

9 Month Newsletter



Well Child appointments can be made online at [ARCPediatrics.com](https://www.arcpediatrics.com).

Your baby's length, weight, head size, along with health screens and immunizations performed will be in the [After Visit Summary](#).

Click on the Visit icon in MyChart to see the After Visit Summary related to this visit.



Quick Tips for Parents

- Continue to feed breastmilk or formula until 12 months of age.
- The most important strategy to have your child enjoy all foods is giving your baby foods they 'don't like' over and over. Sometimes it takes 20–30 licks before they will become familiar with it and start eating it.
- Give your baby water in a cup at this age so that your baby is ready to stop the bottle by 1 year old. It is OK for them to drink up to 8 ounces of water a day. This can be a sippy cup, straw cup, or 360 degree lid cup.

DEVELOPMENT

Learning

Your 9 month old is very curious and their new-found mobility will aid their exploration. You are likely noticing your baby will check out every part of the house that they can – drawers, wastebaskets, cabinets, etc. Being active is an important part of your baby's development. Limit time spent in items that restrict movement (car seats, strollers, swings, seats, etc).

Because your baby is constantly in motion at this age, you will need to move your baby away from things you don't want them to do. Rather than saying "no" quite often, consider redirecting them to what you do want them to do. Redirecting means showing them what you want them to do instead. You might redirect by showing them a new object you prefer that they play with. But also just helping them change course by singing something or by changing rooms entirely.

An infant's best teachers are you, your baby's parents or guardians. They learn best from us playing with them and talking with them. The American Academy of Pediatrics and care team at Austin Regional Clinic recommend using iPhones or tablets only to communicate with family members under the age of 18 months.

Gross Motor (Movement) Skills

Sitting

By 9 months, most babies can get themselves into a sitting position without help, and can sit well balanced for extended periods. Your baby may still topple over as they reach for items or gestures wildly. Don't leave your baby unsupervised, even for a moment. Little arms can get caught in odd positions, preventing your baby from rolling normally.



Crawling

Most, but not all, babies can crawl by 9 months. Some babies never learn to crawl, they scoot on their bottoms or slither on their stomachs. As long as your baby is learning to coordinate each side of their body and is using each arm and leg equally, there is no cause for concern. If you feel that your baby is not learning to move normally please discuss your concerns with your baby's doctor or advanced practice clinician (APC).

Pulling to Stand and "Cruising"

After crawling is mastered, your baby will next learn to pull up to a standing position using the bars of a crib, furniture, you, or whatever is handy. The next few weeks are then spent learning how to lower back down to sitting. Within a month after your baby masters pulling to stand, they will cruise about the room holding onto objects such as furniture. Consider the furnishings and potential dangers for your baby as they becomes mobile. Your baby needs constant supervision.

- Remove tall flimsy objects, dangling cords, and any furniture with sharp edges.
- Anchor (to the wall) television sets on stands.
- Tether tall bookshelves to the wall in the rooms where your baby plays.
- Cover plugs for electrical outlets.

Walking

The average baby walks without assistance at around 12–14 months of age, although it can take as long as 15 months to master this skill.

Babies do fall as they learn to walk. Typically if they fall when learning to walk and cry right away, they are OK. Please let us know if you see vomiting or they are not acting like themselves within a few minutes.



Hand and Finger Skills

By 9 months, most babies have mastered at least a crude pincer grasp (picking up small objects with thumb and two opposing fingers). The next task for those little hands to learn is how to let go of the objects they grasp. At first, your baby will press the object against a flat surface and uncurl their fingers. Then by 10 or 11 months, most babies will learn to uncurl their fingers in mid-air and drop objects. Now the fun begins! You will see your baby practice this new skill constantly and those around them will be picking up toys, food, and whatever else they can get their hands on.

Language

Your baby probably does not speak true words yet but even now is learning about language. Early sound-making is a playful and enjoyable activity. Babies learn speech and language from those people who care for them and play with them. Talk directly to your baby.

