



Guide to Whole Health - 9 Months

Weight today:

Length:

Head:

Your baby:

- Is probably mobile! By 9 months almost all babies are scooting or army-crawling, most babies are crawling, and some babies may even be cruising or walking. Remember that all of these milestones can occur normally within an age range, so don't sweat it if your baby isn't quite there yet. Here is a helpful chart:

Milestone	Average age	Age range
Scoots, army crawls or creeps on tummy	7 months	5-10 months
Crawling on hands and knees	8 months	6-11 months
Pulls to stand	9 months	6-12 months
Cruises	11 months	9-14 months
Walks	12 months	9-17 months

- Is learning to make sounds (like "mammamama") and may be trying to copy your sounds, facial movements and gestures.
- Responds to her name and can distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar voices.
- Starts to use hand motions and gestures to communicate what he wants (e.g., arms up means he wants to be picked up).
- Can recognize commonly used words and phrases and may follow a one-step simple instruction.
- **Great toys at this age** are blocks, balls, toys that roll, empty containers (like Tupperware or empty pots and pans).

When to be concerned:

- Big variations in development are completely normal. However, please notify us if you see any of the following signs:
 - Uses only one hand or one side of the body, or heavily favors one side.
 - Does not maintain eye contact, does not babble, does not respond to his name, does not want to interact with others, or seems fearful of everyday noises.
 - Does not like movement activities (like being bounced or swung).
 - Does not want to play with toys of various textures or musical toys.

Diet:

- Your baby is starting to transition to solid foods as a more significant source of calories. If you are struggling to introduce solid foods to your child please let us know. **Sometimes breastfed babies struggle with the texture of solid foods and need a little extra coaxing to transition to real foods.** These babies will often need extra help to ensure that they keep up on their growth chart.
- Encourage your baby to feed herself.
- Show your baby how to drink from a cup.
- Remember that being messy is normal!
- Continue to breastfeed or use formula or donated breastmilk. Until 12 months of age breastmilk or formula are considered the primary source of calories. Continue providing iron rich foods* like broccoli, blackstrap molasses, prunes, grass-fed red meats, or dried fruits like raisins.
- Watch for **choking hazards** like hot dogs, nuts, frozen peas, raw carrot sticks, whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, melon balls, marshmallows or other candies. Cut up foods into pieces smaller than your baby's fingers, or give soft foods. Your baby should be watched while he is eating and should not be allowed to play while eating.
- Do not give your baby soda, cola, tea, coffee, or flavored drinks. Juice is a poor source of nutrients and is high in sugar - we recommend saving juice for very special occasions only (around once per month or less).

Diapers:

- As the variety of foods increases you may notice a change in your baby's bowel movements (poops). Your baby should have a bowel movement at least every day that is firm or semi-solid. Foods like meats, bananas, rice, dairy products and white flour foods tend to be constipating, while most vegetables, whole grains and many fruits (like prunes and apricots) tend to relieve constipation.*

Sleep:

- At 9 months babies are typically awake for 2.5-3 hours at a time before becoming tired and needing a nap.
- At 9 months most babies are sleeping through the night. However, it is our experience that many breastfed babies continue to nurse at least once at night until about 12 months of age. As long as you both are feeling rested this is perfectly fine. You can begin offering water as an alternative in the middle of the night. If you need tricks on sleep training or breaking the night-time waking habit please let us know.
- Many babies resist falling asleep! You can now introduce a "transitional object" like blanket, pillow or teddy bear. Keep bedtime routines consistent and calming. (No tickle games before bed!)

What you may be feeling

- Tired! We find that 9 months is the time where parents are most fatigued, as months of frequent night wakings, teething, colds, and many months of breastfeeding start to take their toll. If you're not feeling tired, that's great! If you are feeling tired please be aware that this is normal! You may want to ask your naturopathic physician about adrenal supportive* herbs and supplements.
- Remember to **continue taking your prenatal vitamin as long as you are breastfeeding**, or according to your physician's recommendations.
- Take time for yourself and your partner! Remember that research shows that what is best for the parents is best for the baby, so don't feel guilty if you need to take a break from caregiving.

