

My Four-Month-Old & Me

Recommendations from your Pediatrician
"She's so much more interested in playing than eating!"

Baby is 4 months old now and her development has taken huge strides:

- Reaches and grasps her rattle or teething ring.
- Does "push-ups" when on her tummy.
- Kicks a lot and will stand up when I lift her by the arms gently.
- Leans forward when seated to support herself a few seconds before falling over.
- Smiles, laughs, and coos when I talk to her/him.
- Holds her head up when she sits in her boppy pillow or swing.
- Puts everything in her mouth, especially her hands and feet.
- Follows my face from side-to-side and up-and-down.
- Rolls over occasionally. Do not leave her on a bed unattended!

Some ideas for play:

- **Read board books to Baby.** He/she will hit and mouth them. Believe it or not, this is a really good thing! Don't worry if you don't read all the words.
- **Sing songs to Baby.** Some all-time favorite are animated songs such as "The Wipers on the Bus," "Gulp, Gulp Went the Little Green Frog," "Old McDonald Had a Farm." What were your favorite songs as a child?
- **Light and Music Mobiles are fascinating for him/her now. He /She may reach for them.**
- **Swing or Bounce Seat Play Time** will come in handy when Baby seems to want to play non-stop and you need a breather.
- **Go for a walk every day.** Not only will this help Baby get ready for nap time, it is good exercise for you and starts a healthy family habit. You may find Baby is less likely to fall asleep on the walk if you put him in a back-pack or Baby Bjorn rather than the stroller. Try tying a dryer sheet near Baby to help keep mosquitoes away. It is fine to use bug lotion and sunscreen at this age, but don't forget to wash it off afterward. Remember to avoid extreme heat and cold.
- **Play Peek-A-Boo!** Use your hands or a thin blanket to momentarily hide your face or Baby's face, then pull it off and say "Peek-A-Boo!"
- **Tummy Time.** Put Baby on his tummy often during his playtimes to help develop his back, neck, and trunk strength, to help round out his head, and to allow his bald spot to grow back in. At nap and sleep times always put him to sleep facing up.

Feedings:

Baby is ready to learn a new skill: eating from a spoon! This means that she/ he will learn to chew and swallow rather than just sucking and swallowing. This skill is just as challenging to her/ him now as riding a bike will be when she/ he is older. **Be patient.**

Teach this new skill by feeding Baby rice cereal or oatmeal from a spoon:

- Mix a few spoons full of the cereal with breast milk or formula to the **consistency of applesauce** and spoon-feed Baby. This is a vital source of iron and vitamins.
- She/ He will put her/his fingers in their mouth to have something to suck on. This is good!
- She/ he may spit it out. It doesn't mean she/he doesn't like it. It's just brand new to her/him.
- Don't get frustrated when she puts it on her face and in her/his hair. You may want to feed her/him in just a diaper at first.
- Start with once a day and then move to twice a day.
- Feed her cereal before her bottle or breast feed so she will be hungry for it.
- Gradually thicken the cereal over the next two weeks.

At 4 ½ months, try some other cereals with him/her. Remember to introduce only one new food per week at this age, so you can identify any foods that cause an allergy (rash, diarrhea, hives, blood in stools). Call me if you notice any signs of allergies.

At 6 months, start some baby food if Baby has done well on the cereals.

- **Homemade is just as good as bottled! Stage 1 is appropriate for her age.**
- **Pureed vegetables are good starters.**
- **At this age introduce no more than 2 new foods per week.**
- **Good vegetable starters are green peas, carrots, sweet potatoes/ yams, green beans, broccoli, mashed potatoes, and corn.**
- **Remember that everything must be cooked well and pureed.**
- **If she/ he eats a lot of orange vegetables, her skin will turn a little pumpkin color.**
- **After she/he learns to like vegetables try some fruits (applesauce, mashed bananas).**

At 7 months, it is okay to introduce meats, eggs, pureed fruits. Do not give peanuts, popcorn, grapes, hot dogs, or items that roll because of the risk of choking.

You will notice changes in your baby's stools when solid foods are begun. Foods that will make their stool softer include barely cereal, green beans, peaches, plums, pears, and prunes. Stools will be firmer with rice cereal, applesauce, bananas, and carrots.

Baby will take 4-6 breast feeds (or formula bottles) per day. The amount in each bottle may be less since he is eating solid foods also. Do not start juices or water just yet.

