

Well Baby Visit - Nine Months

Date: _____ Weight: _____ Length: _____ Head size: _____

The 9-month-old child continues making major gains in development and begins displaying a little independence. The youngster of this age is always on the move and will begin to get opinionated about such things as what foods to eat and when to go to sleep. Occasionally, these opinions turn into protests, so now is the time to begin setting some limits and saying "no." The following comments are designed to help you enjoy your 9-month-old while continuing to gain confidence in yourselves as parents.

PARENTING AND BEHAVIORAL

- Keep up a constant chatter with your 9-month-old child. Talking to your child while dressing, bathing, feeding, playing, walking and driving encourages speech development.
- Encourage play with age-appropriate toys. Babies like to bounce, swing, reach for you, pick up and drop objects, and bang things together. Choose toys carefully, avoiding all toys with small pieces that can be easily removed and swallowed or have sharp edges. Toys that are rounded and made of wood or soft, but strong, plastic are usually safe. Unbreakable household objects such as plastic measuring cups, large wooden spoons, pots, pans and plastic containers make great toys. A foam rubber ball helps the child develop his small motor skills.
- Provide opportunities for safe exploration.
- Begin to set some limits for future discipline by using verbal "no's," distraction, removing the object from the baby's sight or removing the baby from the object. Never use spanking as a form of discipline, even a "little" tap on the hand. If you become angry with your baby, put the child in their crib or playpen for one or two minutes. This will allow you to calm down and allows your baby to realize she has done something wrong. Consistent discipline is very important - adhering to the limits you set keeps your child safe.
- Shoes are not necessary at this age. They should be used only to protect the feet from sharp objects and the cold.
- Establish a bedtime routine and other habits to discourage night awakening. Make sure your baby has learned self-soothing techniques by providing your child with the same transitional object, such as a stuffed animal, special blanket, favorite toy.
- Stranger and separation anxiety may limit some parent's ability to leave their 9-month-old with grandparents or a babysitter. It is important for parents to get out from time to time without their little one. You get a breather, and your son learns that sometimes you do go away, but you always come back.
- Parents need playtime too. However, babies this age sometimes feel frightened when left with a new caretaker. If at all possible, try to get the baby to know the sitter with you present before leaving her alone with the sitter for the first time.

DEVELOPMENT

Your 9 month old should be able to:

- Sit well independently.
- During this period your baby will probably learn to creep, crawl and otherwise get around the room. He may even pull up in the crib or on furniture, and begin "cruising" around the room.
- Perhaps the most striking developmental achievement is the use of fingers and thumb to poke, pry, probe, and pick up smaller and smaller objects.
- Respond to his own name.
- Make attempts to feed herself, especially finger foods.
- Possibly say "dada" or "mama" but not specifically to his father or mother.
- Understand a few words, such as "no-no" and "bye-bye."
- Bang two toys together.
- Play interactive games well, such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake.
- Sleep through the night except for an occasional night waking.
- Show feelings of pleasure and eagerness.
- Show displeasure with loss of a toy or when left alone in a room.
- Begin developing certain concepts - for example, your child will retrieve a toy after he watched you put it under a blanket.
- The 9-month-old has now learned to be a little afraid of certain strangers - even to family members she does not see very often. The baby of this age also begins to take a dim view of being examined by their doctor.

FEEDING

- Growth rate slows a little now. Therefore, expect your baby's appetite to be slightly diminished.

