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4 Month Visit

Now things should be getting really fun. More talking, smiling, and laughing make your child a joy. Good sleep and a nap routine should be more and more consistent. The fog of raising a newborn is lifting!

Development

1. At this age, your baby should vocalize more and more. She should be able to reach for objects and get her hands together, follow with her eyes 180 degrees, hold her head steady while seated, bear some weight on her legs, roll over one way, and keep her head steady when pulled to a seated position.
2. Sleep patterns are usually developed by this time. Hopefully your child is going to sleep on her own. It is best to put the baby to bed when she is sleepy but not fully asleep. This will help her put herself back to sleep should something awaken her. A regular bedtime and nap routine should be well established by now.

Injury Prevention

1. Everything goes to your baby's mouth by this age, making choking a significant risk to your baby. Should your infant become choked on an object, the back-blow is the method of choice to dislodge it. Try to sign up for an infant CPR course. Attached to this handout is a "Childproofing Your Home" handout-please read it over carefully. Be wary when you are visiting another home or when you have houseguests. Your baby WILL find the one thing in the house to choke on.
2. Make sure toys cannot break easily and are age appropriate. Be conscious of small pieces or buttons that can be pulled off of objects. Store your loose change out of reach of little hands.
3. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle in the crib. Prolonged nighttime feeding leads to dental cavities and more ear infections.
4. Be wary of pacifier cords that can become wrapped around your infant's neck. Remove all cords or necklaces when sleeping.
5. Direct sun exposure is not appropriate for infants under 6 months of age. Use sunscreen sparingly.
6. Do not expose your child to cigarette smoke. Passive smoking (exposure to second hand smoke) can lead to an increase in the number of respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma.
7. Also post the poison control number prominently in your house and in your cell phone. **1-800-222-1222**

Nutrition

1. Most babies are ready to begin solid foods between four and six months.
2. Begin feeding solid foods with something relatively non-allergenic. We recommend starting baby oatmeal mixed with tap water. There are instructions on the box for mixing. First feedings should be mixed as a thin consistency gradually thickening the mixture as your baby gets used to solids.
3. Once your baby is a pro at cereals, start introducing vegetables, waiting at least 3 days between each new food. Once you work through all the veggies, it is time for fruits.
4. Use single ingredient foods ("First Foods") initially. Meats usually aren't added until 8 or 9 months of age.
5. Most babies don't tolerate chunks of food until well after 6 months.
6. Continue formula or breast milk until one year of age. This is still their main source of nutrition.
7. When your child signals that he is full (by turning away or spitting all foods out), do not force him to continue eating to "finish it off." Let your baby recognize the signs of fullness and stop. Early overeating is directly related to childhood obesity.

Next Visit

We will see you and your baby when she turns six months. By then, she will be very verbal, very good with her hands, and maybe even starting to move! 6 month babies are ready for the flu shot. It is my strong recommendation that all children get the flu shot. Influenza is the most dangerous vaccine-preventable disease that you can protect your baby from. We will discuss at the next visit.

Childproofing Your Home

Childproofing your home is an ongoing process and now is the time to begin!

Bedroom Safety:

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- Always** place your baby to sleep on his or her back.
- Do not smoke when holding infant.
- Use a crib made after 1992 and be sure the mattress fits snugly.
- Crib slats should be 2 3/8" apart or less.
- Put the mattress at its lowest level to prevent falls.
- Avoid putting pillows, soft bedding, or stuffed animals in a crib.
- If you use a playpen with mesh sides, the holes must be less than 3/4" across.
- Use a safety belt on infant changing table.
- Nightlights should be at least three feet away from the crib.
- Post poison control and physician phone numbers on all phones.
- Use smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home.
- Never leave an infant unattended on changing table, bed, or bath.
- Keep blind cords, electrical cords and mobiles out of baby's reach.
- Place a baby monitor in the nursery far from child's reach.
- Anything that will fit inside an empty cardboard toilet roll is a choking hazard.

Bathroom Safety:

TO DO

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- Set water heater to 120 degrees F or below.
- Babies can fall into a toilet head first and not be able to get out, so be sure to install toilet locks.
- Never leave a child unattended in or around water.
- Keep all electric appliances away from water sources.
- Put safety locks on all bathroom cabinets.

Kitchen and Living Room Safety:

TO DO

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- Anything that will fit inside an empty cardboard toilet roll is a choking hazard.
- Shorten drapery and blind cords.
- Lock any potentially dangerous substance in a high cabinet. If you have to, keep them under the sink and use a childproof lock on the cabinet doors.
- Know the names of all houseplants and keep out of child's reach.
- Cover all unused electrical outlets with a child-resistant outlet cover.
- Place barriers around wood stoves, fireplaces, and portable space heaters.
- Do not place your baby in a walker with wheels.
- Keep appliance, drapery, and lamp cords short and protected.
- Doorknob covers will keep your child from getting into places when the doors are closed.
- Do not smoke in the home.
- Do not leave food and drinks out on the counters or tables where your child could get them.
- Anchor all dressers, tables, appliances that can topple onto child as a result of climbing or pulling.
- Mount safety gate at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Do not hang dish towels on the oven door, as baby can pull towel and bring the door down.
- Unplug all kitchen counter appliances and beware of leaving knives, scissors, coffee mugs on the counter.
- Cover end tables, coffee tables, or low dressers with cushioning.

Garage Safety:

TO DO

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- Keep all paint, varnishes, and dangerous tools out of reach.
- Unplug all power tools after use.
- Keep all guns unloaded and in a locked cabinet.
- Take doors off old refrigerators and freezers.

It is a good idea to have a few sets of EMERGENCY NUMBERS including Physician, Poison Control and Hospital. Some suggestions as to where to put these numbers:

- ✓ On your refrigerator
- ✓ In your car.
- ✓ In your diaper bag.
- ✓ Give to family and friends.
- ✓ Near phones.
- ✓ Give to caregivers and neighbors.

For more information on creating a child safe home, visit the National Safe Kids campaign at www.safekids.org

The American Academy of Pediatrics also provides childproofing information at www.aap.org