

You and your premature baby: 11 months



Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

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NICU Follow-Up Clinic

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What to expect this month

Language development begins long before we ever hear baby's first words. Babies spend months learning to use their mouths, experimenting with sounds, and learning to listen.

Children begin saying words at various ages. Your baby's first spoken words are special. For the first time, she can tell you what she is thinking. For a time, babies often seem to talk in their own language - "babbling" in a conversational way. When your child tries to copy your spoken words, she may not be understandable. That is okay.

Caring for your baby

Standing up

Once your child starts pulling up to stand, you can't keep him down. Parents no longer need to discourage standing, as before.

It is important to notice how your child is standing. If your baby spends more time standing on tiptoes rather than on fully flat feet, consult your doctor. Your baby may need special exercises to learn to stand on flat feet.

This month with baby

Here's what 11-month-old babies might tell you . . . if they could!

Walking and talking

Learning to walk and talk at the same time may be too much for a little person! While I learn to walk, I may slow down a bit in my language development - but I am still listening. I understand more words than I can say.

I practice the sounds that I hear. Keep reading to me and talking to me about the world around us. Help me learn my words by keeping things simple. If I want a toy, give it a one-word name and help me practice asking for it.

Feeding

Mealtimes may get messy. I enjoy finger feeding myself, and I may also squish, smoosh, smell, and even throw my food. Be patient with me. While being firm with your expectations, let me explore tastes, textures, and smells, too.

I am probably ready to eat "big people" foods now. Some flavors and textures might not appeal to me. Some babies love spicy tastes, some do not. Just like adults, we develop likes and dislikes. Next month I may like something that I didn't like last month, so keep trying.

Watch for choking. I may bite off a piece that is too big to swallow. Avoid giving me large chunks. Avoid foods that are hard to chew like nuts, grapes, popcorn, hard candies, raw carrots, and celery. Before feeding me hot dogs or meat sticks, cut them lengthwise and then into smaller pieces.

Bedtime

If bedtime becomes a problem, now is the time to establish a bedtime routine, such as reading a story or singing. Stick to a routine and try not to rush me. Use your voice to comfort me if I fuss after I am alone.

Movement

I like to:

- stand alone, and lean over or rotate my body 90 degrees.
- squat and stoop.
- hold a spoon and try to feed myself.

I enjoy it when you:

- let me finger paint, even though it is messy.
- roll a ball to me. Help me bend over to pick it up, so I can practice my balance.
- teach me ring-around-a-rosy.

Playing

I like to:

- test my limits with you.
- seek approval and avoid disapproval.
- depend on parents, and assert myself with brothers and sisters.

I enjoy it when:

- Mom helps me. I may suddenly reject help from anyone but her. Encourage dad and others to play with me. I may do better if mom is out of sight!

Thinking

I like to:

- explore containers, lift lids on boxes, and put my fingers into holes.
- remove objects, such as blocks and pegs, from cups or boxes.

I enjoy it when you:

- give me plastic containers with lids to put on and take off.
- let me take small objects out of containers. Bangle bracelets, wooden blocks, and other “fun junk” will entertain me for a long time.

Communication

I like to:

- imitate inflections, speech rhythms, and facial expressions.
- have conversations with you.
- point to body parts.

I enjoy it when you:

- imitate sounds and take turns talking with me.
- name body parts for me when we play with a mirror.