

The logo for Kids Plus Pediatrics features the letters 'k', 'i', 'd', 's', and a plus sign, each inside a colored square: 'k' in green, 'i' in red, 'd' in purple, 's' in yellow, and '+' in blue. Below this, the word 'pediatrics' is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font.

k i d s +
pediatrics
4-Month Handout

4-MONTH DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

1. Does your baby lift and turn her head when lying on her belly?
2. Is your baby becoming more vocal (cooing, squealing)?
3. Does your baby respond to sound, and watch your face briefly?
4. Does your baby smile in response to you?
5. Will your baby hold an object in his hand and bring it to his mouth?
6. Is your baby trying to roll over?
7. Is your baby bearing weight?

FEEDING

Continue breast and/or iron-fortified formula feeding as your baby's main source of nutrition. (And remember that babies should never go to bed with a bottle!) At this age, most babies are not ready for other foods, but you can slowly start cereals over the next two months. As babies learn to sit up with support and hold their heads steady (5-6 months), this will make it easier to feed your baby solid foods such as cereal. In the beginning, don't expect your baby to actually swallow much cereal. She'll take bites, but her tongue movements will often push the food out of her mouth. This is normal, and it takes a while for a baby to learn to keep the food in her mouth.

Be relaxed about the first few weeks of introducing solids. In the first few weeks, it's not important how much cereal your baby eats. Your baby needs time to adjust to the new tastes, textures, and way of eating that solid foods require. Talk, sing, make faces, and touch your baby during meals. Meals should be fun times for you and your baby! Expect every meal to result in a mess. There will be food on you, the baby, and the floor. When your baby begins to hold a cup, grab the spoon, and practice with finger foods, the mess will be worse.

Infant cereal should be the first solid food you feed your baby. Begin with an iron-fortified single grain cereal such as rice, oatmeal, wheat, or barley. Give just one teaspoon of cereal a day at first. The cereal should be mixed with enough breast milk, formula, or water to make it look like creamed soup. Gradually increase the amount of cereal up to two tablespoons twice a day, according to your baby's appetite. While younger babies prefer thin cereal, older babies may like cereal that is thicker and holds its shape on a spoon.

You should wait at least 1 week between introducing new foods to be sure there are no allergies.

It's important for your baby to learn about spoons and cups. Feed your baby cereal using a spoon, so he can see and feel the textures of foods and become familiar with eating from a spoon. With each month, your baby will become more and more independent. As this happens over the next few months, babies try to feed themselves with a spoon and drink by themselves with a cup. Encourage your baby to develop these skills.

End a meal if your child gets really fussy or just wants to play with the food. This probably means he's had enough to eat. Don't let a big battle start because your child doesn't want to eat, or because you don't want to waste food.

Fruits and vegetables are usually started sometime around 6 months of age.

For more information on starting with cereals and solid foods, see the Nutrition Notes page on our web site.

DEVELOPMENT

Many babies develop stranger awareness around 6 months of age.

Thumb sucking at this age is normal, and will not damage or affect their teeth.

Slobbering, drooling, and putting hands and objects in their mouth are also normal. These don't necessarily indicate teething.

Encourage play in the playpen. Playpens are safe places to leave a baby alone when you need a few minutes for yourself. Also encourage your baby to interact and play with parents and siblings.

SLEEP

Babies should still be sleeping on their backs at this age. However, once they learn to roll over on their own, they can sleep in whatever position they prefer, and you do not have to keep flipping them back over onto their backs. Continue providing a safe sleep environment with no bumpers, toys, stuffed animals, pillows or blankets.

You may be able to discontinue night time feedings. By 4 months of age, babies should be able to sleep for a 7-8 hour stretch without eating. Give the last feeding around 10 or 11pm. If your child cries during the night, comforting her with a back rub and some soothing words instead of with a feeding.

All children have four or five partial awakenings each night. Make middle-of-the-night contacts brief and boring. Comfort your child as little as possible between 10pm and 6 am. They need to learn how to go back to sleep on their own. If your baby cries for more than five minutes, visit her, but don't turn on the light, play with her, or take her out of the crib. Comfort your baby with soothing words and stay for

less than one minute. The brief contact usually isn't enough to encourage your baby to keep waking you up every night. If the crying continues, you can check your baby every 20 minutes, but do not take her out of the crib or stay in the room until she goes to sleep -- unless, of course, she's sick or afraid.

