

# WELL-CHILD CARE

## Four Month Old Visit

### Your Baby's Development

#### Social-Emotional

- Your baby should be smiling spontaneously and enjoying social interaction.
- Babies explore their world by putting their hands in their mouth. They use this to calm themselves as well.

#### Communication

- You should see that your baby has different cries for hunger, fatigue, pain
- Your baby should babble more expressively and spontaneously

#### Cognitive

- Your baby should be indicating pleasure and displeasure
- Your baby should be responding to your affection

#### Physical Development

- Your baby should be able to push his chest up to his elbows. He should have good head control.
- Your baby should be beginning to roll and reach for objects.

Your baby needs **daily routines** for feedings and naps.

This helps your baby to have a good sense of security.

#### Play with your baby!

**Quiet playtime activities:** reading, singing, sitting together in the park

**Active playtime activities:** Get a floor play gym so your baby can be on his back and reach for toys or kick them with his feet. Place your baby on her tummy on a colorful blanket with a mirror and toys to look at.



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#### Eating

- Your baby needs either breast milk or formula as his sole source of nutrients. Feedings may become less frequent. It is not unusual for him to want different amounts of formula at different times of the day. Your baby should be waking at night for feedings, usually requiring one feed overnight. During growth spurts you will see that your baby needs more food.
- Your baby should be able to show when she is hungry or full. Pay attention to these clues. It is important to respond to your baby's behaviors to avoid overfeeding or underfeeding.
- It is important to continue holding your baby for all his feeds to reduce the risk of choking. Do not prop the bottle.
- You may consider introducing plain, iron-fortified rice cereal at 4 months of age. Your baby needs to be ready for this, however. Your baby should be able to sit with support and have good head and neck control.

#### How to start feeding your baby rice cereal

Mix the cereal with formula in a small bowl. At the beginning, it should be runny. Feed to your baby with a spoon. Over the next few months, gradually thicken the cereal to a "porridge" consistency.

Do not put the cereal in the baby's bottle.

#### Crying

- Babies cry a lot at this age – it gets better as they get older. Crying won't hurt your baby.
- When your baby is crying check to see that she has been fed and that she does not have a dirty diaper. Check her from head to toe to see if there could be something causing her to cry.
- There are many possible ways to calm your baby: talking, patting, stroking, bundling, rocking, walking, dancing, going on car rides. Try to find what works for your baby.
- Realize that your baby can become bored, so you can try distracting her, moving her to another activity.
- You may find that you cannot console your baby. Some babies can be very difficult to calm no matter what you do. If you find that you become overwhelmed or frustrated by your baby's crying, put your baby down in a safe place and walk away. Seek out some help from friends, family, or your healthcare provider. Never, ever, shake your baby. This can cause permanent brain damage.



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### Sleep

- Your baby should be having a longer stretch of sleep for 5 to 6 hours overnight.
- Establish a **bedtime routine** for you and your baby. This routine should occur within the hour before bed. Things to include are a nighttime bath, reading a book to your baby, giving your baby a bottle.
- Your baby should go to bed early – around 7 p.m. Children have a natural “sleep window”. If you miss the window, they get a second wind and are even harder to put to sleep. Most babies sleep better and longer with an *earlier* bedtime.
- Place your baby in his crib when he is drowsy but not asleep. Talk to your baby gently and pat him to sleep. This will help your baby learn that he can go to sleep on his own. When he awakens at night he will be more likely to go back to sleep without your help.
- Keep regular naps. Daytime naps affect the quality of nighttime sleep.

### Safety

#### Car Safety

- Always put your baby in a **rear-facing** car seat in the **back seat**. Never place your baby’s car seat in the front seat with a passenger air bag.
- Is your car seat properly installed? You can find information about car seats at [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org).
  - A **Child Safety Seat Inspection Station** can inspect your car seat to see if you are installing your car seats properly. You can find this at [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org) or by calling 866.732.8243.
- Keep your baby in the back seat until he is at least 1 year of age and weighs at least 20 pounds.

#### Home Safety

- Never leave a child alone in or near a tub of water. Water can cause severe scalding burns and young children can drown in less than 2 inches of water.
- Infants can roll off of furniture like changing tables, couches, and beds. Falls are the most common reasons for emergency room visits. Get in the habit of always keeping one hand on the baby when changing diapers or clothing on changing tables.
- Do not allow your child to play with small objects. They can be placed in the mouth and your baby can choke.
- Do not use infant walkers. They are frequently the cause of falls.

#### Prevent Burns

- Do not drink hot liquids while holding your baby.



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- Adjust your water heater to 120 degrees F or less. Before bathing your baby, always test the water temperature with your wrist to make sure it is not too hot.

#### Fire Safety

- Buy a **fire extinguisher** for the home. The most common causes of home fires are cooking and heating equipment.
- Install **smoke alarms** in your home. Have an alarm on each floor and in the sleeping areas of the home. Check alarms monthly. Change the batteries at least once a year.

#### Gun Safety

- More than 5,000 children and adolescents are killed by gunfire each year. **Most of these injuries are almost always inflicted by themselves, a sibling, or a friend.**
- If you choose to keep a gun in the home, store it **unloaded** in a **locked** place. Lock and store the ammunition in a **separate** place.

#### Sleep Safety

- Your baby should continue to sleep on his back to reduce the risk of sudden death. Do not use loose, soft bedding or soft toys in the crib.
- Do not let your baby sleep in your bed.
- Your baby's crib should have slats that are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart and with a mattress that is the same size as the crib. The crib should be certified by the JPMA. Keep the sides of the crib raised when your baby is sleeping in it.
- If you use a mesh playpen or portable crib, the weave should have openings less than ¼ inch. Never leave your baby in a mesh playpen with the drop-side down.

#### Next Visit: Six-Month Well-child check

At the next visit ...

- Your baby will become even more interactive, engaging in face-to-face games.
- Your baby will start to distinguish between strangers and people he knows.
- Your baby will be able to sit with support. She will be reaching for and grabbing objects. She will transfer the objects between her hands.
- Your baby will start to have single-consonant sounds.



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