

# Your 4-Month Old Infant

By now you and your infant are likely settling into a predictable routine. He or she is becoming very interactive and you may be wishing you could slow time. Every day is a new and exciting one. The following are some developmental and safety tips for this age.

## Sleeping . . . a Review!

By now your baby is capable of sleeping a minimum of 8 hours and up to 12 hours at night without a feeding. A consistent bedtime routine is important to help him/her wind down at night (a bath, music, a book, rocking, etc.). He/she will begin to associate these things with going to sleep. It is helpful for your baby to learn to fall asleep on his/her own. Try to put him/her in the crib when still awake or drowsy. If he/she cries, leave the room and wait a few minutes to see if he/she settles down. If the crying persists more than 15-20 minutes, try comforting him/her with your voice (but do not feed, rock or remove from bed). Leave again. If still crying in 15-20 minutes, repeat the same process. This is difficult to do, but it is not harmful to your baby and will help him/her develop healthy sleeping habits. Once he/she is sleeping through the night, they also develop a more predictable daytime nap schedule. If you have other questions, look back at the 2-month handout for a more thorough review and ask your physician at your next check up.

## Teething

Beginning~3 months and up until about 1 year of age, your baby may develop his/her first tooth. Signs of teething usually include increased drooling, the desire to chew on things, slight increased

fussiness and possibly a low-grade fever (less than 100°F). [Of note is that around 4 months babies often drool and put their hands and toys in their mouth as a part of their oral exploration of objects as well - this is often mistaken as teething.]

Teething usually begins with the 2 bottom front teeth. These usually erupt between 5 and 7 months but can be as late as one year. Next the four upper front teeth erupt, then the next two bottom front teeth. The first molars come next (~12-15 months) and then the "eye" teeth.

If your baby seems uncomfortable during teething, an occasional dose of Tylenol is okay. Use of a refrigerated teething ring may be helpful. **Do not freeze teething rings** as they may stick to your baby's lips or gums and cause pain.

Once he/she has a new tooth, take care to cleanse it daily. No need for toothpaste. Simply use a soft toothbrush, a finger brush or even a washcloth with water and wipe it at the end of each day (ideally after the last feeding). And remember, never put your baby to bed with a bottle - this can cause tooth decay.

## A Word about Infant Walkers

Infant "walkers" actually do not help the process of walking and actually pose serious safety hazards for children.

Consider the following:

MYTH - Walkers help your baby learn to walk.

FACT - Babies who spend lots of time in a walker may actually walk later than babies who don't.

MYTH - Walkers are a safe place for your baby to play when you are busy.

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**FACT** - Walkers allow your baby to reach things he/she should not (open stairwells, medications, electrical cords and outlets), resulting in serious injuries, even death.

A majority of these accidents happen while an adult is present in the room.

**MYTH** - Walkers provide exercise for your baby.

**FACT** - Your baby gets all the exercise he/she needs from crawling, reaching and playing.

**MYTH** - Walkers relieve boredom and make infants happy.

**FACT** - There are safer ways to entertain your baby. Stationery exersaucers are safe and fun alternatives.

**If you do not have a walker, don't buy one!**

**If you are given a walker, return it and get something else!**

**If you already have a walker, remove the wheels or destroy it!**

## Your Developing Baby

You are probably noticing a baby who is eager to explore the world with his/her sight, hearing, and taste. Additionally he/she is becoming more social and is understanding how to quickly catch the eyes of parents and even strangers. Here are some changes you may notice in the next 2 months.

- His/her vision is continuing to improve. Full color vision develops. By four months, he/she can see several feet or more. In the first few months he/she may intermittently have crossed eyes. This should not happen now except on the rare occasion that an object gets too close to his/her face.
- His/her voice is changing now as well. At about 4 months, you will begin hearing babbling. You will begin to

detect a rise and fall in voice and some rhythms. Encourage language development by talking back and imitating his/her sounds.

- You will begin to hear those fun "belly" laughs and by 6 months some squeals of delight!
- Be careful not to leave him/her unattended on any surface higher than the floor. At 4-6 months, he/she will begin rolling both ways (front-to-back and back-to-front).
- At four months, infants begin grasping objects. Most things also end up in the mouth - so be careful to keep away small objects or pieces of plastic bags. By 6 months, infants begin to discover and enjoy playing with their feet. Also by 6 months, he/she will begin to transfer objects from one hand to the other.
- Tummy time is important to encourage good head and neck control. You will notice that he/she can hold his/her chest off the floor now.
- Support your baby in the sitting position to encourage more trunk control. By 6 months, he/she may begin to tripod sit (using his/her hands to help) briefly without your assistance.
- He/she will begin, between 4 and 6 months to understand cause-and-effect. When he/she kicks the play gym, it rattles or when he/she shakes a toy it makes noise. Once he/she realizes the effect, he/she will continue to experiment.

