



Vaccines

Vaccinate your baby on time.

Vaccines help protect your baby from diseases that can cause serious illness and even death. Missing or delaying vaccines puts your baby at risk for illnesses you can prevent. Make sure your baby gets vaccinated on time.

Your baby can be vaccinated even if they are taking antibiotics or have a minor illness, such as a cold, diarrhea, or a fever. The vaccines your baby receives will still be effective and will not make them sicker.

The following vaccines are recommended at the 4 month checkup:

- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
- Inactivated Polio vaccine (IPV)
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) (talk with your baby's doctor for more information)

Until your baby is old enough to get vaccinated against flu, chickenpox, and measles, be sure those in close contact with your baby are vaccinated.

If you have questions about vaccines, talk to your baby's doctor, nurse, or clinic staff. To see and download your family's vaccine records online, visit myirmobile.com.



Well-Child Visits

Schedule your baby's 4 month checkup.

Your baby will grow and change quickly in the first year. That's why checkups are needed so often during this time.

The 4 month checkup is the perfect time to ask questions about your baby's health, growth and development, and vaccines. Take notes during the visit. You may want to share the information you learn with the other people caring for your baby.



Schedule and go to my 4 month checkup.

Growth and Development



Sleep and your baby.

Most babies this age wake up 2 or 3 times a night. Some wake up more, some less. This is common but may be hard for new parents and caregivers.

This pattern of sleeping and waking helps your baby's brain grow and develop and keeps them safe and healthy. In a few months, your baby will start to sleep longer without waking up as often.

Some babies naturally need more or less sleep than others. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends you:

- Sleep in the same room as your baby, but on a separate sleep surface, for at least 6 months to 1 year.
- Place your baby on their back in a crib with a tight-fitting sheet.
- Avoid using soft bedding in your baby's crib.
- Keep baby's sleep space smoke, alcohol, and drug free.

Your family and your baby will develop your own sleep pattern. Start a bedtime routine at the same time every night. This may include a bath, diaper change, and reading a book.

Avoid loud noises and

bright lights before

bed. Lay your baby

down on their back

while they are drowsy but awake. This gives your baby practice falling asleep in bed. Don't worry if your baby wakes up right away. Soothe your baby and try again when they are ready.

Encourage "tummy time".

Your baby might get a flat spot on their head if they spend a lot of time laying on their back. This happens because your baby's skull is soft and neck muscles are weak. Flattening usually goes away on its own, if it does not, talk with your baby's doctor.

Give your baby plenty of "tummy time" when they are awake, and someone is watching. This will help keep your baby from getting a flat spot. It also helps make your baby's muscles stronger. Hold your baby in your arms often. If your baby is bottle fed, hold them on your right side for one feeding and on your left side for the next. If your baby is breast or chest fed, they get switched from side to side as you move them from one side to the other.

Nutrition and Physical Activity

Babies only need human milk or formula now.

The AAP recommends only breast or chest feeding your baby for the first 6 months. Then continuing to breast or chest feed along with solid foods for as long as you and your baby desire. Breast or chest fed babies are less likely to get colds, ear infections or allergies. Human milk also lowers baby's risk of Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDs) and diabetes.

Breast or chest feeding also helps strengthen your baby's immune system. But your baby also needs to get recommended vaccines to protect against serious diseases.

Be careful about buying or sharing human milk. Babies can get sick if human milk is not bought from a safe source or is not handled properly.

Ask for help if you're having trouble breast or chest feeding.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about connecting with a lactation consultant. If you are a Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) member, call your local WIC clinic. For answers to breast or chest feeding questions visit La Lecha League's website, llusa.org/bfinfo.

Cuddle with your baby.

Hold and talk to your baby while feeding them. Your baby needs to cuddle with you and look at your face even when they can hold a bottle.

Vitamin D is important for everyone.

A vitamin D supplement is necessary if your baby drinks human milk or less than 32 ounces of formula a day.

Your baby may also need an iron supplement around 4 months. Ask your baby's doctor for more information.

Solid food readiness.

The AAP recommends only breast or chest feeding your baby for the first 6 months. You'll know your baby is ready when for solid food, like baby cereal, when they can:

- Sit with minimal support.
- Control head movement.
- Show interest in eating by moving their tongue side to side, or open their mouth when they see a spoon.

