

Well Child Care at 4 Months

Feeding

Your infant has been growing well on breast milk and/or formula alone. Infants may take 6 oz. or so per formula feeding. Infants should continue to receive breast milk and/or formula on a demand schedule. At 4-6 months the infant is now developmentally able to control his tongue and mouth muscles to make feeding baby cereal and solids easier. The additional calories and iron are also good for the infant. There are no hard and fast rules for feeding solids. The best time to offer solids is anytime the infant is hungry and you are not in a hurry. This feeding experience should be fun as well as nutritious! The infant should be able to hold his head up and support his back. If using a high chair, be sure to strap the infant in snugly.

Start with one solid feeding – usually iron fortified rice cereal – given once a day. Mix 1-2 tablespoons of dry infant cereal with 4 tablespoons of breast milk or formula to make a soupy mixture for the first feedings. You may also feed jarred baby cereal if you prefer. Use only single ingredient baby cereal like rice, barley or oatmeal. Always feed solids by spoon so the infant learns how to eat. The amount of cereal eaten will gradually increase as the infant learns how to eat. Be patient as feeding solids is a messy but fun learning experience for both of you. Pureed vegetables and/or fruits can also be added after your infant masters cereal by spoon. Start slowly with a new food no more often than every 3 days. Spoon the fruit or vegetable into a clean bowl and feed from the bowl thus saving any uneaten portion for later use. Strained/pureed baby foods can be purchased or homemade, whichever you prefer.

Development

Babies are starting to roll over from stomach to back. Your baby's voice may become louder: squealing when happy or crying when he wants food or to be held. In both cases, gentle, soothing voices are the best way to calm your baby. Toys that make noise when shaken are enjoyed.

It is normal for babies to cry. At this age, you can't spoil a baby. Meeting your baby's needs quickly is still a good idea.

Most babies are sleeping in 6 to 8 hour stretches by 4 months of age and will also nap during the daytime. If your baby's sleeping patterns are different than this you may want to ask your doctor for ideas about ways to keep your baby alert and awake during the day and sound asleep at night. Remember to place your baby in bed on her back. Most babies still need to eat 1-2 times during the night.

Put your baby to bed when he begins to get sleepy, but before he falls asleep,

without rocking, feeding, or pacifier. Don't feed him a bottle in bed. This will start good sleep habits and prevent problems in the future. If at all possible, have your baby in his own room.

Teething

Your baby may begin teething. While getting teeth, your baby will drool a lot and chew on almost anything. A teething ring is very useful.

What you can do:

Talk and sing to your baby often (when dressing, feeding, changing diaper, etc.)

Look and smile at your baby often - have a conversation with "smile talk."

Provide new sounds and noises such as clicking your tongue, or provide music boxes or rattles for your baby to listen to.

Provide brightly colored mobiles and textured objects for your baby to look at and hold.

Use play that helps your baby use both sides of his body and both eyes.

Lay him on his back, cross his arms over his chest, straighten them out, and gently stretch them up and down.

Lay your baby on his back, hold his legs by the ankles, bend one knee, then the other, and then both knees.

Shake a rattle above his head until he looks and reaches for it, then reward him with a kiss.

Read baby books with board, cloth, or vinyl pages.

Provide brief periods of play while he is on his stomach -- i.e. "tummy time."

Safety Tips

Avoid Suffocation and Choking

Remove hanging mobiles or toys before the baby can reach them.

Keep cords, ropes, or strings away from your baby, especially near the crib. Ropes and strings around the baby's neck can choke him.

Keep plastic bags and balloons out of reach.

Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts that can come loose.

Remove all small objects that your baby may pick up and swallow from floor, counters and table tops.

Avoid Fires and Burns

Never eat, drink, or carry anything hot near the baby or while you are holding the baby.

Turn down your water heater to 120 degrees F.

Check smoke detectors to make sure they work.

Check formula temperature carefully. Formula should be warm or cool to the touch.

Don't smoke in the house, or near the baby.

Car safety

Never leave the baby alone in a high place.

Keep crib and playpen sides up.

Do not put your baby in a walker.

Next Visit

Your baby's next routine visit should be at the age of 6 months. At this time, your child will get the next set of immunizations.

Additional Health Resources

Virtual Children's Hospital - www.vh.org/vch
<http://kidshealth.org>
www.generalpediatrics.com

Credits:

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

Pediatric Behavioral Health Advisor

Health Informatics - <http://uiowa.healthinformatics.net>

February 04