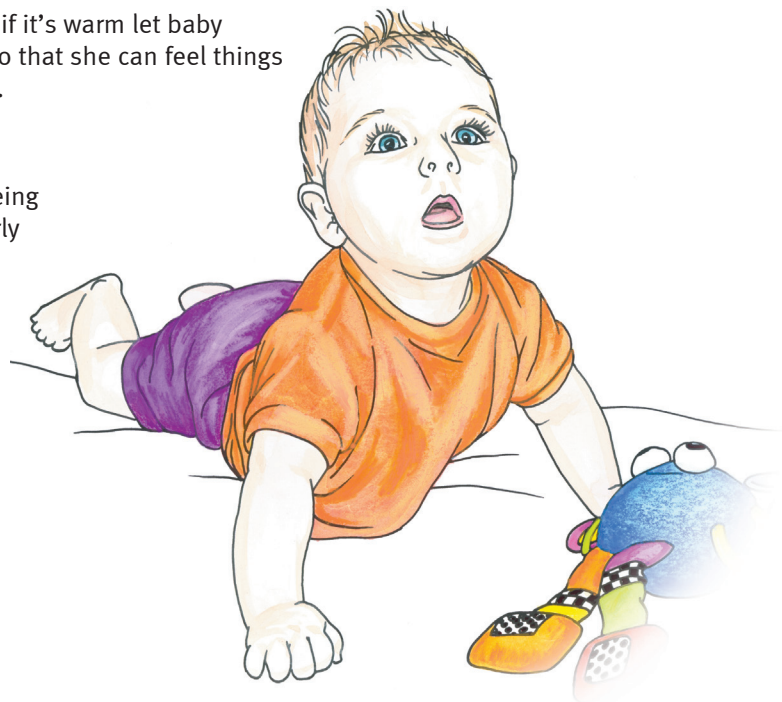


Middle infancy

4 to 8 months

What things do I need to know?

- * **Every baby is different** try not to compare your baby with other babies of the same age.
- * Because all babies are different, **some babies just won't like some activities**. Don't worry about it, try something else.
- * Sometimes your baby may be unhappy with an activity because she is tired or not yet ready to do the activity. **Try it again another time**.
- * **Babies grow and learn fast** so what they do will be changing all the time.
- * **Babies learn by playing**. Play with your baby but also allow him some time to explore his world in a safe way on his own.
- * Baby will develop stronger muscles if she spends **lots of play time on her tummy every day**.
- * Babies enjoy different things to look at and feel. **Let baby have some time out of doors if you can**. *Remember to be careful to keep baby in the shade and watch out for birds and biting insects.*
- * **Babies learn by hearing words**. Talk or sing to baby while you do things together and read to baby as often as you can.
- * Baby will enjoy doing a **variety of things**, but activities must be safe.
- * **Babies need lots of space to move**. Give baby a large mat to play on, a large area to explore. If you have to confine baby for a short time use a playpen rather than the cot or high chair.
- * **Babies can be hurt by 'rough' games**. It is important not to roughly pull, throw or shake your baby.
- * **Dress baby in comfortable clothes** and if it's warm let baby have some time with no clothes at all so that she can feel things against her skin and move really freely.
See: Sun facts on page 18.
- * **You are the most important thing in your baby's life**. Your baby will enjoy being with you while you do things, particularly if you include her in what you're doing.



What physical things will my baby be able to do?

All babies are different and learn to do things at different times – some babies are fast with some things, but slow with others.

Your personal health record tells you when your baby should be taken to a doctor or child health nurse for a check. This is important for the early detection of any problems.

Some things you might expect your baby to do are listed below. If your baby isn't doing some of these things, she may need just a little more time. But if you are worried, you should talk about it with your doctor or a child health nurse.

4 months to 6 months

- * Reaches out with arms
- * Holds rattle and puts it in mouth
- * Rolls over from side to back and from back to side
- * Sits with support and holds head steady
- * Able to raise head and hold it up while lying on tummy
- * Brings feet to mouth when lying on back
- * Sits with some support
- * Reaches out from a sitting position and grabs many objects
- * Rolls over in both directions
- * May move forward on tummy and push with legs
- * Moves object from one hand to the other
- * Looks towards sounds
- * Follows your face with her eyes

7 months to 8 months

- * Brings hands together to clap or bang things together
- * Grabs for a toy with one hand
- * Supports all weight on legs
- * Likes to bounce when held
- * Sits with a little support
- * When sitting turns from side to side to reach for objects
- * May be able to get into a sitting position by pushing up on arms
- * Can see clearly
- * Laughs, chuckles, squeals, babbles
- * Moves around floor in own way eg creeps, crawls, bottom shuffles ...

What about food?

Babies need good food to grow and to be active.

For the first **6 months exclusive breastfeeding** is best, if you can, continue with breastfeeding until at least **12 months**.

