

Well Child Handout: Your child at Four Months

Your Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

TODAY'S MEASUREMENTS

Head circumference: _____ centimeters (_____percentile)

Height: _____ inches (_____ percentile)

Weight: _____ pounds (_____ percentile)

IMMUNIZATIONS: DTap (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis), Hib (haemophilus influenzae), Polio; Pneumococcal conjugate, Rotavirus, possibly Hepatitis B
Possible vaccine side effects include:

- Fever
- More irritability or fussiness
- Discomfort, redness or swelling at the site of the shot
- More spitting up or looser stools

** If needed, you can give your baby acetaminophen (Tylenol). Studies show acetaminophen may reduce vaccine effectiveness, so only use for more severe symptoms. Contact your doctor if your child's symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.*

Next Visit: Six months of age

DEVELOPMENT

All babies develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice that your baby:

- Smiles and laughs
- Initiates interaction with others
- Starts to babble
- Drools (not always a sign of teething)
- Keeps hands open while at rest
- Brings hands together and to mouth
- Lifts head and chest when lying on tummy
- Shows good head control
- Tries to roll over and reaches for objects

NUTRITION

Babies at this age continue to get all their nutrition from breast milk or formula. Some babies become easily distracted during feeding because they get so interested in things around them. If feeding becomes difficult, try feeding your baby in a quiet, darkened room for a few weeks.

Signs that your baby may be ready for solid food include good head control, interest in watching others eat, opening his or her mouth as food nears and not sticking out his or her tongue when you offer a spoon. When your baby is ready for solids, follow these tips:

- Start with a bland food such as iron-fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or formula.
- After a few days of cereal, you can try pureed vegetables or fruits.
- Allow your baby to eat as much or as little as he or she wants. A tablespoon of cereal may be an entire meal at the beginning.
- Introduce new foods slowly—just one new food every three days.
- If your baby does not like the taste of a food the first time you offer it, offer it again several times over the next few weeks.
- Gradually increase the number of solid food meals to two to three a day during the next few months.
- Be aware that your baby's bowel movements will change after you start him or her on solid foods; they may be more solid or different colors (based on what your baby has eaten) and smell more.
- Do not give your baby cow's milk or honey before 12 months of age. All other foods are okay as long as they are soft and do not present a choking hazard.
- Continue giving your baby vitamin D supplements daily.
- Night feedings are still normal at this age.

SLEEP

Babies' sleeping habits vary at this age. Some babies may sleep seven or eight hours in a row while others still wake every three to four hours to feed. Create a regular bedtime routine every night. This may include a massage, bath, change of clothes, quiet songs or reading a story. Also start to put your baby down while he or she is still drowsy but awake. This will teach your baby how to put himself or herself to sleep. If you have questions about your baby's sleep, talk with your doctor.

SAFETY

- Never shake your baby.
- Set your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit so you won't burn your baby. Also do not cook or drink hot liquids while holding your baby.
- Always put your baby to sleep on his or her back on a firm mattress.
- However, if your baby turns over by himself or herself, you do not need to keep turning your child over through the night.
- Keep pillows, bumpers, blankets and toys away from your baby while he or she sleeps.
- Do not use baby walkers that move.
- Always place your baby in a car seat that faces backward in the back seat. For more information, go the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Web site: nhtsa.gov.
- Never leave your baby alone in a car or a bath or on high surfaces due to the risk of falling. Always keep one hand on your baby when changing him or her on a high surface.
- Do not let people smoke around your baby.
- Never tie a pacifier or put jewelry around your baby's neck.
- Make sure that your baby's toys do not have sharp edges or small pieces that could break off. The toys should be at least one and a half inches wide—your baby could choke on them if they are smaller than that. Keep balloons and plastic bags away from your baby—they are dangerous and can suffocate children.
- Make sure that the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are working.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, please speak with your doctor or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or ndvh.org.

FOCUS ON FAMILY

- Postpartum depression can happen at any time during the first year. While postpartum blues are common during the first few weeks, they usually get better. If moms feel sad, anxious or depressed beyond this time, they should seek help and talk with their doctor. You can find more information online at postpartum.net.
- Returning to work after having a baby can be challenging and stressful. Some parents feel anxious or guilty about leaving their baby with even the best care provider. It is okay to have mixed feelings – talk with friends or family about these issues. Employers should offer a place and time for mothers to pump breast milk if needed.
- Try to find time for you and your partner to be alone. Taking care of yourselves will allow you to take better care of your family.

PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

- Join your baby in quiet play (reading, sitting together outdoors, talking or cuddling) and active play (playing on the floor or with a baby gym, mobiles or mirrors) every day.
- Do not let your baby watch TV or baby videos.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Contact your doctor if you have questions about your baby or if he or she:

- Has a persistent or high fever
- Cries a lot more than normal or can't be comforted
- Has trouble breathing or is limp or sluggish

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: aap.org; American Academy of Family Physicians: aafp.org; Immunization information: immunize.org, cdc.gov/vaccines, vaccine.chop.edu, familydoctor.org and vaccineinformation.org
- Suggested reading:
 - *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age Five* by American Academy of Pediatrics, Stephen Shelov, M.D.
 - *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter
 - *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth
 - *Mommy Calls: Dr. Tanya Answers Parents' Top 101 Questions About Babies and Toddlers* by Tanya Remer Altmann, M.D.
 - *Mother Nature* by Rick Hanson, Jan Hanson and Ricki Pollycove
- Other books are available at aap.org/bookstore