

## 4 Month Check-up

**Normal Development:** Your baby may...

### *Social-Emotional*

- Smile and laugh
- Respond to affection and changes in environment
- Develop self-soothing skills

### *Motor*

- Push chest up to elbows
- Begin to roll from front to back
- Open and close hands
- Bring objects to mouth

### *Communication/Language*

- Babble more expressively and spontaneously
- Indicate pleasure and displeasure

### *Cognitive*

- Focus on objects and no longer look cross-eyed
- Enjoy looking around

## **Diet**

- Breast milk or formula is still your baby's main source of nutrition. Feedings may become less frequent with 6-10 feeds in a day. Your baby should not drink juice. Your baby may start to drink water once solids are started.
- At this age, your baby will indicate a desire for food by opening mouth and leaning forward, and will indicate being full or not wanting food by leaning back and turning away.
- Between 4 and 6 months of age, your baby will be ready to begin eating solid foods. Signs that your baby is ready to eat solids:
  - Your baby's tongue thrust reflex (pushing food out of the mouth) is disappearing
  - Your baby can sit in a high chair or infant seat with good head control
  - Your baby can raise tongue to move pureed food to the back of the mouth
  - Your baby can open mouth in anticipation when a spoon approaches
- You may start with any simple basic food (rice cereal, vegetables, fruit, or meats) as long as it is pureed to liquid consistency. Start out with 2 teaspoons once a day and gradually increase until taking a total of 1/3 cup to 1/2 cup daily.
- Unless you have a significant family history of severe food allergies, it is okay to feed your child some of the more allergenic foods such as wheat, egg, milk products, nut butters, and seafood, once solids are started. Recent studies indicate that early exposure (after 4 months old) may actually decrease risk of developing food allergies.
- See 'Starting Solids' handout.
- Do not give your baby honey or cow's milk until after 1 year of age.
- Vitamin D: Breastfed babies and formula fed babies who take less than 32 ounces per day should receive vitamin D, 400 units/day, given in the form of an over-the-counter supplement (such as D-Vi-Sol or Carlson Baby's Super Daily D3). This should continue until baby is 1 year old.
- Iron: Full-term healthy infants usually do not need iron supplementation for the first 4 months of life. After 4 months of life, exclusively breastfed infants need to be supplemented with iron until iron-rich complementary foods (iron-fortified cereals, meat, shellfish, legumes, iron-rich fruits and vegetables) are started.

## **Sleep**

- Babies at this age sleep on average between 12-13 hours per day, and may now begin to give you longer stretches of sleep overnight.
- Establishing a daily routine for feedings, naps, and bedtime is a good idea to help establish longer sleeping stretches at night.
- In order to have longer periods of uninterrupted sleep, your baby must learn how to self-soothe. Try to place your baby in the crib when drowsy, but awake to help baby learn to put him/herself to sleep. This may take some time for you and your baby to master. You may try patting baby down to sleep in the crib instead of holding and rocking down to sleep.
- You can wait a few minutes before responding when your baby starts fussing in the middle of the night. Your baby may have the chance to put him/herself back to sleep alone. If your baby continues to cry, check in to see if hungry, wet, or soiled, but try to keep the lights low with minimal stimulation.
- Always put baby on the back to sleep to avoid SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Make sure that your baby's sleep area is a firm surface free of fluffy pillows and loose blankets that may cover baby's airway during sleep. If your baby has been sleeping in a bassinet, it may be time to transition to a crib.

## **Hygiene**

- The first tooth usually appears sometime between 5-7 months. Drooling, irritability, and constant chewing on fingers or other objects are signs that teething is in progress. Teething rings or biscuits may provide some comfort for sore gums. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be given if sleep is disturbed or if your baby is very irritable or uncomfortable. Do not use topical gum medications.
- Begin early dental care with the eruption of the first tooth. Use a soft toothbrush with a smear of fluoridated toothpaste (the size of a grain of rice) to brush teeth twice a day.
- Your baby will visit the dentist for the first time 6 months from 1st tooth eruption.

## **Stimulation**

- Babies often put their hands in their mouth for chewing and sucking. This technique helps calm them, and they will use this method until they are able to use other self-calming strategies. Some parents think it means that their baby is still hungry, but it does not.
- Spend time talking, singing, and reading with your baby. Good games to play are "This Little Piggy," "Pat-a-Cake," and "Peek-A-Boo."
- Good toys at this age include rattles and squeeze toys that make noises. Avoid toys that easily pull apart, small toys, or plastic bags as all of these things can be choking hazards.
- Continue tummy time with your baby. Allow baby to lie on the stomach while awake and supervised. This will help baby develop neck and upper body muscles and prevent flattening of the back of the head called positional plagiocephaly.

## **Safety**

- Car Safety: In the car, make sure everyone wears a safety belt. Your child's car seat should continue to be rear-facing in the back seat until your child is 2 years old or has reached the maximum weight or height requirements specified by the manufacturer of the car seat.
- Crib Safety: Bars of the crib should be less than 2 3/8 inches (about the width of a playing card) apart. The space between the mattress and the crib frame should be less than two fingers wide. Leave loose blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals outside of the crib.
- Be Attentive: Never leave your baby unattended while awake. Never leave your baby on a surface where he/she can roll off. Always keep one hand on your baby at the changing table. Never leave your baby alone even for a second in a tub of water.
- Choking Hazards: Keep small objects away from your baby to avoid choking.
- Water Temperature: Set home water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Always test bath water before placing baby inside. Avoid holding your baby when cooking, drinking hot liquids or smoking.

- Sun Exposure: Avoid direct sunlight. Use protective clothing and hats to protect baby's skin.
- Smoke Alarms: Install smoke alarms on every floor and change the batteries every 6 months

**Health Maintenance**

- Immunizations: Vaccinating your child is one of the most important things you can do to keep your child healthy.
  - Vaccines recommended at today's visit: Pentacel (DTap #2, Hib #2, IPV #2), PCV #2, Rotavirus #2
- Your next visit will be when baby is 6 months old. We look forward to seeing you then!
- Reasons to call us:
  - Fever alone is no longer an emergency. Call us right away if your infant has a fever (rectal temperature 100.4 and above) plus any of the concerning symptoms below. If your baby has a fever, but is otherwise well, you may make an appointment to see us in the office within 24 hours. For Tylenol dosing see our website at [www.vapg.com](http://www.vapg.com).
  - If your infant is having any feeding difficulties and making less than 6 wet diapers a day.
  - If your infant appears to have difficulty breathing shown by grunting, retractions (sucking in of the skin above the collarbone, between ribs, and below ribs), or flaring of nostrils with each breath.
  - If your infant is lethargic, difficult to arouse, and not responsive to auditory or tactile stimuli.
  - If you have any questions or concerns about your infant. We are always here to help.

Care Plan:

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For more information see our website at [www.vapg.com](http://www.vapg.com) and the Healthy Children website from the American Academy of Pediatrics [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)