

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS

While reading this information, please keep in mind that all children are unique. While the sequence of development is practically the same for all children (for example, most children learn to crawl before they learn to walk), each child's rate of development is different. There is a wide variation in normal development. Some children reach developmental milestones earlier than others. Some reach them later than others. Rarely does a delay in reaching a developmental milestone mean that there is a problem. In most cases, delays turn out to be normal. Remember that premature infants generally reach developmental milestones later than other infants of the same birth age. Parents with any questions or concerns about their children's development should contact their children's health care provider.

Highlights in Physical Development

***Rolling.** Due to the increase in head, neck, and back strength, and also in coordination, most infants are able to roll from the stomach to the back by four months of age. By six months of age, most infants will be able to roll over from the back to the side.

***Head/Neck.** By four months of age, most infants can turn their heads in all directions when seated or lying down. By this time, most infants can hold their heads steady and erect for short periods

of time, and can hold their heads steady, without bobbing, when pulled by the arms up into a sitting position. When lying on the stomach, most infants can lift their heads to a 90 degree angle by four months of age.

Due to the great increase in head and neck strength by four months of age, many infants can now sit propped up for ten to fifteen minutes. Many are also able to sit in a high chair with a fair amount of success.

By six months of age, most infants have full head control and can hold their heads in a steady position, even while sitting up. However, many infants will still need support to stay in the sitting position.

***Grasp.** During the period from four to six months, most infants will be learning how to grasp, and they will begin to grasp and hold objects for longer and longer periods of time. As their grasp becomes better, many infants can hold a bottle with one or both hands. Many grasping infants soon discover their legs and feet, and they enjoy sucking on their own feet this way.

Grasp will become more and more steady, and as this happens, many infants begin picking up objects using the index and second fingers. By six months of age, many infants are able to hold an object between the index finger and the thumb and can reach with one hand to grasp objects. As infants approach six months

of age, they will finally begin to transfer objects from hand to hand.

***Sitting/Standing/Crawling.** At about four months of age, many infants will be able to raise both their chests and legs off the floor while making swimming movements with their arms. This is the beginning of crawling behavior. Many infants at this age will be able to move themselves by rolling and twisting while lying on their backs and by kicking against flat surfaces.

During the fifth month, many infants are easily pulled into a standing position, and many are able to stand firmly when held.

***Vision.** During the period from four to six months, most infants gradually become able to focus on objects at any distance, and they will follow any moving object that catches their attention.

***Bodily Functions.** By four months of age, most infants establish a predictable amount of time between feeding and bowel movements. At this age most infants sleep about ten to eleven hours per night. During the fourth month of life, eating and sleeping patterns become more regular in most infants.

Highlights in Cognitive/Language Development

At four months of age, most infants are gradually becoming more and more vocal. Many begin introducing sounds and imitating several tones. It is at this time that many infants begin to laugh.

Another great achievement at this stage is the ability to squeal. Some parents may be disturbed by the loud noises their infants make, and they may think it's a form of crying, but actually, it's an important new vocal ability. As infants approach six months of age, they will probably be able to say "aah goo" or some similar vowel-consonant combination and will begin to make wet, razzing sounds with their mouths.

Most infants at this age are still very interested in exploring objects with their mouths, but they are now beginning to be more and more interested in looking at objects. In fact, by five months of age, many infants will actually lean over to look for a fallen object. This is an important step in development because it signals that infants are beginning to understand distance and that objects still exist when they disappear from sight. Memory skills are also improving in infants at this age, and many infants begin to recognize familiar objects.

Highlights in Social Development

Most infants begin to show an interest in toys and playthings at about four months of age, and they may show a preference for one or two toys. It is also at this age that infants begin to tell different faces apart. Most infants at this age know their mothers and other family members, and they will probably begin to resent or object to strangers. As their vocal abilities increase, many infants will begin

to vocalize to get the attention of other people, either by making sounds or by coughing or clicking the tongue. Many at this age can vocalize their moods, laughing when they're happy and yelling when they're angry. As infants continue to vocalize in a social manner, they may begin to interrupt the conversations of others by vocalizing.

Infants approaching five and six months of age will become more and more wary of strangers. At this age, many will greet familiar people with a smile and strangers with recognizable expressions of fear.

This period is a very important one for the social development of the child. Infants at this age enjoy being propped up so they can see what's going on around them.



Center for Effective Parenting
Little Rock Center: (501) 364-7580
NW Arkansas Center: (479) 751-6166

www.parenting-ed.org