## Appropriate Toys for the 4-Month Old

- Textured toys that make sounds
- Toys that are easily grasped like rattles
- Board books, vinyl books and pictures
- Soft balls (even some that make sounds)

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## Getting Started With Solid Foods

How will I know when my baby is ready for solid food?

You know your baby is ready for solid food when he:

- Holds his head up without help
- Reaches for the spoon and shows interest in your food
- Can suck food off a spoon without gagging or pushing the food back out

You can see if your baby is ready by mixing infant rice cereal with breast milk or formula so that it is soupy. Place a small amount on baby's tongue with a baby spoon. Give this several tries. If the food comes right back out or baby has difficulty swallowing, you should wait a week or two before trying again. Most babies are developmentally ready to start solid foods sometime between 4-6mo.

### Start with:

1-2 Tablespoons of iron fortified dry rice cereal mixed with breast milk or formula until soupy. Try this once a day. [Evening seems to be a favorite time for most families. Timing the solid foods just before a nursing session or bottle may make it more successful.] If he/she eats everything, try a little more next time. Move to 2 meals a day when he/she masters the technique.

Thicken the cereal as the baby grows and becomes comfortable with feedings. Babies have likes and dislikes. It takes time to get used to new tastes and textures. Don't worry if your baby refuses a particular food. Try it again in a few days.

### Adding foods:

When your baby is eating cereal at breakfast and dinner, begin feeding different foods. To begin with, use one-third of a 4-oz. jar each feeding and gradually increase to the whole jar. Store leftovers in the refrigerator. Introduce one new food every 3-4 days so that if there is a problem, you can tell which food may have caused your baby to have an adverse response. Add vegetables before fruits to avoid the "sweet tooth". Introduce pureed meats around eight months of age.

### A typical menu after introducing fruits and vegetables may look like this:

7:00 A.M. breast milk or formula  
8:30 A.M. cereal & fruit ( $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 jar)  
11:30 A.M. vegetable, BM or form.  
3:00 P.M. BM or formula  
5:00 P.M. cereal & fruit & veg.  
6:30 P.M. BM or formula  
10:30 P.M. BM or formula

### Your baby may be full when:

- He/she pushes food away
- He/she turns her head away
- He/she spits out food

### Food Allergies:

#### Signs of Food Allergies include:

- Hives
- Eczema
- Skin rash
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

Stop the new food. Try it again in 2-3 weeks. If symptoms return, call your doctor to get help.

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**WAIT** until 12 months before trying:

- Egg whites
- Fish or shellfish
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruits and juices
- Whole cow's milk (low-fat or skim milk can be tried at two years)
- Nut products - (note, no nuts until >4y.o due to choking hazard)

**Foods that cause harder stools:**

- Applesauce
- Bananas
- Rice
- Dry cereal

**Foods that cause looser stools (but help constipation):**

- Any fruit with the letter "p" in the name
- Pears
- Plums
- Prunes
- Apricots
- Apple juice
- Water

**You Can:**

- Prepare your own baby foods by thoroughly cooking fruits or vegetables and always using clean utensils. (See below for more information about foods not to home prepare.)
- Freeze your own baby food for up to 2 weeks; try ice cube trays to make single servings.
- Find the schedule that works best for you and your baby.
- Call your doctor or nurse with any questions or concerns.

**A word about iron:**

Infant formulas are packaged two ways, with iron and without iron. "Iron

fortified" does not mean extra iron; it means with iron. "Low iron" really means no iron. Iron is important because iron deficiency has been linked to anemia and later learning disabilities. **DO NOT USE LOW IRON FORMULAS.**

*Adapted from the Healthy Steps for Young Children Program*

**Do Not Home Prepare These Foods:**

**Beets, Turnips, Carrots, Collard Greens and Spinach** take up nitrates from the soil in which they are grown. Some areas have soil that has very high nitrate concentration. Babies are subject to anemia (low blood count) from large amounts of nitrates. Baby-food companies screen their produce for nitrates and avoid produce from those areas with high soil nitrate. Since we cannot test for this chemical in our fresh vegetables, it is safer to use commercially prepared forms of the above vegetables. If you choose to home prepare these anyway, serve them just after preparation - storage actually increases the amount of nitrates in them.

**Lastly, be advised** that your baby's stools will change in consistency, color and odor with the introduction of solid foods. Peas and other green vegetables may make the stool green. Beets may turn stool and urine red. If the foods are not well strained, the stools may contain undigested food particles. This is all normal and related to a digestive system that is still maturing.

HAVE FUN DURING THIS EXCITING, NEW ADVENTURE and as always, call us if you have any other questions.

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