In addition to breastmilk, after **6 months** low allergy foods like baby rice cereal (iron fortified) may be introduced as well as vegetable and fruit purees. To broaden baby's taste introduce vegetables before fruit. First vegetables to try include potato, sweet potato and pumpkin and well-tolerated fruits include banana, apple and pear. Once these foods are well tolerated add a little pureed meat (mince, chicken, fish). Toast fingers and rusks can also be added.

At **8 months** baby can also have plain cereals, cooked egg yolk, bread and pasta. Around this age the texture of food should gradually be changed to roughly mashed or minced, as baby is more able to chew. Cheese, custards, yoghurt and small amounts of cow's milk in breakfast cereal can be introduced from about **9 months**.

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that cow's milk should not be introduced as a drink into baby's diet before **12 months**.

What toys are best?

Some suggestions - check labels for age suitability

- * Small toys to grasp
- * Teething toys
- * Lots of different balls
- * Inflatable beach ball
- * Toys that move
- * Rattles
- * Cloth and board books
- * Noisy toys
- * Activity centre
- * Frame for hanging mobiles
- * Lots of cushions
- * Sheepskin (*not for sleeping on*)
- * Boomerang pillow (*not for sleeping*)

How can I keep my baby safe?

- * **Be there, be aware** – supervision is the best safety measure.
- * **Never leave a baby alone** on a change table, in a high chair or stroller, in a car, in the bath, outside on the ground, anywhere near water.
- * **Always use an Australian Standards approved** harness or restraint in the high chair, in the pram, in the car.
- * **Make sure the hot water tap can't be turned on by accident** and check that the hot water system is set below 50 degrees celsius.
- * **Baby is growing and learning so fast.**
One morning she can't roll, the next she can! One day she's safe lying in the middle of your big bed, the next she'll roll off and thump onto the floor. You have to watch her and be ready for the next stage of development!
- * **Protect baby from the sun** *See: Sun facts on page 18.*
 - if possible go out in the early morning or late afternoon
 - provide or look for shade
 - dress baby in light weight, long sleeved clothing and a hat
 - from 6 months use baby sunscreen on exposed skin only
- * **If you use a bouncer always place it on the floor and supervise.**
- * **Always put hot drinks down** and out of reach when holding baby.
- * **Place baby on his back to sleep.**
- * **Don't use** bumpers or pillows in the cot.
- * **Check for dangers around baby's play area** e.g. heater or fan, stairs ...
- * **Keep baby's play area clear of small items** that she could choke on (anything that can fit into a film canister can be swallowed by a baby).
- * **Keep dogs and cats away** from babies.
- * **Never use balloons as toys.**
- * Check that **toys are durable and washable** and in good working order.
- * **Check toys regularly.** Little things that come loose can easily choke baby.
- * **Baby walkers are not recommended.**
- * **Once baby is mobile try lying on the floor and look around the house from the baby's point of view.** What things can she reach or move, what things might she want to pull, what little things are hidden under the sofa?
- * **Place lids on nappy buckets and store them up high** to avoid poisoning and drowning.
- * **Keep medicines and cleaning products in a high cupboard out of sight and well out of reach.** **Never leave any medication in your bag.**
- * **Put child resistant locks on cupboards** that you want to keep baby out of.
- * **Keep sandbox covered at night** and check or rake it before baby plays in the sand.
- * **Empty kiddie pools immediately after use.**
- * **Fence the garden and lock gates,** especially into pool areas.
- * **Keep emergency phone numbers** by the phone.
- * If possible, take a **course in first aid and CPR.**

Contact Kidsafe Qld – phone (07) 3854 1829 for more safety information

Some things to do with my baby

* Let baby move * Let baby explore * Give baby play time on her tummy *

I learn by being held and touched and by moving around with you

Baby still loves cuddles

for example:

- Cuddle baby while you read a book together
- Have a cuddle and a rock in a rocking chair
- Dance together
- Sing to baby and touch his nose, his toes, his knees and chin ...

Carry baby in different ways

for example:

- Hold baby over your shoulder
- Hold baby in a sling or baby pouch
- Hold baby with his back against your chest



Move baby in different positions

for example:

- Lie or sit baby on your knees and bounce her up and down
- Lie on the floor and lean baby against your knees
- Carry baby around the house searching for a toy and make a game of it ... Where's teddy?

Play this game outside too. Involve other children. See: Action songs and watery songs on pages 20 & 21.

- Go to the park and let baby have a swing on your lap
- Put baby, tummy down, along your arm and swing her in the air
- Have a bath with baby and move her back and forth like a boat



Touch baby all over

for example:

- Give her a massage after her bath or any time
- Tickle her with something soft like a feather
- Touch different parts of her body while you sing
- If it's hot use a wet sponge to cool her down
- Blow on baby's feet, hands, hair ...
- Blow raspberries on tummy, toes, fingers, back of neck ...

