



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

Breastmilk or formula remains the primary source of nutrition at this age. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, with the addition of complementary foods at that time.

There is no rush to start solid food, so we recommend you wait for signs that your baby is ready. Signs includes your baby holding up his head well, sitting with some support, watching you eat, and even grabbing at your food while you are eating.

Much of how we start feeding babies comes from our families and cultures. There are many ways to feed a baby, and not much research on most of it! Some families choose “baby-led weaning”- a form of feeding where babies take the lead and are offered small bits of what the family is eating. Others choose to offer pureed foods at first. Fruits and vegetables are good first foods, because they’re usually well-tolerated by babies. Whatever you choose, we recommend you follow these recommendations:

Meals should be fun and enjoyable for baby.

Don’t worry about how much he or she swallows. The most important thing at first is the experience. Babies can eat as much as they want at each sitting. It’s important that they learn to keep eating when they’re hungry, and stop when they’re full.

Mess is best!

Being messy with food is developmentally healthy for babies. Let her play with food, get her hands messy, grab the spoon, etc!

Avoid choking hazards.

This includes food with skins (hot dogs, grapes), whole nuts, hard vegetables such as raw carrots, etc.

Avoid honey until 1 year due to the risk of botulism.

Current research supports offering peanut products closer to 4-6 months. Talk with your provider about these recommendations. Since peanut butter is sticky and can be hard to manage, options include mixing it in to baby cereal, letting her lick it off your finger, or using commercial peanut power made for babies.

Feeding baby once a day at first is fine, and it can be any time of day.

Your provider can discuss further recommendations and questions during your visit.

For more information on starting with cereals and solid foods, see the Doctor's Notes page on our web site, which includes a whole section on Food & Nutrition.

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.

Try and 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, comfort her with a back rub and some soothing words instead of with a feeding.

Make middle-of-the-night contacts brief and boring. Comfort your child as little as possible between

10pm and 6 am. All children have four or five partial awakenings each night. 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 your child is standing in the crib, don't try to make her lie down; she can do that on her own. 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

Crying may increase during the first six to eight weeks. Sometimes it may be a sign of hunger or the need to change a diaper, but often there may be no reason for the crying. As you get to know your baby better, you will become more comfortable knowing when to pick up and console the baby, and when to feel confident that the crying will stop in a few minutes if left alone. Remember: fussing is usually related to the baby's temperament, not to bad parenting!

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 it there 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,

and remove your coat or jacket when you come back in. Never smoke 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 on car seat regulations and recommendations, see the Doctor's Note on our web site: <http://bit.ly/KPPCarSeatInfant>

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

We now offer no-appointment necessary Walk-In Hours, mornings and evenings, at both offices:

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

Weekday Evenings, 6:00pm 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

Weekend Hours at all three offices.

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 you Walk In, you'll 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. (You can also check the Doctor's Notes library on our web site, which features well over one hundred different topics covered by our Kids Plus Providers.) 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! You'll also find us on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, and Pinterest.

You can access the **Kids Plus Patient Portal** 24/7/365 on your computer, tablet, or smart phone. No matter where you are, you can always see and print many of your child's medical records, including growth charts, immunization records, prescriptions, lab results, and visit notes. It's like having a Kids Plus virtual office right at your fingertips.

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

