

## **BABY ADVOCATE**

### **At 4 months**

#### **Health**

My Baby is putting everything in his mouth. Does this mean he is teething?

- Not necessarily. Babies explore their world and learn about their environment by putting things in their mouth. This can also be a form of self-soothing or self-comforting. Babies who are teething usually display many of the following symptoms: drooling, rubbing fists or objects on the gums, showing signs of irritability, gums that are warm and tender to the touch and white spots indicating that teeth are cutting through the gums.

I'm worried that my baby isn't eating enough. Whenever he is eating/breastfeeding, he pulls away and doesn't seem interested. Is he growing enough?

- Your doctor or nurse practitioner will discuss your baby's weight at your well child visit. If your baby appears to be growing and healthy this could simply be a sign that the baby is showing cues that he is full. Your baby's temperament might also indicate that he is easily distracted from too much stimulation — requiring you to try feeding baby in a quieter area with less distractions, noise, or light. Babies become very social at about four months. His increased head control and ability to explore the environment visually allows him to turn his head to look for the source of the noise or bright light, people entering or leaving a room, etc.

How much juice/water should I be giving the baby?

- Your baby does not require additional amounts of water or juice for her development. The water and calories provided in breast milk and formula is sufficient. However, if your baby shows symptoms of constipation, talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner before offering additional liquids. .

#### **Development**

I don't feel comfortable leaving my baby with a babysitter. I'm afraid that whomever I leave him with won't know what to do. Is it normal to be so worried?

- Yes. Most parents experience fears and have a difficult time separating from their baby initially. It helps to share as much information as possible about your baby's temperament and daily routines with the babysitter so they are well prepared. Writing information down — such as schedules, your baby's favorite ways to be soothed etc. — can also be helpful. Encourage the babysitter to come over prior to the expected date for a “play date” that allows you to observe their interactions together and answer the sitter's questions about your baby. Leaving a phone number where you can be reached will help both you and the sitter feel more comfortable.

I recently went back to work, and when I take my baby to the sitter/child care provider, he doesn't seem to mind being left with a stranger. What if my baby becomes more attached to them than to me?

- It is important to speak with your childcare provider on a daily basis to hear details about his daily activities. Typically, it is nice to consider the parent and the childcare provider as a team that works together to provide the baby with safe, consistent, and nurturing care — rather than viewing it as a competition of who provides better care or who has a stronger attachment. Having one caregiver during his time at childcare is important for his development as well. The baby can then develop a secure base that includes positive interactions with his parents and his childcare provider.

I'm worried that my baby might become "dependent" on the pacifier/thumb since that's all that works when he is crying. Could this happen?

- Yes. However, using the pacifier/thumb is a form of self-soothing or self-regulation. Typically, parents report that the advantages can outweigh the disadvantages. Weaning can be discussed when you or your child are ready sometime between 12 and 18 months.

### **Prevention**

My son/daughter wants to help hold and carry the baby. Is this OK?

- Yes, it is important for the older sibling to bond with the new baby. However, it is preferred that the child be seated on a sofa/couch and hold the baby on their lap with an adult providing physical assistance. This will ensure that the baby's head is being properly supported. If the child is too young to understand that the baby is fragile, then the child should be closely monitored and supervised at all times. The family might establish guidelines for slightly older children, such as "You can hold the baby when mommy or daddy places her on your lap, but you shouldn't try to pick up the baby on your own as she can fall and hurt her head."

How will I know if my baby is sick?

- Your baby might show any of the following symptoms: fever, irritability, change in appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, lack of urinary output (possible dehydration), change in usual behavior, rash, seizure, or change in sleep patterns — along with other symptoms not listed. It is important to contact your doctor immediately if you think your baby might be sick.

How much fever reducing medicine should I give my baby when he has a fever?

- Please talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about when and how much medicine to give your child for fever.