Bedtime:

Bed will move from 6 hours of sleep at night to 8-10 hours of sleep at night if you develop a regular bedtime routine that transitions him to sleep.

How do you know when he is ready to skip his late-night feeds? Developmentally, he is ready at four months. Your cue is when he begins sleeping through his late-night feed on his own or when he takes less milk than his usual day time feeds.

Bedtime Routine:

- The bed time routine should be **short** and **occur at the same time** almost every night.
- A common routine is a bath, moisture **cream massage** and **change into bed clothes**.
- Follow with a few minutes of reading and **the last feed of the evening** with soft talking, singing, prayer, rocking, or quiet time. Dim the lights and avoid stimulating play.
- Put Baby into his/ her crib with his/ hers eyes **still open** and remember to **put the rails up**.
- It is best to avoid use of music and light mobiles at bedtime as this may stimulate Baby.
- Make a point of keeping the bedtime routine at the same time every night as much as possible. Remember that you decide when bedtime is, not Baby.

In addition to creating a bedtime routine that fosters sleep, you also have the job of learning not to jump at every little coo and whimper. This is a perfect time to move Baby to his own room (if he/ she is still in your room) so that you do not hear every noise.

Baby may cry when laid down to sleep or when he drifts between sleep cycles at night. **Give him a chance to console himself back to sleep. If you become part of his arousal pattern now, you will have to be there every 3 hours to console him back to sleep between each cycle. In the long run, this does not benefit Baby or you.**

- When you put Baby down to sleep, give him a pacifier or put his hand in his mouth.
- Most babies will fall asleep after 15-20 minutes of noise making or fussing.
- If baby continues to cry loudly, check on him, do not pick him up or feed him.
- Avoid turning on bright lights or making strong eye contact as this may stimulate him.
- A few gentle pats and putting his hand in his mouth is the extent of your involvement.
- Once you have assured yourself that he is okay, leave his/her room.
- **If he/she continues to cry, set your timer for “your wait time,” and do not enter his room until the timer goes off.**
- **After about 3 nights, he/she will settle into his/her new routine.**

Sometimes Baby may be ill, sore from shot, have not eaten well or have his schedule altered due to travel. Be flexible and give him/her extra caressing during those nights. Do not be afraid that his/her schedule is “ruined forever.”

Nap Time:

Baby will take 2-3 naps a day. The nap will usually last for about 2 hours. Avoid naps in the late afternoon (after 5 pm) as this will interfere with his sleep at bedtime. Sometimes you may notice that Baby awakens after only 45 minutes. The **“45-minute intruder”** may be a sign that **Baby is going**

through a growth spurt or development spurt. Try feeding her/him. If she/he is not interested in eating, put her back down to finish her nap by gently patting her moment and giving her/him the pacifier or her/his hand. This is a phase that may recur at different times during her infancy. If you find Baby cries excessively when first lying down for her/his nap, try gradually making the nap time earlier. She may be getting over-exhausted.

Typical Schedule:

The actual times may be different for each baby, but they should be consistent every day.

6am	Wake-up time (pick a wake-up time and keep it consistent)
6:30am	Play and feed time (Breast-fed or bottle feed)
8am	Morning nap time (let Baby wake up on his own; see "Nap Time" above)
11am	Play and feed time (cereal feed followed by breast or bottle feed) << Play or nap time depending upon what you think Baby needs>>
2pm	Play and feed time (Breast or bottle feed)
3pm	Afternoon nap time
5pm	Play and feed time (Cereal feed followed by breast or bottle)
8pm	Bath and bed time routine with breast or bottle feed
8:30pm	Bed time (pick a bed time and keep it consistent)
11pm-3am	Baby may wriggle or make noises. He /she does not need feedings anymore. He/she is just transitioning between his sleep cycles. Let him/ her have a chance to go back to sleep on his/her own.

Notes:

Continue cereal at least once a day to provide him/her extra iron and vitamins.

The schedule above is just an example. You will find a schedule that works well for YOU and Baby. The key is consistency with wake-up time and bed time.

Safety Reminders: Keep Baby In a rear-facing car seat when in the car. Infant walkers can be dangerous, and they do not teach Baby to walk any faster. Keep latex balloons, coins, and small toys away. They are choking hazards. Find a reliable baby-sitter, leave a bottle, and go out with your spouse once a week. Happy Parents make Baby happy.