Uninterrupted one-on-one conversations are important to a baby's language development. Babies learn the meaning of words by hearing them over and over again in different sentences with varying tones of voice, facial expressions, and body language from the speaker.

At six months, most babies are vocalizing single-syllable sounds such as "maaaa" and "boooo." By 9 months, vocal control improves and repetitive two syllable sounds, such as "baba" and "mama" are heard. This is babbling. You will hear long strings of varied syllables with variable inflections. As you listen you will hear questions, exclamations, and even jokes.



Most babies say their first real word by 10 to 12 months of age, but don't be too obsessed by when their first word occurs. Expressive, varied sounds, especially if accompanied by gestures such as pointing, is good evidence that their language is developing. Forming spoken words is not easy and occurs after much language development has occurred.

At 9 months of age, many babies can now understand simple words you say. They will turn their head when their name is called. They might even understand other words such as "no" or "stop." They also understand your common gestures you use and imitate or copy them when you use them. For example, if you reach out your hands to indicate you are going to pick your baby up, they will often reach out their hands to you as well.



Ways to Help Your Baby's Language Development

- Talk directly to your baby about things that are physically present: "Look at brother playing with doggie!"
- "Read" your child's picture books with big clear illustrations of babies and adults doing familiar things: "Look, the daddy is washing the car." It is normal for babies to explore books by chewing on them.
- Sing word-and-gesture songs and games that involve their bodies, such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" and "Itsy Bitsy Spider."
- Consider introducing simple baby sign language to your baby for them to communicate wants and needs before they can say the words.

Social and Emotional Development

At 9 months, babies are often showing more emotions than when they were younger. It is common that parents will see facial expressions on their baby that show happiness, sadness, surprise, and anger.

Your baby will be open, affectionate, and outgoing with you, but anxious, clinging, and easily frightened around unfamiliar people or objects. This is called separation anxiety or stranger anxiety, and is a normal emotional phase. Some people may say that your child is fearful because you are spoiling your baby. Don't believe it. Separation anxiety is a sign of a healthy relationship with you.

Separation anxiety usually peaks between 10 to 18 months, and then fades as your

child approaches 2 years of age. This is usually both a tender and a painful phase for parents. You feel flattered to be so loved, but may also feel suffocated by their clinging or guilty when you must leave. Fortunately, this phase will not last forever.

Suggestions that may help:

- Your baby is more susceptible to separation anxiety when they are in a new routine. The more consistent your patterns for when and how you say goodbye, the more easily they will be able to trust that you will return in just a bit.
- Don't make a fuss when you are leaving. Have the caretaker create a distraction, such as a toy. Then say good-bye and leave quickly. Their tears will subside after you leave.

SLEEP

Most 9 month olds sleep around 11–12 hours overnight and have two naps (morning and afternoon) of 1–2 hours each for a total of 13 to 14 hours of sleep in a 24 hour day. Even babies who were sleeping through the night may start to wake up at this age. This is normal and considered part of separation anxiety.

Tips to Prevent Sleep Problems

- Have a soothing bedtime routine such as a bath, tooth brushing, bedtime story, and saying goodnight to family and favorite objects. Any late evening breastfeeding or bottle should happen before this bedtime routine.
- Your baby should be able to fall asleep on their own. Place them in their crib awake but drowsy.
- Make middle of the night contacts brief and boring. Your baby should not need middle of the night feedings at this age.



Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Programs:

If you believe that your child is delayed or has a condition that could lead to delays, please ask your doctor or APC to refer you.

You may also call 1-800-628-5115 or visit the ECI website at www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services for the ECI program closest to you.

DENTAL

As soon as teeth begin to erupt, start brushing twice daily using a toothpaste with fluoride and a soft small toothbrush. The



pediatric dentists recommend using a small smear of fluoride-containing children's toothpaste. You will continue this until your child is old enough to spit the toothpaste out. Children are encouraged to see a dentist as soon as their first tooth appears.

