



What to Ask Your Baby's Doctor in the First Year

by Dr. Jessica Glenbocki, Pediatric Occupational Therapist

Your baby's doctor or pediatrician is an important ally in your child's development. At every well-child visit, they'll track your baby's progress and address any concerns you may have. Knowing how to ask the right questions can help you feel more confident as you navigate the first year of motherhood.

Taking your baby to regular checkups is the best way to ensure they're meeting important milestones. In the first year, visits are typically recommended at **2, 4, 6, 9, and 12 months**. While some pediatricians have specialized training in early development, others may not—but you can always stay on top of your baby's progress by asking thoughtful questions.

Key Questions for the First Year:

Feeding and Nutrition:

- How do I know if my baby is eating enough?
- When should I introduce solid foods?
- Are there any foods I should avoid this year?

Growth and Development:

- Is my baby's growth on track?
- What milestones should I expect at this stage?
- How can I support my baby's learning and motor skills?

Health and Wellness:

- Which vaccines does my baby need, and when?
- How should I handle fevers or colds?
- What safety tips should I follow for daily care?

Sleep and Comfort:

- How much sleep should my baby get?
- What are safe sleep practices?
- How can I establish healthy sleep habits?

If You Have Concerns About Development

It's natural to have questions or worries—every mother does. Some children meet milestones at their own pace, and that's okay. However, if you're concerned, trust your instincts and talk to your baby's doctor. No question is too small when it comes to your child's development.

Development-Specific Questions to Consider:

- What signs should I look for if my baby struggles with certain skills?
- How can I help my baby if they miss developmental milestones?
- What causes developmental delays, and how are they diagnosed?
- How are developmental delays treated?
- Do you have experience with children who need Early Intervention services? Can you share contact information for these services?
- What do the tasks you observe during checkups tell you about my baby's development?
- What should I do if I feel my baby is falling behind?

It's important to remember that not every baby will master every skill at the same time. Sometimes, delays mean a problem, but sometimes they don't. The best thing you can do is share your concerns with your pediatrician or another childhood development expert.

You can also put your mind at ease by [talking with a child development expert](#) on Vitalxchange

About Vitalxchange: If you're looking for more personalized guidance, [Vitalxchange](#) is here for you. Our easy-to-use app connects new mothers like you with certified child development experts and science-backed parenting programs. From sleep routines and picky eating to speech and motor development, Vitalxchange provides practical advice tailored to your family's needs. Explore [Vitalxchange](#) today!



Your baby's first year - smiles and milestones

by Dr. Jessica Glenbocki, Pediatric Occupational Therapist

As parents, we work hard to ensure our children are well-fed, safe, and have what they need to grow. A good part of our role involves knowing how to motivate our children's early social-emotional, speech and language, cognitive, and motor development. Science shows that investing time to help our children through early milestones can help lay a strong foundation for their future success and well-being.

Because 90% of brain development occurs before age 5, ensuring your child receives nurture and care when needed is vital. These first years are a valuable (and fun!) time for parent-child bonding. This is when you get the most time with your child and learn how to blend your intuition and observations to become the world's expert on your child. A skill that is bound to help you make the best choices and resources to help your little one thrive in the world

The following includes a few general areas of early childhood development to be aware of.

Social-Emotional Learning Skills

Social-emotional learning ([SEL](#)) refers to a child's emotional well-being, interactions with others, and how they respond to or deal with various social situations. Infants and young children exhibit skills in this domain by crying to communicate their needs, smiling, and playing with other children.

Here is a list of social-emotional milestones your child will have in the first year

Child's Age	Social-Emotional Milestones
2 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calms down when spoken to or picked up 2. Looks at your face 3. Seems happy to see you when you walk up to them 4. Smiles when you do or smiles at people when they talk or smile.
4 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Smiles on their own to get your attention 2. Chuckles (not yet a full laugh) when you make them laugh 3. Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention
6 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knows familiar people 2. Likes to look at themselves in the mirror 3. Laughs
9 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers 2. Shows several facial expressions, like happy, sad, angry, and surprised 3. Looks when you call their name 4. Reacts when you leave (looks, reaches for you, cries)
12 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plays games with you, like pat-a-cake

These development milestones are achieved by 75% of children at the age indicated. If your child does not reach the milestone as indicated, it does not necessarily mean your child has a developmental delay. However, you should discuss what you are seeing with your pediatrician. You should also monitor your child to see if they ‘catch up’ and achieve the milestones later. At the end of this article, we make some additional recommendations on what you can do to help your child develop these skills.

