

Well Child Care at 4 Months

Feeding

Your baby should still be taking breast milk or infant formula. Most babies now take about 6 ounces every 4 to 5 hours. Some doctors recommend waiting to give a baby juice until he can hold a cup. Others advise that you can start juice at the age of 4 to 6 months but should limit it to a few ounces each day.

Some babies are now ready to start cereal. A baby is ready for cereal when he is able to hold his head up enough to eat from a spoon. Cereal should not be given from a bottle or infant feeder. When you start cereal, start with rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula. You may want to start with a thin mix of cereal and then thicken it gradually. Pureed fruits and vegetables can also be started between 4 and 6 months. Start a new food or juice no more often than every 5 days to make sure your baby is not allergic to the new food.

Never leave the baby in bed with a bottle because it can lead to tooth decay. Don't give your baby a bottle just to quiet him when he really isn't hungry. Babies who spend too much time with a bottle in their mouth have more ear infections. They also start to use the bottle as a security object, which makes weaning more difficult.

Development

Babies are starting to roll over from stomach to back. Your baby's voice may become louder. He may squeal when happy or cry when he wants food or to be held. In both cases, gentle, soothing voices are the best way to calm your baby. Babies at this age enjoy toys that make noise when shaken. It is normal for babies to cry. At this age you can't spoil a baby. Meeting your baby's needs quickly is still a good idea.

Sleep

Many babies are sleeping through the night by 4 months of age and will also nap 4 to 6 hours during the daytime. If your baby's sleeping patterns are different than this you may want to ask your doctor for ideas about ways to keep your baby alert and awake during the day and sound asleep at night. Remember to place your baby in bed on her back.

Teething

Your baby may begin teething. While getting teeth, your baby will drool a lot and chew on almost anything. A teething ring is very useful.

Safety Tips

Avoid Suffocation and Choking

- Remove hanging mobiles or toys before the baby can reach them.
- Keep cords, ropes, or strings away from your baby, especially near the crib. Ropes and strings around the baby's neck can choke him.

- Keep plastic bags and balloons out of reach.
- Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.

Avoid Fires and Burns

Never eat, drink, or carry anything hot near the baby or while you are holding the baby. Turn down your water heater to 120°F (50°C).

Check your smoke detectors to make sure they work.

Check formula temperature carefully. Formula should be warm or cool to the touch. Don't smoke in the house or near the baby.

Wear your safety belt.

- Use an approved infant car seat correctly in the back seat.

Never leave your baby alone in a car.

Avoid Falls

- Never leave the baby alone on a high place.
- Keep crib and playpen sides up.
- Do not put your baby in a walker.

Immunizations

At the 4-month visit, your baby should have a:

- DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) shot
- Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B) shot
- polio shot
- pneumococcal (PCV7) shot.

Some babies also receive a hepatitis B shot at this age.

Your baby may run a fever and be irritable for about 1 day after the shots. Your baby may also have some soreness, redness, and swelling where the shots were given. Acetaminophen drops (1/2 dropperful, or 0.4 ml, every 4 to 6 hours) may help to prevent the fever and irritability. For swelling or soreness, put a wet, warm washcloth on the area of the shots as often and as long as needed for comfort.

Call your child's physician if:

- Your child has a rash or any other than reaction besides fever and mild irritability.
- Your child has a fever that lasts more than 36 hours.

Next Visit : Your baby's next routine visit should be at the age of 6 months. At this time your child will

get the next set of immunizations.

Normal Development: 4 Months

Here's what you might notice your baby doing between the ages of 4 months and 6 months of age.

Daily Activities

Is active, playful, and gregarious.

- Reaches and grasps some objects.

Shakes rattle when placed in hand.

Carefully studies objects placed in hand.

- Puts everything into mouth.
 - Plays contentedly with fingers and hands.
 - Usually sleeps through the night.
 - Acknowledges bottle gleefully.
 - Laughs and giggles while playing and socializing.
 - Basks in attention.
 - Just begins to realize objects exist even when out of sight.

Hearing

- Turns head purposefully in response to human voice.
- Smiles and coos when talked to.

Motor Skills

- Rolls from side to side.
- Holds up chest when lying on tummy.
- Supports head when held in sitting position.
- Sits with support for longer periods.
- Enjoys using the legs in kicking motions.

Vision

- Focuses clearly.
- Fascinated with mirror image.

Each child is unique. It is therefore difficult to describe exactly what should be expected at each stage of a child's development. While certain behaviors and

physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal. These guidelines are offered as a way of showing a general progression through the developmental stages rather than as fixed requirements for normal development at specific ages. It is perfectly natural for a child to attain some milestones earlier and other milestones later than the general trend. Keep this in mind as you review these milestones.

If you have any concerns related to your child's own pattern of development, check with your family physician.