

Well Baby Visit
9 Month Visit

Weight _____ Length _____

DEVELOPMENT: This is an age of active exploration. Many infants can creep and crawl about, and may be pulling up to a standing position and starting to take steps around the furniture. Your baby can probably sit well without support, and may be able to assume a sitting position without your help. Unless you're careful, your baby may try to climb up the stairs. Coordination in the finger muscles improves and a neat "pincer grasp" of small objects between the thumb and index finger will develop. Hand to mouth coordination also improves, and the baby will use this skill to eat Cheerios, Legos, and any pieces of lint that are within reach.

Children this age love to make noise and may constantly squeal and babble. Repeated consonants like dada, mama, baba appear, although these may not be used to mean daddy or mommy for a few months yet. You can stimulate your baby's language development by talking to him or her. Your baby understands more than he or she can express in words. Even though words are limited, gestures and facial expressions can effectively communicate wants, likes, and dislikes to you. Imitative games like waving bye-bye, peekaboo, and patty-cake are fun at this age.

HABITS AND BEHAVIOR: At this age, babies are frequently very shy with strangers or even other relatives, and cling to their mother and cry if separated. This is a normal stage of attachment, which will pass, and not a sign that the baby is spoiled. By this time, most babies are developing a simple understanding of cause and effect. For example, banging on the garbage can produces a great noise; drop a toy and cry, and someone will pick it up again. How you respond to your baby's actions can influence what he or she does in the future. If you laugh and show delight with something your baby does, the laughter is rewarding and enjoyable, and a repeat performance is likely. On the other hand, actions that are ignored will be non-rewarding and will be dropped. This principle of teaching behavior by showing approval of desired behavior is also applicable to older children (and spouses) and is generally more productive than a negative approach based on criticism and spanking.

Sleep habits are generally well established at this age, with most babies sleeping 11 to 12 hours at night with one or two naps. If your baby develops the habit of waking at night, this is best managed by ignoring it as much as possible. Repeated nighttime visits, rocking or walking the floors, and feedings can maintain the habit past the age when sleeping through the night is possible (and certainly more desirable from your perspective). If bedtime or night waking is a problem, let's discuss it.

FEEDING: Most infants should now be on three meals a day and many will have reduced their milk intake to 16 ounces a day. Breast milk or iron-containing formula should be continued until one year of age. Baby cereal is an important source of iron and should be continued as long as possible. Table foods may be introduced, starting with mashed potatoes, cottage cheese, yogurt, sweet potatoes, soft cereal, scrambled eggs, and anything else you can mash or chop. Finger foods are popular at this age. Choose soft, nutritious foods like bananas, cheese, toast, and cooked vegetables. Avoid "junk" food and desserts, or foods that pose a choking hazard like nuts and raw carrot slices. This is probably the easiest time to introduce a cup and

wean your child from the bottle. Again, stick to milk, juice, or water, and avoid sharing sips of your soda, coffee or beer. This is a good age to try feeding the baby in a high chair along with the rest of the family at mealtime for at least part of the meal. Babies this age have definite likes and dislikes and will let you know them! Don't get into "food wars" (you're bound to lose).

SAFETY: This is the beginning of a time when accidents are a major threat to your child's well being. Accidents kill more children in the U. S. than all diseases put together. At this age, your child's poking and probing fingers can pick up buttons, beans, beads, pills and other small objects that may be eaten or inhaled into the lungs. Here are some simple things you can do to make your house safer: 1) keep all medications, cleaning supplies and other hazardous substances in locked cupboards; 2) cover electrical outlets with socket covers; 3) don't let electric or phone cords dangle where your baby can reach them; 4) turn pot handles to the back of the stove and keep hot liquids away from the table edge; 5) have child-proof gates or doors at all stairs and keep them closed. If your child ingests a potentially harmful object or substance: 1) call our office (225-1700) or Poison Control (275-5151); 2) keep the jar or bottle of the substance ingested; 3) have activated charcoal suspension handy, but don't administer until you obtain medical advice.