

## 7-9 month baby

### Your baby's development at 7-9 months

Your baby's growing interest in anything and everything will mean that, at 7-9 months, your days will be spent keeping them out of harm's way. As their personality develops they may become more assertive and display preferences for their favourite things, such as foods and toys, whilst shunning what they dislike.

By now you should have begun the weaning process. When it comes to your baby's nutrition, no single food can give your baby all the nutrients they need. Providing a varied diet will ensure they get the right balance of vitamins and minerals, as well as the energy they need for growing and exploring.

Iron-rich foods and either breastmilk, infant or follow-on milks are also essential at this stage as the natural iron stores they were born with begin to run low at around 6 months. It's amazing to think that, at 7 months, your baby has almost the same iron requirements as a 30 year old man

As you progress through the first weaning stage, you may want to introduce new flavours and a slightly thicker, mashed consistency. Not only will new foods keep them interested, they will help your baby learn to eat and develop their chewing skills. Don't be afraid to give them a spoon and let them get messy, it all contributes towards their learning.

When your baby is in their high-chair, pay attention to their non-verbal signals— picking up foods with their hands may mean your baby is ready to try feeding themselves. Finger foods can make food more exciting for them and the thicker, chewier texture helps your baby's speech muscles to develop. Although it may be messy, you might find your baby eats more this way. If your baby refuses to eat lumpy foods at first, simply move back to foods with a softer consistency and try again another time.

If you're bottlefeeding and you haven't done so already, you may wish to consider moving onto a follow-on milk that is specially formulated to complement your baby's weaning diet as they provide extra iron, vitamins and minerals in a smaller quantity of milk. Remember; government guidelines recommend you don't introduce cows' milk (unless it's in cooking) until 12 months. For more information on Aptamil Follow On milk, have a look at our product section. Our feeding advisors are available on **08457 623 628**, Monday to Friday, 8am - 8pm, with tips and advice about how to make the transition to follow on milk as smooth as possible.

### Other changes happening at 7-9 months

#### Baby-proofing your home

Babies at this age soon begin to learn what happens to an object if they release it from their grasp or throw it. Practicing this newly acquired skill can prove most enjoyable for them – although, understandably, perhaps not quite so much fun for you!

This is also a time when some babies learn to crawl, although not all babies take to crawling - some prefer to shuffle around on their bum and others progress straight from standing up and

leaning to walking. Even more move backwards - probably because it allows them to keep hold of their favourite toy. However they choose to get around, their increasing activity levels will mean they'll need lots of space to explore. It takes them time to learn the meaning of "no!" so baby-proofing your home will help to keep your baby and your breakables out of harm's way.

### **Play can encourage development**

The part of your baby's brain which controls their motor skills (or movement skills) has already developed to help them control their upper body. But during this next stage it's the turn of their lower body, hands and feet to develop. As your baby's control over their leg muscles grows, they are able to bear more weight on their feet and will probably enjoy bouncing up and down on your lap or in a bouncer.

Try creating an exciting playground for your baby by building obstacles using throws or cushions for them to shuffle or crawl around. Not only will it strengthen their muscles, it will also help encourage their explorative nature.

### **Separation anxiety**

At 7 months, as your baby begins to understand the concept of space, he or she may begin to realise that you are not joined at the hip. This 'separation anxiety' can mean they become scared and clingy when you try to leave the room, even if it's just for a moment. Some babies even get clingy when you put them down and move away – even if it's just by a few feet. You can help your baby to feel more secure by sticking to a regular daily routine - whether it's simply giving them a milk bottle on waking, or planning snack times around naps.

Playing hiding games can also help to ease your baby's separation anxiety as they learn that not being able to see something can actually be fun and that you really will come back when you say you will. Start by hiding their favourite toy and asking them if they can find it.

### **Forming words**

Although not yet talking, your baby's beginning to recognise their own name and should soon turn around when they hear it. Their random babbling will begin to sound more like words as they repeat the sounds they've mastered.

At 7 months, when your baby says 'mama' or 'dada' - or whatever their name for you might be - they now understand its meaning and are referring to two very special people in their life – although they may still get the words muddled up.

Babbling, laughing, squealing or screaming are all ways in which they express their opinion. They're beginning to understand the meaning of the word 'no' – but that doesn't mean they'll always obey it.