



guide to

# watching your baby grow, month by month

Watching your baby grow and develop is like watching a flower bloom: it all seems to happen quite fast and each stage has its own fascination.

Our month by month guide will show you some of the things to look out for but remember, all babies have their own timetable for development so don't be too concerned if your baby differs from those that are 'typical'.

#### any questions?

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# one month

## movement

At one month your baby may be able to lift her head briefly while lying on her stomach. However, babies' movements are still dominated by the primary reflexes so when placed on her back her head will roll to one side with the limbs on that side extended whilst on the other side they are flexed. When placed on her front she will turn her head to one side and pull her knees under the abdomen holding her arms close to her body, with her hands curled into fists. If you hold your baby and stand her on a hard surface she will press down and make a forward walking movement.

## vision

Even at this early age your baby will be interested in things around her and she may be able to focus on your face whilst feeding. If you hold your baby upright or in a half-reclining position when you are talking to her or showing her something, this will help to keep her interest. Objects with bold patterns and shapes will attract very young eyes so by placing these where your baby can see them will help develop visual patterns. She may be able to follow an object moving in an arc about 6-10 cm away from her face.

## hearing and noises

Your baby may be able to respond to the sound of a small bell being rung by moving her eyes and head towards the source of the sound. She may be able to turn her head towards you when you speak to her. A young baby will quickly learn to sleep through everyday noises; it's sudden loud noises that may wake her but reassurance and a cuddle should soon settle her down again. Don't tiptoe around or whisper while your baby is asleep, this should not disturb her and may find it hard to go to sleep when she gets older if she is not used to noise.

## smell

Babies can recognise their mother's smell from the earliest days and your baby will be able to distinguish between the smell of your breast milk and that of another mother. She can also tell the difference between the smell of formula or cows' milk and your milk.

## minor blemishes

Occasionally babies may be born with some minor skin blemishes but these are usually harmless and require no treatment; they disappear on their own as the skin matures.

Milia are tiny white spots on the face caused by blocked oil glands and these should fade after a few days.

Urticaria or nettle rash has a raised white centre surrounded by an inflamed red area, which quite commonly occur during the first weeks; this usually clears up after the first month.

Stork marks or bites are red marks occurring around the back of the neck, on the eyelids or across the bridge of the nose and usually disappear during the first few months.

Strawberry marks are raised red marks that sometimes appear in the days after birth and they may grow rapidly during the first few weeks. They usually disappear after about six months but may take up to 18 months to go. Treatment may be required later if they have not disappeared.

## infections

White patches on the tongue and inside of the mouth of your baby are an indication that your baby has thrush, which is easily treated. Thrush is a fungal infection that can be caught from unsterilised feeding equipment or from the mother if she was suffering from vaginal thrush at the time of the birth. Oral thrush appears in the mouth and around the cheeks and is treated with anti-fungal drops. Thrush can also appear on the baby's bottom as a red rash and needs to be treated with antibiotic cream. Both can be obtained from your doctor.

## out and about

Babies need fresh-air, so if you have a garden or secure outside area and the weather is warm enough, let her sleep outside in the pram making sure she is well covered and away from draughts. When it is hot, make sure that the pram is in the shade and use a canopy rather than a pram hood to let the air circulate. You should also use a fine mesh pram net to protect your baby from insects and cats. If you don't have anywhere outside, put her in her pram or cot near an open window, so the fresh air can circulate into the room. Babies need activities to stimulate them so take her on an outing in her baby sling or carrier; she will enjoy being close to you and will be able to see the world from a different viewpoint.

## two months

### development

At two months, your baby is developing quickly and may be able to smile and make cooing noises and throaty gurgles. He will enjoy practising these vocal exercises and each new noise is helping him discover which combination of throat, tongue and mouth actions make which sounds. As your baby masters each new sound, you will begin to notice that he uses them to communicate vocally with you.

### learning control

Your baby is gradually gaining control of his body and may be able to lift his head when lying on his stomach, keeping his mouth and nose free to breathe. Your baby will be able to hold his head up for a short while when you hold him in a sitting position and if you touch his hand with a rattle he may try to grasp it.

