Well-Baby Checkup: 9 Months

CHILD'S NAME	DOB	DATE OF VISIT	NEXT VISIT	LENGTH	PERCENTILE	WEIGHT	PERCENTILE

Reaching Milestones and Activities

All babies develop at their own rates. Keeping track of your baby's development is important. Your job is to help your baby to learn new things when he or she is ready.

At 9 months of age, your baby may start to:

- Be afraid of strangers
- Have favorite toys
- Stand, holding on
- Crawl, creep and scoot on their bottom
- Understand no and wave bye-bye
- Use fingers to point at things

If your baby was born earlier than expected, reaching his or her milestones may be "off schedule" a bit. Talk to your baby's health care provider about any concerns or questions you may have.

Protect Your Child with Immunizations

Protect your child against 14 potentially serious diseases before 2 years old with vaccines. Vaccines can protect your child from very serious and even life-threatening diseases.

All children 6 months and older should get their flu shots, by the end of October, for protection during flu season. Your child needs the flu vaccine each year because the disease changes over time.

Talk to your baby's health care provider if you have questions or need to catch up on vaccines.

Teething

If your baby is teething, here are some tips to help make your baby feel better.

- Cuddle, rock or walk around with your baby. Showing love can help comfort your baby.
- Give a teething aid that your baby can chew on such as a firm rubber teething ring or even a cool, wet washcloth.
- Use a clean finger to massage swollen gums for 2 minutes at a time.

No Screen Time and Technology Use

Under the age of 18 months, it is best for babies to have no screen time.

This is important for brain development and for a healthy connection between parent and child.

Sleep Time

At 9 months of age, your baby will sleep an average of 12 to 16 hours (including naps) per day. Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle of breastmilk or formula.

Nutrition

The primary source of food for your baby will still be breastmilk or formula until he or she is 12 months old, but solid foods will gradually begin to make up a bigger part of his or her diet.

- **Reminder:** Do not replace breastmilk or formula with cow's milk until he or she is at least 12 months old (1 year).

Offer a Variety of Healthy Foods

What your baby eats at around 9 months old is a good sign of what he or she will like to eat when they get older. Offer a variety of vegetables and fruits and whole-grain products like brown rice and whole-grain cereals. Let your child use all his or her senses when trying new food.

Smelling, licking, touching, and playing with new foods is important in order for babies to learn to like them. It does take some time, patience and a bit of messiness.

If your child does not like a new food, keep trying! It can take up to 10 exposures to a food before he or she will eat it.

Avoid Choking – Finger Foods Best Practices

By the time they are 8 to 10 months old, most babies want to try to feed themselves and can do so with finger foods.

- Do not give your child finger foods that are large, sticky or don't liquefy easily. They are choking hazards. Always watch your child when he or she is eating.

Before giving your child a finger food item, try a bite first and ask yourself if it falls into one of these safe categories:

- **Does it melt?** Some infant dry cereals that are light and flaky will melt in the mouth.
- **Is it mushy?** Well-cooked or canned veggies and fruits will mush easily. If you are giving canned fruit or vegetables, make sure to choose ones without added sugar or salt.
- **Is it soft?** Cottage cheese, shredded cheese and small pieces of tofu are good examples.
- **Can it be gummed?** Pieces of ripe banana and well-cooked pasta can be gummed.
- **Is it small enough?** Food should be cut into very small pieces, such as grapes and even coin-shaped pieces of hot dog, to prevent choking. Avoid peanuts and popcorn.

Encourage your child to begin using a spoon to feed himself or herself. This will be a messy, but practice is important.

No Honey

Do not give honey. Your baby can get seriously sick.

Transitioning from Bottle to Cup

Between the ages of 6 and 12 months, start your baby from a bottle to a cup. Start with a sippy cup with handles, but avoid spill-proof cups with valves unless they are only used for water.