Unless recommended by your doctor or nurse, do not add cereal or other food thickeners to your baby's bottle as this can lead to overfeeding and poor hydration.



Family Support and Routine

Help your body recover from pregnancy.

Eat well and take care of yourself so you have energy to take care of your baby and do the things you love. Eat a variety of foods from each of the 5 food groups (protein, dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables) every day. No single food can give your body everything it needs. Eat healthy snacks and limit sweetened drinks, including sodas.

Here are some other post-pregnancy tips:

- Take prenatal vitamins or a multivitamin with iron and folic acid. They provide nutrients for your body.
- Try to get some exercise every day, such as walking outside. Start slowly. If you have questions about what exercise is safe for you, talk to your doctor.
- Get routine dental care at least every 6 months.
- Find ways to reduce stress.

- It's recommended to wait at least 18 to 24 months before getting pregnant again, especially if your baby was born early or if you had a C-section delivery. To learn where to get low-cost birth control, call the Help Me Grow Washington Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.
- If you smoke, try to quit. For help, call 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW) or visit quitline.com.

Recognize postpartum depression and anxiety.

If you or your partner feel sad, anxious, or like you can't handle things, you may have postpartum depression (PPD) or anxiety. PPD and anxiety are very common. It can also affect a partner who has not given birth. It does not mean you are not a good parent or caregiver!

Talk about your feelings with your doctor and people you trust. It is important to get help. Healthy feelings between you and your baby are important for your baby's development. For more support you can call Perinatal Support Washington at 1-888-404-7763 or visit perinatalsupport.org.



Let's go on a walk together!

Safety

Reduce your baby's risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Always lay your baby on their back to sleep. Make sure everyone who takes care of your baby does this. Talk with your baby's doctor or nurse about the best sleep position if your baby has any special needs.

Keep soft objects, toys, crib bumpers, pets, pillows and blankets, and other loose bedding away from the sleep area. You can keep your baby close to your bed but on a separate sleep surface designed for infants.

Babies who breathe any form of smoke are at higher risk of SIDS.

Your baby may have an increased risk if cigarettes or marijuana are used around them. Keep your baby away from people while they are smoking tobacco or marijuana. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or car. Vaping is also harmful and is not safe to do around your baby.

After using tobacco and marijuana products, wash your hands and change your clothes to remove lingering smoke.

Have a plan for when your baby cries.

All babies cry. It's common for babies to cry from 2 to 4 hours a day. Crying is one way your baby tells you what they need. You may be able to tell the difference between your baby's cry when they are hungry, needing a diaper change, or if they are uncomfortable.

Even though you know crying is normal, it may still be very stressful. Plan ahead for what to do if you ever feel like shaking or hurting your baby.

Here are some things you can do:

- Gently lay your baby down on their back in a safe place and stay 10 feet away.
- Take slow, deep breaths until you feel calmer.
- Call a friend or the Help Me Grow WA hotline at 1-800-932-4673.

Share your plan with everyone who takes care of your baby. Make sure they all know to never shake the baby. Tell them to call you right away if they feel frustrated or stressed out.



If I cry often, ask for help.

Your baby can choke on small things!

Babies explore by putting things in their mouths. Small toys can be dangerous. Anything small enough to slip into a toilet paper tube can choke your baby. Make sure older children do not give your baby small toys or pieces of food. Call your local hospital, health department or fire department to find out about infant CPR and first aid classes.

Prevent your baby from falling.

Always keep at least one hand on your baby when they are on a bed, sofa, or changing table. Your baby could make a sudden move and roll or wiggle off the edge.

If you need to answer the door or the phone while changing your baby, carry your baby with you. You can also put them in the crib or in a safe place on the floor. If you use a play seat, use one without wheels. When your baby is in a reclining seat, make sure to buckle any safety straps.

Thanks for reading! Share this letter with other caregivers in your child's life. You'll hear from us again before your baby is 6 months old with information on how to:

- Tips for starting solid foods.
- Your baby's first teeth.
- Encourage your baby to move.



For the Health of All Our Children

Watch Me Grow Washington is a program of the Washington State Department of Health



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