



Is Your Baby Meeting These Important Milestones?

Key Social, Emotional, and Communication Milestones for Your Baby's Healthy Development

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The milestones in this chart are important to a child's healthy learning, behavior, and development. While each child develops differently, *some differences may indicate a slight delay and others may be a cause for greater concern.* The following milestones provide important guidelines for tracking healthy development from four months to three years of age. These milestones *should not be* used in place of a screening, but should be used as discussion points between parents and physicians at each well visit. If a child does not have the skills listed—or if there is a *loss of* any skill at any age—be sure to let your physician know.

Does Your Baby...

At 4 Months:

- Follow and react to bright colors, movement, and objects?
- Turn toward sounds?
- Show interest in watching people's faces?
- Smile back when you smile?

At 6 Months:

- Relate to you with real joy?
- Smile often while playing with you?
- Coo or babble when happy?
- Cry when unhappy?

At 9 Months:

- Smile and laugh while looking at you?
- Exchange back-and-forth smiles, loving faces, and other expressions with you?
- Exchange back-and-forth sounds with you?
- Exchange back-and-forth gestures with you, such as giving, taking, and reaching?

At 12 Months:

- Use a few gestures, one after another, to get needs met, like giving, showing, reaching, waving, and pointing?
- Play peek-a-boo, patty cake, or other social games?
- Make sounds, like “ma,” “ba,” “na,” “da,” and “ga?”
- Turn to the person speaking when his/her name is called?

At 15 Months:

- Exchange with you many back-and-forth smiles, sounds, and gestures in a row?
- Use pointing or other “showing” gestures to draw attention to something of interest?
- Use different sounds to get needs met and draw attention to something of interest?
- Use and understand at least three words, such as “mama,” “dada,” “bottle,” or bye-bye?

At 18 Months:

- Use lots of gestures with words to get needs met, like pointing or taking you by the hand and saying, “want juice”?
- Use at least four different consonants in babbling or words, such as m, n, p, b, t, and d?
- Use and understand at least 10 words?
- Show that he or she knows the names of familiar people or body parts by pointing to or looking at them when they are named?
- Do simple pretend play, like feeding a doll or stuffed animal, and attracting your attention by looking up at you?

At 24 Months:

- Do pretend play with you with *more than* one action, like feeding the doll *and then* putting the doll to sleep?
- Use and understand at least 50 words?

- Use at least two words together (without imitating or repeating) and in a way that makes sense, like “want juice”?
- Enjoy being next to children of the same age and show interest in playing with them, perhaps giving a toy to another child?
- Look for familiar objects out of sight when asked?

At 36 Months:

- Enjoy pretending to play different characters with you or talking for dolls or action figures?
- Enjoy playing with children of the same age, perhaps showing and telling another child about a favorite toy?
- Use thoughts and actions together in speech and in play in a way that makes sense, like “sleepy, go take nap” and “baby hungry, feed bottle”?
- Answer “what,” “where,” and “who” questions easily?
- Talk about interests and feelings about the past and the future?

Red flags. If your baby shows any of these signs, please ask your pediatrician or family practitioner for an immediate evaluation:

- ▶ No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by six months or thereafter¹
- ▶ No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions by nine months or thereafter¹
- ▶ No babbling by 12 months²
- ▶ No back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, showing, reaching, or waving by 12 months²
- ▶ No words by 16 months²
- ▶ No two-word meaningful phrases (without imitating or repeating) by 24 months²
- ▶ ANY loss of speech or babbling or social skills at ANY age²

¹ Greenspan, S.I. (1999) *Building Healthy Minds*, Perseus Books

² Filipek, P.A., et al. *Practice parameter: Screening and diagnosis of autism*. *Neurology* 2000, 55: 468-79.

The key social, emotional, and communication milestones were compiled and adapted with permission from the following sources: Greenspan, S.I. (1999) *Building Healthy Minds*, Perseus Books; Prizant, B. M., Wetherby, A. M., Roberts, J. E. (2000) Communication Disorders in Infants and Toddlers, In C. Zeanah (Ed.) *Handbook of Infant Mental Health*, Second Edition, New York: Guilford Press; and Wetherby, A.M. (1999) *Babies Learn to Talk at an Amazing Rate*, FIRST WORDS Project, Florida State University.

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