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Well Child

TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR 4-MONTH-OLD

CHILDREN ARE CONSTANTLY CHANGING. And while you as parents can't anticipate every change, these Well Child Tips can prepare you for what lies ahead and help you raise a healthy and safe child.

SAFETY

- Choking is a common, but preventable, emergency that can happen with babies.
- Your baby likes to put everything into his mouth. Keep small things your baby can choke on away from him. Items such as coins, marbles, earrings, batteries, pen tops and small, round foods such as peanuts, gum, carrots, hot dogs, popcorn and raisins are dangerous for your baby. Always call 911 right away if your baby chokes and cannot cough well, cry or make a noise.
- Always check the sides of your baby's crib to make sure they are locked before you leave him in bed. When he learns to push up on his hands and knees, lower the crib mattress and take down any toys hanging over the crib.
- Within the next two months, your baby will be ready for a highchair. Make sure you use one with a tray that locks and a strap that goes around his waist and between his legs. Stay close to your baby when he is in his highchair.
- Protect your baby from the harmful rays of the sun. Dress him in a hat with a brim and a shirt that covers his shoulders and chest. Babies younger than 6 months old should not use sunscreen. It is a good idea to stay out of the sun from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest. Children's sunglasses with 100 percent ultraviolet protection (check the label) are a good idea, too.
- If you have any questions about immunizations, be sure to discuss them with your child's healthcare provider. Following a regular immunization schedule is very important for your child's health.
- Toys for 4-month-olds should allow your child to learn about his senses, sight, sound and texture. Toys should have bright colors and simple designs. Unbreakable mirrors, safe musical toys with soft sounds, children's tapes, rattles and balls with different textures are especially good choices for this age.

NUTRITION

- The way you feed your baby tells him how you feel about him. And that's the way he will learn to feel about himself. If you feed him the way he wants to be fed, he will learn that you (and other people) are loving and that he is lovable.
- From 3 to 6 months old, you will still be feeding during much of the time you and your baby spend together. To be happy, your baby needs to know he can depend on you to respect his wishes and provide what he wants. Show him that you will be reliable and there when he needs you. Your baby will eat best if you follow his lead.
- If you are breast-feeding, you need to keep eating well to protect your own nutritional health and to keep your breastmilk nutritious. Choose plenty of grains, fruits and vegetables and dairy products (or other calcium sources).
- Around 6 months, your child's healthcare provider may say your baby can start eating iron-fortified infant cereal. Rice or barley cereals are good foods to start with because



they are least likely to cause allergies. Mix cereal with breastmilk or formula. Start with it thin and gradually thicken it as your baby gets better at eating it. Cereal should always be fed by spoon.

- Not all babies are ready for solids at the same time. A baby is ready to begin solids when he can:
 - Sit up, alone or with support.
 - Turn his head away if he does not want it.
 - Close his lips over a spoon.
 - Scrape the food from the spoon with his lips.
 - Keep the food in his mouth, rather than spitting it back out.

DEVELOPMENT

- Your baby may now be able to roll over. To help him learn to do this, put a toy he likes out of reach. He may roll over to grab it.
- Your baby should be sleeping longer at night. If you need tips on helping your baby sleep, ask his healthcare provider.
- At this age, it is OK to let your baby cry himself to sleep if you check on him every 10 to 15 minutes.

PARENTING

- Babies like to be on a schedule. Try to feed your baby and put him down for naps and bedtime around the same time every day.
- A baby sleeps best in his own crib or bassinet.
- Dress your baby like you dress yourself. Do not put too many clothes on him or he may become too hot. When it is cold outside or if the wind is blowing, put a hat on him, as well as a sweater or jacket. This helps to keep him warm all over..

NEXT VISIT

Until your next appointment, you may call your child's healthcare provider if you have any questions about keeping your baby safe and healthy. If your child's healthcare provider is unavailable, call the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice line at 404.250.kids or check the Children's Web site at www.choa.org for more information.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

NOTE: These tips are just a guide and do not give you all the information you need to raise a healthy and safe child. Remember that children develop and grow at different rates and you know your child best. If you have any questions or concerns, be sure to ask your child's healthcare provider.

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