca/health
- Ministry of Health Promotion: www.ontario.ca/mhp
- Ontario Early Years Centres: www.ontario.ca/earlyyears

Reports

- *Getting It Right at 18 Months, Making It Right for a Lifetime*, Report of the Expert Panel on the 18-Month Well-Baby Visit. www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/gettingitright.aspx
- *Final Report to the Ontario College of Family Physicians for the Evidence to Support the 18-Month Well-Baby Visit*. www.ocfp.on.ca. This report includes clinical practice recommendations that have been incorporated into the enhanced visit.