

PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATES OF SPRINGFIELD, INC

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FOUR-MONTH CHECK-UP

FEEDING: Breast milk or formula provides complete nutrition in the first six months of life. Solid foods should be introduced when the baby has developed good swallowing reflexes and head control, generally around six months of age. Starting solids too early can increase risk for obesity and allergies. However, research suggests that babies with severe eczema or egg allergy at this age may benefit from early peanut exposure AFTER testing.

Adding cereal to the diet does not help babies sleep through the night. Adding cereal to the bottle is associated with overfeeding and obesity.

Breast-fed infants require a multi-vitamin with iron supplement at this age such as Poly-vi-sol with Iron or NovaFerrum multivitamin with iron, one dropper a day. Breast-fed babies will need to nurse 6-8 times a day until six months of age.

Bottle-fed babies should continue to take 24-30 ounces of formula a day and should continue their vitamin D supplement of 400 iU/day, such as D-vi-sol, unless they are receiving more than 32 ounces of formula daily. Babies who receive both breast milk and formula need only the Poly-vi-sol. Never prop the bottle or put the baby to bed with a bottle.

Please investigate the fluoridation status of your home water supply soon so we will know if your baby needs a fluoride supplement at the six-month check-up. Untreated well water in our area has no fluoride. Some small towns fluoridate the city water supply only intermittently so a phone call to your water authority might be in order. Too much fluoride since that may lead to stained teeth while too little leads to more dental cavities.

DEVELOPMENT: This is the beginning of one of your baby's most charming stages. He should be rolling over, laughing and bringing hands and toys to his mouth. Soon, he will be scooting across the floor, pulling up, playing peek-a-boo and making many new sounds. Babies may become more demanding of parents' time and get upset when left in a room alone. Babies should be "vocalizing" (making cooing and communicative sounds) at this age. If you are not seeing this and other efforts to interact with you

socially from your infant or have any concerns about hearing or vision, please bring it to our attention.

While it may be tempting to let a baby hold his own bottle or take a bottle to bed, these habits can make weaning much more difficult later and can contribute to ear infections and asthma. If your baby uses a pacifier, this next few months would be a good time to wean it for similar reasons.

Many babies start teething now and get their first teeth at six to seven months of age. Safe teething toys are available but teething gels and tablets are not recommended. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used occasionally for teething pain. Only one form of liquid acetaminophen is now available for infants and children, so please check your dosage chart carefully.

SLEEP: Babies will often need just one nighttime feeding at this age, going 6-7 hours at a stretch. Sleep schedules are becoming predictable. Do not put the baby to bed with a bottle.

ILLNESS: Many illnesses are caused by viruses and are best treated by keeping the child comfortable while the body heals itself over several days. Fever (rectal temperature over 100.4) is one of the ways the body fights illness. How the baby seems to feel is more important than the degree of fever. A baby who has a temperature over 104, fever more than four days, difficulty breathing, irritability, or lethargy even when the fever has gone down should be seen in the office promptly. A child with fever or pain can be helped to feel more comfortable with acetaminophen drops. A dosage chart is given at each check-up and is included under the Parent Resources tab of this website.

The symptoms of minor respiratory infections often improve with the use of a vaporizer or humidifier in the baby's room, elevating the head of the bed and cleaning the baby's nostrils with saline drops. Discolored mucus without other worsening symptoms is natural and responds well to regular use of nasal saline drops. "Cold" medications may have serious side effects in this age group, are ineffective and are not recommended. Cold symptoms often last 10-14 days.

Vomiting and diarrhea respond best to continuing breast milk. Bottle-fed babies should switch to oral rehydration fluids such as Pedialyte. Smaller, more frequent feedings such as a 1-2 teaspoons every 5 minutes can prevent

dehydration in cases of persistent vomiting. If rehydration fluids are needed for more than 24 hours, consult with our office.

Regular exposure to cigarette smoke is harmful to your infant and contributes to ear infections, colds, asthma, crib death and later cancer. Smokers should not smoke in the house or car. The American Cancer Society can provide information on stop-smoking programs.

When planning a trip away from your child, please leave a letter with her caregivers including medical conditions, past surgeries, medications, allergies, and immunizations, as well as a copy of your insurance card.

SAFETY: As always, anticipation of new skills will help you protect your child. Babies are becoming more active and are more likely to be injured at this age. Use an approved car seat for all car and plane trips. Install smoke detectors in your home. Turn down the water heater to 120 degrees. Use only unbreakable toys without sharp edges or small parts. Keep plastic bags, balloons, and baby powders out of reach. Never step away when the baby is in the bath. Do not place the infant even in a seat or carrier on a table or ledge. Use a playpen with sides locked in the “up” position as an “island of safety” if you must step away from the baby for a few minutes. A link to the recall website on the Parent Resources tab of this website.

IMMUNIZATIONS: Vaccines are due again at this age. Acetaminophen will help side effects such as fever, fussiness or redness/discomfort at the injection site. If your baby has fever for more than 24 hours, acts “limp” or “lifeless”, or seems extremely fussy, please let us know promptly. If your baby receives vaccines elsewhere, please fax or bring in the records.

OFFICE CALLS: When calling for advice, please have your questions organized with a pencil and paper handy. If the baby is ill, please take the baby’s temperature before calling (no need to add to the actual reading). Routine calls should be made during regular weekday office hours. Emergency calls may be placed through the office number whenever we are not in the office.

APPOINTMENTS: Preventive care visits (well child check-ups) are an essential part of your baby’s health. These are an opportunity to discuss changes and concerns about diet, sleep, developing skills, safety, and immunization issues. The next few visits at this age will be at 6 months, 9

months and 12 months. Please see the Appointments page of this website for details on scheduling well and sick visits.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

Office (417) 882-1600

After hours (877) 599-8962

Fax (417) 631-0119

Poison Control (800) 392-9111