

Caring for your baby: 4 months

At four months old, your baby is probably expressing themselves with smiles and laughs, exploring the world with hands and mouth, and ready to start eating some solid foods. These tips may help you care for your baby during this next stage of development.

Feeding your baby

- Breast milk is the healthiest food for your baby. Breastfeed your baby for as long as possible.
- Let your baby decide when and how long to breastfeed (feed on demand).
- If you bottle-feed, feed on demand. Use iron-fortified formula until your baby is one year old. Never warm bottles in the microwave.
- Let your baby decide how much to eat.
- Solid foods can be introduced after your baby turns 4 months old. Healthy choices are fruits, vegetables, cereals, and meat. All solid foods, including nuts, need to be pureed to prevent choking.
- Introducing certain foods early, such as peanut products, can help prevent food allergies. This is especially true if your baby has eczema.
- Don't give your baby honey during their first year.
- Make sure your baby is getting a vitamin supplement that has 400 IU of vitamin D every day.

Practicing healthy habits

- Don't drive after drinking alcohol.
- Always wear your seat belt.
- Don't drink hot liquids near your baby.
- Wash your hands before feeding your baby, and after changing diapers.
- Don't put your baby to bed with a bottle.
- Protect your baby from the sun. Stay in the shade or keep your baby's head covered with a hat.
- Protect your baby from secondhand smoke.
- When your baby is awake, place them on their tummy to play. This helps to strengthen their neck and arms and prevent flattening of their head.
- Go for walks with your baby.

Keeping your baby safe

- Place your baby in a car seat, facing backward, for every ride. Rear-facing car seats cannot be used with passenger side air bags. For information on choosing the safest seat for your child, call toll-free **1-800-282-5587**.
- Avoid SIDS (crib death) by putting your baby down to sleep on their back (not their side or tummy).
- Don't use baby walkers. They are dangerous.
- Prevent falls. Never leave your baby alone on a bed or sofa.
- Prevent choking by keeping small objects and balloons away from your baby.

What to do if your baby is choking

- If your baby is **COUGHING**, but is also **BREATHING** and **CRYING**: Call nearest Emergency Room for advice.
- If your baby is **CHOKING** and **CANNOT BREATHE**: Call 911, then do the following:
 - Step #1: Put baby face down on your arm, supporting the head, with head lower than body.
 - Step #2: Give up to 5 back blows with heel of hand between baby's shoulder blades.
 - Step #3: Put baby face up on your forearm with head lower than body.
 - Step #4: Give up to 5 chest thrusts near center of breastbone.
 - Step #5: Lift jaw and tongue, look in mouth. If foreign body is seen, sweep it out with finger.
 - Step #6: If baby is not breathing, tilt head back and give 2 breaths.

To learn more, take a CPR training class.

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Easing vaccination days

- When your baby gets vaccines (shots), you may give them acetaminophen (Tylenol) drops every 4 to 6 hours after the visit. This can help your baby feel more comfortable after getting the vaccines.
- Use this chart to find out how much acetaminophen you can give your baby. Dosages listed are for medicine concentration of 160mg/5ml. Toss out old bottles of medicine with concentration of 80mg/0.8ml. Talk to your baby's doctor or nurse if you have questions.

Age	Weight	Syrup
under 4 months	under 12 pounds	¼ tsp/1.25 ml
4-11 months	12-17 pounds	½ tsp/ 2.5 ml

Don't give aspirin to a child under 20 years old. Aspirin can cause Reye's syndrome, a rare but dangerous disease.

Other parenting tips

- Talk and sing to your baby.
- If your baby is teething, it may help to give them a teething ring or gently rub their gums. Some signs of teething may be chewing and drooling.
- Never leave your baby alone at home, in a car, or in a bathtub.
- Give your baby brightly colored toys.
- For information about child care, call The Family Center at Childcare Aware of Washington toll-free at **1-800-446-1114**.

Feeding babies 4 to 12 months old

Breast milk or formula will be your baby's main food for the first year. Start to give solid foods when your baby is 4 to 6 months old. Use the following chart as a guide only, because babies develop at different rates.

Age	Foods to Introduce
4-6 months	Iron-fortified rice cereal, then other cereals. Begin with 1 or 2 teaspoons of cereal mixed with luke-warm formula or breast milk. Use a baby spoon. Introduce pureed foods one at a time. Begin with plain, mildly flavored foods. Offer fruits, vegetables, and iron-rich foods such as meat. You may need to try many times before baby eats it.
6-9 months	Continue introducing pureed or mashed solid foods. Slowly start adding healthy finger foods around 8 months. Emphasize fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products such as yogurt and cheese.
9-12 months	Table food, meats. A serving size for a child is the size of their fist. All foods are ok to introduce if there isn't a family history of allergies except honey (not until one year old). You may start giving your baby whole cow's milk or soy milk after 12 months.

SUGGESTED READING

- *Your Child's Health*, Schmitt
- *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, Shelov
- *Caring for Yourself and Your New Baby*, Kaiser Permanente

Next well-child visit at 6 months old

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