

# Module 2: Growth and Development

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## Developmental Goals for Your Baby

Having a baby – whether it’s your first child or your fourth – is so exciting! But it is not always easy and it can be scary.

If you have a premature baby, you may have more questions about your baby than a parent whose baby was born on time. You may wonder how they will grow and if they will have any complicated problems while they grow.

One way to tell your baby is growing okay is to pay attention to the important goals they are achieving. We have listed important goals, also known as milestones in a child’s growth, so you know what to watch for at each age.

For example, typical milestones for babies are: “makes eye contact and smiles” and “rolls from tummy onto back”.

Remember that your baby’s development is not a race and that each baby develops at their own speed and in their own way. Some children do not reach every milestone at the same time. This is especially true if they were born early, so remember to give things time and have patience.

But it is very important to pay attention to these signs so that if your baby is not reaching the goals at each age, you can talk to your doctor or community health work to get extra services to help your baby earlier rather than later!



## Your Baby's Corrected Age

The best way to track your baby's growth is to make sure you are looking at the right goals. There are different milestones babies reach at different ages, but if your baby was born early, you need to remember that he might not reach some of these goals like other babies his age because he did not have enough time to fully develop in the womb.

So, if your baby was born early, he really has 2 birthdays. The day he was born is the official date of birth, but his original due date is also an important. You need to calculate what is called a "corrected age." This is the age that he actually is in terms of his growth.

Calculating corrected age isn't difficult. If your baby is 14 weeks old, but was born 6 weeks early, subtract 6 from 14. This gives you 8 weeks. Use this adjusted age when you look at the milestones sections.

If your son is 6 months old, but was born 3 months early, then you should expect him to be at or near the developmental level of a 3-month-old baby.

By age 2, most children have caught up to the normal range, and you won't have to do this math. If your child has not caught up, he may require extra support for a longer period of time. (See Provider Support Section)



## Watch for Progress

As a parent, your biggest concern is making sure your baby is moving forward in her growth and development.

There are different milestones that show the development your child is making. For example, your baby should go from pulling herself up, to standing, and then to walking.

It is important to remember that every baby is different and that they may reach different goals and at different times.

You will know your child better than anyone else. When you watch her carefully, you will see ways she is growing well. You will also know if she needs more help.

It can be scary to worry about your baby's development, but remember, you do not have to do it alone. There are doctors, teachers and other people and information to support you. Your baby's health care provider will evaluate your baby's development at each well-baby visit.

If you have any concerns about whether your baby is developing the right way, talk to your child's doctor or community health workers.



## Social and Emotional Development Milestones

Social Emotional development is all about how your baby interacts with others.

Your baby's first social experiences are through touch. We are all social creatures and we enjoy being around other people. Even the youngest babies want to interact with others; they like to watch faces and turn toward voices.

When babies are little, they get our attention by crying and fussing, but as they get older they need to learn how to control and show their emotions.

It takes time for a baby to learn how to express and understand their feelings. Keep patience and watch for the right signs that they are developing on track.



## Language and Communication Milestones

Babies find different ways to communicate with their family and caregivers. Spoken language is one of the ways babies communicate. Language development follows a similar path no matter what type of communication babies use.

All young children begin to understand that letters are symbols that stand for words and sounds no matter which alphabet they use.

You play a large role in how your baby connects to other people, so remember that whatever language your baby uses, supporting good language development and communication will help them learn about their world and connect with others.



## Cognitive Development: Learning, Thinking, and Problem-Solving

We all know babies are curious about everything. There is so much to learn! Babies need time and opportunity to explore the world around them. Babies love to figure out how things work and how to put things together.

As their brains develop, babies start showing amazing abilities to make sense of things. Babies grow so fast that it can be hard to believe how quickly they learn and understand things.

As you let your baby explore the world around him, remember to keep things supervised and safe. Help your baby explore by giving them new and exciting experiences. Introduce new sights, smells, sounds, and textures.

No matter what your baby's abilities are, you can help them explore the world using all their senses.



## Movement and Physical Development Milestones

Because there are so many different milestones your baby will go through, movement and physical milestones are the broadest categories and the ones most parents focus on. Physical development covers everything from feeding to growing to walking to picking up small objects.

It involves the whole body and all of the senses. Because it involves so much work, it requires time and patience.

Remember that in order to develop the most complicated skills babies need a foundation of stability, bilateral coordination (using both sides of their body together at once), and a good understanding and familiarity with sensations.





## 2 Month Milestones

### Movement/Physical Development

- Can hold head up and begins to push up when lying on tummy
- Makes smoother movements with arms and legs

### Language/Communication

- Coos, makes gurgling sounds
- Turns head toward sounds

### Cognitive

- Pays attention to faces
- Begins to follow things with eyes and recognize people at a distance
- Begins to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn't change

### Social and Emotional

- Begins to smile at people
- Can briefly calm himself (may bring hands to mouth and suck on hand)
- Tries to look at parent

Remember that you need to adjust your baby's age for each set of goals.