COLIC & CRYING

By this age, colic is usually a thing of the past. If your baby continues to be persistently fussy, let one of our providers know. Babies at this age have short attention spans and may cry if they are bored and need a change of scenery, as well as when they are hungry, tired, etc. As your baby grows you will get to know what his favorite soothing methods are, but remember you can't stop all crying! It's okay to use the restroom or make dinner and encourage your baby to start to learn to watch you from a little bit of distance.

HOT WATER

To minimize the risk of scalding, we recommend your hot water heater be set no higher than 120°F.

By 3 to 5 months, babies will wave their fists and grab things. NEVER carry your baby and hot liquids or hot foods at the same time. You can't handle both safely, and your baby could get burned.

If your baby does get a burn, immediately put the burned area in cold water. Keep the burned area in cold water until she stops crying, then cover the burn loosely with a bandage or clean cloth and call us right away.

SMOKE & CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Houses should have at least one smoke detector on each level. Many safety experts recommend one in each bedroom, as well as a carbon monoxide (CO) detector for the house. Be sure to check the batteries at least twice a year to be sure they are still functioning properly. Your family should have an escape plan in case of fire, including multiple exit sites, and a safe place to meet outside so you can be sure everyone is out safely.

We also caution against passive smoke exposure of any kind. Our recommendation for the health of your baby is no smoking. The more smoke your child is exposed to, the higher her chance of developing more colds, lung infections, ear infections, allergies, asthma problems, and cancer. The best thing for your child's health is for you not to smoke at all. Even if you don't smoke near your child, chemicals from smoking stay with you on your clothes and on your body. If you must smoke, smoke outside the house, never inside or in the car. Even if your child is in another room or not in the car at the moment, she will still be exposed to lingering, harmful chemicals later.

CAR SAFETY

Make certain that your baby’s car seat is installed correctly. Read and follow the instructions that come with the car seat and the car’s owner’s manual. Use the car seat EVERY time your child is in a car.

All babies should be restrained in a rear-facing car seat, in the rear seat of the car. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing safety seat until age 2, or until they reach the highest weight and height allowed by their car seat’s manufacturer. For more information, see Dr. Hartung’s Doctor’s Note on Car Seat Safety: <http://bit.ly/KPCarSeat>

Be sure to set a good example for your children – parents should always wear seat belts.

Never leave your child alone in a car.

INJURY PREVENTION

Now that your baby can put his hands in his mouth, be careful about small objects (safety pins, coins, etc.). A good rule of thumb is that if an object is small enough to fit through the center tube of a toilet paper roll, it’s a choking hazard.

Check toys periodically. Again, be careful about small objects such as buttons, plastic eyes on dolls, etc. that can be pulled off and put into your baby’s mouth.

Never leave an infant unattended on a bed or table. Even though your baby may not be rolling yet, she will be soon, and you don’t want her first experience with rolling to be a dangerous one.

WALK-IN HOURS

Your baby is now eligible for no-appointment necessary Walk-In Hours, all offices:

Weekday Mornings, 8:15 to 9:30am at Pleasant Hills and Squirrel Hill/Greenfield

Weekday Evenings, 6:30pm to 8:00pm

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday at Pleasant Hills

Monday and Thursday at Squirrel Hill/Greenfield

All Day, Every Week Day at Cranberry/Seven Fields

These hours are to address routine health problems such as sore throat, cold symptoms, fever, rash, and ear pain. They are not designed to evaluate chronic problems. If your child is older than 4 months and has had symptoms fewer than 3 days, you can be seen on a first-come, first-served basis.

You can read more about Walk-In Hours on our Kids Plus web site, www.kidspluspgh.com.

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS

If you feel you need additional advice between regular check-ups, you can post questions to our Facebook page or telephone us during office hours. Facebook, where we answer questions sometimes as quickly as in a few minutes, is a great place to ask about general, non-pressing issues. For more detailed and pressing health questions, it's best to call. Either way, we're always happy to provide counseling and guidance. (It's both our job and our pleasure!)

When calling after office hours, your call will be answered by an answering machine. If you have a concern that can't wait for regular office hours, please leave your name, your child's name (with spelling), and your phone number, and we'll return your call usually within an hour or so.

If you have an emergency that requires an ambulance or paramedics, call 911 *first*. If you have an emergency that can't wait for a call back and need to have the doctor urgently paged (such as seizures, respiratory illness with labored breathing, suspected dehydration, or similar conditions), the recorded message will give you the answering service's phone number, and they can reach the doctor on call for the emergency.

AND REMEMBER...

We have a wonderful, 24/7/365 resource for parents at our **Kids Plus Facebook Page**. Like us on Facebook, and follow along with our great Kids Plus Social Media Community!

We look forward to seeing you at your 6-Month Well Visit!

