

What are Milestones?

It's important to understand milestones because they help you know if your baby is on track with growth and development. As your baby grows and develops, they will learn certain skills that build upon others to help them learn to walk, talk, think, and get along with people like you and I do. You'll notice that milestones fall within a range of ages. That's because each child is unique and develops at their own pace. You can easily help your child develop their skills by simply loving and playing with them. Your child reaches their milestones best by interacting with you and others. It's a good idea to learn about milestones but try not to focus too much on them. Being aware of them helps you know if your baby has any delays or setbacks so that you can get them help. If you attend all of your well-baby visits, your medical provider will keep a watchful eye over your child's development and let you know of any possible delays. Your provider will also rely on you to alert them to any concerns you have, such as lost skills.

Movement Milestones

Lots of supervised tummy time will help your baby strengthen their neck and back. It may look like they're struggling, but those struggles build strength. Try putting a toy in front of them to encourage them to lift their head and look up at it or put it by their hand to encourage them to clutch it. Get on the floor with your baby to encourage their efforts in movement. Anytime you have your baby on their tummy, you need to be very careful and watchful. If they fall asleep, they need to be placed on their back in a blanket-free crib. You can also lay them on their back on an infant play mat so they can look at the toys dangling over them to encourage them to move their head. Try to avoid overstimulating them. If your baby begins to get fussy, then playtime is over.

Vision and Hearing Milestones

In the first month, your baby can only see objects right in front of them and can only see patterns and colors that are high in contrast. Their vision is just good enough for them to gaze at your face for feedings. Notice that they focus on you as they eat. By three months, their vision has developed enough to the point they can begin distinguishing subtle color differences and follow objects from side to side! They can also recognize familiar objects and faces from a distance. Soon they'll begin recognizing their family! In the area of hearing, your baby is born already knowing your voice. They heard it from the womb as they grew and developed! You may notice that when your baby fusses, your voice may calm or quiet them. With time, they'll learn the other voices in their family too. By around three months, you'll notice your baby turning their head to locate a sound or voice they hear. You can provide visual stimulation with items that have contrasting colors to them such as black and white color patterns. Use colorful toys such as mobiles for them to look at or toys that make sounds. Bring your baby close and talk, murmur, or sing to them. Have the rest of the family talk to them as well.

Speech and Language Milestones

Even though your baby can't use words, your newborn is well-equipped to communicate. They tell you what they want by crying. If they're hungry, uncomfortable, overstimulated, tired, or just needs you, they'll cry. Talk to your baby; as they make sounds, imitate them. Your baby will love it, but also talk to them in normal adult form, too. Eventually you'll want to throw out the baby talk to give them good examples of how to speak. Read to them, even if you don't think they'll understand it; the more they hear, the more they'll learn. Even before they can utter words or sentences, they'll eventually pick up on the subtle rules of communication.

Social and Emotional Milestones

The best way to develop social and emotional milestones is by interacting with your baby a lot. Talk, smile, laugh, kiss, comfort, play with them, and be attentive to their needs. Be aware of their temperament and parent to them. If your baby is overly-sensitive, then gently or slowly introduce them to new things. If they react more strongly, then be careful not to overstimulate them. The more engaged your baby is with you, the more their brain develops, their world opens up, and they become less focused on hunger, gas, or being tired.

When to Call Your Provider

By the end of three months, your baby should reach several of their three-month milestones. But call your provider if you notice that your baby:

- Has difficulty lifting their head
- Has stiff legs with little to no movement
- Pushes back with her head
- Keeps hands fisted and lacks arm movements
- Is not using a part or side of their body
- Jitters or shakes too much
- Stops doing something they used to do
- Isn't smiling or making eye contact

Movement Milestones

- Raises head and chest on stomach
- Supports upper body on stomach
- Stretches and kicks on back
- Opens and shuts hands
- Brings hands to mouth
- Grasps and shakes toys

Visual and Hearing Milestones

- Follows moving objects
- Recognizes familiar objects and people
- Uses hands and eyes in coordination
- Prefers sweet smells
- Prefers soft textures
- Turns head toward sounds

Speech and Language Milestones

- Makes eye contact
- Cries differently for different needs, such as hungry versus tired
- Coos and smiles

Social and Emotional Milestones

- Begins to develop a social smile
- Learns to self-entertain
- Enjoys playing with people
- Communicates in expressing emotions (squeals, coos, babbles, and chuckles)
- "Talks" when spoken to
- Is expressive with face and body
- Imitates movements and expressions
- Has awareness to strange situations

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