

Why Milestones?

From birth to one year, your baby develops certain skills in order to be ready for their second year. These skills are categorized into normal expected age ranges. This helps you know if your baby is on track; but remember, they are just general guidelines. What is most important is to go to all of your baby's well visits at two months, four months, six months, nine months, and one year. Since you know your baby best, you should bring up any discrepancies with your provider that you notice between your baby and the milestone guidelines.¹

Movement Milestones

Movement milestones track your baby's physical development. They involve the use of big muscles, like the ones before the arms, legs, neck, and back. These are the muscles they will need to walk, run, jump, and climb! But first, they have to strengthen those muscles and learn balance, coordination, and more. By six months, they'll be able to transfer objects from one hand to the other and put them into their mouth. But before this happens, you will want to get down on your hands and knees and go through your house to remove all small objects that could be choking hazards. So, what can you do to help your baby develop their movement skills? The easiest way is to just play with them. Get down on the floor with them and continue to give them tummy time. Watch as they roll over and begins the shaky journey to getting into a crawling position. Put rattle toys, lids to containers, or blocks close by that they can roll over to, pick up, and play with. Give them experiences with items that have different textures, colors, and patterns that they can reach for, grasp, and taste.^{2 3 4}

Language and Communication

How do you encourage language and communication skills? All you really have to do is talk to them. As you walk with them, point out objects and tell them what they're named. Talk to your baby about everything. Use expression in your voice so that they can learn the nuances of language. Remember, we don't just communicate with words. We use tone, our hands, and facial expressions, and babies have to learn this. When you're happy, you smile, clap your hands, and your voice goes up.^{4 5 6}

Social and Emotional

After three months of observing you and your family, your baby is ready to show you who they are! You should see them becoming more attentive and curious about everything within their sight and reach. They'll also begin responding to other people's emotions and should seem generally happy most of the time. They love to play; watch as they respond with smiles or chuckles to peek-a-boo, when you show them a favorite toy, or when the family pet licks their face. Life is intensely interesting to your baby as they engage in it and those around them. They're even interesting to themselves. Hold them up to a mirror and watch as they wonder who they're looking at.^{4 7}

Cognitive

Cognitive skills are your baby's ability to think, learn, and problem-solve. Research has shown that right from birth, your baby is learning! They learn that if they babble and squeals, you'll react with joy. That's cause and effect. They learn that your smiles mean you're pleased with them, and that makes them want to smile back. Some emerging cognitive skills that you will see in your baby by six months include the ability to find partially hidden objects. Before, when an object was hidden, your baby thought it had magically disappeared. But soon, they'll be able to figure out that it's just out of sight, but still there. That's incredible deductive thinking for a little baby! This all started by observing and looking around at things.^{4 8}

Calling Your Provider

If you notice that your baby isn't progressing in their development or they begin to lose some of those skills they've already learned, then it's important to see your provider. Contact your medical provider, if your baby:

- Doesn't try to get things within reach
- Doesn't show affection for you
- Doesn't respond to sounds around them
- Has trouble putting things into their mouth
- Doesn't make vowel sounds, such as "ah", "eh," or "oh"
- Doesn't roll over in either direction
- Doesn't laugh or squeal
- Seems stiff and their muscles seem tight
- Seems floppy, like a rag doll

Your provider can refer you to a specialist to help your baby catch up on missing or lost skills or to test your baby for other potential problems. But remember, no matter the reason for the delay, your baby is still a unique and valuable little person.⁴

Movement Milestones

- Rolls over in both directions
- Begins to sit without support
- Rocks back and forth
- Uses raking grasp
- Supports weight on legs

Social and Emotional Milestones

- Knows familiar faces and begins to know if someone is a stranger
- Likes to play with others, especially parents
- Responds to other people's emotions and often seems happy
- Likes to look at themselves in a mirror

Language/Communication Milestones

- Responds to sounds by making sounds
- Strings vowels together when babbling
- Responds to his own name
- Makes sounds to show joy and displeasure
- Begins to say consonant sounds

Cognitive Milestones

- Looks around at things nearby
- Brings things to mouth
- Begins to pass things from one hand to another
- Finds partially hidden objects
- Shows curiosity about things and tries to get things that are out of reach

Resources:

1. Williams, Glenda, MD, Pediatrician, "Infant Expectations." 2020.
2. "Hand and Finger Skills." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Hand-and-Finger-Skills.aspx.
3. "Baby." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/default.aspx.
4. "Important Milestones: Your Baby By Six Months." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5 Dec. 2019, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/milestones-6mo.html.
5. "Language Development: 4 to 7 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Language-Development-4-to-7-Months.aspx.
6. "Hearing and Making Sounds." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Hearing-and-Making-Sounds.aspx.
7. "Emotional and Social Development: 4 to 7 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Emotional-and-Social-Development-4-7-Months.aspx.
8. "Cognitive Development: 4 to 7 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Cognitive-Development-4-to-7-Months.aspx.