



Having a baby – whether it’s your first child or your fourth – is so exciting! But it is not always easy. If your baby was born more than three weeks early, you may have more questions about your baby – and how he will grow – than a parent whose baby was born on time.

We wrote this brochure to help you understand how your child will develop. We have listed important milestones – or achievements – in a child’s growth, so you know what to watch for at each age. For example, typical milestones for babies are: “makes eye contact and smiles” and “rolls from tummy onto back”.

It is important to remember that development is not a race. Babies develop at their own speed and in their own way. Some children do not reach every milestone at the same time. *This is especially true if they were born early.*

# Supporting You and Your Preemie

## Milestone Guidelines for Premature Babies

**Adjust your baby’s age to get a true sense of where your baby should be in his development.**

**Here’s what to do:** If your baby is 14 weeks old, but was born 6 weeks early, subtract 6 from 14. This gives you 8 weeks. Use this *adjusted age* when you look at the milestones sections.

By age 2, most children have caught up to the normal range, and you won’t have to do this math. If your child has not caught up, he may require extra support for a longer period of time.

**Watch for progress.** The most important thing is to make sure your child is moving forward in his development. For example, your baby should progress from pulling himself up, to standing, and then to walking. Remember that children reach new milestones at different ages.

You will know your child better than anyone else. When you watch her carefully, you will see ways she is growing well.

You will also know if she needs more help. Remember, you do not have to do it alone. There are doctors, teachers and other people and information to support you. We hope this brochure gives you a good place to start.





## A Guideline to the Milestones in a Child's Development

The information below shows how young children typically develop. It is important to use your child's *adjusted age* when tracking his development. So, if your baby is 21 weeks old, but was born 5 weeks early, his *adjusted age* is 16 weeks (or 4 months). This means you should refer to the milestones listed under "at 4 months (16 weeks)" to see what your child should be doing at this age.

*Use this information to help you watch your child's progress.*

### At 2 months (8 weeks)

#### Motor

- Moves hands and legs actively
- Keeps hands open most of the time
- Lifts head and chest when lying on tummy
- Controls head a little, but may still need support
- Holds objects in hands

#### Language

- Responds to sounds (for example, turns when hears voices and rattles)
- Makes cooing noises like "aaaah" and "ooooh"
- Cries when needs something

#### Activities

- Fixes eyes on a person or object (a mobile, for example) and follows its movement
- Has different cries for different needs

#### Social/Emotional

- Makes eye contact and smiles
- Recognizes and enjoys interactions with mother or primary caregiver



### At 4 months (16 weeks)



#### Motor

- Brings hands together, or to mouth
- Lifts head and pushes on arms when on tummy
- Reaches for objects
- Turns or makes crawling movement when on tummy

#### Language

- Turns head to follow familiar voices
- Laughs and squeals
- Combines sounds more often (for example, "aaah-oooh", "gaaa-gooo")

#### Activities

- Grasps more and reaches for objects
- Brings objects to mouth
- Increases activity when sees a toy

#### Social/Emotional

- Is increasingly interactive and comfortable with parents and caregivers
- Shows interest in mirrors, smiles and is playful
- Is able to comfort himself

### At 6 months



#### Motor

- Puts weight on feet when held standing up
- Sits by himself
- Bangs and shakes objects
- Transfers objects from one hand to another
- Holds 2 objects at a time, one in each hand
- Rolls over from tummy to back

#### Language

- Responds to her name, turns and looks
- Babbles, making sounds like "da", "ga", "ba", "ka"

#### Activities

- Pays attention to what toys can do (make music and light up, for example)
- Looks towards object that drops out of sight

#### Social/Emotional

- Is becoming more aware of surroundings
- Notices if parents are present (or not)
- Reacts differently to strangers
- Expresses excitement, happiness and unhappiness

*Until the age of 2, adjust your child's age so his growth and progress takes into account that he was born early.*



### At 9 months

#### Motor

- Picks up small objects with thumb and finger
- Moves more easily (crawls, moves along furniture, walks when hand is held)
- Pulls to a stand

#### Language

- Recognizes familiar words (her name and phrases such as "time for bath" and "go bye-bye")
- Babbles with combination of vowel and consonant sounds (for example, "dada", "baba", "mama")
- Imitates sounds and movements

#### Activities

- Explores objects carefully (turns them upside down, puts hands inside openings)
- Is more involved in feedings (tries to hold bottle or pick up finger foods)
- Resists toy being taken away

#### Social/Emotional

- Plays peek-a-boo and claps hands with excitement
- May show anxiety around strangers

12  
mths.

### At 12 months (one year)

#### Motor

- Stands alone
- Takes first steps
- Turns pages of a book few at a time
- Puts small objects in container

#### Language

- Combines movements with sounds (reaches for an object and uses voice at same time)
- Pauses or stops when told not to do something
- Associates "mama" or "dada" with parents
- Uses one word again and again
- Hands you an object when asked

#### Activities

- Is better able to feed herself (tries to drink from cup)
- Helps with dressing

#### Social/Emotional

- Prefers to be with parents and caregivers
- Plays with other children

### At 15 months (1 1/4 years)

#### Motor

- Walks without help
- Climbs on chairs and other furniture

#### Language

- Uses 2 words besides "mama" and "dada"
- Asks for food or drink with sounds or words
- Shows what he wants by pulling, pointing or grunting

#### Activities

- Feeds self with spoon, often insisting on feeding self

#### Social/Emotional

- Gives kisses
- Greets people with "hi"
- Listens to a story

15  
mths.