- Continue to breast feed or use iron-fortified formula for the first year of the infant's life, in order to have healthy bones and teeth, and to prevent anemia (low blood count).
- Feeding should be on a routine mealtime schedule, which hopefully coincides with the family mealtimes. Try scheduling four feedings per day, at a minimum.
- Continue introducing new solid foods. Your baby will let you know when and how much he wants to eat. Add one new food at a time to your baby's diet. Use a new food for a few days in a row before trying another. Watch for any reaction, such as a rash, vomiting, or diarrhea. If it occurs, stop the new food and wait one month before trying it again. Don't use mixed vegetables or jars with combinations of different food until you have tried each food in the mixture one at a time.
- Your baby will begin to show preferences for some food and dislike for others as new solids are introduced.
- Table foods should still be cooked until very soft, with no additional salt, fats, or spices. Mash foods or blend them in a blender. Examples include: cooked vegetables such as carrots, peas, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, squash, green beans, pinto beans, kidney beans; canned fruits, such as peaches, pears (mashed), applesauce; fresh fruit, such as mashed bananas; cereals, such as cooked cream of rice, cream of wheat, oatmeal; finely ground or pureed meats.
- Now is the time to begin introducing a cup if you haven't already, since it is important to **try** to eliminate all bottles around the baby's first birthday. The easiest way to do this is by taking advantage of the infant's natural curiosity and desire to imitate adults. Parents should buy two or three brightly colored plastic cups and begin drinking out of these new cups. Since the child will want the same thing the parents have, start giving your child her formula in an identical cup. She will not be able to hold the cup by herself for some time. An alternate way of introducing the cup is to use one with a top and "feeding spout." While your child will not be using this type of cup when she gets older, there is less of a mess when she tips it over! Don't lose patience! If your 9-month-old shows little interest, try again in a day or two. Don't worry if it seems your baby is taking less liquid from the cup. This is normal since the growth rate slows down for a while.
- Your baby is developing new skills. Encourage your baby also to eat from a spoon and pick up finger foods to feed himself, as his grasp gets better. Some examples of good finger foods are toast cut in strips, graham crackers, softened cheerios, fresh bananas, peach or pear in small slices, cooked peas, cooked beans, cooked carrots. Feeding time will be messy! Don't scold or fuss; use newspaper or a plastic sheet under the high chair to help with clean up.
- Give your baby soft table foods to increase the texture and variety of foods in her diet. Give your child the opportunity to use her newly developed skill of picking up things by offering small bits of soft table foods. The 9-month-old is a great imitator. The food on your plate is much more appetizing to her, so take advantage of this to introduce new table foods.
- Avoid giving foods that can cause choking. The most common foods babies aspirate are peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs/ sausages, carrot sticks, celery sticks, whole grapes, raisins, corn, whole beans, hard candy, large pieces of raw vegetables/ fruit, and tough meat. Always supervise your baby while eating and learn the proper emergency procedures for choking.
- If there is a strong family history of a food allergy, you might want to limit or avoid highly allergenic foods, such as eggs, strawberries, nuts/nut products, and seafood until your baby is older (most are safe to try at 1 year, but nuts should be avoided until 3 years if the family history is present).
- Resist the temptation to feed your baby desserts, puddings, or creamed vegetables which have added milk solids, cornstarch, or sugar your baby doesn't need. Sweets, punches, and soft drinks just help to spoil baby's appetite for more nourishing foods.
- When introducing juices, dilute them with the same amount of water to avoid causing diarrhea. Juice is not necessary at this age but may be started. Unsweetened, diluted apple or white grape juice are good ones to start with. Excess juice consumption leads to malnutrition, diarrhea, and cavities. Limit juice intake to 4 ounces per day.
- Continue to give the breast-feeding infant supplemental Vitamin D, and fluoride supplements, if your water supply is not fluoridated.
- If a caregiver is feeding your baby, go over the schedule with him to make sure he is feeding your infant the way you want.
- Because your baby is getting ready to cut teeth, she may be "gnawing" on everything.
- The following guidelines are suggestions for amounts of different foods:
 - ⇒ Breast Milk or Formula: 20 to 26 ounces each 24 hours, including what is used for cereal.
 - ⇒ Cereals: 4 to 6 tablespoons once a day. Add 1.5 tablespoons of formula, water, or expressed breast milk to each tablespoon of dry cereal.
 - ⇒ Vegetables: 4 to 5 tablespoons 2-3 times a day. You should start with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods.
 - ⇒ Fruits: 4 to 5 tablespoons 2-3 times a day. You should start with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods. Unsweetened 100% fruit juice (3 to 4 ounces once a day) may be used as a substitute for one fruit serving. Juice should be put in a cup, not a bottle - this will also help with the transition from bottle to cup.

- ⇒ Meats: To begin about 9 months of age. 4 to 5 tablespoons once a day. Begin with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods.

IMMUNIZATIONS

No immunizations are routinely given at this age. The next shots are given at 12 months of age.

