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9 – 12 Months

During this period your baby will become more and more active – creeping, crawling, rolling, and pulling up in the crib and on furniture. MaMa and/or DaDa and other babbling come more regularly. Simple words like “hi” and “bye-bye” may begin. Games that imitate speech or vocal sounds like “peek-a-boo”, “pat-a-cake”, and “so big” will begin. You might even see them waving! Babies love to reach, drop objects, pass toys from hand to hand, and hit toys together or on other surfaces.

One important ability is using the index finger and the thumb to pick up small objects. This is called the pincer grasp. Any small object such as fuzz, buttons, crumbs etc. appeals to your baby even more now because of their ability to pick these objects up successfully. Of course, this important skill has many implications for safety (discussed in more detail later).

Feeding

Babies are usually eating all kinds of baby foods including meats and are beginning small finger foods (See Finger Feeding Handout). Even though babies have no chewing teeth they can swallow and digest small pieces of food that are soft cooked or dissolvable. You will begin giving your baby opportunities to finger feed as he/she is ready.

Breast milk or formula intake usually decreases to 3 or 4 feedings or less per day. Cup drinking should be increasing and weaning to a cup should be considered. As babies eat more solid food they naturally drink less breast milk or formula. Food is becoming more important in your baby’s diet. By the end of the first year, breast milk or formula can be thought of as more of a beverage than an essential food.

Safety

The accident age starts in earnest around 9 months. The probing and poking fingers can pick up buttons, beads, paperclips, pills, and other objects which can get down into the lungs or, worse still, block the windpipe and cause severe choking and death. Falls, burns, and poisoning from eating or drinking substances that are not food are also very serious hazards.



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The Poison Control Center 589-8222 at Norton Children's Hospital is THE place to call if your child ingests anything that is not food. Also, be sure to keep the 911 Emergency Number in mind and near the phone. Review the route from your house to the appropriate emergency room.

ACCIDENTS KILL MORE CHILDREN OF THIS AGE GROUP THAN ALL THE DISEASES PUT TOGETHER!!!

You cannot watch your child every minute but you CAN take safety precautions in the form of baby-proofing your home. This can help to anticipate and prevent most accidents. Your conscientious study and protection of your home and your child's surroundings (yard, daycare, relative's homes etc.) is just as essential to your child's health and welfare as giving him/her immunizations to protect against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, and whooping cough.

Approved car seats remain the most important safety effort you can make. Remember, new regulations require all infants to remain rear facing until 2 years of age.

A Few Words on Being a Parent

A lot has been said about stranger anxiety at this age. Babies are often cool towards unfamiliar people and even wary of family members he/she does not see often. This is a normal stage all babies experience and it is important for normal development.

The reason babies act this way is their memory is developed to the point they really know you, their parents. Babies don't always remember others as well. They don't know where you have gone when your face disappears. Babies can accept new or less familiar people IF allowed to learn about them at their own speed. Playing "peek-a-boo" is thought to be helpful to babies during this stage to show them your face comes back – again and again.

Encourage family to approach your baby slowly. Let them know how your baby learns about others. Play a lot of "peek-a-boo" and realize these early evidences of your baby's memory development will be the foundation for later learning. Babies cannot learn if they cannot remember. Early memory development is the beginning of learning. Remember, it is also a strong sign of your baby's unique attachment to you!



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NEXT CHECKUP: 12 MONTHS OF AGE