



AGE FOUR MONTHS TO SEVEN MONTHS

WHAT A PERSONALITY!

FINALLY, by your baby's fourth month birthday, you will probably have a daily routine for his feeding, napping, bathing and going to sleep at night. This routine will provide a predictability that will help you to budget your time and activities.

This is the period when your baby will learn to coordinate his emerging perceptive abilities and his increasing motor abilities. You are going to experience grasping, rolling, sitting and perhaps even crawling during this period. Your baby will be better able to communicate his emotions and desires now, and he will voice them frequently. Stranger anxiety may begin towards the end of this period, although prior to this he will go through a period of delightful "show-offmanship" during which he will smile and play with everyone he meets.

During these months you will also discover that there is no formula for raising an ideal child. You will discover your child's uniqueness, and what parenting techniques work for him and you.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE & GROWTH

During this period your baby will continue to gain approximately 1 pound per month. But remember the specific numbers are not important, what is important is whether your child follows his growth curves or not. We will continue to plot these at each of your baby's well visits.

MOVEMENT

As your baby continues to have tummy time, you can encourage him to raise his head and chest when lying prone. Ensure that his arms are under his body so that he can push up. Once he has control of his head and trunk, he will probably begin to roll over (usually front to back first). By around 6-7 months he will usually begin to sit unsupported, and will have attained a new vantage point for exploring the world.

FEEDING

At 4 months your baby's diet will still consist of breast milk or formula. Between 4-6 months you can begin adding solid foods. Solids can be started at whatever mealtime is best for you and your baby. If he refuses solids at first attempt, don't force the issue. It is important that you both enjoy his meal time than for him to start these foods at a specific time.

ALWAYS USE A SPOON TO FEED YOUR BABY SOLIDS. This is an important development milestone, and also helps prevent overfeeding. Remember, most of the first few solid food feedings are sure to end up everywhere else except in your baby's mouth. This is normal (it also makes for GREAT PHOTOS!), but remember to increase the amount of food very gradually until your baby gets the idea of swallowing solids. The first food is usually rice cereal. Once your baby has been taking this well for a few weeks, I usually suggest starting on vegetables. Introduce one new food at a time, and stay on it for about 3 or 4 days before introducing the next. I introduce veggies first before fruits, so that your baby gets used to the blander taste of vegetables and doesn't only like sweet tasting foods (like I do!).

If you prepare your own baby foods, remember to prepare them for your baby's taste and not your own. Baby's don't need added salt, sugar or spices. Remember also, as his diet increases, his stools will change. They will be significantly more malodorous (stinky), they can be the colour of the rainbow, they may be firmer and less frequent, and you may see pieces of undigested foods. This is all normal.



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SLEEPING

By four months, most babies have given up at least one of their night time feeds. Some babies may also be “sleeping through the night”. It is important to have a consistent bedtime routine, even at this young age. Experiment with what works best for your baby - a warm bath, a gentle massage, a story or lullaby, soft music, breastfeeding, etc. Try to settle your baby in his crib while he is still awake, so that he learns to fall asleep on his own. Often by 6 months, babies sleep for longer periods in their own room where they are not disturbed by your noises or your spouse’s snoring. As well you may sleep better, not listening for every little rustle or sigh that your baby makes.

TEETHING

As stated, the rule of thumb is “the first tooth by six months, and a tooth per month thereafter”. Usually the two bottom teeth are first. Teething does NOT cause a fever above 100 degrees F. If your baby has a fever over 101 degrees, then that is not going to be related to teething. You should NEVER let your baby fall asleep with a bottle as this will lead to problems, such as dental cavities. As well, clean those new teeth with a soft cloth. We will also be giving you fluoride drops to start for your babies teeth development starting at 6 months. I give one drop a day Monday through Friday and don’t worry about the weekends. Too much fluoride can stain the teeth.

FEVER

For management of fever over 4 months of age, please refer to our handout that was given at your 2 month check up - “Help! My child has a fever”. This will help you learn what to do for a fever, and when you need to call.

By 4 months, all objects will go to your baby’s mouth (your baby uses his lips, tongue etc to explore new objects). This means there will be a lot of drool as well, so have the bibs ready. It does not necessarily mean that teeth are right around the corner, as some babies will droop, and mouth everything for several months before the first tooth appears.

By six months of age your baby will also usually be able to transfer an object from one hand to the other. He will probably still be using a palmer grasp rather than a pincer grasp (which develops around 9 months of age).

VISION

Watch your baby closely as he works on developing his new motor skills. You will see intense concentration and it will be obvious that this is playing a key role in his early motor and cognitive development. During this period full colour vision develops and his distant vision will continue to mature. Try to find new and interesting objects to visually stimulate your baby.

LANGUAGE

By 4 months of age your baby not only recognizes the tone and way that you talk, but also some of the individual sounds that you make. He will begin to babble, and you will be able to hear him raise and lower his voice. Continue to encourage this type of interaction.

By 6-7 months your baby may start imitating sounds of speech. Start introducing him to simple syllables and words like ‘baby’, ‘cat’, ‘dog’, ‘mama’, and ‘dada’, etc. Although it might be a year before you can interpret his babbling, your baby can understand many of these words well before his first birthday.



APPROPRIATE TOYS

Suggested toys would include an unbreakable mirror attached to the inside of the crib or playpen; soft balls, textured toys that make sounds; toys that have finger holds; musical toys; see-through rattles that show the pieces making the noise; baby books with board, cloth or vinyl pages.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

One of the exciting things that your baby will discover during this period is cause and effect. Usually he will happen upon this by accident. He may notice that while shaking his rattle, he hears a sound. Once he discovers that he can cause these interesting reactions, he will continue to experiment with other ways to make things happen.

One great game that will happen because of this is the "drop the spoon game". Your baby will repeatedly drop an object, simply to see if it will reappear. By doing so he is learning about object permanence. Initially your baby believed that if he couldn't see an object, it ceased to exist. But during this period, he will realize that yes you are the same mommy and daddy; that his teddy bear on the floor is the same one that he played with; that the block under the cup is still there when the cup is raised. In other words he recognizes that objects have permanence. Because of this he may start to play the game of peek-a-boo by the end of this period.