

# How your baby develops

## 9–12 months

### What can I expect?

- Your baby should crawl and use his or her hands more.
- They may stand or start walking.
- They can chew food, but don't give your baby hard foods because they might choke.
- Talking and reading to babies will help them learn how to talk.
- Your baby will be happy with familiar people, but might not like new faces or your absence.
- Playing games with your baby and giving them toys will help them learn about the world around them.
- Make sure your baby stays safe by going through the safety checklist.

### Growth and development

From nine to 12 months your baby will probably be able to:

- sit unsupported for quite a time
- turn sideways without losing balance
- stretch out to pick up a toy from the floor
- progress from rolling to wriggling to crawling on all fours. Some babies have their own crawling style which may not be usual, but their concern is getting somewhere rather than how they do it
- pull themselves up to stand against furniture or another support. At first when they pull up on a support to stand up, they will not be able to lower themselves slowly back to a sitting position. They may flop down or cry for help, but will be back on their feet again in no time
- gradually walk by stepping sideways, using furniture for support
- learn to walk when their two hands are held, then with one hand held
- possibly stand alone for a while, or even walk unaided by 12 months.

### Use of hands

Your baby's ability to use his or her hands is developing rapidly at this age.

Your baby is becoming more skilled and they can use their fingertips for grasping and manipulating.

Because babies of this age can better control how they release objects, your baby can now stack blocks and put objects into containers.

They practise their throwing skills in a variety of ways, eg. toys and food are thrown from strollers and high chairs.

### Eating habits

Your baby does not need all food to be made smooth at this age.

They can now chew – with or without teeth. However, babies should not be given hard foods such as pieces of apple, carrot, popcorn or nuts, as they may choke on these.

Some babies will prefer to feed themselves with finger foods but you will need to supervise. They will also enjoy trying to hold a spoon to feed themselves.

Many babies of this age are interested in holding and drinking from a cup, so help them to do this when a drink is nearly finished. Although this may be messy, it will encourage your baby's independence.

### Language

Babies between nine and 12 months are interested in all sounds, especially voices – their own and other people's.

During this time they may say their first real word, although it is often hard to hear it among the other noises they make.

They love to:

- babble for amusement
- show what they want by pointing and making sounds.

The more you talk to your child and respond to their attempts to communicate, the easier it will be for their language skills to develop.

Babies learn language through lots of routine and repetition. So at this stage, using single words over and over will give your baby a chance to hear words and eventually copy them.

When talking to your baby about things they express interest in, remember to get down to their level.

Talking during everyday events, like changing a nappy and bath time, helps to teach your child about language.

Reading books and talking about the pictures is another enjoyable way to help your child's language skills.

### Your child and other people

At this age, your child is more confident with other people and enjoys the company of familiar adults, but:

- will sometimes object to new faces and voices
- may be distressed if you leave, even for a short while.

This is a normal stage of your child's development as your baby is still learning to know the difference between familiar and unfamiliar people.

### Learning through play

Playing is the way children learn about the world around them. Lots of different types of play, suitable for the child's age, can give them the experiences needed to develop and learn.

Your child needs opportunities to explore and experiment with new skills. You can provide these experiences by playing with and talking to your child.

Games to play are:

- finger-toe songs and rhymes (eg. 'This little piggy')
- peek-a-boo
- clapping hands
- listening to and copying sounds.

At this age, useful toys include the following:

- cars and trains for pushing
- toy telephone
- blocks and other stacking toys
- nesting cups
- peg puzzles
- activity sets
- soft cuddly toys
- household containers
- crayon and paper
- bath toys
- medium to large balls.





## Safety

A safe place for your baby to explore and play is essential. From nine to 12 months, babies can move around very quickly and quietly. They should not be left near windows, balconies or on high pieces of furniture.

They don't understand danger, and can get into trouble before you know it – so you need to be very watchful.

Remember: The more a baby can crawl, walk, climb and explore, the GREATER THE CHANCE OF INJURIES. This is also the time when babies will use furniture to pull themselves up. Take care with top heavy furniture (including flat screen televisions), which can topple over if not secured.

- Never leave your baby alone on a change table or other furniture (especially a bed), in the bath, in the car or near any family pets.
- Always make sure your baby is strapped in securely when in a highchair, stroller or shopping trolley to prevent falls.
- Protect your baby from sun and heat. Seek shade when outdoors and use protective clothing and a hat.
- Every time your baby travels in a car, make sure you use an approved baby capsule or child restraint. Never leave your baby alone in a car – not even for a few minutes.
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time. Babies should never be left in the care of older children, no matter how reliable they seem.
- Make sure there are no objects small enough to swallow around where your baby is playing. Pins, batteries, dead insects, buttons, beads, nuts, coins and other small objects may cause your baby to choke. Cigarette butts are poisonous to your children.
- Place your baby in a playpen for short periods each day to help them understand and accept safety limitations later.

Your baby is very mobile and eager to explore. Check your house thoroughly AND OFTEN to keep your baby safe.

- Use safety barriers for steps, stairs and rooms you don't want your child to enter, and to keep them away from fireplaces, swimming pools, heaters and spas.
- Keep kettle and iron cords out of reach of young children. Use stove and bench guards and curly cords to prevent children from pulling hot food and drinks onto themselves. Always turn saucepan handles to the back of the stove. Do not leave hot drinks or noodles unattended or within reach.
- Cover power points when they're not in use.
- Make sure all low cupboards have child-resistant latches.
- Check your furniture – like coffee tables – is sturdy enough for your child to pull himself or herself up to stand.

- Store medicines, cleaning aids and any sharp or dangerous items well out of reach, or in a cupboard with a child-resistant latch.
- Dangerous objects like heaters and fans should be kept out of reach.
- Keep the bathroom and toilet door closed and nappy buckets out of reach as small children can fall into them head-first. It only takes 5cm of water and two minutes for a child to drown.
- Keep the bathroom door closed so your child can't touch the hot taps. Consult your plumber to reduce household water temperature to avoid scalds and burns. Hot water regulators or thermostats should be fitted on all bath hot water taps.
- Ensure there are safe play areas outside. Regularly check for objects that could harm your child, for example:
  - garden tools
  - protruding branches
  - garden fertilizers or chemicals
  - poisonous plants and mushrooms (especially after rain).
- Ensure play areas are shady and fenced from the pool, roads and reversing cars' driveways.
- Do not use babywalkers. They are not recommended or necessary for normal healthy babies.
- Dress children in nightwear made with fabric that is slow to burn or designed to reduce fire danger. Look for the low risk fire danger rating on the tag.
- Avoid giving your baby any small, hard food to eat like pieces of apple or carrot, popcorn or nuts, as they may choke on these.
- Ensure that your baby is sleeping safely, according to the guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* fact sheet.

## More information

If you would like more information about your child's development or you are concerned about your child, talk to your child health nurse or your doctor.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

## Acknowledgement

This fact sheet is the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

