

Everything seems to be coming together at this stage. Your baby will change from a vulnerable newborn infant to a responsive baby. Between 3 and 4 months it may even feel as if there is a daily routine developing. There is a better understanding of baby's needs and you, as a parent, are becoming more confident. Over the next 3 to 4 months incredible changes will be happening to your baby and to you as a parent.

Feeding

Babies are now becoming more efficient with their feeds. Breast feeding, especially, becomes quicker and easier as the baby's digestive system has matured. Both breast and bottle-fed babies may also be feeding less frequently as their stomach capacity has increased. Continue to have baby's growth monitored to ensure that he is getting a sufficient quantity of milk. In general, if a baby is growing, having good wet nappies and regular bowel movements, seems alert and is playing and sleeping well, chances are good that he's getting enough to eat.

This can also be a time for dietary changes. Often mothers who have been breastfeeding choose to introduce formula during this period and then the big step of introducing solid food is taken between 4 and 7 months.

Between 4 and 6 months most babies lose their tongue-extrusion reflex, a reflex which causes a young baby's tongue to push everything but a nipple right out of its mouth. You will also have noticed, or more than likely heard, baby becoming more vocal. He is gaining control over his mouth as well as his tongue. This means that babies can start to keep foods in their mouths. Get guidance from your paediatrician or clinic nurse as to the readiness of your baby for solid foods, how often to introduce new foods, and what to look for in terms of allergic reactions or food intolerance.

Elimination

Regular wet nappies are still a good indication that baby is getting a sufficient amount of milk. Bowel movements will also have become more regular and less frequent. Usually baby has one decent sized, softly formed stool every day. However this will change as solid food is introduced and as baby starts producing more saliva as a result of teething. There can now be significant changes to the consistency, colour and the smell. If there are extreme changes discuss this with your clinic nurse to eliminate problems.

Sleep

By 4 months, a more predictable sleep pattern begins to emerge. Babies in this age range generally sleep about 14 to 16 hours a day. Sleep time is usually spaced out in 2 or 3 naps and a solid block of about 6 to 8 hours (sometimes much longer) at night. There are, of course, great variations in babies' sleep needs and schedules. As a general rule, it's a good idea to push for longer periods of uninterrupted sleep at night and try to phase out middle-of-the-night feedings. This is also a good time to establish an end of day/bedtime routine. This could start with a late afternoon walk, a bath and massage, a milk feed, a little reading or lullabies and then to bed to sleep, for, hopefully, most of the night.