

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

TWO TO FOUR MONTHS

While reading this information, please keep in mind that all children are unique. While the sequence of development is practically the same for all children (for example, most children learn to crawl before they learn to walk), each child's rate of development is different. There is a wide variation in normal development. Some children reach developmental milestones earlier than others. Some reach them later than others. Rarely does a delay in reaching a developmental milestone mean that there is a problem. In most cases, delays turn out to be normal. Remember that premature infants generally reach developmental milestones later than other infants of the same birth age. Parents with any questions or concerns about their children's development should contact their children's health care provider.

Senses

***Vision.** By two months of age, infants are much more attentive to visual stimuli and may be able to track briefly (follow moving objects with their eyes). By two and a half months, the focusing distance of most infants is about twelve inches. If something brightly colored is placed within twelve inches of them, they will focus on it, and then follow it as it's moved from side to side.

***Hearing.** The sense of hearing in infants is fairly well developed at birth. There is evidence that infants respond

more positively to the human voice than to any other auditory stimulus. This preference for the human voice increases over the first four months of life.

Highlights in Physical Development

***Head/Neck.** Between two and four months of age, the ability to control head and neck movements continues to improve. By three months of age infants, when placed on their backs, will probably be able to lift their heads to a 45 degree angle. When placed on their stomachs, they will probably be able to lift their heads 90 degrees, with their weight supported by their arms from the elbows to the wrist. When lying on their stomachs, two to four month old infants will be able to raise their heads and hold them in this position for a few minutes at a time, and they may even look around.

***Grasp.** At about two months of age, the grasp reflex in most infants begins to disappear. Also, infants don't clench their hands as tightly as they once did. During this period, infants will also begin to hold their hands open more often. By three months of age infants' hands will generally stay open, though they may not be able to grasp anything for long.

Between two and four months of age, many babies begin to play with their own hands, and they may clasp them or stare at them. Grabbing is now a voluntary act,

though infants may not be able to grasp anything for very long.

***Rolling.** At about three to four months of age infants are getting more and more adept at rolling, and they will probably be able to roll over one way completely.

Highlights in Cognitive/Language Development

During the period from two to four months, infants are gradually becoming more and more alert and expressive. During this age range, infants are learning how to gurgle, coo, babble, and make other noises in addition to crying. The lip and tongue movements that infants make are their first attempts to reply to verbal stimulation.

Two to four month old infants begin to use their mouths as a means of exploration. It is also at this age that many infants begin to touch everything in sight as a way of learning how to measure distances using the hands and eyes. Infants will first look at an object and then attempt to confirm distances by trying to reach it.

Highlights in Social Development

By the end of the second month, most infants will begin to smile easily and spontaneously. This is called indiscriminate smiling, and it is one of the first social responses that infants make. Indiscriminate smiling is

spontaneous smiling that is not in response to any stimuli. By the end of the third month, the indiscriminate smile gives way to the social smile. Infants will now smile in response to the human voice, to express pleasure, and they will smile when adults smile at them.

During the period from two to four months, most infants will show obvious signs of curiosity and interest in what's going on around them. Infants will begin to express pleasure when others are present by smiling, kicking, and waving their arms. It is at this time that crying usually decreases dramatically.

Between three and four months of age, infants may begin to show fear of strangers by turning away and possibly crying. It is at this time that many infants begin to react differently to their mothers than they do to others. Infants this age may begin to protest when left alone and will cry differently when their mothers leave them than when others do.



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