

# Developmental Milestones: Your Infant at 4 Months

## What are developmental milestones?

Developmental milestones are skills most children achieve by a certain age. Developmental milestones include physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and communication skills that are appropriate for the child's age. Milestones give important clues about a child's health and well-being. Any child whose milestones are delayed should be evaluated by a health or developmental professional.

- **Social and emotional** milestones include how children learn about their own emotions and the emotions of others. These milestones also involve learning how to interact and play with other people.
- **Language and communication** milestones involve language, speech, and nonverbal communication (for example, hand gestures or facial expressions). These milestones include a baby's babbling, their first words, and their ability to listen to others and hold a conversation.
- **Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)** milestones are centered on a child's ability to think, learn, and solve problems. Cognitive milestones include an infant learning how to react to different facial expressions and a preschooler learning to say the alphabet.
- **Movement/physical development** involves both gross motor skills and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills are typically the first to develop. They include your child's ability to support their head, sit up, stand, crawl, and walk. Fine motor skills involve precise movements such as grasping a spoon, picking up small objects, and drawing.

As a parent or caregiver, you spend the most time with your child and know them the best. If your child is not meeting these age-related milestones, or if you think there could be a problem with the way your child plays, learns, speaks, or acts, it is important to tell your child's primary care provider so they can assess your child's development. Discuss these concerns with them at your child's 4-month well-child exam.

Here are the milestones to expect from your child based on what most babies do at this age:

### **Social and emotional**

- Smiles spontaneously, especially at people
- Likes to play with people and might cry when playing stops
- Copies some movements and facial expressions, like smiling or frowning

### **Language/communication**

- Begins to babble
- Babbles with expression and copies sounds
- Cries in different ways to show hunger, pain, or being tired

### **Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Lets you know if they are happy or sad
- Responds to affection
- Reaches for toy with one hand

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- Uses hands and eyes together, such as seeing a toy and reaching for it
- Follows moving things with eyes from side to side
- Watches faces closely
- Recognizes familiar people and things at a distance

## **Movement/physical development**

- Holds head steady, unsupported
- Pushes down on legs when feet are on a hard surface
- May be able to roll over from tummy to back
- Can hold a toy and shake it and swing at dangling toys
- Brings hands to mouth
- When lying on stomach, pushes up to elbows

Tell your child's doctor if you are concerned that your child is not meeting milestones for this age. Most communities also have early childhood intervention programs that can help assess your child.

## **Resources and References:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/developmentalscreening.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/developmentalscreening.pdf)