

child development 9-12 months



Your baby is moving around now and the pace of life has quickened somewhat. He will be 'talking' and making recognisable sounds and he will really love you talking to him, looking at picture books together, pointing to objects he knows and repeating single words clearly.

He may be clingy and wary of strangers but he is forming special relationships with family members and his personality will be becoming clear to you.

Social and emotional development

It is usually in these three months that your baby begins to understand his very special relationship with you, and with friends and relatives. He starts to know that when you go away, you will come back again, and that you are still there even when he cannot see you. Talking to him when you are in another room can reassure him of this.

No wonder 'peek-a-boo' and 'hiding' are favourite games because they play out in a simple way the comings and goings of people that your baby has come to recognise and depend upon. He also has some understanding that you see him and that he can hide from you, although he still thinks that if he can't see you, you can't see him (he will put his hands over his eyes to hide). He starts to understand that he is a person, and he can start to understand that the baby in the mirror might be him.

He will have developed some definite ideas about what he likes and does not like. He may kick and resist nappy change time or other restrictions on his freedom.

- He will smile and babble and try to engage you in a conversation, and copy simple hand games like 'clap hands' or 'bye bye'. In other words he is becoming aware of himself as a social creature. He understands the meaning of 'no', although he is going to spend the next 18 months checking its meaning exactly!

The down side of all this is that he is frightened when you leave him and will cling and cry, and (very sensibly) be wary of strangers.

Moving around

The big change in motor development is that she will move all on her own. She might pull herself along with her arms, roll around, crawl on all fours or shuffle along in a sitting position. During this time she will start to pull herself to standing while holding on to you or a chair or other furniture, and then start to move along holding on to the furniture. Some babies will start to walk by themselves during these months, although many won't walk for a few months yet.

- It's a big thing to see your baby 'standing on her own two feet', probably holding on and not walking quite yet, but vertical nevertheless. If you have loved the tiny baby stage you may have some sadness when your baby starts to look like a child or else you may be relieved to see the promise of some independence to come.

Safety is a big issue when babies start to move around by themselves. You need to baby-proof your house and make sure all poisons and dangerous items are locked away up high. Put things that she might break well out of reach too. She can't stop herself from touching anything that looks interesting.

Her fine motor skills are improving quickly too. She can pick up an object with her thumb and fingers rather than grabbing with the palm of her hand. She pokes and points with her finger, bangs things together and transfers objects from one hand to another. She cannot, however, control putting things down and often she has to drop the object to release it from her grasp. She will still put anything she holds into her mouth and, now that she can pick up small things, this can be a risk time for swallowing dangerous objects or choking.

She will be able to sit on her own for quite long times and will enjoy exploring objects and the sounds she can make with them while sitting on the floor.

She will be feeding herself in her high chair, although she may often be more interested in squishing and feeling than the actual eating bit. She will learn how to do this well (such as managing a spoon) by trying, so allow some messy play. She is also able to drink out of a cup with a spout without help.

Talking

He has got the idea of how conversations work (taking turns).

- Even though he may not have any words you can understand he will 'chat' away with the right inflexions in his voice.
- He imitates what a conversation sounds like, such as when he is playing with a telephone.
- He may be saying simple sounds like 'mumum' and 'daddad'.
- He recognises several words and may shake his head for 'no'.

He is not making the huge variety of sounds that he was in earlier months because his sounds are more specific to his native language. He begins to drop (for instance) those European sounds deep in the back of his throat for more English, front of mouth sounds (if English is his native tongue).

He loves music and rhymes and will bounce and sway to the rhythm, and he will love the repetition of songs that help him to learn that language in itself is a musical thing. Babies are usually very interested in picture books now and reading with your baby helps his language develop.

Activities for the 9-12 month old

- Make her a kitchen cupboard of her own to open and shut the door, and to play with things inside. Toddler-proof cupboards that have breakables or dangerous things in them.
- give her pots, lids and spoons to bang.
- Sing songs with actions and repeat phrases.
- Move to the rhythm of music together.
- look at simple books with clear pictures in them.
- Play 'hiding' behind the couch or curtains.