Separation Anxiety

As your baby is growing and becoming more aware, you may notice your baby will panic when he or she can't find you. You may even notice at bedtime, he or she will refuse to leave you to go to sleep and then may wake up in the middle of the night looking for you. You can learn to help your baby adjust through short practice sessions at home.

- **Tip:** Have another adult with you to watch your baby when you have to go to another room for a few seconds. Tell your baby where you are going and that you will be right back. If your baby cries or makes a fuss after leaving, call to him or her instead of running back. Your baby's tears will go away within minutes after you leaving and baby will soon focus his or her attention to the person watching him or her.

No Baby Walkers

The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly opposes the use of baby walkers. Walkers are never safe to use, even with an adult close by.

Walkers can *actually delay* when a child starts to walk. One way you can keep your child safe from injury is to throw away your baby walker.

Help Your Child Learn and Grow

As your baby grows and develops, there are many things you can do to help your baby get a good start in life and gain independence.

Interesting Objects to Play

Babies are interested in textures and sounds. You can put a graspable object (such as a rattle) in your baby's hand and very gently tug on it. This can help build muscle as your baby will try to resist your efforts. You can also provide a variety of age-appropriate toys that make noises or have interesting textures for your baby to feel. Always watch your baby when he or she is around objects.

Continue Reading

Choose books with simple pictures and bright colors. You can point to and name objects in the pictures. Even though your baby cannot understand the words, he or she loves the sound of your voice. Reading and showing your baby pictures can help develop his or her eye muscles. The more words your baby hears over time, the more words he or she will eventually learn.

Supervised Floor Time

Give your baby floor time to encourage stretching and kicking which can strengthen his or her muscles. Always watch your baby and never leave him or her alone. You can put a toy just out of reach to encourage baby to move to try to reach it. This works best if you are on the floor and involved by smiling and giving encouraging words.

Caring for You and Your Family

At Avera, our experts are here for you and your family. When you take care of yourself, you are better able to take care of your family.

Safety Tips and Reminders

Car Seats

Always place your child in an approved, rear-facing car seat as long as possible. As your child grows, you might have to switch from using a smaller, rear-facing-only car seat to using a bigger, rear-facing convertible car seat.

- Make sure to read the instructions for height and weight limits that came with your car seat. Learn more about car seat safety at NHTSA.gov/therightseat.

Other Helpful Car Reminders:

- Any parent or caregiver, even a very loving and attentive one, can forget a child is in the back seat.
- Always check the back seat and make sure all children are out of the car before locking it and walking away.
- Avoid distractions while driving, especially cell phone use.

Sun

When outdoors, try to stay in shaded areas. Keep your child out of direct sunlight. The sun's rays are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Have your child wear a hat or sun covering that is lightweight and covers most of his or her body. Use sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15 once he or she is 6 months or older.

- Make sure to follow the product instructions on applying sunscreen and when to reapply.
- Always test an area of your baby's skin with sunscreen to check for an allergic reaction before applying to large areas.
- Apply carefully around the eyes, avoiding eyelids. If a rash develops, talk with your child's health care provider.

Childproofing Your Home

Your baby will soon find creative ways to pull themselves up to stand and explore the world around them. Do a safety check in your home of areas that your child may spend time in. Be aware of items like tablecloths or cords that your child might pull on and keep these items out of reach.

- Use approved safety gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs that are properly secured.

Cover Electrical Outlets

Cover your electrical outlets at home. There are several options: sliding outlet covers, outlet plugs and/or a box outlet cover. Children can suffer serious shock and burn injuries if they insert objects into outlets. If you use outlet plugs, make sure they are secure and not easy to remove. They can be a choking hazard.

Choking Prevention

Check your home to make sure anything small enough to choke on is put away and out of reach. If the item is small enough to fit inside a toilet paper tube, your baby can choke on it. Read the instructions and warning labels.

In some cases, children's products (for example, toys, equipment or clothing) may be recalled. You can monitor and find out by checking the Consumer Product Safety Commission at cpsc.gov.

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