

Child development: 6-9 months

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Remember, the information on this fact sheet should not be used or relied on as an alternative to professional care. If you have a particular problem, see your health care professional.

- She will, in the course of these months, come to recognize the important, familiar people in her world and therefore become sensitive to strangers. By 9 months she will be shy with strangers, and for a while she might not even want to be too close to people she knows, such as her grandparents but this will change. With familiar people it is a very sociable age and she will love playing and chatting.

You and your baby are starting to feel (and act) like separate people. He is starting to sit up, move by rolling, reach out and act on the world. He worries that you might not come back when you go away from him and lets you know it. He will really respond to you giving him lots of things to look at, touch, play with, and safely put in his mouth.

Time playing on his tummy on the floor will strengthen his back and get his legs into crawling mode.

Social and emotional development

There are some big emotional and physical developments in your baby that you will notice between 6 and 9 months. Your baby is becoming able to move around and take a much more active part in family life.

- Your baby begins to realize she is a separate person surrounded by her own skin and finishing at her hands and feet. She no longer experiences floating in a sea of feelings and needs

where the outside and the inside are all mixed together, instead she begins to feel she has an outside and an inside and to know where the boundary of the outside is. She will start to understand that you are separate from her, and it will worry her when she can't see you or feel you nearby.

- She begins to recognize and identify her own feelings and that they are different. For instance she may know the difference between feeling hungry and feeling lonely and may be able to give you some clue as to whether she wants food or a cuddle. She knows this because you have helped her to recognize different feelings by responding to her hunger with food and her loneliness with cuddles etc.
- She will begin to have desires of her own; simple things she knows she wants, like wanting to hold an object or wanting to be picked up immediately. Her desires may not always be the same as yours and for the first time you may feel yourself clash with her tiny will!

Physical development

He will put everything in his mouth. His lips and tongue are the most sensitive part of his body and will give him lots of information about texture, shape and taste. Also, you can swallow some bits of the world [such as food] but not others and he is just learning this! Safety is very important!

- He will start to take some mashed solids around this time, and later some soft finger food such as toast, [under your supervision].
- At first it is hard for him to work out the eating action because he is used to sucking, so keeping the food inside his mouth can be a challenge!
- Just because the mashed pumpkin gets spat out does not necessarily mean he hates it, he just may not yet have got the hang of keeping it inside his mouth and swallowing it.
- Different textures feel very strange to him at first.



An Australian Government Initiative

For more information on this topic or any issues related to pregnancy, birth or babies, call the free 24 hour helpline:

1800 882 436



Moving

At some time during these four months she will be able to:

- roll over, front to back and back to front
- sit alone for a few moments when you put her into a sitting position, then manage to sit by herself without falling over
- do push ups when on her tummy, ie lift her head and chest off the floor and support herself on outstretched arms



- start to move while on her tummy, first 'commando' style ie pulling herself along on her arms, then crawl on all fours
- reach for a rattle and shake it
- swap a toy from one hand to the other
- find her feet, play with them and put them in her mouth.

Seeing

His eye muscles will be working well and he will be able to focus on small objects. He also develops a perception of depth and therefore can be afraid of heights and falling. By 9 months he can not only see a drop but understand that it is scary. Despite this some babies let the desire to move overcome this feeling and try, for example, to roll off the change table.

Hearing

He will turn towards familiar sounds and voices and want to make sounds himself, not only verbally but by banging objects together.

Speech and language

While she has been cooing and babbling for many weeks her sounds will now take on a closer resemblance to real words.

- Your baby enjoys making sounds and she knows that she has made them.
- She will experiment with, and copy, different sounds like clicks, lip bubbles and raspberries as well as her word-like sounds.
- She will use lots of different sounds to express different emotions; frustrated grunts, squeals and chortles of delight are all in her repertoire.
- She will listen to you carefully when you speak to her, and she will 'talk' back to you using her babbling sounds.
- She will probably be putting a vowel and a consonant together as in "muum", or "bubub".
- She might say 'ma-ma-ma' because she can, rather than because she understands that this sound is a word she can use when she wants her mother. Even though it may still be accidental these same sounds will be repeated as she works out how to make the noises.

Activities for the 6-9 month old

He loves to touch and grasp and to 'make things happen', ie make things shake or bang or move towards him. These activities are great fun and also help him to understand that he has an effect on the world, he can DO things to it. If we want our children to be able to

act in the world when they are grown up, this is very important.

Conceptually he is learning about up and down as well as coming and going and he will love to play games that act these things out.

He will love to:

- have you look into his eyes and chat with him
- lie on his back and grab his feet
- lie on his tummy and reach for a brightly coloured toy or piece of paper
- have you play "here is your nose - here is mummy's nose"
- drop his toy from the highchair or pusher endlessly and delight in watching you pick it up
- play 'ahh boo' as you bring your face quickly down to his tummy.
- play 'peek-a-boo' as you hide your face behind a book or cloth and say his name when you come out.

At this age, although they want things that they can hold and shake and drop, and put into their mouth, babies need most of all to be with and to have fun interacting with people, especially their parents and other people who are close to them such as their brothers and sisters and grandparents. People are much more interesting than things.

Safety

A moving, mouthing baby needs constant supervision and can quickly swallow small objects or creep into unsafe places. Babies are unable to understand about danger. Lock away unsafe objects or put them high out of reach.

Alert!

You should check with a health professional if, by nine months, your child is not:

- sitting up without help
- smiling and laughing out loud
- grasping, holding and shaking things
- reaching out for objects and putting them into his mouth
- turning towards you when you call his name
- beginning to try some 'solid' foods
- making lots of different sounds.

Every baby is different, but if you are worried that your baby is out-of-step with things that most babies do, it is a good idea to check with your community child health nurse or a doctor. If there are any problems, getting help early is important, and if there isn't, it will be reassuring to know that all is well.

Summary

Social emotional

A baby at this stage usually:

- knows familiar people, starts to withdraw from strangers
- begins to turn around when her name is called
- starts to become anxious if her main caregiver is out of sight
- stretches up her arms to be picked up
- initiates gestures such as cough, poking out tongue.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- does not show pleasure when she sees familiar people
- is not making eye contact
- cannot be reassured by mother or close carer.

Motor skills

A baby at this stage usually:

- sits without support by 8 -9 months
- starts to move around by 8 months (rolling, creeping)
- takes objects to mouth by 6 months.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- is not sitting by 9 months
- holds his body stiff and cannot be put in a sitting position
- is not interested in, and reaching for, objects by 8 months.

Daily activity

A baby at this stage usually:

- can hold a bottle to drink
- can start to drink from a cup, which is held by an adult, by 6-8 months
- holds a spoon - but cannot use it, by 7 months
- begins to try some 'solid' foods.

Understanding

A baby at this stage usually:

- looks for a fallen object by 7 months
- plays 'peek-a-boo' games
- cannot understand 'no' or 'danger'.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- does not recognise mother
- does not show interest in surroundings.

Speech and language

A baby at this stage usually:

- babbles by 6-7 months making one and two syllable sounds eg 'dada'
- listens to a person speaking, then 'answers' in babbling sounds.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- does not babble, imitate or make other sounds when someone talks to him.

Resources

Parent Line in your state or territory

Child and Family Health Service

References

Allen K and Marotz L, "Developmental Profiles" Delmar Publishing 1999.

Lingam S and Harvey D, "Manual of Child Development" Churchill Livingstone 1988.

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