

Milestones for older babies 9 to 17 months



Babies grow and develop best in loving and caring environments. Older babies will start to do a lot of new things. There are many ways you can support their development.

Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age, eg walking or saying mama or dada for the first time. 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 9 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Are shy, clingy or fearful around strangers.
- Show several facial expressions, eg happy, sad, angry, surprised.
- Look when you call their name.
- React when you leave, eg look or reach for you or cry.
- Smile or laugh when you play "peek-a-boo".

Language/Communication Milestones

- Make a lot of different sounds like "mamamama" and "bababababa".
- Lift their arms to be picked up.

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Look for objects that drop out of sight, eg a spoon or toy.
- Bang two things together.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Get to a sitting position by themselves.
- Move things from one hand to the other hand.
- Use fingers to "rake" food towards themselves.
- Sit without support.

Help your baby grow and learn

- Play with your baby by dumping blocks from a container and putting them back in together.
- Play games such as "my turn, your turn", eg by passing a toy back and forth.
- Play "peek-a-boo" - cover your face or head with a cloth and see if they pull it off.



- Take turns dropping a small toy into a container. When the toy hits the bottom say 'Boom!' Your baby might laugh or clap in excitement. After a few times drop the toy in the container without saying anything. They might try to say 'Boom!' or make another noise. If they do, respond by saying it back. Encourage them to drop the toy in the bucket and say 'Boom!' with you.
- Find a safe object that makes noise, eg a set of jingling keys or musical toy. Make the sound and then hide the object behind your back or under a blanket. Encourage baby to look for it, eg by saying 'Where are the keys?' When they find the object respond enthusiastically, eg 'You found it!' Try different hiding spots or different objects and repeat the game until they lose interest.

Babies ask for things by pointing. When you respond with words it helps their language skills, eg you can say 'You want the cup? Here is the cup. It's your cup'. If your baby tries to say 'cup' celebrate their attempt.

- At the supermarket point out and talk about the different foods you see. Or talk about what your baby is pointing to or noticing. What type of food is it? What colour? What does it taste or smell like? You might say 'I see red and green apples. I wonder if they taste sweet?' If your baby makes sounds in response listen and keep the discussion going.
- Ask for behaviours you want, eg rather than saying 'don't stand' say 'time to sit'.
- Make simple gestures in front of your baby - wave your hand, stick out your tongue or blow a kiss. Babies love to copy adults by watching them, remembering what they do, waiting their turn and trying to copy. If your baby makes the gesture first, copy them back!
- Read to your baby. Reading can be pointing to and naming pictures in books or magazines.
- Say a quick and cheerful goodbye so your baby knows you are leaving, even if they cry. Let them know when you return, eg 'Daddy's back!' This will help them develop trust and learn you will always come back. If you just disappear they can become fearful next time you need to leave.

- Give your baby safe places to explore. Baby-proof your home, eg move sharp or breakable things out of reach. Lock away medicines, chemicals and cleaning products.

What most babies do by 12 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Play games with you, eg "pat-a-cake".

Language/Communication Milestones

- Wave "bye-bye".
- Call a parent "mama" or "dada" or another special name.
- Understand "no" (pause briefly or stop when you say it).

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Put something in a container, eg a block in a cup.
- Look for things they see you hide, eg a toy under a blanket.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Pull themselves up to stand.
- Walk holding onto furniture.
- Drink from a cup without a lid as you hold it.
- Pick things up between their thumb and pointer finger, eg small bits of food.

Help your baby grow and learn

- It's fun for babies to explore their surroundings whether they are crawling, standing with support or beginning to walk. Sit or kneel down near them and place pillows, couch cushions or soft toys on the floor between you. Encourage them to explore these "obstacles" and come to you. Older babies might climb over, stack or carry them or even pretend to lay down and go to sleep.
- Show your baby behaviours you want. Use positive words or affection when they do them, eg if they pull your pet's tail teach them how to pat gently and give them a hug when they do it.



- If your baby is getting into things you don't want them to redirect them quickly and consistently with a toy or move them. Save "no" for behaviours that are dangerous. When you say "no" say it firmly - don't smack, yell or give long explanations.
- Encourage baby to practise walking on their own. Baby walkers are not recommended. Let them hold your hands or hold onto furniture that is safe.

Limit screen time 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.

- Give your baby pots, pans and wooden spoons or a small musical instrument, eg a drum or cymbals. Encourage them to make noise.
- Point to interesting things outside, eg a truck, bus, bird, animal. This will help your baby pay attention to what others are "showing" them when they point.
- Talk or sing to your baby about what you're doing, eg 'Mummy is washing your hands' or sing "This is the way we wash our hands".
- Build on what your baby tries to say. If they say 'ta' for truck say 'Yes a truck'. If they say 'truck' say 'Yes that's a big blue truck'.
- Babies learn to calm themselves from calm caregivers who make them feel safe. Talking softly, holding, rocking or singing helps them learn they can calm down.

What most babies do by 15 months

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Copy other children while playing, eg taking toys out of a container when another child does.
- Show you an object they like.
- Clap when excited.
- Hug a stuffed doll or other toy.
- Show you affection (hugs, cuddles, kisses).

Language/Communication Milestones

- Try to say one or two words besides 'mama' or 'dada', eg 'ba' for ball or 'da' for dog.
- Look at a familiar object when you name it.
- Follow directions given with both a gesture and words, eg they give you a toy when you hold out your hand and say 'Give me the toy'.
- Point to ask for something or get help.

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Try to use things the right way, eg a phone, cup or book.
- Stack at least two small objects, eg blocks.

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Take a few steps on their own.
- Use fingers to feed themselves.

Help your baby grow and learn

- Find ways to let your child help with everyday activities, eg get their shoes to go outside, put snacks in a bag for the park or socks in the washing basket.
- Let your child drink from a cup without a lid and practise eating with a spoon. Learning to eat and drink is messy but fun!
- Children like to do favourite things again and again. You can use what they like to introduce new things, eg read a new book after a favourite one.
- Sing songs with hand motions, eg "Wheels on the Bus", "Open, Shut Them", "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" (see YouTube). See if your baby tries any of the actions.
- "Pretend talk" with a stuffed animal. See if they try to copy you or use another stuffed toy to "talk" with the one you are holding.





- Say what you think your baby is feeling, eg sad, mad, frustrated, happy. Use words, your voice and facial expressions, eg 'You're frustrated because we can't go outside, but it's not okay to hit. Let's look for an indoor game'.

What babies hear, see and feel in the early years affects how their brain develops. They do best when they have warm, nurturing relationships with parents and caregivers.

Seek help if your child:

- loses skills they once had
- doesn't respond to sound or 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 child best. Don't wait. Seek help early from the Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS) or 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 young 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



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Parenting SA

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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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