

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR 9 MONTH-OLDS

VACCINES:

- * No vaccines are routinely given at this age. During October - March, we will offer influenza (flu) vaccine.
- * If your infant missed a vaccine dose, it may be given at this visit.
- * Household members living with infants are strongly encouraged to receive the flu and whooping cough vaccines. Please contact your primary care provider.

SCREENING TESTS:

- * Complete Blood Counts (CBC) or Hemoglobin (Hgb) – a test for anemia, or low red blood cell counts. In children, anemia usually is from not eating foods with enough iron.
- * Lead level (Pb) – a test for lead poisoning. Please let us know if your home has lead paint or other lead hazards in it.

DEVELOPMENT and PARENTING TIPS:

Speech/language:

- * 9 month old infants understand simple words such as “bye bye” or “no” and should be starting to respond to their own names.
- * Infants of this age babble a lot and may start to say words like “Mama” or “Dada” (or “Papa”). At this age, though, they usually don’t know the meaning of those words yet.
- * In the next few months, by 12 months of age, nearly all toddlers will start to address parents appropriately as Mama or Dada/Papa. Many will begin to understand simple commands.

Physical ability:

- * Most 9 month olds should be able to sit by themselves.
- * He will start to pull himself up to standing position by holding on to something, like furniture.
- * At this age, most infants are learning to crawl.
- * Your infant should be starting using her thumb and fingers to grasp objects.
- * In the next few months, by 12 months of age, most infants will begin to take steps while holding on to something (called “cruising”) and many will take their first steps independently.

Social/play:

- * Most 9 month olds will start to enjoy playing “peek-a-boo.” This actually teaches an important skill: learning that objects still exist even when you can’t see them.

- * Even infants love picture books! This should become a fun and important part of the bedtime routine (after tooth brushing).
- * Infants at this age will start to be able to hold and manipulate objects so try to have different types of toys such as balls, cars, soft blocks, musical toys, stacking toys, cloth or cardboard books. Avoid using TV or video to entertain your infant.
- * In the next few months, your child will start to become more social and may enjoy more interactive play, games like “peek-a-boo” and “pat-a-cake.” As they begin to crawl, babies will want to explore their environments. (See **Safety Issues**, below).

Behavior:

- * Many infants at this age will be a little fearful of strangers or strange places. This is called “stranger anxiety.” Be sure to give your infant time to adjust to new situations and people. Try to be reassuring and calm.
- * Even young infants need to have limits on behavior. You should try to set limits consistently. When your baby is misbehaving, try distracting him with something he likes. Avoid scaring or yelling at your baby.
- * Be sure to praise your baby for good behavior!! Saying things like “Yeah! That’s great!” or “You did it!” can reinforce good behavior and accomplishments.
- * Now is the time when most babies start to sleep through the night. Having a bedtime routine and set schedules will help. Also, remember that sleep and feeding behaviors are usually connected. Do not let your infant fall asleep with a bottle or breast in his mouth. He needs to learn to fall asleep in his crib by himself to be able to sleep through the night.
- * In the next few months, your infant may continue to be shy around strangers and start to get scared when separated from you (called “separation anxiety”). He will learn that you are coming back, though! It helps to expose your infant to new environments and people while still with you. Remember to be consistent, set limits, praise good behavior, and correct bad behavior or offer a distraction away from bad behavior.

NUTRITION and EATING BEHAVIORS:

- * At this point, infants still should be drinking formula or breast milk. Do NOT switch to regular cow’s milk until a year of age! Remember that babies that exclusively breastfeed and those that drink less than 32 ounces of formula per day need to take a vitamin D supplement.
- * You should be giving your baby more solid foods instead of formula and breast milk. As babies start to have better finger control, you

- can give them soft “finger foods” that are easy to pick up such as Cheerios, small pieces of toast and cookies or other foods that you are eating. Babies also need a lot of iron at this age, and meat is the best source of iron in foods that we eat.
- * Try to have three meals each day with a snack between meals. At meals, use a high chair and eat with your baby at the table. Let your baby have her own spoon. Expect it to be messy!
 - * Try to be patient when introducing new foods or switching to a cup. Your baby may refuse new foods or the cup initially but will try it eventually. Don’t give up!
 - * Be sure to avoid foods that cause choking: no nuts, hard candy, hot dogs, or hard pieces of fruits or vegetables.
 - * Avoid juice and soft drinks. Babies simply do not need them.
 - * Do not let your baby fall asleep using a bottle or while breastfeeding. It will prevent him from learning to sleep through the night. As her teeth come in, the sugar from formula, breast milk, or juice will cause cavities to form. If you haven’t already switched to “sippy cups,” do it now. No more bottles! Often stopping the bottle all at once works better than trying to slowly decrease its use.
 - * In the next few months your infant will start to transition to a toddler’s eating habits and growth patterns. By 12 months of age, it may seem like your baby is not eating enough. Don’t worry! If your baby’s growth and blood counts are good, it means she is eating enough of the right foods. Don’t forget that your baby will want to do more eating by herself, too. He will enjoy using his fingers to pick up foods and hold a spoon. Make it fun. Introduce new foods. Encourage your baby to eat the same foods that you do.