#### Act early by talking to your child's doctor if your child:

- Doesn't respond to loud sounds
- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Doesn't bring hands to mouth
- Can't hold head up when pushing up when on tummy

## 4 Month Milestones

### Motor

- Brings hands together, or to mouth
- Lifts head and pushes on arms when on tummy
- Reaches for objects
- Turns or makes crawling movement when on tummy

### Language

- Turns head to follow familiar voices
- Laughs and squeals
- Combines sounds more often (for example, “aaah-oooh”, “gaaa-gooo”)

### Cognitive

- Grasps more and reaches for objects
- Brings objects to mouth
- Increases activity when sees a toy

### Social / Emotional

- Is increasingly interactive and comfortable with parents and caregivers
- Shows interest in mirrors, smiles and is playful
- Is able to comfort himself

Remember that you need to adjust your baby’s age for each set of goals.

#### Act early by talking to your child’s doctor if your child:

- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Can't hold head steady
- Doesn't coo or make sounds
- Doesn't bring things to mouth
- Doesn't push down with legs when feet are placed on a hard surface
- Has trouble moving one or both eyes in all directions

## 6 Month Milestones

### Motor

- Puts weight on feet when held standing up
- Sits by herself
- Bangs and shakes objects
- Transfers objects from one hand to another
- Holds 2 objects at a time, one in each hand
- Rolls over from tummy to back

### Language

- Responds to her name, turns and looks
- Babbles, making sounds like “da”, “ga”, “ba”, “ka”

### Cognitive

- Pays attention to what toys can do (make music and light up, for example)
- Looks towards object that drops out of sight

### Social / Emotional

- Is becoming more aware of surroundings
- Notices if parents are present (or not)
- Reacts differently to strangers
- Expresses excitement, happiness and unhappiness

Remember that you need to adjust your baby's age for each set of goals

#### Act early by talking to your child's doctor if your child:

- Doesn't try to get things that are in reach
- Shows no affection for caregivers
- Doesn't respond to sounds around him
- Has difficulty getting things to mouth
- Doesn't make vowel sounds (“ah”, “eh”, “oh”)
- Doesn't roll over in either direction
- Doesn't laugh or make squealing sounds
- Seems very stiff, with tight muscles
- Seems very floppy, like a rag doll

## 9 Month Milestones

### Motor

- Picks up small objects with thumb and finger
- Moves more easily (crawls, moves along furniture, walks when hand is held)
- Pulls to a stand

### Language

- Recognizes familiar words (her name and phrases such as “time for bath” and “go bye-bye”)
- Babbles with combination of vowel and consonant sounds (for example, “dada”, “baba”, “mama”)
- Imitates sounds and movements

### Cognitive

- Explores objects carefully (turns them upside down, puts hands inside openings)
- Is more involved in feedings (tries to hold bottle or pick up finger foods)
- Resists toy being taken away

### Social/Emotional

- Plays peek-a-boo and claps hands with excitement
- May show anxiety around strangers

Remember that you need to adjust your baby’s age for each set of goals

Act early by talking to your child's doctor if your child:

- Doesn't bear weight on legs with support
- Doesn't sit with help
- Doesn't babble (“mama”, “baba”, “dada”)
- Doesn't play any games involving back-and-forth play
- Doesn't respond to own name
- Doesn't seem to recognize familiar people
- Doesn't look where you point
- Doesn't transfer toys from one hand to the other

## 12 Month Milestones

### Motor

- Stands alone
- Takes first steps
- Turns pages of a book few at a time
- Puts small objects in container

### Language

- Combines movements with sounds (reaches for an object and uses voice at same time)
- Pauses or stops when told not to do something
- Associates “mama” or “dada” with parents
- Uses one word again and again
- Hands you an object when asked

### Cognitive

- Is better able to feed herself (tries to drink from cup)
- Helps with dressing

### Social / Emotional

- Prefers to be with parents and caregivers
- Plays with other children

Remember that you need to adjust your baby’s age for each set of goals.

Act early by talking to your child’s doctor if your child:

- Doesn't crawl
- Can't stand when supported
- Doesn't search for things that she sees you hide
- Doesn't say single words like “mama” or “dada”
- Doesn't learn gestures like waving or shaking head
- Doesn't point to things
- Loses skills he once had



## Get More Information About Growth and Development

The information from this module has been adapted from the Centers for Disease Control's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Campaign. They offer a very informational website with lots of resources. [Click here](#) to check it out.



Bright Futures provides a list of informational videos for parents to watch to help them learn more about their child. [Click here](#) to visit their website.

The American Associate of Pediatrics has created a website just for parents and caregivers to get information about all sorts of parenting topics including growth and development. [Click here](#) to learn more.

The Baby Center gives you an idea of what types of toys are a good fit for your baby at each stage of their development. [Click here](#) to see some great ideas!

Pathways is another online resource that offers information about baby milestones and has a lot of free materials to print out and explore. [Click here](#) to visit their site.



Great job! You're another step closer to finishing the CHECK Prematurity Online Program. Hopefully you now know more about how your baby develops month to month.

Now you can move on to the next topic, which talks about breathing problems and other possible complications your baby may have.

