

child development 9-12 months



Your baby is moving around now and the pace of life has quickened somewhat. He will be 'talking' and making recognisable sounds and he will really love you talking to him, looking at picture books together, pointing to objects he knows and repeating single words clearly.

He may be clingy and wary of strangers but he is forming special relationships with family members and his personality will be becoming clear to you.

Social and emotional development

It is usually in these three months that your baby begins to understand his very special relationship with you, and with friends and relatives.

He starts to know that when you go away, you will come back again, and that you are still there even when he cannot see you. Talking to him when you are in another room can reassure him of this. No wonder 'peek-a-boo' and 'hiding' are favourite games because they play out in a simple way the comings and goings of people that your baby has come to recognise and depend upon. He also has some understanding that you see him and that he can hide from you, although he still thinks that if he can't see you, you can't see him (he will put his hands over his eyes to hide). He starts to understand that he is a person, and he can start to understand that the baby in the mirror might be him.

He will have developed some definite ideas about what he likes and does not like. He may kick and resist nappy change time or other restrictions on his freedom.

- He will smile and babble and try to engage you in a conversation, and copy simple hand games like 'clap hands' or 'bye bye'. In other words he is becoming aware of himself as a social creature. He understands the meaning of 'no', although he is going to spend the next eighteen months checking its meaning exactly!

The down side of all this is that he is frightened when you leave him and will cling and cry, and (very sensibly) be wary of strangers.

Moving around

The big change in motor development is that she will move all on her own. She might pull herself along with her arms, roll around, crawl on all fours or shuffle along in a sitting position. During this time she will start to pull herself to standing while holding on to you or a chair or other furniture, and then start to move along holding on to the furniture. Some babies will start to walk by themselves during these months, although many won't walk for a few months yet.

- It's a big thing to see your baby 'standing on her own two feet', probably holding on and not walking quite yet, but vertical nevertheless. If you have loved the tiny baby stage you may have some sadness when your baby starts to look like a child or else you may be relieved to see the promise of some independence to come.

Safety is a big issue when babies start to move around by themselves. You need to baby-proof your house and make sure all poisons and dangerous items are locked away up high. Put things that she might break well out of reach too. She can't stop herself from touching anything that looks interesting.

Her fine motor skills are improving quickly too. She can pick up an object with her thumb and fingers rather than grabbing with the palm of her hand. She pokes and points with her finger, bangs things together and transfers objects from one hand to another. She cannot, however, control putting things down and often she has to drop the object to release it from her grasp. She will still put anything she holds into her mouth and, now that she can pick up small things, this can be a risk time for swallowing dangerous objects or choking.

She will be able to sit on her own for quite long times and will enjoy exploring objects and the sounds she can make with them while sitting on the floor.



She will be feeding herself in her high chair, although she may often be more interested in squishing and feeling than the actual eating bit. She will learn more coordinated movements (such as managing a spoon) through these experiences so allow some messy play. She is also able to drink out of a cup with a spout without help.

Talking

He has got the idea of how conversations work (taking turns) and even though he may not have any recognisable words he will 'chat' away with the right inflexions in his voice. He imitates what a conversation sounds like, such as when he is playing with a telephone. He may be saying simple sounds like 'mumum' and 'daddad'. He recognises several words and may shake his head for 'no'.

He is not making the huge variety of sounds that he was in earlier months because his sounds are more specific to his native language. He begins to drop (for instance) those European sounds deep in the back of his throat for more English, front of mouth sounds (if English is his native tongue).

He loves music and rhymes and will bounce and sway to the rhythm, and he will love the repetition of songs that help him to learn that language in itself is a musical thing. Babies are usually very interested in picture books now and reading with your baby helps his language develop.

Activities for the 9-12 month old

- Allocate a kitchen cupboard of her own to explore (toddler-proof those that have breakables).
- Give her pots, lids and spoons to bang.
- Sing songs with actions and repeat phrases.
- Move to the rhythm of music together.
- Look at simple books with clear pictures in them.
- Play 'hiding' behind the couch or curtains.
- Talk with her a lot.

- Sit her on the floor with her toys and play together. Follow her lead if she starts playing a certain way and introduce fun turn taking. For example, build up a tower of blocks so she can knock them down with great excitement many times.
- Encourage her to push a trolley with bricks in it.
- Cuddle and roll on the floor.

Children of this age still like being with people best of all, but they are starting to have some interest in toys that do something, like move or make a noise.

What to watch out for

Seek help from your health professional if your baby by 12 months is not:

- pulling himself up to stand
- moving around somehow
- changing objects from one hand to another
- looking up when you call his name
- copying simple sounds like 'mummmum'
- showing signs of being especially attached to his parent
- smiling, laughing, squealing and trying to attract your attention.

Summary

Social emotional

A baby usually:

- is well aware of strangers and familiar people and withdraws from strangers
- may not even go to familiar people for a while - demanding the primary caregiver
- gives cuddles by 10 months
- enjoys peek-a-boo games.



There may be a problem if a baby:

- does not show pleasure when she sees familiar people
- does not show anxiety when separated from her main caregiver.

Motor skills

A baby usually:

- can move around by crawling or bottom shuffling by 10 months
- can reach out while sitting without falling over
- can pull up to standing by 10 to 11 months
- walks with hands held by 10 to 12 months.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- is not sitting by 9 to 10 months
- is not starting to move around by any means.

Understanding

A baby usually:

- is interested in small objects and toys and reaches out for them
- starts to look at, feel and handle small objects before taking them to his mouth
- looks in the correct direction for things that have fallen down.

There may be a problem if a baby:

- is not interested in toys or objects that are attractive to babies of this age.

Speech and language

A baby usually:

- is putting strings of babble sounds together
- shakes head for 'no' by about 10 months
- recognises several words including own name (e.g. looks for daddy if 'daddy' is said)

- imitates simple sounds made by other people.

There may be a problem if:

- babbling has not become more complex and baby does not babble in 'conversation' with others.

Note: All children are different and develop at different rates. So if your child does not do all the things in this topic, it may be because your child is working on some different area of her learning and development at present.

However, if your child is very different from other children, if you are worried about your child's development or if the baby seems not to be progressing or going backwards, you should seek the advice of a doctor or community child health nurse. If there is a problem, getting help and ideas early will help most. Otherwise it is good to have reassurance that your children are developing normally in their own unique way and to remember that what matters is to support them in moving forward from where they are now.

For more information contact:

- Local community child health nurse
See inside your baby's purple 'All About Me' book, in the phone directory under 'Child Health Centres' or www.health.wa.gov.au
- Local family doctor
- Ngala Helpline
8.00am–8.00pm 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parenting WA Line
Telephone (08) 6279 1200 (24hr service)
Outside metro area – Freecall 1800 654 432



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