HYGIENE:

- * As your baby’s teeth come in, you should be brushing the teeth before bed. Ideally, start trying to brush after breakfast too. You can brush with just water or start using a tiny amount of fluoride toothpaste once daily. If you have any concerns about your child’s teeth, consider taking him or her to see a dentist.
- * Drink your tap water! Most of the towns in our area have clean and safe tap water that comes from state reservoirs. This water contains fluoride to make your teeth strong. If you’re not sure about your town’s water supply or whether it has fluoride, ask your child’s doctor. Bottled water usually is NOT necessary.
- * Babies do not need shoes, but they may help to keep the feet warm and protected, particularly when outside.
- * As your baby starts to eat more solid food in the coming months, you will notice her bowel movements change. They will become thicker and less frequent. If you are concerned about constipation

(hard, infrequent bowel movements), let us know. Sometimes, just a little extra water to drink can help soften the bowel movements.

SAFETY ISSUES:

- * Always have a mature adult supervising your child.
- * Never leave your infant unattended in or near water, even the bathtub.
- * Avoid choking hazards. Anything that can fit through a roll of toilet paper is too small for an infant to play with.
- * Before your baby starts walking, make sure your home is safe. It is better to have a safe home than to be constantly having to say “no” to your baby or intervene in unsafe situations.
- * Keep all medicines, poisons, and cleaning supplies stored in an upper, locked cabinet.

>>>POISON CONTROL CENTER: 1-800-222-1222<<<

(Call this number if your child eats something that might be dangerous.)

- * Always use a car seat. It is recommended that infants and toddlers should face the rear of the car until 2 years of age. The middle of the back seat is the safest location.
- * Well-fitting safety gates on all stairways will prevent falls.
- * Never use baby “walkers” (seats on wheels). They do not help babies learn to walk and are VERY dangerous.
- * You can prevent falls by putting window guards on upper story windows that can be reached by your child. Avoid putting beds or sofas next to windows on upper floors. Remember: KIDS CAN’T FLY.
- * Try to have a playpen where you can leave your baby while you do things around the house.
- * Never leave hot or heavy objects where they might fall on your baby.
- * Find out if there are lead hazards in your home. If you rent an apartment, your landlord should know. Ask your child’s doctor or nurse if you have questions about this.
- * No smoking in the house! We strongly encourage parents who smoke to try to quit. Even the smoke on your clothes, hair, and breath can affect your child. Ask us for information on how to quit.

NEXT VISIT: age 12 months for a check-up/physical and as needed for other problems, illnesses, and injuries

We will talk more about setting rules and limits for your child, creating a calming bedtime routine, feeding your child, supervising your child, and

caring for your child's teeth. Be sure to write down your questions for next time. Try to think of questions to ask us.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

The internet can be an excellent source of information on child health and development. Be sure that the websites you visit are reputable! If you have questions, please ask us.

Need help with breastfeeding?

Meet with a lactation consultant and other breastfeeding mothers at the Cambridge Health Alliance Breastfeeding Support Drop-in Program, located at 8 Camelia Avenue in the Cambridge Hospital driveway. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10AM to 12PM. No appointment is necessary!

More information is available from these sources:

Zipmilk	www.zipmilk.org
Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program	(800) 942-1007
La Leche League	(800) LA LECHE
Nursing Mothers' Council	(617) 244-5102
Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition	www.massbfc.org
International Lactation Consultant Association	www.ilca.org
National Women's Health Information Center	(800) 994-9662

Check out *Bright Futures* parent information from the American Academy of Pediatrics at:

<http://brightfutures.aap.org/pdfs/Visit%20Forms%20by%20Age%20110/9%20Month/A.Inf.PH.9month.pdf>

Check out *Healthy Children* parent information from the American Academy of Pediatrics at:

www.healthychildren.org

Find more information and tools on our CHA website page for parent resources at:

[Http://www.challiance.org/Services/PediatricsResourcesforParents.aspx](http://www.challiance.org/Services/PediatricsResourcesforParents.aspx)

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