Social considerations

- Your child may be showing signs of **separation anxiety**. This is completely normal, and shows that your child has good and healthy attachment to her primary caregivers.
- You may be noticing **sibling rivalry**. This often peaks or intensifies as your baby begins to crawl and walk. Make sure to spend extra "special" time with your older child/children.
- Now is the time to **establish the framework for discipline**. Most children cannot truly understand the link between action and consequence until about 18 months of age. In other words, "time-outs" are not really effective until your child is significantly older. However, you should firmly establish your family rules now while your child is young. These rules should not change as your baby gets older, though the punishment for them does change. The most effective strategy for discipline at 9 months is redirection. Simply moving your child or distracting them from their inappropriate behavior works the best. Saying "NO" firmly is important so he knows this is not allowed. Remember that discipline simply means that you are creating a **structured environment where your child can feel safe, loved, and where the relationships in the household are respected**.
- Make a safe environment for your child so you do not have to be saying "NO!" frequently.

Safety & General Health Tips

- Save the **Poison Control Center number** to your phone: 1-800-222-1222. If your baby swallows a suspected poison, unknown pill or any unintended medication call this number. Take your child to the emergency room if she requires immediate medical care.
- Upgrade your **baby's carseat** to a toddler seat when she meets or exceeds the limits of her infant carseat (which varies by manufacturer). **Make sure to keep your child rear-facing until at least 2 years of age.**
- **Use a safe sunscreen** for your baby when it is not possible to keep him out of the sun. We highly recommend checking out the sunscreen guide at Environmental Working Group which is updated yearly. (www.ewg.org.)
- **Never leave a child alone in a car.**
- **Do not leave your baby unattended.**
- **Always supervise your baby when she is around water.** Always empty bath tubs, buckets of water, and baby pools. Babies can drown in only a few inches of water. Keep toilet lids closed.

- Please be sure you have **smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors correctly installed.**
- **Child-proofing your home** becomes increasingly important as your baby becomes more mobile. We recommend getting on your hands and knees and looking underneath your couch, tables, chairs, etc.
- Install **electrical outlet covers** if you haven't already.
- Put **safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.** (Babies can crawl up stairs and fall down them.)
- Keep **matches and lighters well away from the reach of your child.** Lighters are both a fire hazard and a potential toxic agent - as you know, babies will put ANYTHING into their mouths.
- **Store medications, poisons, dishwashing detergent, bleach, household cleaners in locked cabinets.**
 - Be aware that laundry detergent "packets" look very appealing to children, and are one of the most common causes of Poison Control Center calls. We recommend not using these products.
- **Firearms and knives** should always be stored out of reach of children. Firearms should have trigger locks and be stored separately from bullets.
- Make sure that **windows and window screens are secured** so your baby cannot push the window out.
- **Shoes are not necessary,** and can sometimes hinder your child from learning to walk. If necessary soft-soled moccasins can be used if she needs foot protection outdoors.
- **Brush your child's teeth** before bed with a baby toothbrush. Use water or speak with us or pediatric dentist about appropriate toothpaste. Do not let your baby go to sleep with a bottle of milk.

What to expect from your baby between 9 months and 12 months:

- She will probably say her first word!
- He will probably learn to walk!
- She will probably get a few more teeth.
- May start to feed himself with a spoon, drink from an open cup, and feed himself finger foods (if he isn't already).
- May start to stack blocks, put objects in a container and roll or throw balls.
- May start to open pages of a board book, or like to feel the pages of textured books or surfaces.

Vaccines

- If you are vaccinating your child on schedule, no vaccines are due at the 9 month visit. If you are vaccinating on an alternate schedule speak with us to confirm what vaccines are due.

*Topics with an * have more information published on www.naturopathicpediatrics.com. Simply type in the underlined phrase into the search box to find additional articles.*