

Your Baby's Incredible Mind

From birth, your baby's brain has grown, changed, and developed as a result of all of their experiences and interactions—good and bad. This includes the relationship they have with you and their family, the love and care you give them, and their expanding understanding of their world. And the most critical time for this is in their first few years. During this time, you will want to strictly limit electronic use for your child. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that babies under the age of two have VERY limited time on electronics and only when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach. Involve your baby in as much as you can throughout your day and make sure that the caregivers you put them with are responsive and caring, just like you. The more you talk, read, play with, and include your baby in everyday family life, the more their brain grows and develops.

Movement Milestones

By nine months, your baby's mobility is really taking off! They are doing everything they can to take their first step! Soon enough they'll be walking and then running, and then you'll be running after them! Your baby has likely gotten crawling down pretty well by now, and they're also likely pulling themselves up to stand. They may even be letting go of furniture occasionally to test their balance. If not, they will be soon. You might catch them cruising around the couch or coffee table while holding on. It's only a matter of time until, with a little coordination and balance, and a lot of courage, and then your little cruiser will take their first solo step! Put padding on those squared, sharp edges of furniture to prevent bruises and owies. You don't need to use a baby walker to teach your baby to walk. They really don't help, and they can be very dangerous. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against them. You'll notice that your baby has the pincer grasp down really well by now. They can manipulate their toys, feed themselves, and are getting better at voluntarily letting go of things in their grasp.

Language and Communication Milestones

You may notice, as your baby nears one year of age, that their nonverbal communication is getting pretty good. They may crawl toward something they want, point, and well...you know just what they mean. They may also be imitating tones and gestures they see you doing when you talk, such as pointing, waving, nodding, or shaking your head. They're also putting sounds together that make words. When they say "Mama" or "Dada" and you get excited and praise them, they learn how meaningful those words are. They learn that "Mama" gets your attention in such a special way. Eventually they learn that *you* are Mama. Watch as they practice these new special words! This is communication! Remember that their words don't always sound like the actual word. You don't need to correct them, but when you use a word, make sure you pronounce it correctly so that, with time, they can learn the right way to say it.

Social and Emotional Milestones

Social and emotional skills are how your baby responds to you and other people, and how they handle their emotions. They're now aware of people they don't know—strangers! You may start seeing your baby grow more nervous or shy around strangers. This is completely normal. They may even become more anxious or cry around people they used to be comfortable with, such as babysitters or relatives. At about the same time, your baby may also get more upset when you leave them and may cling to you and scream as you try to leave. Eventually they will learn from experience that you WILL come back for them, and just like that, this stage will pass.

Cognitive Milestones

Their brain really is the center of everything! At nine months, your child's attention span was still pretty short—they likely could only focus for a couple minutes on any one thing. At this young age, they're highly distractible! But like everything else, their attention span also continues to grow, and by their first birthday, they might be willing to sit for as long as fifteen minutes. That's progress! You'll start seeing them explore their environment in different ways, such as throwing, shaking, and banging things together. They might even find glee in the game of retrieve. That's where they drop their bottle or cup, and you pick it up—over and over and over—hundreds of times! And speaking of cups, your baby will start to use one correctly, as well as brushing their hair—or yours! You'll even see your baby begin to follow simple directions like, "pick up the toy," or "come to Mama!" They'll also start to understand the names of things and will point to the right picture when it's named.

When to Call Your Provider

The reason we share these milestones with you is because you know your child best. You're with them every day, and you're the one who will likely notice any delays. Knowing the guidelines will help you keep an eye on your baby's development and alert your provider to any problems. If your child is delayed or missing any of the milestones, or if you have any concerns, talk to your medical provider, who can refer you to a specialist who can help your baby catch up.

Movement Milestones

- Gets to a sitting position without help.
- Pulls up to stand, walks holding on to furniture (cruising).
- May take a few steps without holding on.
- May stand alone.

Cognitive Milestones

- Explores things in different ways, like shaking, banging, throwing.
- Finds hidden things easily.
- Looks at the right picture or thing when it's named.
- Copies gestures.
- Starts to use things correctly; for example, drinks from a cup, brushes hair.
- Bangs two things together.
- Puts things in a container, takes things out of a container.
- Lets things go without help.
- Pokes with index (pointer) finger.
- Follows simple directions like "pick up the toy."

Language and Communication Milestones

- Responds to simple spoken requests.
- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye."
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speech).
- Says "Mama" and "Dada" and exclamations like "uh-oh!"
- Tries to repeat words you say.

Social and Emotional Milestones

- Is shy or nervous with strangers.
- Cries when Mom or Dad leaves.
- Has favorite things and people.
- Shows fear in some situations.
- Hands you a book when they want to hear a story.
- Repeats sounds or actions to get attention.
- Puts out arm or leg to help with dressing.
- Plays games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake."

References:

1. Mundkur, Nandini. Neuroplasticity in Children. Department of Pediatrics Bangalore Children Hospital, medind.nic.in/icb/t05/i10/icbt05i10p855.pdf. Accessed 5/8/2020
2. "Healthy Digital Media Use Habits for Babies, Toddlers & Preschoolers." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 12 Nov. 2019, www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Healthy-Digital-Media-Use-Habits-for-Babies-Toddlers-Preschoolers.aspx. Accessed 5/8/2020
3. "Your Child at 1 Year - Centers for Disease Control and ..." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2009, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/checklists/CDC_LTSAE-Checklists-with-Tips-1year-P.pdf. Accessed 5/8/2020
4. "Movement: Babies 8 to 12 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 7 Apr. 2021, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Movement-8-to-12-Months.aspx. Accessed 5/8/2020
5. "Language Development: 8 to 12 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Language-Development-8-to-12-Months.aspx. Accessed 5/8/2020
6. "Emotional and Social Development: 8 to 12 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Sept. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Emotional-and-Social-Development-8-12-Months.aspx. Accessed 5/8/2020
7. "Cognitive Development: 8 to 12 Months." HealthyChildren.org, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1 Aug. 2009, www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Cognitive-Development-8-to-12-Months.aspx. Accessed 5/8/2020