

NINE MONTH OLD CHECK UP

FEEDING AND NUTRITION

Your baby should be well acquainted with all types of food now – cereal, fruits, vegetables and meats. She has probably developed definite dislikes for certain foods in each category. This is normal, but continue to introduce her to new foods and foods she has not cared for in the past. As she grows, her tastes change and she may desire a food once found distasteful.

Mealtime can be a messy experience now as your baby delights in exploring her food. By now, your baby may be well on the way to mastering the use of a cup. Never fight with your baby at feeding time – a gentle coaxing will suffice to get her to eat. If this fails after an adequate time, then no further attempts to get her to eat are necessary. She will make up for it at future meals. Mealtime should always be pleasant for parent and child.

By now your baby will be eating finger foods. Small soft foods such as banana wedges are preferable, as small hard foods, such as "hard" candies, hot dogs, raw carrots, whole grapes, popcorn and pretzels can choke a child resulting in fatal asphyxiation. Food should be cut into small pieces and cooked well for young children, who should be fed only a small amount at a time. Meals and snacks must be supervised!

At eleven months of age you may begin to change the baby from formula to regular milk, unless otherwise instructed by your pediatrician.

Above all, tolerate your baby's messiness and allow her to experiment with feeding herself – it is all part of the learning process.

SCHEDULE

If your baby has already developed the practice of sleeping through the night, you may be surprised to find that she has starting waking up again in the middle of the night. This is normal and most babies will drop off to sleep again after crying for a short time (20–30 min.).

Your baby still sleeps about half the time now, including a morning and afternoon nap. Denying your baby a daytime nap does not encourage her to sleep better during the night. Lack of sleep most likely will make her more cranky.

DEVELOPMENT AND PLAY

Most babies can sit alone without support by age 9 months. Some may even be able to go from their stomachs to a sitting position. Attempts to scoot and crawl have begun, although some babies skip this milestone and begin to pull to a standing position. The index finger and thumb are now used together like pincers. He will use the index finger to explore and poke at things. He will enjoy putting things together and dropping things into a cup and removing. When offered a string attached to pull toy, he will pull the string to get the toy.

Your baby is reserved with strangers and may even cry but he enjoys other social games such as pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo or waving bye-bye. He now responds to the sound of his name and "no, no." He reaches out to the people playfully.

Your baby will enjoy playing with pots, pans and plastic kitchen containers and utensils. Once again, any toys should be inspected for sharp edges and small parts that may easily break. You will probably find many things in your home that your baby prefers to play with more than expensive manufactured toys.

Always talk to your baby about what you see and what you do. Remember, your baby's language has been developing since his first cry and he is eager to hear what others have to say. Your baby may be able to say Ma-Ma and Da-Da along with his own special jargon which he enjoys hearing you imitate.

SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE

Now that your baby is more mobile, special care should be taken in "child-proofing" your home. Kiddie guard locks purchased at the local hardware are good idea for cabinets and drawers containing harmful or breakable items. Anything you do not want your baby to handle should be put away. Investigation is a normal stage of development and anything within reach is fair game.

You should have the Poison Control number available. You will receive a First Aid Chart at this time.

Discipline should be used infrequently. If the baby is doing something undesirable, distract him by giving him something else to do or removing him from the scene rather than spanking. Try to say "YES"; you may do this rather than "NO" all the time.

SHOES

We do not feel that high topped walking shoes are needed to teach a child to walk. The purpose of shoes is to protect the feet and keep them warm and are not needed until the child is actually walking. Sneakers or low shoes are fine. The only reason for using high topped shoes is to prevent a child from removing her shoes at will. Shoes need not be expensive but should be of adequate width and about 1/2 inch longer than the baby's toes when the sole of one shoe is held against the sole of the opposite foot.