Speech and Language Skills

Speech and Language development covers [receptive communication](#) (what a child understands when others speak) and expressive communication skills (what and how to communicate effectively with others through speech).

Here is a list of speech and language development milestones your child will have in the first year:

Child's Age	Speech & Language Milestones
2 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes sounds other than crying 2. Reacts to loud sounds
4 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes sounds like “oooo” and “aahh” (cooing) 2. Makes sounds back when you talk to them 3. Turns head toward the sound of your voice
6 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes turns making sounds with you 2. Blows “raspberries” (sticks tongue out and blows) 3. Makes squealing noises
9 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Makes different sounds like “mamamama” and “babababa” 2. Lifts arms up to be picked up
12 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waves “bye-bye” 2. Calls a parent “mama” or “dada” or another special name 3. Understands “no” (pauses briefly or stops when you say it)

75% of children at the age indicated achieve these speech and language milestones. Children all develop differently. If your child does not reach the milestone as indicated, it does not necessarily mean your child has a developmental delay. However, you should discuss what you are seeing with your pediatrician. You should also monitor your child to see if they ‘catch up’ and achieve the milestones later. At the end of this article, we make some additional recommendations on what you can do to help your child develop these skills.

Cognitive/General Knowledge Skills

This area of child development includes skills like moving a barrier to find a hidden object, counting objects, naming pictures, and matching colors.

Child's Age	Cognitive Milestones
2 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watches you as you move 2. Looks at a toy for several seconds
4 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If hungry, opens mouth when they see breast or bottle 2. Looks at their hands with interest
6 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Puts things in their mouth to explore them 2. Reaches to grab a toy they want 3. Closes lips to show they don't want more food
9 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looks for objects when dropped out of sight (like their spoon or toy) 2. Bangs 2 things together
12 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Puts something in a container, like a block or cup 2. Looks for things they see you hide, like a toy under a blanket

75% of children at the age indicated achieve these cognitive milestones. However, children all develop differently. If your child does not reach the milestone as indicated, it does not necessarily mean your child has a developmental delay. However, you should discuss what you are seeing with your pediatrician. You should also monitor your child to see if they 'catch up' and achieve the milestones later. At the end of this article, we make some additional recommendations on what you can do to help your child develop these skills.

Gross Motor Development

Gross motor development deals with how well an infant or child can manipulate the large muscles of their body. Crawling, walking, jumping, and throwing a ball are all gross motor/large muscle skills.

Child's Age	Gross Motor Milestones
2 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds head up when on tummy 2. Moves both arms and both legs
4 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds head steady without support when you are holding them
6 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy
9 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gets to sitting position by themselves 2. Sits without support
12 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pulls up to stand 2. Walks, holding onto furniture

75% of children at the age indicated achieve these gross motor milestones. If your child does not reach the milestone as indicated, it does not necessarily mean your child has a developmental delay. However, you should discuss what you are seeing with your pediatrician. You should also monitor your child to see if they ‘catch up’ and achieve the milestones later. At the end of this article, we make some additional recommendations on what you can do to help your child develop these skills.

Fine Motor Development

Fine motor development refers to the use of small muscles. Fine motor skills typically means using their hands.

Child's Age	Fine Motor Milestones
2 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No specific fine motor milestones
4 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holds a toy when you put it in their hand 2. Brings hand to mouth
6 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leans on hands to support themselves when sitting
9 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uses fingers to “rake” food toward themselves
12 Months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drinks from a cup without a lid as you hold it 2. Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food

75% of children at the age indicated achieve these fine motor milestones. If your child does not reach the milestone as indicated, it does not necessarily mean your child has a developmental delay. However, you should discuss what you are seeing with your pediatrician. You should also monitor your child to see if they ‘catch up’ and achieve the milestones later. At the end of this article, we make some additional recommendations on what you can do to help your child develop these skills.

It is important to remember that every child may or may not demonstrate all the skills in every domain. Sometimes this might mean a problem, and sometimes it does not. Be sure to bring your concerns and questions to your child’s doctor and someone trained in assessing childhood development.

Curious if your baby is meeting key milestones? [Schedule a Milestone Check video call: Is Your Baby on Track?](#) and get personalized insights from child development experts—right when you need it.

Source: AAP/CDC

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