

Hi. I am your baby.

I am now 4 to 6 months old. I have my own unique personality and my own way of doing things. I may do some things before other babies and I may do some things after them. Be patient. I will get there in my own time.

The most important thing you can do is to be warm, loving and responsive to me. This will help my brain develop and shape the way I learn, think and behave for the rest of my life. I also need you to take care of yourself. If you feel unhappy or have negative feelings, please talk to family, friends or your doctor.

To help you know what to expect, here are some common milestones most babies reach between 4 and 6 months old.

Growth

Size

- I am growing faster now than I will grow at any other time in my life. My birth weight will at least double by the time I am six months old.
- My brain is also growing and developing quickly. I need nutritious food and lots of playing and moving around to help my brain develop.

Teeth

- Teething usually begins around 6 months old and will continue until I am about 2 to 3 years old.
- I might be fussy and cranky when I am teething and I'll probably drool a lot of saliva. I might not be very hungry.
- You can help me by letting me chew on a clean teething ring or damp washcloth. Do not use teething gel, ice cubes, teething biscuits or soft foods to help me teethe. I could choke on these things.
- Talk to my dentist or doctor if my gums become red and sore or if I get a fever or diarrhea when I am teething.
- Gently wipe my mouth and gums with a clean cloth every day.

Development

Movement

- I am getting more control over my movements.
- I can control my head movements.
- I use my hands and mouth to learn more about objects and my surroundings.
- My legs are getting stronger. I will push down on my legs if you support and stand me on my feet.
- I might sit without help for short periods.
- I can roll over from my stomach to my back.
- I might rock on my hands and knees. I might even start to crawl.
- If I see something I want, I will reach for it.

Language

- I like it when you talk, sing and read to me.
- I smile or laugh when you talk to me in a nice voice.
- I might cry when I hear an angry voice.
- I might stop crying when you talk softly to me.
- I make several vowel-like sounds, such as “e” and “a” and I like it when you repeat the sounds I make.
- I squeal, grunt, laugh and might start to babble.
- If I do not babble or make sounds, take me to a speech-pathologist.

Hearing

- I will turn my head toward sounds and voices.
- If I do not seem to hear you when you come into my room, take me to my doctor.

Vision

- I like to look at my hands.
- I smile at myself in the mirror.



Behavior and Emotions

Thinking, Feeling and Doing

- I love to interact with people and can be easily entertained.
- I am interested in the world around me and will stop feeding just to look around.
- I might cry or act shy when people I don't know get too close to me.
- I know my family and like to be around them.
- I like to play in the bath.
- I am very curious and like to explore and learn.
- I like to touch things and to feel different textures.
- I might cry when you take something away from me.
- I am learning how to form lasting relationships by getting attached to things, like a toy, blanket or soother.

Crying

- I might cry for no reason or just because I am bored.
- I know it can be frustrating to hear me cry but please *never* shake me for any reason. Shaking can cause brain damage, blindness, paralysis or even death. Take a break, don't shake.

Sleeping

- I like to nap during the day and will probably take 2 naps every day.
- A regular bedtime routine can help me relax and get ready to go to sleep.
- I will probably sleep through at least one night time feeding and might even sleep through the night.

Playing

- I like bright, colorful toys and other items.
- Some of the toys I like are unbreakable mirrors, soft balls, toys that make sounds, musical toys, see-through rattles and baby books.
- I like to play and move on the floor. I especially like it when you get down on the floor and play with me.
- I might like being on my tummy now.

Sexual Health

Children learn about sexuality daily and continue learning throughout their lives. Sexuality is an awareness of our entire self as a male or female. This is basic to healthy sexual development.

- I learn about love and trust by the way you hold and cuddle me.
- I need to hear the correct name of all my body parts, i.e., eyes, nose, penis, vulva or vagina.