SAFETY

- Now that baby is crawling and exploring (or soon will be), parents must be aware of and limit the possibility of accidents in the home. No matter how safe we think our homes are, REMEMBER, babies need constant watching! The safest place is in their bed or playpen when parents are busy. Use the playpen as an "island of safety."
- Childproofing your home, if not done at 6 months, should take priority at this age. Get down on the floor at your baby's eye level and see what your child can get into.
- Now that your baby is more active, be careful not to leave him anyplace from which he can fall. Always keep one hand on your child and never turn your back, for even a second, when you put him on a sofa, bed, changing table or any other high place. Your baby always needs your full attention.
- Never leave your baby alone with a young sibling or pet.
- Continue to use a rear-facing infant car seat, in the back seat, that is properly secured at all times, until 1 year of age. Always use an approved infant car seat and never hold the baby on your lap when traveling. Once your baby weighs 20 pounds **and** is one year old, the car seat may be changed to face forward.
- Do not use an infant walker at any age. Walkers can tip over easily and carry a high risk of injury. Not only do they allow for falls down stairs, running into low tables, and tumbles out of the walkers themselves, which can lead to serious head injuries, they also can actually delay learning to crawl and walk. Play saucers are a safe alternative.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.
- Continue to keep the baby's environment free of smoke, since smoke exposure can lead to increased risk of upper respiratory infections, ear infections, and burns. Keep the home and car nonsmoking zones.
- Never leave your baby alone in the bathtub or pool. Empty buckets, tubs, or small pools immediately after use. Ensure that swimming pools have a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Avoid overexposure to the sun. Remember sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 15, but preferably 30 or more) for any outdoor activities to avoid painful, damaging sunburns. Even with sunscreen, avoid play outside during the hours between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when the sun is most dangerous.
- Do not leave heavy objects, or containers of hot liquids on tables with tablecloths that your baby may pull down.
- To avoid scalding, set your water heater at 120 degrees. Don't carry baby around while you drink hot drinks or cook.
- Place plastic plugs in electrical sockets, or place large pieces of furniture in front of outlets. Keep all electrical cords out of reach. Avoid dangling electrical and drapery cords.
- Keep toys with small parts or other small, removable, or sharp objects out of reach. It is especially important to remind older siblings that they should always play with small objects out of reach of the baby.
- Keep all poisonous substances, medicines, cleaning agents, health and beauty aids, and paints and paint solvents in the original container, locked in a safe place, out of your baby's sight and reach. Never store poisonous substances in empty jars or soda bottles. Remove plants from reach, too. In case of accidental ingestion, it is important to know exactly what your baby got into. Always call Poison Control (1-800-332-3073) if an accidental ingestion occurs.
- Remember there is no such thing as a "child proof" cap.
- Install safety devices on drawers and cabinets where the infant may play.
- Install gates at the top and bottom of stairs, and place safety devices on windows.
- Lower the crib mattress.
- Breakable objects on the floor and low tables should be removed.
- If you have a pet, keep his food and dishes out of your baby's reach. Also, never allow your child to approach a dog while the dog is eating. Even though your pet may seem quite harmless, animal behavior can be unpredictable; do not leave them alone with your child.
- Learn first aid and infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

SLEEP

- Encourage your baby to console himself by putting your child to bed awake, but drowsy.

- Try to establish a regular bedtime hour. Have a quiet time before bedtime. If you play actively just before bedtime, your baby will be much too stimulated to relax to go to sleep.
- No bottles in bed - they cause choking, ear infections, and cavities.
- Some 9-month-old babies decrease the length and/or frequency of naps.
- Due to the emergence of separation anxiety, the 9-month-old baby may show resistance to going to sleep for naps and at night. She may also cry when the main caregiver leaves the room, even if she can still hear that person.
- Doctor visits can become a very scary experience for your child at this age. Do not worry if they are excessively tearful in the clinic - this is usually just due to separation and stranger anxiety, and not pain.
- Some 9-month-old babies begin night awakenings for short periods of time. If your baby wakes and cries out, check on his safety and comfort, but leave him in bed. Keep the visit brief. Avoid stimulating your infant. Do not encourage play. Don't give juice or milk. Do not allow your baby into bed with you to quiet him. Don't rock him back to sleep. All of these things will only reinforce the night awakenings, and it will become a habit. Babies must learn to put themselves back to sleep. Leave the room quickly once you feel everything is okay.
- Sleep is also occasionally disturbed when the infant pulls up in her crib and cannot get back down.

STOOLING

If baby eats at regular times, her bowels may move at regular times, too. Her bladder is getting bigger and can hold more urine at a time. Your baby may wet less often, but more each time.

TEETHING

- Teething does not cause high fever or watery diarrhea. It may cause drooling, low-grade fevers, looser stools, or fussiness.
- Tylenol infant drops, in the appropriate amount, may be helpful. Over-the-counter medications for teething may help, although having your baby chew on a cold or frozen teething ring or crushed ice in a washcloth may be of more benefit for your baby's discomfort.
- When your baby gets his first tooth, you should begin brushing with a toothbrush. Toothpaste isn't necessary now.
- Your baby may have one or both bottom teeth by now. Don't worry if teething is delayed as every child has her own timetable for teething. The process of getting teeth can be difficult or easy and there is no reason why one baby frets and drools during tooth eruption and another sails through it without a whimper. Ask your baby's doctor what you can do if teething gives your little one a problem.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

- Anything that bothers you!
- Poor weight gain
- Your baby shows little interest in social interaction, avoids eye contact, and smiles infrequently
- Your baby seems stiff or floppy
- Your baby's head falls backwards when she is pulled to a sitting position
- Your baby only uses one hand to reach
- Your baby makes no attempt to sit
- There is no infant babbling
- Eyes are crossed most of the time
- You have not seen any developmental changes since the last checkup

NEXT APPOINTMENT

- At 12 months old
- Call the appointment line 2-3 weeks in advance to set up an appointment

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- Tricare Nurse Advice Line: 1-888-887-4111
- Nurse Triage Line 556-CARE
- Clinic appointment line: 264-5000
- Clinic phone number: 556-1140/1141
- Emergency: 911
- Poison Control 1-800-332-3073