

9-Month-Old Developmental Milestones

Milestones matter! How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about their development. Below is a list of milestones that most babies will have achieved by 9 months of age.

Social and emotional milestones

- Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers
- Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised
- Looks when you call their name
- Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, or cries)
- Smiles or laughs when you play peek-a-boo

Language and communication milestones

- Makes a lot of different sounds like “mamamama” or “babababa”
- Lifts arms to be picked up

Cognitive milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like their spoon or toy)
- Bangs two things together

Movement and physical development milestones

- Gets to a sitting position on their own
- Moves things from one hand to the other hand
- Uses fingers to “rake” food towards themselves
- Sits without support

Other things to share with your child’s doctor at their 9-month visit:

- What are some things you and your baby do together?
- What are some things your baby likes to do?
- Is there anything your baby does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your baby lost any skills they once had?

You know your baby best. Don’t wait. If your baby is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills they once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your baby’s doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening.

If your doctor is concerned about your baby’s development, they may refer your baby to a specialist or to Early On, which is the early intervention program in the State of Michigan (1-800-EARLYON or 1800EarlyOn.org). You can also contact Early On at any point on your own to request an evaluation.

You can help your baby grow and learn!

As your baby’s first teacher, you can help their learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your baby’s doctor if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your baby’s development.

- Repeat your baby’s sounds and say simple words using those sounds. For example, if your baby says “bababa” then say “book.”
- Place toys on the ground or on a play mat a little out of reach and encourage your baby to crawl, scoot, or roll to get them. Celebrate when they reach them.
- Teach your baby to wave “bye-bye” or shake their head “no.” For example, wave and say “bye-bye” when you are leaving. You can also teach simple baby sign language to help your baby tell you what they want before they can use words.

- Play games such as peek-a-boo. You can cover your head with a cloth and see if you baby pulls it off.
- Play with your baby by dumping blocks from a container and putting them back in the container.
- Play games with your baby such as “my turn, your turn.” Try this by passing a toy back and forth.
- “Read” to your baby. Reading can be talking about pictures. For example, while looking at books or magazines, name the pictures as you point to them.
- Limit screen time to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Babies learn by talking, playing, and interacting with others.
- Find out about choking risks and safe foods to feed your baby. Let them practice feeding themselves with their fingers and using a cup with a small amount of water. Sit next to your baby and enjoy mealtime together. Expect spills. Learning is messy and fun!
- Ask for behaviors you want. For example, instead of saying “don’t stand” say “time to sit.”
- Help your baby get used to foods with different tastes and textures. Foods can be smooth, mashed, or finely chopped. Your baby might not like every food on the first try. Give them a chance to try foods again and again.
- Say a quick and cheerful goodbye instead of sneaking away so your baby knows you are leaving, even if they cry. They will learn what to expect with goodbyes and how to calm themselves. Let them know when you return by saying “I’m back!”
- Have routines for sleeping and feeding. Babies do better when they know what to expect.
- Stay close by as your baby explores and moves around your home so they know you are near.

- Make sure your baby gets enough sleep; 4- to 12-month old babies need 12-16 hours of sleep a day (including naps). Consistent sleep time makes it easier.
- Take care of yourself. Parenting is hard work! It is easier to enjoy your growing baby when you feel good yourself.
- Make it a game when your baby drops things. Hand the item back to them so she can drop it again.
- Pay attention to the way they react to new situations and people; try to continue to do things that make your baby happy and comfortable.
- Describe what your baby is looking at; for example, “red, round ball.”
- Play a game that teaches your baby to look for things they see you hide such as a toy under a blanket.
- Give your baby safe places to explore. Baby-proof your home. For example, move sharp or breakable things out of reach. Lock away medicines, chemicals, and cleaning products. Save the Poison Help Line phone number in all phones: (800)222-1222.
- Use your words, facial expressions, and voice to show what you think your baby is feeling (sad, mad, happy, etc.). For example, tell them “You are sad, let’s see if we can make you feel better.”
- Put your baby close to things they can pull up on safely.

To see more tips and activities download CDC’s Milestone Tracker app. This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

This handout is adapted from www.cdc.gov/ActEarly

Scan the QR code for more information:



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