Eating

- I still need breast milk or iron-fortified formula to help me grow for the first year. I can have whole milk when I am 9–12 months old but should not have skim or 2% milk until I am much older.
- If I am breastfed, ask our community health nurse or doctor about vitamin D supplements.
- With your help, I can start to learn to drink from a cup.
- I do not need solid foods until I am 6 months of age.
- Never let me go to sleep with a bottle of milk, juice or sweetened water. The sugar can damage my teeth even when I am very young.

Immunization

- Protect me from disease. Ensure I get my 4 month and 6 month immunizations on time.

Child Care

- If I need child care, talk to our community health nurse who can tell you what to look for in a child care setting.

Keeping Me Safe

I am always changing and learning new things. I depend on you to help keep me safe as I start to explore my world. What is safe one day might not be safe the next day. Get down on your hands and knees and see the world the way I see it, so you can remove possible hazards before I find them.

Most childhood injuries can be predicted and prevented.

Here are some **simple guidelines** to help keep me safe between 4 and 6 months old...and beyond.

Falls are the leading cause of hospital visits for childhood injuries

- Lower the mattress in my crib as soon as I can sit.
- Take down my crib mobile when I can get up on my hands and knees.
- When you put me in a high chair, always strap me in with the safety straps and stay with me.
- Use a high chair that has a wide base so it cannot be tipped over if someone bumps into it.
- Start thinking about baby gates, drawers and cupboards, toilet covers, corner protectors for furniture and other possible hazards. I am going to be crawling soon if I am not already!
- I can roll over from my stomach to my back. Keep your hand over me at all times when I am in a high place.
- Strap me securely into my stroller or carriage.
- Never put me in a baby-walker with wheels.



Car Safety

- Put me in an approved child safety seat every time we travel by car.
- I am safest in a rear facing child safety seat until my first birthday. Be sure to read the manufacturer's directions – some are only recommended rear facing until I weigh 9 kg (20 pounds) but others not until 16 kg (35 pounds).
- Make sure my child safety seat is properly installed.
- Never leave me alone in a vehicle. What you think will take 5 minutes may take much longer. I can become too hot in a vehicle in the summer and too cold during the winter.
- I should not eat or drink by myself while travelling in a vehicle. I could choke while you are driving and you may not be able to help me.

Crib Safety

- My crib should have a bolted mattress support, not S-shaped hooks. The space between bars should be no more than 6 centimeters (2³/₈ inches).
- The mattress should fit snugly in my crib.

Sun Safety

- Keep me out of the direct sunlight. Clothing, hats and shade will protect my sensitive skin from the sun.
- Do not put sunscreen on me until I am 6 months old.

Burns and Scalds

- Be very careful when you eat, drink or carry anything hot when I am close to you.
- If you warm up my formula in a microwave oven, always shake the bottle and check the temperature before you feed it to me.
- Check that bath water is about body temperature (37°C or 98.6°F) by touching the water with your wrist or elbow. The water should feel warm, not hot or cold.

Water Safety

- Always stay with me when I am in the bathtub and always keep one hand on me.

Choking

- Anything I might put in my mouth should be too big for me to swallow.
- Do not give me hard, small and round, smooth or sticky solid foods like hard candies, cough drops, gum, raisins, nuts or grapes. They may block my airway and I could choke.
- Check my soother often to make sure it is not soft and cannot come apart.
- Never hang my soother on a string around my neck.
- Choose toys and equipment appropriate for my age.

Animals and Children

- Animals, even the family pet, can hurt me. Stay with me when animals are around.
- If our cat or dog is in the house when I am sleeping, close my bedroom door.
- My siblings and other children can hurt me. Stay with me when other children are around.

Fire Safety

- Make sure our house has smoke detectors that work.
- Plan and practice how our family will get out of the house if there is a fire.

Questions?

If you have any questions concerning your child's healthy growth and development, please contact your community health nurse at your local health region office.

Health Link Alberta

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)

Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)

Outside Edmonton and Calgary local calling areas, call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

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Growth and Development Series

