

**West Plano Pediatrics**  
6300 W. Parker Rd #426, Plano, TX 75093  
(972) 608-0774

## **Four Month Check-up Advice**

### **Next Visit: Six Months**

**Diet**--Your baby's nutrition should still be mostly from breastmilk or formula. She should take about 24 to 32 ounces of formula in about 5 or 6 feedings per day. You should begin to put your baby onto a feeding schedule to help fit in to your family's routine. Most babies are ready to begin solids at 4-6 months. She should have good control of her head when propped or held in a sitting position and her tongue thrusting should be decreasing before you start solids. When your baby is ready, start with a few tablespoons of rice cereal mixed with formula or breastmilk once a day. You should probably choose the quietest meal of the day to introduce cereal so that you and your baby will not be distracted or stressed. Use a spoon, not an infant feeder, and try to put the cereal near the middle of her tongue, instead of at the tip. If she spits it out, or doesn't do well, you might need to wait a few days and try again.

After she has mastered rice cereal for a week or so, you are ready to move on. It is important to add only one new food every 4-5 days so that if she has a food allergy it will be recognized early. Don't use any combination foods until she has had each individual food in the mixture. There is some controversy as to the best order in which to add new foods. In reality, it doesn't seem to make a lot of difference, except that meats should not be added until after 6 months. We have a few suggestions if you're not sure how to start.

- Introduce oats and barley after rice cereal. It has a similar taste and texture to the rice cereal and might be accepted more easily.
- Fruits are generally well accepted after cereals because babies like the sweet taste.
- Add vegetables starting with lighter colored vegetables (like squash) and working toward the dark green ones, which have a stronger taste.
- As you add more types of foods, give your baby solids at more mealtimes so that by 8 months she is eating 3 meals of solids a day.

There are a few foods your baby should not have at this age. Corn is difficult to digest until 6-9 mo., wheat, eggs, peanut butter and fish are more likely to cause allergic reactions if given before 9 mo. If you prepare your baby's food at home, avoid beets, turnips, carrots, and collard greens because these fresh vegetables have high levels of nitrates.

**Development**--You have probably noticed that your baby is trying to roll over, grasp objects and babble some. As she matures, her newborn reflexes, such as the hand grasp, will disappear and be replaced by purposeful movements. Large muscle groups of the trunk, arms and legs will develop before the fine motor control needed in her hands. Your baby will first swipe and bat at objects, then she will learn that she can grasp them and inspect them with her hands and mouth. At this age your baby will learn to control her movements by what she sees happening, and can begin to make corrections if her aim is off. She will probably use both hands for everything. Over the next few months she will learn to reach with one hand and to transfer from hand to hand.

Your baby is learning to use her hands, but she is also learning about the physical properties of objects--size, shape, texture, weight, temperature. Playing is her way of learning about the world. Until she can sit well, make sure she has plenty of play time on her tummy or propped in your lap so that she can practice reaching and grasping and inspecting. Give her plenty of simple toys that are of different sizes, colors and textures. Watch the games she initiates and introduce new ones to her. Play with her a lot!

**Handedness**--Most babies change which hand they prefer fairly frequently in the first year, and the true dominant hand does not emerge until 4-5 years of age. If you notice that your baby has a clear and consistent preference of one hand over the other (right or left) before 15 months, let us know. She may be weak in the hand she doesn't use.

**Sleep**--Most babies at this age need 2 naps a day. Let her sleep until she wakes up unless you find that she has trouble sleeping at night if her naps are too long during the day. Continue to build on your bedtime routine by reading stories or singing quietly until your baby is drowsy but not asleep. Consistency is very important in the routine.

**Safety**--As your baby becomes more active, you should be more alert to potential dangers in the environment. Don't put your baby in an infant seat on top of a counter or table, no matter how secure she seems. Make sure you continue to use your carseat in the rear-facing position until he is one year old and weighs 20 lbs. or more. We would like to caution you against walkers because many infants are injured seriously as a result of falls or simply being able to reach things that they shouldn't. If your baby loves her walker (all babies do), take the wheels off so she can play safely. You can also use an ExerSaucer in place of the walker. Never leave your baby alone near water or in the bathroom.