

# Your Child at Nine Months

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## DEVELOPMENT:

All babies develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice that your baby:

- Sits without support
- Tries to crawl, but might still be dragging legs or going backward
- Pulls on something to try to stand
- Takes steps while holding on to furniture
- Moves objects from hand to hand
- Picks up small objects with index finger and thumb
- Understands his or her name, “no” and “bye-bye”
- Repeats syllables (“da-da” and “ba-ba”)
- Fears strangers
- Waves, claps and copies others
- Protests when parents leave
- Enjoys social games such as peekaboo

**IMUNIZATIONS:** None; your baby may need catch-up shots if he or she missed previous doses.

Possible vaccine side effects include:

- Fever
- More irritability or fussiness
- Redness or swelling at the site of the shot.

**Next Visit:** At twelve months of age

*If needed, you can give your baby acetaminophen (Tylenol). Ask your Provider for the correct dose. Contact your Provider if your child's symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.*

## NUTRITION:

Most children can now have three meals a day with snacks in between, although meals may be small. Table foods can now play a bigger role in your baby's diet. Examples include toast, bananas, avocados, soft cheeses, well-cooked vegetables and Cheerios. Allow your child to feed himself or herself. Have your child sit at the table with the rest of the family at mealtimes. Your child may drink much less breast milk or formula as he or she eats more solid foods. Keep following these tips:

- Babies at this age do not need juice. If you choose to give juice to your child, limit the amount to no more than four ounces a day.
- Encourage your child to drink from a sippy cup and plan to wean him or her from the bottle over the next three to six months.
- Remember that your child may need to try new foods 10 to 15 times before he or she accepts them.
- Keep giving your child vitamin D supplements if he or she drinks less than 32 ounces of formula a day.
- Try giving your child yogurt and cheese now but wait until he or she is 12 months old before switching to soy or cow's milk.

Do not give your child honey, eggs, fish, shellfish or nuts until he or she is at least 12 months old.

## SAFETY

- Avoid foods that may cause your child to choke. Children choke on foods that are round, small and hard such as peanuts, popcorn, raw carrots, whole grapes and hot dogs cut into pieces.
- Falls are more common as children learn to walk. Install gates and window guards. Remove furniture with sharp edges and corners.
- Remove hazardous items such as pins, coins, medications and plants from your child's reach.
- The kitchen is a dangerous room. Keep knives out of reach. Cook on the back burners of your stove to reduce the risk of burns.
- Cover outlets, secure electrical cords and make sure blind cords are out of reach.
- Watch your child at all times when he or she is near pools, hot tubs, toilets and buckets. Children can drown in as little as two inches of water.
- Before your baby begins to stand, lower the crib mattress to the lowest position and remove the bumpers.
- Avoid keeping your child in the sun for long times. When outdoors put a hat on your child and apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30.
- Always place your baby in a car seat that faces backward in the back seat. For more information, go the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Web site: [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov).
- Make sure that the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home are working.
- If you are worried about violence in your home, please speak with your Provider or contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or [ndvh.org](http://ndvh.org).
- Post the Poison Control Hotline on your refrigerator: 1-800-222-1222.

## SLEEP

Objects such as a small blanket may still comfort your child, especially if he or she becomes anxious when you leave. Night feedings end around this age. If your child cries at night, respond right away and comfort him or her, but do not rock your baby for a long time, feed or bring your baby to bed. This can create habits that are hard to break. If you are concerned about your child's sleep habits, talk with your Provider.

## DISCIPLINE

Because your child is moving around more and is exploring, you need to start setting limits. Distracting your child and removing objects he or she shouldn't touch are good tools at this age. However, it is not too early to start telling your child "no". Say "no" to dangerous acts such as reaching up to the stove, or acts such as hitting or biting. Make sure that all caregivers follow the same set of rules. They should be consistent in disciplining your child. Never spank your child.

## FOCUS ON FAMILY

- Postpartum depression can happen at any time during the first year.

While postpartum blues are common during the first few weeks, they usually get better. If moms feel sad, anxious or depressed beyond this time, they should seek help and talk with their Provider. You can find more information online at [postpartum.net](http://postpartum.net).

- Separation anxiety may start at this time. Your child may have let you leave for work without being upset before but may now start to cry or cling to you. Know that this is a stage many children go through and your child will be fine after you leave. Try not to sneak out of the house without your child seeing you—this can make your child more anxious and clingy.
- Try to find time for you and your partner to be alone. Taking care of yourselves will allow you to take better care of your family.

## PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT

- Playing with toys that roll and blocks that your child can dump out of a container and stack help teach cause and effect.
- Listen to and make music with your child. Songs with gestures and finger actions teach your child how to copy.
- Play interactive games. Laugh with your child and encourage older brothers and sisters to join in playtime.
- Walkers are dangerous and not needed. Do not use them. Children learn to walk on their own. Barefoot is best. Your child does not need special shoes.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Academy of Pediatrics: [aap.org](http://aap.org); American Academy of Family Physicians: [aafp.org](http://aafp.org); Immunization information: [immunize.org](http://immunize.org), [cdc.gov/vaccines](http://cdc.gov/vaccines), [vaccine.chop.edu](http://vaccine.chop.edu), [familyProvider.org](http://familyProvider.org) and [vaccineinformation.org](http://vaccineinformation.org)
- Suggested reading:
  - *Baby Proofing Basics* by Vicky Lansky
  - *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age Five* by American Academy of Pediatrics, Stephen Shelov, M.D.
  - *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense* by Ellyn Satter
  - *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth
  - *Mommy Calls: Dr. Tanya Answers Parents' Top 101 Questions About Babies and Toddlers* by Tanya Remer Altmann, M.D.
  - *Oneness and Separateness: From Infant to Individual* by Louise Kaplan, Ph.D.
  - *Touchpoints: Birth to 3: Your Child's Behavioral and Emotional Development* by Barry Brazelton, M.D., and Joshua Sparrow, M.D.
- Other books are available at [aap.org/bookstore](http://aap.org/bookstore).