Children with Medicaid insurance can find a dentist by searching 211Texas.org or by calling 877-847-8377 (THSteps Hotline).

NUTRITION

Your child's diet should be expanding at this age. This is a good time to teach your child to enjoy eating healthy food. The most important factor determining what your child eats is what you eat. You are the most important role model for your child. It is important that you evaluate your own diet. What food you eat and what food you serve will be critical in developing your child's eating habits.

Some parents tell us that their children don't like certain foods. At this age the most important factor in food acceptance is repeated exposure. Rejection of a new food is normal. It can take 10–15 exposures to new foods before your baby will consider trying it. Do not give up. Ignore the faces your baby makes when trying a new food. Just keep putting foods that they may not seem to prefer on their plate.

Unfortunately, nearly half of 9–12 month old children consume desserts, sweets, or sweetened beverages every day. At nine months, there is a considerable drop in vegetable and fruit intake. Help your child by offering fruits and vegetables at every meal.

Liquid Intake

Continue to feed your baby breast milk or an iron-fortified formula until at least 12 months of age. Wait until 12 months of age to introduce cow's milk.

If your baby was full term, at this age breastfed infants usually nurse 3–5 times a day.

The average amount of formula taken per day at 9 months is 24 ounces. By 12 months, 16 ounces a day is sufficient.

Choking in an Infant Under 12 Months

What to Do If Your Child Is Choking

1. Check infant's mouth by opening the mouth with the thumb over the tongue and the fingers wrapped around the lower jaw. If the object is seen, it may be removed with a finger sweep. Do not perform a blind finger sweep on an infant less than 12 months of age.
2. If the infant is still choking, then place the infant's face down over your arm with head lower than the trunk. The infant's face should be in the support arm's hand and infant's legs should straddle the arm, one leg on each side of the elbow. Five blows are delivered with the heel of the hand between the infant's shoulder blades.
3. If back blows were not successful, turn the infant over and give 5 rapid chest compressions with 2 fingertips on chest (just below nipple line). This is to expel the object from the windpipe.
4. If breathing is not reinitiated after 5 back blows and 5 chest compressions, check infant's mouth again by opening the mouth with the thumb over the tongue and the fingers wrapped around the lower jaw. If the object is seen, it may be removed with a finger sweep.
5. If object is not removed and infant is still choking, start the sequence again with the back blows and call 911.



Water/Juices

Breast milk, formula, and water are the best drinks for your child. Drinking PLAIN water (not flavored) is a good habit to start at this age. Offer water in a cup between meals if your baby seems thirsty. Give a maximum of 8 ounces water a day. Juices are not needed at this age, except they are occasionally used to treat constipation. If you give your baby juice, offer it in a cup, and only offer 4 ounces or less of 100% juice. Excessive juice intake can cause diarrhea, excess gas, tooth decay, and poor nutrition.

Cup Training

It seems to take some babies a few months of practicing using a cup (sippee, straw, or other spillproof cups) before they get the hang of it. If you haven't already, give your baby a cup of water daily to start practicing how to use it. (For example, maybe you give them water in their cup every dinner meal.) If your baby has already mastered drinking water from a spillproof cup, then start putting their breastmilk or formula into the cup a few times a day. Work towards a goal of stopping the bottle at 12 months.

Solids

Have scheduled times for snacks and avoid allowing your baby to graze (eating a few bites every hour) all throughout the day.

Grazing throughout the day may make your baby less interested in their meals. Provide structure and predictability for your child by providing a set meal and snack schedule. Your infant should have 3 well-balanced meals and 2–3 snacks per day by one year of age.

In addition to breastmilk or formula, your baby's daily diet should include foods in each of the following food groups daily: grains (unsweetened cereal, whole wheat breads, pasta), vegetables, fruits, proteins (meat, beans, eggs), and foods containing dairy (cheese and yogurt).

A way to ensure that you are providing a well-balanced meal is by utilizing the MyPlate visual aid (see below).



