

4-7 Month Old Well Visit

Your baby grows rapidly during this time so you may have questions about her physical development and motor skills. Most likely she will now be seen at 4 months and at 6 months, but your doctor may have a different schedule.

Once babies can reach out and grab objects, and start having contact with more people, they are at increased risk for contagious illness, particularly if entering childcare or if they have older siblings. Also, much of the immunity that they received from their mothers before birth is “wearing off” now.

What to expect at the office visit

- Measurement of your baby's length, weight and head circumference. Growth will be plotted on a growth chart, and you'll be advised of the progress.
- A physical exam to check for normal function of the eyes, ears, heart, lungs, abdomen, arms and legs, etc. The doctor will check the baby's soft spot (fontanel) at the top of the head and may check for signs of teething.
- A review of physical and emotional development through both observation and your progress report. Can your baby hold up her head? Is she rolling over? Attempting to sit up after 6 months? Trying to use her hands more? How does she react to strangers? Your doctor may ask you these questions and more.
- You may be asked how you are doing with the baby and how the rest of the family is doing. Your doctor may go over safety questions with you: Have you baby proofed your home? Is the baby in an appropriate safety seat while in the car? Have you removed mobiles from the crib if your baby can pull herself up?
- A discussion of eating habits, including the likelihood that solid foods will be introduced soon.
- Advice on what to expect in the coming months.
- Your baby will receive immunizations during some visits (see below).

During the six months before their first birthday babies are checked for anemia (low red blood cell count — usually due to iron deficiency). This can be done with a simple finger prick to collect a drop of blood. No other routine laboratory tests are needed in the first year of life.

Address any questions or concerns you have at this time. Make sure to write down any specific instructions you receive regarding special baby care. Keep updating your copy of the baby's medical record, listing information on growth and any problems or illnesses.

Immunizations your baby will receive

Immunizations generally given at the 4-month visit:

- second diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine
- second *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine
- second polio vaccine (IPV)
- second pneumococcal conjugate (PCV) vaccine
- second rotavirus (RV) vaccine
- second hepatitis B (HBV) vaccine (can vary depending on whether your doctor uses combination vaccines)

At the 6-month visit, your baby may receive:

- third diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine
- possibly the third polio vaccine (IPV)
- third hepatitis B vaccine (if first two doses have been given earlier)
- third *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine
- third pneumococcal conjugate (PCV) vaccine
- possibly a third rotavirus (RV) vaccine
- a flu shot

Babies at high risk of developing a meningococcal disease, which can lead to bacterial meningitis and other serious conditions, may receive an additional vaccine. (Otherwise, the meningococcal vaccine is routinely given at 11-12 years old.)

When to call the doctor

Colds and other illnesses are a part of growing up. Your baby is beginning to explore and probably is being exposed to other kids. While it's hard to see your baby suffer, rest assured that most kids grow out of the frequent-illness stage (though perhaps not for some time).

Meanwhile, these safeguards can help keep your baby well:

- Breastfeeding will provide antibodies and enzymes that help protect against illness.
- Keep away from kids you know are sick, especially those with infectious diseases such as chickenpox.
- Family members who are sick should not share food or drink with the baby.
- Everyone should wash their hands well before handling the baby and her toys.
- Be vigilant about vaccines. Stick to the immunization schedule recommended by your doctor.

Call your doctor right away if your baby seems lethargic or less energetic, refuses to eat, suddenly has trouble sleeping, has diarrhea or is vomiting. Also, a temperature over

4-7 Month Well Visit (continued)

101°F (38.3°C) should be reported to the doctor immediately, even if she seems well otherwise.