

What's Up? Your Baby's Development

9-Month Visit



Babies are becoming good communicators as they get closer to turning 1 year old. This makes it a delightful time for parents. Babies can use their actions and sounds to let loved ones know what they want, such as handing a book to a parent so she'll read it aloud. *How does your baby "tell" you what he wants?*

9–12 Months: What's on Your Mind

Yesterday my baby picked up my cell phone and babbled into it. How did she learn that?

Between 9 and 12 months old, your baby is developing a better memory. He is beginning to imitate actions he has seen others do—such as chat on the phone. Your baby is also learning how different objects are supposed to be used. From watching you, he knows a phone is for talking. One way you help your child figure out how the world works is by letting him play with child-safe objects—such as a hairbrush or sponge—and talk about how they look and feel, and what they do.

What Your Baby Can Do

I can understand more words than I can say.

- I am starting to understand what you say to me. I can even follow simple directions like "Go get the ball."
- I tell you what I want with my sounds and body movements. I may say a word or two, such as "mama."

I can creep and crawl.

- I have found my own way of crawling—on my hands or knees, on my stomach, "crab crawling" by moving backwards and sideways, or even scooting on my bottom!
- I walk while holding on to furniture or your hand. I may even start walking on my own.

I know that things still exist even though I can't see them—especially you!

- I may cry when you leave because I know you are still out there somewhere and I want you to come back!

I love to do things over and over again.

- This is how I practice and figure out how things work.
- Repetition also helps build my memory.

What You Can Do

Tell your baby what is happening and what you will do next:

"After your milk, it will be time for a nap." This helps her learn language. Routines also let her know what to expect.

Put your baby's sounds and actions into words. "You are pushing your food away. I think you are telling me you are all done."

Name things your baby looks at or points to: "That's the moon. The moon comes out at night."

Give your baby lots of time and a safe place to practice new skills such as crawling and walking.

Make a "trail of toys" in a child-safe place in your house. Line up several objects (a wooden spoon, a plastic bowl, a brightly colored dishcloth) that your child can crawl to and explore.

Play hide-and-peek games. This helps your baby learn that things that disappear also reappear.

Be sure to say good-bye to your baby. Never sneak out. This builds his trust in you and helps him learn to how to cope with separations.

Help your child take the next step in her play. If she is banging two blocks together, see if she'd like to try stacking them.

Offer your child a ball to toss or a rattle to shake. These activities help children learn how things work. They also build the muscles in their hands that will help them learn to write.



Spotlight on How Babies Connect Their Thoughts and Actions

Between 9 and 12 months old, babies take action with a goal in mind. For example, your child may crawl off as fast as she can when she sees you holding a clean diaper. She doesn't want a diaper change, so she crawls away to avoid it! It's important to understand that babies don't do this to make us angry. They simply want to make their own needs and feelings known. These purposeful actions also show that babies have developed more mature thinking skills and a better memory. They remember that they don't like lying still or feeling those cold, wet wipes.



What It Means for You:

When you and your child take turns talking and listening, your child is learning to tell the difference between sounds. Later, she will put these sounds together into words. To build your baby's early language skills during playtime, talk with her about what the two of you are doing together.

Follow your child's lead about what interests him. When a child is engaged and having fun playing, he is learning. Offer new challenges as your child masters new skills—such as suggesting he try to stack more blocks on top of his three-block tower.

What captures your child's attention?

As you use the HealthySteps handouts, remember that your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated and still be growing just fine. Every child develops at his own pace—and your HealthySteps Specialist will be available to answer any questions you may have. Your family's cultural beliefs and values are also important factors that shape your child's development.

Did you know...

The more parents respond to their 1-year-olds during playtime—showing their own enjoyment and excitement in their child's play and noticing what their child is interested in—the better their child's language skills are at 3 years old.¹

What You Can Do:

To support your baby's growing thinking skills, you can:

- Show your child how cause-and-effect works, such as letting him press the doorbell or turn on the light switch.
 - Follow your baby's lead. Notice what your child is interested in and let her (safely) explore an object in her own way.
 - Encourage your baby to use all his senses to learn. Let him touch an ice cube. Notice when it melts.
- Crinkle leaves in your hands and see what happens. Let him shake a sealed plastic container of dry rice and one full of dry beans. How do they sound different? (Always supervise carefully.)
 - Child-proof yet again! Now that babies have a goal in mind, such as touching the television remote, make your home child-safe so you spend more time playing, and less time saying No.

At this visit the pediatric team will measure your baby's length, weight, and head. They'll listen to your baby's heart and look at her eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Your baby will receive any needed immunizations. We will talk about your baby's development and routines like sleeping and eating. We'll also review safety guidelines. And, of course, we'll make time to discuss any questions or concerns you might have!

1. Silven, N., Niemi, P., & Voeten, M. (2002) Do maternal interaction and early language predict phonological awareness in 3- to 4-year olds. *Cognitive Development*, 17(1), 1133–1155.