

Milestones for young babies

Birth to 8 months



Your baby is growing and developing from the day they are born. Babies do best in loving and caring environments. Talking, touching and playing with your baby from the beginning helps you bond and is great for their development.

Developmental milestones are things most babies can do by a certain age, eg smiling for the first time or sitting without support. All babies are different, some will do things faster and some slower.

At least three quarters of all babies will meet their developmental milestones at each age below. If you are worried your baby is not meeting their milestones talk to a child health nurse or other health professional.

If your baby was born prematurely adjust their age by subtracting the weeks/months they were born early, eg an 8 month baby born 2 months early has an adjusted age of 6 months. Check milestones for their adjusted age.

What most babies do by 2 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Calm down when spoken to or picked up.
- Look at your face.
- Seem happy to see you when you walk up to them.
- Smile when you talk to or smile at them.

Language/Communication Milestones

- Make sounds other than crying.
- React to loud sounds.

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Watch you as you move.
- Look at a toy for several seconds.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Hold their head up when on tummy.
- Move both arms and both legs.
- Open hands briefly.

Help your baby grow and learn

- Hold a rattle to one side of your baby's head, shake it and see if they look for the noise.
- Learn to notice and respond to your baby's signals to know what they're feeling and need, eg are they trying to "play" with you by making sounds and looking at you or turning their head away, yawning or becoming fussy because they need a break? Responding to their needs will feel good and they will feel safe and loved.
- Being responsive to your baby helps them grow and learn. Limiting your screen time when you are with them helps you be responsive.



- Practice tummy time regularly in a variety of positions including on your chest, on the floor or change table. Put toys at their eye level in front of them and talk or sing to them. Never leave your baby alone during tummy time.
- Spend time cuddling and holding them. This will help them feel safe and cared for. You will not spoil your baby by holding or responding to them.
- Talk, read and sing to your baby to help them develop and understand language.

Babies need some tummy time on the floor each day from birth. It helps develop muscles for head control and crawling. Start for a minute or two a few times a day and gradually build up to 10-15 minutes. Never leave a baby alone on their tummy. Let them know you're there by talking and singing, stroking their back or tickling their hands. If they don't like tummy time try doing it on a rolled up towel or on your lap or chest.

What most babies do by 4 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Smile on their own to get your attention.
- Chuckle (not yet a full laugh) when you try to make them laugh.
- Look at you, move or make sounds to get or keep your attention.

Language/Communication Milestones

- Make sounds like "oooo", "aahh" (cooing).
- Make sounds back when you talk to them.
- Turn their head towards the sound of your voice.

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- If hungry, open their mouth when they see the breast or bottle.
- Look at their hands with interest.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- When you're holding them they can keep their head steady without help.
- Hold a toy when you put it in their hand.
- Use their arm to swing at toys.
- Bring their hands to their mouth.
- Push up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy.

Help your baby grow and learn

- Call your baby by their name to help them learn it, eg 'Where's your hat Sam?' Babies start to recognise their name from around nine months.
- Allow your baby to explore - this is how they learn. Encourage them to see and hear what's around them and to touch things that aren't sharp or hot; let them put safe things in their mouth (nothing small enough to choke on).
- Let your baby have time to move and interact with people and objects throughout the day. Try not to keep them in swings, strollers or bouncy seats for too long.
- Lay baby on a blanket with toys to reach for or kick at and to explore what's around them.
- Lay baby on their back and show them a brightly coloured toy. Move the toy slowly from left to right and up and down to see if they watch how it moves.
- Follow your baby's lead and play games they show an interest in. Whenever possible let them decide how long to play and when to move on to something else.

Limit screen time (TV, tablets, phones) to video calling with loved ones. Screen time is not recommended for children younger than 2 years of age. Babies learn by talking, playing and interacting with others.

What most babies do by 6 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Recognise familiar people.
- Like to look at themselves in a mirror.
- Laugh.



Language/Communication Milestones

- Take turns making sounds with you.
- Blow “raspberries” (stick tongue out and blow).
- Make squealing noises.

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Put things in their mouth to explore them.
- Reach to grab a toy they want.
- Close lips to show they don’t want more food.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Roll from tummy to their back.
- Push up with straight arms when on tummy.
- Lean on hands to support themselves when sitting.

Help your baby grow and learn

- Learn to read your baby’s moods. If they are happy keep doing what you are doing. If they are upset take a break and comfort them.
- Sit with baby facing you on your lap and make silly sounds. Take a pause and wait to see if they “talk back”. When they babble, squeal or make a silly face make the same sounds and face back.
- Hide a toy under a cloth, cup or box and encourage baby to look for it. Once they can find it quickly move it to another hiding place and encourage them to find it again. When they find the object show excitement and say ‘You found it!’ Repeat the game as long as they seem interested.
- Read to your baby every day by looking at pictures in books and talking about them. Respond to them when they babble and “read” too, eg if they make sounds say ‘Yes, that’s the doggy!’
- Sing to your baby and play music. Babies love songs and chants with simple hand motions. They can learn to copy motions and remember sequences with practice, eg Incy Wincy Spider or Pat a Cake.
- Hold your baby up while they sit. Let them look around and give them toys to play with while they learn to balance.
- Point out new things and name them, eg cars, flowers, birds, animals when you’re on a walk.

Seek help if your child:

- loses skills they once had
- doesn’t respond to sound and light
- doesn’t use eye contact or interact with other children or adults
- is very stiff or floppy or shows a difference in how much they use their right and left sides.

If you are worried for any other reason talk to a health professional.

Getting help early can make a big difference.

You know your baby best. Don’t wait. Seek help early from the Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS), your doctor or paediatrician. They can assure you all is well or get help for your child if they need it.

Note: The term ‘Parents’ in this Guide refers to anyone caring for and/or raising children and young people, eg parents, caregivers, step-parents, grandparents, guardians, foster or kinship carers.

Want more information?

Parent Helpline

Phone 1300 364 100, 7 days, 7.15am–9.15pm

Advice on child health and parenting

After 9:15pm your call will go through to the national Healthdirect helpline

Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS)

Phone 1300 733 606, 9am-4.30pm, Mon-Fri for an appointment

Free service for children aged 0-5. Nurses can help with children’s health, eating, sleeping and development www.cafhs.sa.gov.au/

Early Years SA App

Information on child health, learning, development and wellbeing from birth to 5 years www.education.sa.gov.au/early-years-app

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

For further information on children’s milestones

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html

Raising Children Network

Information on raising children, including child development and play <https://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Parenting SA

For other Parent Easy Guides including ‘About babies’, ‘Learning to talk’, ‘Why stories are important’, ‘Living with Toddlers’, ‘Developmental delay’, ‘Milestones for older babies’, ‘Milestones for toddlers’, ‘Milestones for 3 to 5 year olds’ and ‘Growing and learning in the family’ www.parenting.sa.gov.au

Acknowledgement: The developmental milestones outlined in this Guide are sourced from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html



**Government
of South Australia**

Parenting SA

A partnership between the Department of
Human Services and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

www.parenting.sa.gov.au

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia.

Important: This information is not intended
to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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