

# Southwest Pediatric

A S S O C I A T E S

Kelly Jolet, MD | Vaishalee Patil, MD | Haydee Rimer, MD | Christine Fyda, DO | Nick Wagner, MD

## Your Baby at 9 Months

**Medications:** Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen can be given as needed for discomfort or fever. No other medications are recommended for this age unless directed by your doctor. Please see our medication dosing chart for the right dose based on your baby's weight today.

**Next Visit:** 12 months of age unless there are other concerns

**Labs:** We usually do a test for anemia at this age, involving a finger stick for a small amount of blood. Some insurance plans require this at 12 months.

### *Immunizations*

Immunizations are not typically given at this visit unless we need to do some catching up. The next vaccines are typically given at the 12 month visit. Flu vaccines are given after 6 months of age in Fall/Winter.

### *What Your Baby Can Do*

Gross motor and fine motor skills start to take off about this age. Typically we can see a baby who sits very well, transfers objects from hand-to-hand, use a fine pincer grasp to pick up single objects and may start to crawl. Many babies will be able to pull to stand, and others may have already taken their first step, though this is earlier than average (12 months) and much earlier than is required (15 months).

A curious thing happens at this age for many babies as well – they are keen to explore, but don't want to be separated from parents. They often cry when you walk out of the room. Also, they are curious about objects and places, but are often terrified by strangers. Separation and stranger anxiety are normal stages of development. We encourage you to reassure your child, but don't force them into the arms of strangers (even if the stranger is their grandparent or new babysitter). Let them warm up at their own pace. Separation anxiety will fade too with reassurance and with the knowledge learned from experience that Mom or Dad always comes back.

Verbal development is also starting to become more interesting, with sounds like Mama, Dada, Baba and possibly even a word or two that has real meaning. The average kid has a first "real word" by about 1 year. This is a great time to continue to give your baby lots and lots of verbal input – talk through the grocery store, as you cook dinner, and really sit down and read together. If your baby doesn't have the attention span to sit for an entire book, use times when they are a captive audience (in the car, in the grocery cart) to make up stories and sing songs. Ask your baby to point to objects in books and on the shelf. Engage them and expect a response. Sign language is a good tool to enhance communication as well, but it doesn't replace verbal interaction.

## ***Media***

Parents often feel pressured to introduce their children to videos and interactive games on their iPad & cell phones – all designed to improve their language skills, eye-hand communication and school readiness. The reality is that there is no good substitution to your face-to-face interaction. Videos designed FOR babies are not recommended, and have actually been found to delay speech acquisition. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends NO television and/or “screen time” for the first 2 years of your baby’s life. In reality, most families allow some television while they finish dinner, while they travel, or while waiting in the doctor’s office! Our best suggestion to you is to consciously limit your child’s access to TV/iPad, video & cell phone games/videos. Limit them, using them as tools to compliment vital, personal interaction with your children. We discourage the TV as “background noise” during their play – just turn it off as often as possible. This is also a really good age to consider censoring what you’re watching – violent images, even in cartoon form, are confusing to young children and are known to increase aggressive behavior in toddlers.

## ***Protection & Guidance***

We encourage you to actively patrol your home routinely, checking for dangers that have been previously missed or that are new dangers because of a new developmental skill. Move household chemicals up high. Turn down your water heater. Start having a good discussion about what you plan to do with firearms in your home. The AAP recommends that firearms not be allowed in homes with children, but if you choose to keep a firearm in your home, let’s work together to minimize their risk.

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Gun-Safety-Keeping-Children-Safe.aspx>

## ***Feeding & Solid Foods***

Our options open up by 9 months and definitely include any fruit, vegetable or grain. We can now add dairy foods (yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese) and meats but continue breast milk or infant formula – your baby is not ready for whole milk yet. Our food handout will help you select what foods your baby is ready for. What to feed and when, especially in regards to food allergies, is a hot area of research. The final word isn’t in yet, but we know that the trend is moving to earlier introduction of previously considered “forbidden” foods.

It’s good to remember that even though we may be shifting toward earlier introduction of fish, peanut butter and eggs, we still do NOT want to give raw honey before 12 months of age. The reason it is restricted is because of the risk of botulism, not allergy. That risk is still unfortunately quite real. See our Starting Solid Food Handout for details.

This is a good age to start practicing with a sippy cup and/or a straw cup. We would love for your baby to be completely off of any bottles by their birthday.

## ***Discipline***

Until at least 15-18 months of age, babies don't need "discipline." What they do need is predictable limits, choices whenever possible and protection from danger. When a child is determined to get into something they shouldn't, the key is a) figure out a way to keep that something inaccessible and the interest will wane and b) redirect them to a more exciting activity. Slapping their hands at this age not only doesn't work, it actually teaches them that hitting is occasionally ok. We really encourage you to modify their environment to keep it as safe as possible so that you don't have to say, "no" so much during the day – and when you do say, "NO!" for a dangerous situation, it will have an impact and get their attention. Consider saying, "Not for {your child's name}" or "Not for baby" instead of "no."

Never spank a child of this age. It is never appropriate to shake a baby to get their attention. Babies can be extremely frustrating. If you find yourself getting very angry at your child, stop and take a few deep breaths, walk away and if necessary, ask for help. Please ask us for help if you feel that you feel very frustrated. Good parents often feel out of control and helpless. It's ok to ask for help.

### ***Sleep Habits***

Babies should be sleeping at least 8-10 hours in a row at this point. A consistent, soothing bedtime routine is still the best method to ensuring a smooth transition to sleep. We recognize that many parents choose to cosleep with their children, and we also recognize that cosleeping is very much a part of many of our families' cultures. Unfortunately, we can't medically recommend cosleeping because of some very real risks to your baby, we certainly respect your choice to parent in the way that you feel is best.

Babies need roughly 14 hours of sleep at this age, generally 10-11 at night (possibly with 1 feeding) and 3 hrs divided between 2 naps/day. Keep in mind that your child may need more or less, and may need to sleep whenever they have the opportunity while you're running older siblings around. Most babies are also taking about 2 consistent naps at this point. Some will throw in a short evening nap, while others have dropped to 1 nap per day already. Most kids will naturally migrate to 1 nap per day around 15 months, but others in daycare settings are encouraged to make that transition at around the first birthday.

Check our Recommended Reading Section on our Pinterest site for our favorite sleep books. Also feel free to discuss your sleep concerns at your next well check.

### ***Car Seats***

Most babies need to be out of infant carrier car seats by now, but we still very much recommend that you keep them in a rear-facing car seat at least until their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. State law requires that they be in a rear-facing car seat until 12 months and 20 pounds, which we believe is the minimum safety standard. We know that it's much safer to keep them backwards as long as possible.

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>