### crying and colic

Your baby now stays awake for longer periods between feeds and may be more awake in the evenings. Some of this waking time will be used to cry and whilst some babies cry very little, on average they usually cry for two or three hours a day, much of which takes place in the evening.

This is often blamed on colic, thought to be a type of stomach or abdominal ache occurring in spasms, which makes your baby draw up his legs in pain as he screams. No one really knows what colic is but if it is going to occur it usually starts within the first three weeks of birth and lasts until around three months. There is no reliable treatment for colic although there are some medicines available; you should consult your doctor first. Colic isn't always the cause of excessive crying; some babies cry for no obvious reason. Don't leave him to cry for more than a few minutes, pick him up and offer him comfort by rocking, letting him suck or by distracting him with a toy. If crying becomes a major issue, this may indicate either a problem with you (e.g., an early sign of depression) or your infant. Seek advice from your health visitor or doctor.

### development check - 'the 6-8 week review'

In the UK, and many other countries, you can expect your child to have an initial development check at your doctor's surgery or health clinic between six and eight weeks. This will help to establish whether there are any early signs of delayed development or health or behaviour problems. Your child will go through a number of routine checks between now and when he reaches school age; they are all important and are designed to reveal hidden disabilities as well as more obvious ones.

This early check will include measuring your baby's weight, length and head circumference, noting the changes since birth. You will probably be asked how your baby is feeding and sleeping. General progress will be checked and your doctor may also carry out a series of tests to evaluate your baby's head control, use of hands, vision, hearing and social interaction as well as check the hips, heart and testicles (in boys). You may be given guidance on what to expect during the next month regarding feeding, sleeping and development and you may also be asked about how you are managing with your new baby at home.

### immunisation

Your baby should be given his first round of immunisation against major diseases such as meningitis, Hib, diphtheria, etc. After immunisation, your baby may feel a little off-colour for up to 24 hours and may even run a temperature. Rarely, a convulsion (or 'febrile fit') may occur as a result of the fever, but this is over quickly and has no lasting effect. It is also quite normal for the skin around the site of the injection to become red and sore or slightly swollen. If you are at all worried about your child's reaction, contact your doctor immediately.

## three months

### development

By three months, your baby will have more control over her head movements and when in a sitting position, can keep her head up for several seconds. Your baby will be able to turn her head and look around as her neck strengthens.

As babies begin to understand their own body they spend hours studying and moving their own fingers. Their hands will have opened up and they will be able to clasp and unclasp them and may even be able to hold a small toy for a few seconds. When your baby is lying down, you will probably find that her arms and legs make a lot of movement, she will kick both legs vigorously. Your baby will probably be smiling and cooing when she sees you or hears your voice. She will also respond vocally when you speak to her, using her lips and tongue to coo. She uses her whole body to express the way she feels.

### behaviour

A baby will react to familiar situations and will show excitement when she recognises the preparation for things

that she enjoys. She responds to bath-time and other caring routines with obvious pleasure, especially when she has your undivided attention. When she is uncomfortable or lonely or angry she will tell you by crying loudly; you should respond to this behaviour in a calm voice with lots of praise and exaggerated gestures to make her feel at ease.

### bedtime routine

If you haven't already done so, introduce a regular bedtime routine now so that your baby starts to realise that a bath, a story and a cuddle are a prelude to being put to bed to sleep. By three months babies begin to sleep for long periods at night. If she has started to sleep through the night you may find she needs less sleep during the day. Encourage her to stay awake during the day play and talk to her and stimulate her with toys and activities.

### immunisation

At three months your baby will have the second round of immunisations.

## four months

### development

At four months your baby is developing rapidly. She should be able to lift her head up 90° when she is on her stomach and raise herself up a little way, supported by her arms. She will be trying hard to learn how to sit and at first you will need to help her balance but as confidence grows she will learn to adjust her legs and to use her hands to keep herself upright. She may be able to roll over in one direction and her hand-eye coordination is improving so she may be reaching out and grasping objects.

### early learning

Motor development and learning progress at the same rate between four and five months. She is awake for much longer and will want to be sociable, play games and join in conversations with you, she may even be able to laugh out loud. You should spend time responding to these early attempts at sociability to encourage your baby's development. Point out different objects around the house or in books and talk to her about them. She may also enjoy seeing and talking to herself in a mirror. There is good evidence now to support you reading even at his early age.

