

West Plano Pediatrics
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Nine Month Check-up Advice
Next Visit: Twelve Months

Diet --Your baby should be eating a variety of baby and junior foods as well as soft table foods. Most babies can eat the foods that you would feed to the rest of your family now, including wheat and eggs. If there is someone in your family who has a severe food allergy, ask your doctor for advice about when to introduce that food. She should not have foods that she could choke on, such as, popcorn, peanuts, grapes, whole hot dogs, hard candy, etc. You will probably notice a decline in the amount of formula or breastmilk your baby drinks each day. Sixteen to twenty ounces a day are plenty because she is now getting most of her calories from solid foods. Remember that you should not switch from formula or breastmilk to whole cow's milk until her first birthday.

Your baby will probably require 3 meals and 2 snacks a day because her stomach is small and she is full of energy at this age. Don't let her get into the habit of eating constantly through the day (or "grazing"). Limit snack time to 15 minutes. If she is playing instead of eating at the end of 15 minutes, snack time is over and she should wait until mealtime to eat again.

Development--Your baby is now or will soon become more mobile. Most babies will start to crawl or scoot and can stand holding on to furniture. She may walk while holding on ("cruise") for a few months before she walks alone.

At nine months, your baby should be starting to understand more of what you say to her. She should know her name and understand "no". She will soon begin to use gestures to let you know what she wants and wave bye-bye. Often babies start to say "mama" or "dada" at this age, but they may use these names for any adult.

As your baby learns to use her hands better, give her lots of finger foods to eat. Cheerios and crackers are favorites because they are easy to pick up and dissolve easily in the baby's mouth. Finger foods are important not only for nutrition but also to help develop her fine motor skills in her hands. She will also feel more independent when she can make some decisions about what goes into her mouth. You may find that when she is learning to eat with her hands she refuses to eat when you feed her with a spoon. Don't turn mealtime into a test of wills, provide her with a variety of foods she can feed herself and don't force any foods on her. Finger feeding is messier and takes longer than spoon feeding, but it is an important skill for your baby to master.

Safety--Your house should be baby-proof now that your child is becoming more mobile. In general, you should look around your house from your baby's point of view and see what might catch her eye. Wall outlets should be covered with a safety plug when not in use. If your drapes or mini-blinds have cords, keep them out of reach, or use a floor mount to keep the cord taut. Any tall or heavy pieces of furniture, such as floor lamps, bookcases or televisions, should be very stable. If not, you should anchor your bookcases to the wall or put lamps behind other pieces of furniture. Be on the look out for any small objects on the floor that your baby could swallow or choke on. If you have stairs in your home, you should have a gate at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Your baby's bedroom should be a safe place for you to leave your child alone all night. The mattress should be at the lowest level and the rails should be all the way up. When your baby can pull herself up, remove the bumper pads and any large toys or pillows that she could stand on to climb out of the crib. If your baby can climb out of her crib, it is time to move to a bed. You should move her to a bed when the rail is less than 3/4 of her height or she is 35 inches tall even if she hasn't climbed out yet.

In the kitchen, make sure all cleaners, soaps, furniture polish, insect bait, etc are in a high cabinet with a lock. Keep the poison control number (1-800-222-1222) by the phone. Knives, forks and scissors should also be locked away. It's a good idea to put a childproof latch on the rest of the cabinets and drawers. You might give her a cabinet that contains only safe items or toys for her to play with. This might keep her out of trouble for a little while. Unplug any appliances not in use. When you are cooking on the stovetop, turn handles away so that your baby cannot pull anything hot down onto herself. Be aware of where your baby is at all times so that you will not trip on her or spill something hot on her.

Make the bathroom off limits for now. Keep the door shut and the toilet lid down at all times. Even though your baby can sit well at this age, it is still important not to leave her during her bath even for a second. If you have to answer the door or the phone, wrap the baby in a towel and take her with you. Check to make sure your hot water heater temperature is set at 120 or less. All medicines, including over the counter medicines such as Tylenol and aspirin, should be kept in a locked cabinet. Child-proof lids are helpful, but do not guarantee that your child cannot get into the bottles.

Any toxic chemicals around your house must be locked in a cabinet or locker. Never put chemicals or gasoline into containers other than the ones they came in. If you put paint thinner in a Coke bottle, your child will think it is Coke. If you have a refrigerator or freezer in your garage, keep it locked; if you are not using it, take the door off.

Remember that infants and toddlers can drown in very small puddles of water. Never keep water in a mop bucket or tub. Five-gallon buckets are especially dangerous for toddlers--the buckets are short enough for a toddler to fall into, but too tall for her to get back out. As always, if you have a pool, it should be safe for your child and any curious neighborhood children. A fence between your house and the pool is recommended.