

Four-Month Visit

Congratulations, your baby is 4 months old and becoming more interactive and playful every day! The following are some tips to help you along.

Feeding and Nutrition

- At this age, your baby may feed less frequently (usually 4-7 times a day) but in larger amounts.
- A rule of thumb is that each day babies take about 2 ½ ounces of formula per pound of their weight.
- Your baby will regulate his intake day to day to meet his own needs. Instead of going by fixed amounts, let your baby tell you when he has had enough (he may turn his head away or spit out the nipple).
- Only give your baby breast milk or formula. Babies this age don't need plain water or juice.
- Don't give your baby honey until after age 1.
- Mix formula with faucet water (even if your baby doesn't have teeth yet) since it has fluoride to keep teeth growing beneath the gums healthy.
- Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle or prop a bottle in his mouth.
- If your baby is breastfed only or taking less than 32 oz of formula/day, he should continue taking a Vitamin D supplement (400 IU/day).
- Spitting up is common and is not dangerous if your baby is acting well and gaining weight. This usually gets better around 6-9 months.

Starting Solids

- Breast milk or formula will continue to be a major source of your child's nutrition throughout the first 12 months.
- Most babies start solids between 4 to 6 months of age. What are signs of readiness to begin? Your baby should be able to sit on her own, grab for things to put in her mouth, and close her mouth around a spoon. She will also show interest when you are eating.
- Start once a day with infant cereal (rice, barley or oatmeal) fortified with iron. Mix 1 tablespoon of cereal with 4-5 tablespoons of breast milk or formula. To begin, make the mixture the consistency of soup and gradually prepare it thicker.
- Always spoon-feed cereal. **Don't put cereal in a bottle.**
- Babies generally have a strong tongue thrust reflex so don't be surprised if a lot of food ends up on the floor. It may take a few feeds before your baby figures out what to do.
- Once your baby has mastered cereal, try fruits or vegetables. Give one new food at a time and wait 2-3 days before starting another in order to watch for any signs of allergic reaction such as rash, vomiting or diarrhea. Over the next few months, gradually increase to 2-3 solid meals a day.



Safety Tips

1. Always keep one hand on your baby. Do not leave him alone on the bed, couch or changing table. Never leave your baby alone in the bathtub.
2. Don't put your baby in an infant walker at any age.
3. Your baby's car seat should remain in the back seat facing the rear window.
4. Minimize the risk of burn accidents to your baby: do not smoke, drink hot liquids or cook while holding your baby.
5. Turn your hot water heater down to 120° or lower to avoid burns.
6. Now is a good time to childproof your home. Keep medicines, cleaning supplies, small or sharp objects, plastic bags, balloons, sockets and cords out of your baby's reach. Anything that fits inside a toilet paper roll is a choking hazard.
7. Make sure that your smoke detectors are working and properly installed. Change batteries at least once a year.
8. Avoiding direct sun exposure (especially 10am-4pm when UV rays are strongest) is best. If not possible, sunscreen (preferably unscented and chemical-free) is ok for babies but test it first on a small patch of skin.

Pooping

- As you introduce solid foods, poops may change in color, consistency and frequency. It is normal for your baby to strain before pooping successfully as long as the poops are soft.

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Four-Month Visit continued...

Sleeping

- At this age, babies may sleep 8-12 hours at night and take 2-3 naps for an average of 15 hours of total sleep/day.
- Now is a good time to start a bedtime routine if you haven't already – this helps signal to your baby that it is time to go to sleep. You may want to dim the lights, read a book or sing to your baby.
- Place your baby in her crib when she becomes sleepy but is still awake so she learns to self-soothe and fall asleep without your help.
- If your baby wakes up fussing at night, try waiting a few minutes before responding to see if she can soothe herself back to sleep. If she keeps crying, check on her but don't turn on the light, play with her, or pick her up. Instead, gently pat her and/or say "shhh" to let her know you are there.
- Continue to place your baby on her back to sleep to decrease the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. If your baby is already rolling over, she may not stay on her back – this is ok.
- Don't put loose, soft bedding, pillows, wedges, or stuffed animals in the crib. Lower the crib mattress before your baby starts to sit up.

Development

- Babies vary greatly in development. At this age, many babies will:
 - 1) Start to engage you in "conversation". Your baby may babble and pause to give you a chance to respond.
 - 2) Begin to roll over and reach for objects.
 - 3) Sit when propped up (not by herself) and have better head and neck control.
- Try these tips to help with development:
 - 1) Talk and sing out loud to your baby. Repeat the sounds your baby makes back to her. Listen to music and dance with her. Play pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.
 - 2) Look at books with hard cardboard pages and bright pictures together. It is very normal for your baby to put books in her mouth.
 - 3) Continue 'tummy time' on a firm surface several times a day.
 - 4) Give your baby soft and brightly colored toys (rattles, balls and squeak toys) that make noise or move when touched.
 - 5) Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns about your baby's development.



Teething/Oral Care

Teething usually starts between 4-7 months but timing is variable. It may cause mild fussiness, crying, low-grade fever (not >101°F) and drooling. To help, gently massage your baby's gums or let him chew on a wet towel. Before teeth come in, wipe your baby's gums with a moist cloth after feedings (especially before bed). Once teeth appear, brush them twice a day using water on a soft baby toothbrush. To prevent tooth decay, never let your baby fall asleep with a bottle.

Immunizations (*vaccine schedule may vary slightly by practice)



Today: 3 shots and 1 oral	Next Visit (at 6 months-old):
-DtaP / Polio / HIB (combined)	-DtaP / Polio / HIB (combined)
-Pneumococcal	-Pneumococcal
-Rotavirus (oral)	-Rotavirus (oral)
-Hepatitis B (variable)	-Hepatitis B (variable)

Websites

- AAP Healthy Children | <http://www.healthychildren.org> (Health topics and news updates from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- AAP Immunization Info | <http://www.aap.org/immunization> (Research-based information about childhood vaccines)

Important Numbers

- Poison Control
1-800-222-1222
- Parental Stress Line
1-800-632-8188
- Domestic Violence Help Line
1-617-724-0054 (HAVEN)
- Smoking Quit Line (free):
1-800-TRY TO STOP
- Your doctor's office

Your child's next routine visit is recommended at 6 months-old.