

Your Baby at 4 Months

Medications: Acetaminophen can be given as needed for discomfort or fever. No other medications are recommended for this age unless directed by your doctor. Please see {dosing chart} for the right dose based on your baby's weight today.

Next Visit: 6 months of age unless there are other concerns

Immunizations

You should receive a specific handout for each vaccine given, and if you don't, please let us know. Side-effects are uncommon but can include:

- Discomfort at the injection site
- Fatigue; they often sleep a lot the first day
- Low grade fever for up to 24-36 hours
- Redness and warmth at the injection site for a few days; this is not an infection
- A small lump where the vaccine was given, which may last several weeks

You can help your baby feel better after vaccines by giving lots of tender loving care, allowing for extra rest, and giving Acetaminophen as needed for significant discomfort or fever. We recommend that you only give it as needed, rather than around the clock. Recent studies indicate that Tylenol, given too frequently, may blunt the immune system's response to the vaccines, making them less effective.

See immunization schedule

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-pocket-pr.pdf>

Feeding & Solid Foods

Breast milk or infant formula is still the most important food at this age. Babies who are directly breastfed may feed on demand. For comparison's sake, babies generally take 28-32 ounces per day of expressed breast milk or formula. Vitamin D drops (400 IU/day) are still recommended for babies who receive primarily breast milk. Exclusively breastfed babies also need a little bit of extra iron in their diet now – either from iron fortified cereal, pureed meats or supplemental iron drops. Formula fed babies will need to have this extra iron by 6 months.

Solid foods may be started as young as 4 months. If your baby doesn't seem interested in solid foods at 4 months, you can wait a little bit, but if you decide to hold off until 6 months, we would like you to start at least a few days or more before your 6 month well check so we can check how things are going. We have a specific handout to help you plan solid foods for your baby.

Healthy Sleep Habits

Hopefully your baby is sleeping at least one 6 hour stretch by now. If not, we may be able to adjust the schedule a little bit to try to make sure everybody gets enough rest. Sleep problems are common, frustrating and of course invite many opinions about how to fix them. Chronic sleep struggles put strain on parents, careers, marriages and relationships. Chronic sleep struggles can rob you of the joy of being a parent, so we take them seriously. We encourage you to ask for advice and read lots of available material, and then choose a strategy that fits your situation, parenting personality and infant's temperament best. Most strategies will work IF you are persistent. Check out our Recommended Reading Section on our Pinterest page for some good choices. Some basic tips:

- Establish a consistent sleep routine that both parents follow; this means roughly the same time as well as the same series of events (bath, breast, rocking, bed)
- Make sure your baby is not fully asleep when you put them down into the crib; allow them to be sleepy but not asleep so that they can develop the ability to drift off on their own. This process can be gradual if you need it to be.
- When your baby fusses in the night, wait a few minutes to see if they can settle down on their own. Check on them if they can't settle down; try to not pick up and start the routine over again, but pat and soothe with your voice. We want you to gradually allow them to do more of the work of getting back to sleep.
- Swaddling is fine until about 4 months of age, but thereafter it is discouraged. It's a good idea to help your baby learn to sleep without swaddling at this age.
- A small transition object (small stuffed animal, cuddly cloth) can be cuddled with you breast or bottle feed and can keep them company in bed.
- Don't start the habit of laying down with your baby to get to sleep. If you do not want to co-sleep, you may pay dearly for this later.

Teething

It's not common for babies to get a tooth at this age – the average first tooth comes about 6 mos. What IS common is for parents to worry about teething at this age. Babies will drool and chew on their hands frequently, and sometimes are pretty fussy. Parents worry that this must be a tooth working its way in. The truth is, it might be, but it's probably not. Babies use their mouth as a sensory organ for touch, feel as well as taste. They chew on their hands because it feels neat – not necessarily because their gums hurt. Feel free to offer teething toys to chew on, especially chilled ones, but avoid topical analgesics (Anbesol, etc) and teething tablets. They simply don't work. If your baby genuinely seems to be in pain, feel free to use Acetaminophen for discomfort occasionally.

Safety

It's not too early to think about the "baby-proofing" process. No house can ever be made 100% safe, but the idea is to reduce risk of injury. It's also misleading to consider a house baby-proofed, because you will need to adjust to the increasing ability of your child. Now is a good time to start thinking about plug covers, cabinet latches; it won't be long until your baby is mobile! Start wrapping cords from appliances, window treatments to prevent entanglement.

Start moving cleaning supplies high instead of under the sink. Start moving medication to locked containers.

Never allow your child in a car unless they are in an approved, rear-facing safety seat. Check weight AND height limits; many babies outgrow carrier-type seats because of their length first. Infants stay rear-facing at least until 12 months, and preferably until 2 years.

www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seat-Checkup.aspx

www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Home-Safety-Heres-How.aspx