



Children & Teens MEDICAL CENTER

FOUR MONTHS



Normal Development

In general, four-month olds are happy, social little people. They do have individual personalities – some are very active while others are quiet. Some eat, sleep, and dirty diapers on a regular schedule while others are very irregular. Some get used to new faces and places more easily than others. This variety is normal. Your child may not stand, say “dada”, or cut teeth when others of the same age do. If you are at all concerned about your baby’s progress or growth, be sure to raise your concerns during the baby’s physical exam.

No doubt your baby loves to play, people are the most educational toys! This attention does not cause behavior problems. If your baby does not seem truly hungry during the night, we discourage nighttime feeding and playtimes. Your baby does not understand if this makes you exhausted the next day. If you make your middle-of-the-night checks very brief and boring, your baby will be less likely to cry during the night. It is also helpful to allow your baby to fall asleep in the crib, so that when she wakes during the night she is in a cozy familiar place. A baby who is always rocked to sleep will cry for more rocking when she awakes (and everyone wakes up during the night). The same is true for babies who fall asleep while feeding- plan to avoid this very troublesome habit.



Safety

The safety of your child depends on your protection. As you know, everything will be going in his mouth. Try to clear away objects smaller than his fist (for example, small toy pieces, breakables, buttons, cigarette butts, etc.). This is especially difficult if you have older children who give things to the baby, or leave them within reach. Smoking around babies is hazardous: grabbing a lit cigarette will cause a nasty burn; breathing the second-hand smoke causes breathing problems, cough, wheezing, etc. Other common sources of burns are hot cups of coffee or tea, hot baths, spills, hot steam vaporizers, and the sun. Falls become more common as babies start rolling. A wiggling 4-month-old can move, tip, or fall out of a baby seat. You cannot expect them to stay put even for a moment. Be sure you have a car seat that meets federal safety standards, and use it as directed. If you have not already done so, arrange to take a Red Cross first aid and CPR course. Be prepared. Never shake a baby. This can cause serious injury or death. Keep plastic bags and balloons away from the baby, since suffocation and choking may occur. Avoid sun exposure. Don’t use sun screen until 6 months of age. Continue to have the baby sleep on his back or side for safety.



Feeding

Breast milk or iron-fortified formula is still a complete diet for the 4 to 6-month-old infant – no solids or juice are required. Many babies still have an automatic reflex that makes the tongue stick out when a spoon is presented. This makes spoon-feeding very difficult and messy. If you wait until your baby gets tongue control, introducing solids will be much easier. Of course, you could feed solids through a nipple, but that does not help your baby to learn new skills. It is preferential to wait until your baby is 6 months of age to decrease the risk of food allergies, eczema, and obesity. Most parents use cereal as the first solid food. This is a good idea, especially if you are breastfeeding, since the iron added to baby cereal will help prevent anemia.

Teething

Most babies this age drool and put their hands in their mouths. Many will not have any teeth come through for months, yet any concern you have about your baby's health or behavior will be blamed on teething by someone! We do not have a lot of solid scientific information on the subject; you will have to use your common sense. Of course, a baby who is getting teeth can also get sick or fearful. It is reasonable to use Tylenol if your baby seems to be in pain. Persistent pain should be checked out. Cold teething rings may be useful; we advise against numbing gels. After a couple of teeth have come through, you will have an idea of your baby's response.

Response to Immunizations

We want to know if your baby had any problem following the first DPT-HIB shot and polio vaccine. The second set of immunizations is the same, but your baby might react differently. One or two days of fussiness, sleepiness, fever and/or tender, red swelling at the injection site can be normal; however, many babies have no reaction at all.