I learn by reaching and holding and touching and tasting

Give baby lots of play time on his tummy

- Spend time playing on the floor with him
- Put toys where he can see them and reach for them
- Give him some toys that roll - show him how they roll

Watch ... be there ... challenge



Give baby different things to hold

- Bought toys are fine eg rattles, squeaky toys, teething rings, balls ...

Check labels for age suitability

- But common things from around the house are fine too eg plastic things from the kitchen, pots and pans, sponges, paper, empty tins with lids, plastic lids ...

Baby will explore with her mouth so make sure the things you give her are safe and clean

See: How can I keep my baby safe? on page 8.

Play pulling and pushing games

for example:

- Roll a soft ball to baby and show her how to stop it and push it back to you
- Play baby 'tug of war' with a toy



- Let baby play with plastic wheeled toys - show her how to push them to make them go

Give baby different things to touch

for example:

- Scrunched up paper, a sea sponge, soft fabric ...
- Make a book with pieces of carpet, wool, plastic, fur, silk ...
- Cloth, board and plastic books
- Old magazines
- Toys made of plastic, fabric ...

Tie some small toys with short lengths of wide elastic and hang them from baby's high chair

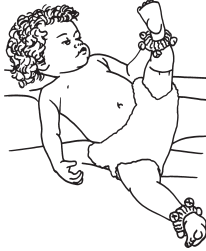
- Start with one and then add more
- Show him how to pull them up and drop them down again

I learn by moving my arms and legs and body

Babies love to kick

for example:

- Hang a rattle or bells where baby can kick them
- In cooler weather put baby in booties with coloured toes or pompoms, or soft slippers with bells on them



Safety check bells

- Hold a biscuit tray or aluminium plate at baby's feet and talk



about the noise she makes when she kicks it

- Let baby kick in the water (in the bath or in a wading pool)

- Let baby kick in the sand (at the beach or in a sandbox)

If you have sand for baby to play in cover it at night and check and rake it before use

Never leave baby unattended in the bath or in a wading pool

Give baby lots of play time on his tummy

for example:

- Prop him on his elbows to help him raise his head
- Lie on your tummy in front of baby and have a 'talk'
- Prop a plastic mirror in front of baby where he can see himself
- Fill empty plastic bottles that will roll with small/colourful/noisy things (glue lids on)
- Put colourful, noise-making toys where baby can reach for them
- Hold a toy to the side where he can see it and fly the toy over baby's head and land on the other side – he'll follow with his eyes and may roll over as well

See: Rolling games on page 21.

Sing movement songs with baby

You can add movements to any song, for example:

- Clap hands together, clap feet, bounce up and down, sway from side to side ...



See: Movement songs on page 21.

Let baby sit

for example:

- On your lap
- On the floor between your legs
- Leaning against a boomerang pillow
- Propped up by cushions

I learn by hearing movement words

Act out songs and fingerplays with baby

for example:

Clap your hands, one-two-three,

Play a clapping game with me.

Now your hands have gone away.

Find your hands so we can play.

(Wellhousen, 2002:43)

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,

knees and toes, knees and toes.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,

We all clap hands together!

Swinging so high,

Swinging so low.

Swinging so high,

Swinging so low.

If you don't know many songs don't worry – babies love to hear the same song over and over

See: Movement songs on page 21.

Read picture books with baby

Read stories with simple action words and pictures, stories with repetitive phrases are lots of fun e.g. *Run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!*



Use action words when you play and sing and dance with baby.

for example:

Up **Down** Around **Low** High
Bounce Sway **Rock** Jiggle **Jump**
Kick **Twirl** Throw **Lift** Fast **Slow**
Over **Under**

Use words to talk about:

- what you are doing
- what baby is doing
- what you can see



I learn by looking and listening

Play peek-a-boo

- Hide your face behind your hands or behind a nappy and then show your face



Play aeroplanes

- Buzz with your hand or a toy around baby and land on different parts of her body

Blow bubbles

- At bath time, outside or anytime

Play hiding games

for example:

- Show baby a toy, hide it under a washer then help him find it. Make the game more interesting, hide the toy under something small and then get larger - start with a washer, then a hand towel, then a tea towel, then a baby blanket
- Put a scarf into an empty lunch wrap cylinder so that it's all gone ... then pull it out of one end. It's magic!
- Call baby's name from the side or behind him and see if he can find you

Change mobiles often - make your own

for example:

- Hang small plastic shapes from a wooden coat hanger
- Hang a piece of elastic or a hoop from the ceiling above the cot or change table and attach bells, a scarf, ribbons, soft toys
- Hang coloured streamers where they'll move with the breeze
- Hang wind chimes where they'll catch the breeze

What things does your baby like to look at the most?

Use toys that make a noise when baby does something to them – by hitting, banging, shaking, rolling, kicking

for example:

- Rattles
- Balls with bells in them
- Drums
- Foil trays
- Squeaky toys
- Saucepans

Baby will start to see that she is causing the noise to happen

