

Suzanne Holbrook, MD
sunnysidepeds.com

4 Month Well Child Visit

Most children, at this stage, are beginning to use their hands specifically, reaching out to grab small objects close to them. The midline world is now a source of fascination and many enjoy toys attached to car seats or cribs to reach out for. Some children can roll from their stomach to their back, but not all. I encourage tummy time daily to aid this skill. The child might enjoy a colorful blanket or mat to lie on to stimulate their reaching and playing. Many kids are reaching for feet or hair (as many moms are aware). Your child should now recognize your voice and as you enter a room your child should show some degree of recognition. Your child should be vocal with their voice, laugh and follow with their eyes through the entire half-circle in front of them.

Feedings are still mainly liquid nutrition (either formula or breast), breast fed babies I encourage only breast milk feedings, however at this time formula fed infants might take to some vegies such as you can buy or make yourself. I would begin slowly because at this age your infant may still not be able to mouth solids in a way that allows easy swallowing. Very soft vegetables or purees would be what I would give at this age but if your baby is solely breast feeding, I would wait until 6 months for solids, giving only breast milk until then. Juice may help constipated infants who are plagued with hard stools and may be used as a medicine for this purpose, 1-2 ounce of 1/2 strength apple or prune juice is appropriate.

Sleep is normally less than for the 2-month-old, approximately 15 hours in 24 hours. This is an important landmark because many infants are now large enough to sleep through an 8 hour stretch of night sleep. It is at this time I have found infants can begin to be taught to sleep well without feedings through the night. Many infants up until this time have been aided in their sleep through either feedings or co-sleeping or simply holding in-arms to fall asleep. At this time the child has been nurtured and comforted so their world is safe and secure. At this stage, the kids can self-soothe and you could choose to let your child “cry it out” to sleep. This is done after your child is ready for bed, the bedtime ritual of feeding first, bathing second and quiet time completed. Lie your child in their crib and turn on music or other soothing sound that signals sleep. It might take an hour or so the first time your child is learning to self-soothe however as long as the child falls asleep him or herself, the next time will be much quicker. This routine should be done both day and night sleep times and it will teach your child to fall asleep. Another helpful detail is to wake and give a “dream feed” for your child between 10-12 midnight. This helps your child to sleep through a stretch of sleep during hours that are healthy for parents sleep as well.

At this age I am much less concerned with little colds so don't worry too much regarding fevers less than 102 degrees F and runny noses (as compared to the 2 month exam). I would bring in your child for evaluation if fevers are lasting longer than 3 days, are greater than 102, or if the child is not drinking fluids or if the breathing is labored.

Vaccines at this visit include those recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are boosters of those given at 2 months of age. Again, fever and legs that are sore are normal and tylenol (acetaminophen) for the fever or pain is recommended. If your child is over 12 lbs 2.5 mls of the infant tylenol is given every 4-6 hours if needed for fever or pain.

The next well child visit is in 2 months at 6 months of age.

Call for concerns. Suzy Holbrook, MD