

# Baby's Next Steps

This document will give you help and advice looking at changes with you and your baby over the next few months. The session forms part of the universal offer for all children 0 to five. You have a 10 to 12-month review and 2 years to 3-month review, which will be planned around these ages, and an appointment letter will be sent out for these contacts.

In this session, we're going to look at weaning, starting on solid foods, a good diet including vitamins and portion control, dental health, physical development, home safety, play, and stimulation. Whilst most of this information relates to your baby, we will also look at parents and their feelings as well.

## Introducing solid foods

Generally, baby's tummies aren't ready for anything other than milk until they're around six months old, and the NHS guidelines advise to wait until your baby is six months old. Here are some things to look out for that show they're ready to have a go. They can sit up supported holding their head and neck upright for a few minutes and they're holding things in their hands and chewing on different objects.

How to make a start? Your baby should be happy and content and not had any milk for a couple of hours, so they will have some hunger starting. First tastes can be fruit, vegetable, mash, or cereal such as baby porridge. Start with a smooth consistency for the first couple of times to see how your baby handles solid food in their mouth. Premature babies may need to wean a little later depending on their development and prematurity. Speak to your public health nurse (health visitor) about weaning your premature baby. If they keep pushing the food out with their tongue they're not ready to wean. Try again in another week or two.

Once your baby has had a couple of tries with solid food and seems to enjoy it, then you can start to increase the texture of food and move to mashing with a fork. Your baby will learn to manage the food in their mouth and develop their chew and bite reflexes which are present between six to eight months old. You can give them solid items of food such as soft cooked carrots, yams (which are sweet potatoes), broccoli, cauliflower, plantain, and chapattis. Food which needs to be cooked should be soft to bite but not falling apart in baby's hand. Give your baby small amounts of finger food from starting weaning as it helps them with their hand and eye coordination, their bite and their chew. Over the next few months, their fine motor skills will improve with this practice. Parents often worry about their baby choking. You must watch your baby whilst they eat in case they choke. But this is rare. Babies can make a funny noise when eating which could be gagging. Gagging is a protective mechanism which means food returns to the mouth making a gagging sound, here the baby can either reswallow the right way or rechew it as it's too lumpy to swallow. All this is learned behaviour and with practice it will happen less and less.

Initially, your baby needs small portions of food alongside their normal amounts of milk. As solid foods increase in frequency and amount, you can change when you offer a milk drink. They will need one when they first wake in the morning and before bedtime. The other milk feeds will slowly be replaced by solid foods. Build up to offering three meals a day and offer a reduced amount of milk as the solids increase, until you're offering dairy foods instead of milk in their diet. 30 grams (1 ounce) of cheese, such as cheddar, is similar to 200 millilitres of milk. 2 small fromage frais or yogurt give the same as 150 millilitres of milk.

Offer foods you have as a family as much as possible instead of buying baby foods. You want your baby to eat what you eat, and it's cheaper. Manufactured baby food is convenient but often sweetened to make it taste better with sugars, fructose or apple juice which could mean your baby prefers sweeter things. Baby's food should be full fat, not low fat. They need the fat content for their energy and development.

## Portion sizes

As a general rule we use a baby or child's fist to represent a portion size, as this grows with your child and will be a good visual clue to how much is enough.

## Foods to avoid

We don't recommend adding salt or sugar to baby's food. Try using stock cubes and gravy which are low salt. Honey in under one-year-olds should be avoided. It could lead to a severe type of food poisoning. For similar reasons, we don't recommend unpasteurized cheeses or lightly cooked shellfish like prawns, mussels, and clams. Swordfish, shark, and marlin can contain higher levels of mercury. This could affect how your baby develops their nervous system which controls how they think, feel emotions and learn to speak.

Whole nuts and peanuts when not ground or chopped up can cause a choking hazard to children. So wait till they're over five years old to give as a snack.

## Vitamins

Breastfed babies need vitamin D from birth until they're five years old. This is whether or not you're taking a supplement containing vitamin D yourself. Formula fed babies need a combination of A, C, and D vitamins once they reach six months old. First stage formula milk has these vitamins added to it. And if your baby has more than 500 millilitres, or a pint, a day they will not need any additional supplements.

