

You and your premature baby:

4 months

Adjusted age: measured from the due date



www.childrensmn.org

NICU Follow-Up Clinic

(612) 813-6722, Children's - Minneapolis

(651) 220-8063, Children's - St. Paul

What to expect this month

Changing sleep patterns

Isn't it great that your baby is beginning to sleep longer now at night? Those irregular sleep cycles are finally starting to change and now follow a pattern. As the brain matures, most babies begin to sleep through the night.

Caring for your baby

Solid foods

Ask your health care provider if your baby is ready to start eating solid foods. Signs she might be ready include:

- doubled weight since birth.
- interest in watching you eat.
- good head control.

Starting certain solid foods too early can contribute to food allergies. It also can affect the growth of mouth muscles used for speech and eating (oral motor development). Some babies with chronic health problems, nutritional concerns, or developmental delays may need to delay solid foods, or parents may need to learn specific feeding techniques. Ask for help before you start feeding your baby solid foods.

Car safety

Use an approved car seat, securely fastened. A loose car seat is dangerous in an accident. Buckle your baby securely into the car seat, making sure the belt is fastened properly. **Never** place a car seat in a seat with an airbag. **Never** leave your child alone in the car.

Electrical outlets and cords

Cover electrical outlets in your home. Inexpensive, plastic outlet covers work well. Babies love to poke. If they poke an outlet, they could receive an electrical shock. Cover all outlets that are not in use. Also, secure electrical cords so that appliances can't be pulled over.

Preventing falls

Now that your baby can roll over, the danger of falling is greater. When your baby is lying on a changing table, sofa, or bed, keep a hand on her at all times. Don't turn your back. If you're interrupted, put the baby in the crib or on a blanket on the floor.

Accidents

Accidents are the leading cause of death in children. Keep your precious baby safe.

This month with baby

Here's what 4-month-old babies might tell you...if they could!

Discovering my hands

As I play with my hands, I may grasp one with the other and feel the squeeze. This feeling tells me that my hand is part of me. This is a very exciting discovery! I will spend hours exploring my hands, learning what is me and what is not me.

Learning to sit

When I lie on my back and play with my feet, I'm actually practicing sitting. I'm exercising the leg, back, and stomach muscles that will help me sit up.

Movement

I like to:

- kick my feet.
- lie on my tummy and raise my head.
- hold my head up and turn in all directions.
- try to reach for objects.
- sit for short periods with help.

I enjoy it when you:

- show me toys and other objects so I can practice reaching.

Playing

I like to:

- laugh, look at myself in a mirror, and look at faces.
- hear music; it makes me quiet.

I enjoy it when you:

- take me for walks.
- give me rattles, spoons, and things to hold.

Communication

I want to tell you about the interesting things around me. While I love to "talk" as loud as I can, most of my sounds surprise me as much as they do you. They just happen, depending on how I'm shaping my mouth at the moment. I like voices and music, and I enjoy activity. I also need quieter times. Now and then, turn off the TV and radio, so I can concentrate on you and your voice.

I like to:

- make a variety of sounds and funny noises.
- watch you, and listen to you talk and sing.

I enjoy it when you:

- tell me what you're doing so I can hear lots of different words.
- imitate my sounds.
- sing me songs and tell me nursery rhymes.