*Focus on your child's strengths.*



*Ask your doctor about "early intervention," extra care some children receive to help develop.*



### At 18 months (1 1/2 years)

#### Motor

- Scribbles
- Walks without help and can sometimes run
- Kicks ball forward
- Pulls a toy along the ground

#### Language

- Follows simple directions, such as "give it to daddy"
- Says an increasing number of simple words (at least 5-10)
- Points to nose, mouth, eyes, ears, hands and feet

#### Activities

- Enjoys eating by himself, but is messy
- Shows how objects work in "pretend" play (feeds a doll, pours tea into cup, brushes hair)

#### Social/Emotional

- Sometimes says no when interfered with
- Can separate from parent more easily, but happy when sees parent again



#### Activities

- Reads books by turning pages and looking at pictures
- Opens door by turning knob
- Washes and dries hands
- Feeds himself with little mess

#### Social/Emotional

- Helps with simple household tasks
- Usually responds to a correction by stopping

### At 2 1/2 – 3 years

#### Motor

- Pedals tricycle
- Cuts with small scissors
- Draws or copies a complete circle
- Jumps in place, balances on one foot

#### Language

- Talks clearly (is understandable most of the time)
- Understands prepositions like "in", "on", "under", "beside"
- Combines sentences using and, or, but

#### Activities of Daily Living

- Is toilet trained and washes face and hands
- Gets dressed with help

#### Social/Emotional

- Gives direction to other children
- Plays a role in pretend games (mom, dad, teacher)

### At 3 1/2 years

#### Motor

- Hops briefly on one foot
- Cuts paper with scissors

#### Language

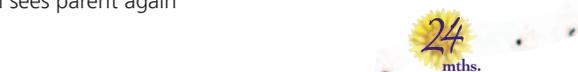
- Identifies 4 colors correctly
- Knows concept of size, shape, number
- Counts 5 or more objects when asked "how many?"

#### Activities

- Washes face without help
- Dresses and undresses without help, except for shoelaces

#### Social/Emotional

- Plays cooperatively with little conflict and supervision
- Pretend play is well developed



### At 24 – 30 months (2 – 2 1/2 years)

#### Motor

- Scribbles in circular motion and can draw vertical lines
- Runs well, seldom falls
- Walks up and down stairs alone
- Stands on one foot without support
- Turns single pages in a book

#### Language

- Talks in 2-3 word sentences
- Follows 2-part instructions
- Uses at least 20 words (including pronouns he, she, I)





## At 4 years

### Motor

- Hops on one foot repeatedly for a few seconds
- Skips or makes running broad jumps
- Draws recognizable pictures
- Draws a person with at least 3 parts (head, eyes, nose)

### Language

- Follows a series of 3 simple instructions
- Reads a few letters
- Speaks in full sentences and is easily understood
- Makes conversation and tells stories of daily life

### Activities

- Buttons one or more buttons
- Usually looks both ways before crossing street

### Social/Emotional

- Is protective toward younger children
- Follows simple rules in board or card games

## At 5 years

### Motor

- Swings on swing by herself
- Prints first name

### Language

- Tells meaning of familiar words
- Recognizes most letters of the alphabet

### Activities

- Goes to the toilet without any help

### Social/Emotional

- Shows leadership among other children
- Plays dress-up and make-believe



*Treat your doctor as your partner.  
Talk to him or her about any questions  
or concerns you have.*

All babies will babble before they say real words. All babies will pull up to a stand before they walk. We are sure that babies will develop in these patterns. But babies can reach these stages in different ways and at different times. This is *especially* true if they were born prematurely. Take some time to think about your baby's development, and answer the questions below. Your answers will help you better understand your baby and how she is going to grow.

- How does my baby like to communicate? How does she let me know what she is thinking and feeling?
- How does my baby like to explore how to use his body? Does he prefer using his fingers and hands (small muscles)? Does he prefer using his arms and legs (large muscles)?
- How does my baby respond to new situations? Does she jump right in? Does she prefer to hang back and look around before she feels safe?
- How does my baby like to explore? What kinds of objects and activities interest him? What do those interests tell me about him?
- What are my child's strengths? In what ways does she need more support?



## We gratefully acknowledge the following for their contributions.

American Hospital Association  
 American Medical Women's Association  
 Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses  
 Children's Medical Ventures  
 Family Voices  
 Institute for Family-Centered Care  
 Maternal and Child Health Bureau  
 Mothers of Super Twins  
 National Association of Perinatal Social Workers  
 National Perinatal Association  
 National Rural Health Association  
 Newborn Individualized Developmental Care and Assessment Program Federation International  
 Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics  
 ZERO TO THREE

## At School Age

### Ongoing Issues Your Child May Face

As premature babies get older, some of them may face ongoing physical problems (for example, asthma or cerebral palsy). They may also face developmental challenges (for example, difficulties paying attention or lack of motor control). This may be especially true for babies who were very small at birth.

Once your child reaches school age, it will be important for you to work closely with his teacher and other school staff to identify any areas of concern. They can also help you find the right resources for help. If the school does not have the resources necessary for your child, his teachers can help you find local groups or programs to help him do well in school. You are not alone – your child's teachers and healthcare providers are dedicated to helping you meet all of his health and educational needs.

## Supported by an educational grant from MedImmune LLC.

Sources consulted include the American Academy of Pediatrics/"Bright Futures" and Harold R. Ireton, Ph.D., "Child Development - First Five Years."

Medical Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your health care provider. There may be variations in treatment that your health care provider may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Copyright © 2008 American Academy of Pediatrics  
All rights reserved.