## Drinks

Your baby can have breast milk or formula first milk for the first 12 months of their life. They do not need to move on to second milk. From one year old, you can move your baby on to full fat cow's milk as a drink. You can use alternative milks. But it needs to be fortified with calcium and vitamin D. Rice milk is not recommended for children under five years old.

From four months old, you can introduce a free flowing beaker with a hard spout, not a soft spout. Start with cool boiled water in your beaker and, over time, your baby practices using it, doing it for themselves. Start to offer milk in beakers if using formula. Offer milk at the end of a meal. Using a beaker helps your baby learn to use their tongue with control. This in turn helps when learning to speak. Using a beaker also helps protect baby's teeth.

## Oral Health

Teeth can start to emerge from four months old to over one year old, and whenever this is, it's fine. Teething is usually noticed by red hard gums, flushed red spots on one or both cheeks, lots of dribbling, chewing and gnawing on objects. Sometimes babies can pull up their ears as well, getting upset more easily than usual, and clinging to you as the caregiver. There are over-the-counter treatments for teething such as gels, rubs, and powders. Cool teething rings can be good to chew on. Babies tend to find anything hard to bite on to aid this process.

As teeth emerge, you should brush your children's teeth twice a day, morning and evening, after their last milk drink. You should use a soft baby toothbrush with small head and soft bristles, using baby's toothpaste with at least 1,000 parts per million of fluoride. You should only use a thin smear of toothpaste or it foams too much. Spit, don't rinse. We advise registering your child at the dentist from one-year-old. Aim to move your child onto beakers and cups by one-year-old and ditch your bottle. Start with drinks in the daytime, then try offering the morning feed in a beaker rather than a bottle. Moving towards the night time bottle probably being the last one to go.

# Immunisations

By now, you should have had nearly all of your primary immunisations. If they're completed, then your next one will be at 12 to 13 months.

# Maternal and infant mental health

The three to four-month old time can be a difficult time emotionally, know that there will be good and bad days as a new parent. If you're feeling low or anxious, experiencing feelings of hopelessness or have often been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things over the past month, then it is important to talk to someone. This is really important if you feel like this most days. If you're under the GP or mental health team, please get in touch with them if you feel that your current care is not helping, particularly if you have any thoughts of self-harm or feel unable to keep your baby safe. Please contact your GP or access your local walk-in centre as soon as possible.

If you recognise these feelings for the first time, there are some excellent services that you can be referred to for immediate help and support. There's evidence of increasing levels of depression in new fathers and also in adoptive parents. Please talk to us if you feel being a parent is not what you thought it would be. If you find it hard to interact with your baby try and remember to smile at your baby and talk to them even if it feels hard to do. Looking after yourself is very important for you and your baby's wellbeing, and we know that babies can be affected by lowered emotional health.

# Promoting development: four months to one year

At four months old, your baby should be grasping and transferring objects between their hands. Be watching everything going on and following movement. They will be laughing at things you do to stimulate them. Give your baby lots of time on the floor, a play mat or blanket with toys around them to reach for. They are interested in grabbing things which make noise, be it crinkly paper or material, things that squeak and have rattles in. Your baby should be trying to roll to one side then back. When on their tummy, they should hold their head and shoulders clear from the floor and their legs are kicking out at the back of them. It looks like they're almost balancing on their tummies.

Babies can do different things between six months and one year with regard to developing their big movements (gross motor skills). They could crawl, but not all babies do. They can be on their knees, on all fours or crawl like a soldier dragging their bodies with their arms and legs low to the floor. Some babies are happy to sit or roll around. Some babies move backwards to start with. Other babies will pull to stand and walk around holding onto furniture and bypass the crawling stage. Babies can have short 20-minute sessions in things like non-rolling activity centres. Baby walkers with wheels, which babies sit in, are not recommended. If your baby uses a door bouncer, they also need to be watched carefully whilst they're in it to ensure they don't bang into anything. For example, doorframes or covered edges.