There is a tremendous amount of normal variation among babies with respect to how much they will eat. The most important way to gauge how much your child should eat is by following their hunger and fullness cues. Never force your child to eat food they refuse.



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Continue to offer a good variety of fruits and vegetables. And don't forget to also add in allergens.

Can I even give things others are allergic to?

Once your baby has had some fruits, vegetables, and cereals, you should also add in other foods. We do recommend that if your baby has severe, persistent eczema or an egg allergy, then you should talk with your provider about how to introduce food allergens. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that infants who are low risk for food allergies to be given foods such as dairy, soy, wheat, nut butters, sesame, fish, shellfish, and eggs starting at 4–6 months old.

How will you know if your baby is having an allergy to a food?

If your baby has a rash all over their body within a few hours of starting a new food or they vomit within a few minutes of having a new food item, then call our clinic and let us know. If your baby has signs of facial swelling, persistent cough, or trouble breathing after starting a new food, call 911.

Grains/Cereals

Infant cereals are an important source of iron for your baby during this period of rapid growth and a changing diet, especially if your baby does not eat other iron containing foods well. When serving other grains (like rice or pasta), aim to make 1/2 the grains whole grains (such as brown rice or whole wheat pasta).

Two servings a day of an iron-fortified infant cereal is recommended to give your baby the iron their growing bodies need. A serving is considered 4 tablespoons of dry cereal.

Fruits and Vegetables

Make sure that your baby is given at least 2–3 servings each of both fruits and vegetables a day. For most babies a serving is about 4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) of the jar baby food or of cooked vegetables and fruits. Although you may feed your baby mashed bananas or other soft fruits, most fruits and vegetables should be cooked until they are soft.

Meat, Mashed Beans, and Eggs (protein-rich foods)

Your baby should have 1–2 servings of protein-rich foods a day. A serving is generally around 2 ounces (1/4 cup or 4 tablespoons). Jar baby-food meats are fine, other forms of meat have to be minced into tiny pieces before being given to your baby. Eggs, smashed beans, yogurt, and cheese are also a good source of protein. Beans should be smashed to reduce choking risk.



Self-feeding and Snacks

Encourage your child to feed themselves at snack time. By allowing your child to feed themselves, although messy and time-consuming, you will be allowing them to learn to self-regulate how much they eat.

Snacks should be thought of as “mini meals” so include nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables. Finger foods for babies include:

- small pieces of banana or other soft fruits
- well cooked vegetables cut small
- dry unsweetened cereals (like yellow-box Cheerios)
- small bits of chicken
- well-cooked pasta
- scrambled eggs
- grated cheese

SAFETY

Thousands of children age 6–12 months have serious accidental injuries every year, most of which can be prevented. Most often injuries occur because parents are not aware of what their child can do. Babies are developing new skills every day. Constant supervision is needed. This is a good age to use a pack-n-play or playpen for short times when you cannot supervise your child. But, in general, limit time spent in items that restrict movement. Instead, now that your child is mobile, safety-proof your home with recommendations below.



Poisoning

Children are very curious, which can lead them to getting a hold of dangerous household detergents and other poisonous materials.

If your child should ingest a poison, call the Universal Poison Control Number, 1-800-222-1222. Post this number on your refrigerator and add it to the contact list on your cell phones. In the case of convulsions, cessation of breathing, or unconsciousness, call 911.

The following information will be important:

- The name of the poison
- The amount and time it was taken
- Any changes to your baby since taking it
- The age and weight of your child

Things to Remember

- Read labels and warnings on all containers.
- Store potentially harmful products and medicines out of reach of children.
- Throw away unused portions and empty containers.
- Do not put potentially harmful substances in food or drink containers.
- Teach children to stay away from storage areas and medicine cabinets.
- Use child-protective safety latches and guards on doors, drawers, cabinets, etc.
- Avoid calling any medicines “candy.”