### introducing solids

Your baby will get all the nourishment she needs from breast or formula milk during the first six months. Once your baby can sit, propped up, and has control over her head you may want to introduce some strained or pureed foods, especially if she shows excitement or tries to grab your food. These first solids are little more than tasters to get your baby used to the idea of sucking from a spoon. If the food offered is pushed straight back out of the mouth by the tongue, it is probably too soon and you should try again in a week or so.

### thumb sucking

Babies will suck anything they can get into their mouths now that they have some control over their hands. Fingers and thumbs will be preferred and she will suck them for comfort as well as pleasure. This is quite normal and is not a sign of emotional distress, nor will it damage the alignment of permanent teeth at this age. Most children grow out of this habit naturally over the next year or two although a child who sucks her thumb as reassurance to get to sleep may take a little longer to break the habit.

### immunisation

At four months your baby will have the third set of immunisations.

## five months

### development

At five months, your baby may now be holding his head steady when upright and keeping his head level with his body when pulled into the sitting position. He will probably be able to pay attention to small objects and may squeal with delight and be able to say some vowel-consonant combinations such as "ah-coo".

### early learning

Your baby is thinking much faster now and his grasp of basic concepts is growing. He will begin to learn about the cause and effect of carrying out simple experiments, such as throwing a toy out of his cot. Initially he will believe that the toy has vanished and won't understand where it has gone. When you return the toy to him, he will be both puzzled and delighted. He will do this again and again until he begins to realise that he can take control of his world by making things happen. You can encourage this early learning process by playing games such as peek-a-boo or hiding an object that was in front of him and then making it reappear again.

### teething

On average a baby's first tooth appears sometime between now and seven months. Babies teethe differently, some experiencing a lot of discomfort and others hardly seeming to notice their first teeth coming through. Drooling is often the first sign of teething and symptoms can often precede the tooth itself by several weeks or even months. Biting is another indication of teething and he may start chewing on anything as the counter-pressure from chewing on a hard object helps relieve the pressure under the gums. Rubbing his gums with your finger may bring relief or you can give him something to chew on such as a chilled teething ring or a slice of carrot. Ear pulling and cheek rubbing are also signs of teething as pain can travel along the nerve pathways to these areas. If your child seems to be in pain you can give him the recommended dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen.

## six months

### development

At six months, your child is now showing a greater interest in what is going on around him. He will turn his head quickly to familiar voices and examine things that interest him for longer periods. He will be very chatty and will probably laugh and chuckle when happy or squeal or scream when annoyed. He will be playing with his feet as well as his hands and can manipulate small objects. His ability to reach and grasp is becoming more accurate; you can help him improve these skills by passing objects in such a way that he has to reach up or down or to the side for them. He will be able to hold objects in the palm of his hands and pass them from hand to hand.

### mobility

Your baby is rapidly becoming more mobile and will probably be able to pull himself into the sitting position if both hands are held. When lying on his stomach he may find that kicking will push him along, usually backwards at first. You can help him to get where he wants to go by placing a toy just out of reach or by placing your hands against the soles of his feet so that when he kicks he has something to push against.

### vision

Visually your baby is keenly aware of everything that is going on around him and when his attention is attracted will move his head and eyes eagerly towards that direction. He will follow what you are doing even if you are busy on the other side of the room. His eyes now move in unison. If he drops a toy in his field of vision he will watch it until it reaches its resting place; toys falling outside his visual field will be ignored or forgotten.

### intelligence

Intelligence can be influenced by many factors including stimulation, health, diet and social interaction. At this stage your child's physical, social and intellectual growth will be enhanced by spending time playing, reading and talking to him and surrounding him with a stimulating environment.

### meal time

This is probably becoming a pleasurable time for your baby now, which you should both look forward to and enjoy. When getting ready for a meal, don't put your baby in his high chair too soon, he will probably get restless as he can't easily move around, especially if he is very active. A quieter baby will probably be happy to sit in his chair and play for a while as you prepare his meal.