# Small movements, fine motor skills and problem solving

Small movements such as picking something up between a finger and a thumb requires more control than picking something up with your whole hand and takes practice. Shape sorters, posting activities, transferring toys from one box to another can all encourage this. Toys which ask the baby to pull, push, turn and press help develop these skills. Show them how to do things, encourage them to keep trying. When they get it right give them lots of smiles and cuddles.

Turn everyday things into a game. Start to help them understand the place of things, is it in, on, under, in front of or behind something? Play hide and seek with objects they know under tea towels. Stacking cups are a great all round toy.

Your baby should be making lots of tuneful sounds, copying noises you make like coughing, blowing raspberries, lip smacking. This is a great time to join a parent and toddler group. Music, books and talking are all important to your baby at this time. They learn quickly about their world. Their brain should have developed all the building blocks for language by nine months old. The more you talk and read to your baby, the more language they are learning. Don't worry if English isn't your first language, your baby will pick up English as they go.

## Safety in the home

More accidents happen in the home than anywhere else. And children under the age of five are some of the most likely to have accidents at home. Children attend A&E or walk-in centres most commonly for accidental poisoning, burns and scalds, and falls. The lounge or living room is the most common place for accidents to happen. Think about stairgates for the bottom of the stairs and room entrances. Keep baby out of the kitchen or in an area where they are safe. Cord blinds should be shortened and tied up away from baby. They are a choking hazard. Continue with safe sleeping, putting your baby to sleep on their backs, not letting them get too hot. Cables need to be tacked or hidden. Plug socket covers are not considered necessary anymore. Corners, door hinges and edges of furniture need to be considered for safety. You may need to remove certain furniture until your baby is older. In the kitchen, we advise moving cleaning fluids to a high cupboard or fitting a child lock on the low cupboards. Make sure there is no dangling flex from your kettle and your kettle is at the back of the worktop. Knives should be in a drawer with a child lock or moved to a higher cupboard out of reach along with any other sharp kitchenware.

Keep hot drinks out of the reach of children. Hot drink scalds can keep burning your child for up to 15 minutes after it's happened. Put any burn under cold running water as soon as possible and keep it under for at least 20 minutes, then seek medical attention. If a scald happens and it starts to blister, cover it with cling film after cooling with running water. This will help keep it clean and stop clothing fibres sticking to it.

Smoke alarms should be fitted and carbon monoxide alarms if you have gas in your house. If you smoke, make sure you keep any smoking materials, lighters and matches in a cupboard high up. Candles should never be left lit in a room unless an adult is present.

Pets must be watched and not left alone with your baby. As your baby is getting more adventurous and active, they are more likely to pull and grab your pet. They're just playing, but your pet may not be tolerant. An adult should be present if pets are in the room or take your baby with you when you go out of it, or shut the pet out of the room when you're leaving the baby. Pets often need timeout from crawling babies and toddlers.

Never leave your baby in water by themselves. They can turn and drown in a couple of minutes. There were four deaths in 2018 in the bath. Also be aware of where children can come into contact with water, paddling pools in the summer, hot tubs and Jacuzzis (at home and on holiday), swimming pools, rivers and lakes.

## Sun safety

Babies under six months old should be kept out of the sun. Babies over six months old should wear sunscreen. This needs applying 30 minutes before going out to allow time for it to sink into the skin and be active. It should be reapplied as per the bottle's instructions. Hats and sunglasses should be worn if there's a lot of bright light. Children need an SPF of at least 30. Keep children well hydrated with additional water drinks if they aren't as hungry.

## Car safety

Children should stay rear facing till they are at least one-year-old and, if possible, up to 15 months old. Babies can be up to five times safer when facing the rear of the car than facing the front. Rear facing car seats are suitable up to a weight of 25 kilos and a height of up to 83 centimetres. A booster

seat should not be used if a child is under 125 centimetres. They should remain in a forward facing car seat with side impact protection. Harnesses should be used wherever they are fitted. For example, the car seat, a baby chair, a bike seat carrier, or high chair. They will keep your child in the correct position and safe for the items used.

Your next contact with the Healthy Together team is when your baby is 10 to 12 months old. You can contact us at any time before this if you have questions or would like advice. You can contact us through your health visitor. Their number should be in the front of your red book, or you can contact us at ChatHealth by text.