Home Safety

Keep all medicines and cleaning supplies well out of reach and equip all cabinets with safety latches. Everything your child finds will probably end up in their mouth, so be careful what is left lying around.

Falls

As your child's strength and curiosity grows, it is important to place gates on both the top and bottom of stairways and other potentially dangerous areas. Also, remove or cushion any sharp edged furniture, just in case your child falls against it. Coffee tables and fireplaces seem to cause the most injuries. Make sure that your baby is strapped in properly at all times when in a stroller, high chair, or any other seats.

Car Safety

Most injuries and deaths caused by car crashes can be prevented by the use of car seats every time your child is in the car. Your child should remain in a rear-facing car seat until they outgrow the rear-facing weight or height maximum for your car seat allowed by the manufacturer. A rear-facing car seat should never be placed in front of a passenger-side air bag. The safest place for all children is in the back seat.

For more information about car seats and for information about having your seat checked for proper installment call 1-800-252-8255 (safe riders program) or 1-866-SEAT-CHECK (www.seatcheck.org).

Do not leave your child alone in a car, even for a "few seconds." Death and injuries from excessive heat or fumes can occur.

Burns

There are a number of ways that your child could be burned.

At this age children grab at everything. Never leave cups of hot drinks on tables or counter edges. Never carry hot liquids or food near your child or while holding your child. Do not let your child crawl or walk around stoves, wall or floor heaters, or other hot appliances. Turn pot handles away from the stove's edge so they are out of reach. A safe place for your child while you're cooking, eating, or unable to provide full attention is a playpen, pack-n-play, highchair, or crib.

Because children are just learning to grab at things, water can be a source of burns. Keep your home's water heater at 120 degrees.

Children are at greatest risk in house fires. Test the batteries on your smoke alarm once a month to be sure that they work. If you use regular batteries on your smoke alarms, change them at least once a year.

Sun Exposure

Avoid the sun during the hours of 10am to 4pm. If outside, stay in the shade, use a floppy hat to protect your baby's face, and use a broad spectrum sunscreen that is approved for children. Sun exposure during childhood can cause skin cancer and premature aging of the skin.

Walkers

Pediatricians find that baby walkers leads to injuries. The walkers that we worry about are the kind where the baby sits in a seat on wheels that is surrounded by a ring. They allow a baby to move into places that are not safe and allow them to topple furniture onto themselves. Try alternatives to walker that are just as fun but safer. Stationary activity centers (that have no wheels) and playyards or playpens introduce babies to using their legs. Wheeled toys that a baby pushes and walks behind are also OK.

Firearm Safety

It is best to keep firearms out of homes where young children live and play. If you do have firearms, then make sure to keep them stored unloaded and locked up. Store and lock up ammunition in a separate place. Hide the keys or access codes to the safes.

Drowning

At this age children love to play in water.

- Never leave your child alone in or near any standing water, even for a moment. Empty all water out of tubs and buckets after each use. Keep bathroom doors shut. Your child can drown in less than 2 inches of water.
- Always stay within an arm's length of your child around water.

READING SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES

Books

My Child Won't Sleep: A Quick Guide for the Sleep-Deprived Parent

Sujay Kansagra, MD

Baby 411: Clear Answers and Smart Advice for Your Baby's First Year

Ari Brown, MD and Denise Fields

Websites

healthychildren.org

American Academy of Pediatrics parenting website.

healthychildren.org/growinghealthy

Dynamic interactive website to help encourage healthy habits for children 0-5 years of age.

vaccineinformation.org

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia information on vaccines.

cdc.gov/vaccines-children

National Immunization Program

Apps for Parents

KidsDoc – from the AAP App

The KidsDoc Symptom Checker allows parents to choose from a wide range of symptoms, then follow the symptom decision chart to determine the appropriate action to take, whether it be home care or a trip to the emergency room.

CDC Milestone Tracker App

This app helps you track your own child's development over time. It also shares tips to help you encourage the next step in their development.