- Talk with her a lot.
- Sit her on the floor with her toys and play together. Follow her lead if she starts playing a certain way and introduce fun by copying her and taking turns. For example, build up a tower of blocks so she can knock them down with great excitement many times.
- Encourage her to push a trolley with bricks in it.
- Cuddle and roll on the floor.

Children of this age still like being with people best of all, but they are starting to have some interest in toys that do something, like move or make a noise.

What to watch out for

Seek help from your doctor or child health nurse if your baby by 12 months is not:

- pulling himself up to stand
- moving around somehow
- changing objects from one hand to another
- looking up when you call his name
- copying simple sounds like 'mummmum'
- showing signs of being especially attached to his parent
- smiling, laughing, squealing and trying to attract your attention.

Summary

Social emotional

A baby usually:

- is well aware of strangers and familiar people and withdraws from strangers
- may not even go to familiar people for a while - demanding the person who looks after her most
- gives cuddles by 10 months
- enjoys peek-a-boo games.

Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if your baby:

- does not show pleasure when she sees familiar people
- does not show anxiety when separated from the person who looks after her most.

Motor skills

A baby usually:

- can move around by crawling or bottom shuffling by 10 months
- can reach out while sitting without falling over
- can pull up to standing by 10 to 11 months
- walks with hands held by 10 to 12 months.

Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if your baby:

- is not sitting by 9 to 10 months
- is not starting to move around by any means.

Understanding

A baby usually:

- is interested in small objects and toys and reaches out for them
- starts to look at, feel and handle objects before taking them to his mouth
- looks in the correct direction for things that have fallen down.

Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if your baby:

- is not interested in toys or objects that are attractive to babies of this age.

Speech and language

A baby usually:

- is putting strings of babble sounds together
- shakes head for 'no' by about 10 months
- recognises several words including own name (e.g. looks for daddy if 'daddy' is said)

- imitates simple sounds made by other people.

Talk with your doctor or child health nurse if your baby's:

- babbling has not become more complex and baby does not babble in 'conversation' with others.

Note: Children are different and may develop at different rates. So if your child does not do all the things in this topic, it may be because your child is working on some different area of his learning and development at present. However, children usually follow the same pattern of development, and it is good to have reassurance that your child is developing normally in their own unique way.

If your child is very different from other children, if you are worried about your child's development or if it seems to go backwards, you should talk with a health professional about your concerns. If there is a problem, getting help and ideas early will help. Remember that what matters is to support them on moving forward from where they are now.

For more information contact:

- Local community child health nurse
See inside your baby's purple 'All About Me' book
Look in the phone directory under 'Child Health Centres'
Visit www.healthywa.wa.gov.au
- Local family doctor
- Ngala Helpline
8.00am–8.00pm 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546*
www.ngala.com.au
- Parenting WA Line
Freecall 1800 654 432* (24 hour service)
www.dlhc.wa.gov.au/parents
- Raising Children Network
www.raisingchildren.net.au

- Kidsafe WA
8:30am–5:00pm (Monday to Friday)
Telephone (08) 9340 8509
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 802 244*
www.kidsafewa.com.au
- SIDS & Kids
9:00am–5:00pm (Monday to Friday)
Telephone (08) 9474 3544
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 199 466*
www.sidsandkidswa.org

*Calls made from a mobile may be charged at a timed rate.

This topic may use 'he' and 'she' in turn - please change to suit your child's sex.

This information, along with other child health information, is available in electronic format at www.healthywa.wa.gov.au

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability. Please contact childcommunity@health.wa.gov.au

© Women's and Children's Health Network, reproduced with permission. The South Australian government does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this reproduction. The original version is published at <http://www.cyh.com>

Warning

This document is published as general information only. You should always consult a healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of any health condition or symptoms.

Disclaimer

The advice and information contained herein is provided in good faith as a public service. However, the accuracy of any statements made is not guaranteed and it is the responsibility of readers to make their own enquiries as to the accuracy, currency and appropriateness of any information or advice provided. Liability for any act or omission occurring in reliance on this document, or for any loss, damage or injury occurring as a consequence of such act or omission, is expressly disclaimed.