



هيئة أبوظبي
للطفولة المبكرة
Abu Dhabi Early
Childhood Authority

1ST EDITION

Watching My Baby Grow and Learn

A primer for parents of infants and toddlers





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A Letter to You

Congratulations on the arrival of your baby! This primer is designed with love and care, specifically for you — the parents of newborns in Abu Dhabi. It is your companion as you witness and support the incredible developmental journey of your child in their first three years of life.

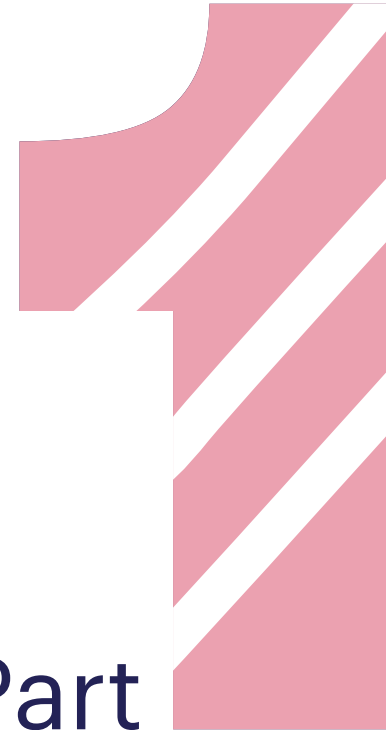
The early years are immensely significant in your child's life. During this period, their brain undergoes rapid development, forming the foundation for future learning, health, and emotional wellbeing. This primer will take you through each stage of your baby's early life, from bringing them home to understanding their growth and development at different ages. It includes essential information about how babies grow and learn. It introduces developmental milestones, namely what babies and toddlers should know and be able to do at different ages. It lists practical tips for parents and caregivers. It includes space for you to record and celebrate your baby's developmental milestones and achievements. You will see that the primer is very succinct; for parents who want to know more or go deeper into an issue, sources of further information have been indicated throughout.

Whether it is your child's first smile, their first steps, or their first words, knowing what to expect at each stage will help you to provide your baby with the nurturing care and support they need. Embrace this time with your little one—they grow up so fast!

Warm regards,

ECA

Part



WELCOMING YOUR NEWBORN

Whether you are a first-time parent or already navigating the beautiful adventures of parenthood, welcoming your newborn home marks an exciting beginning filled with love and new challenges. If you have an older child, involve them in the preparations to welcome the newborn into the family home:

First Things First: Newborn Screening

In Abu Dhabi, every newborn receives a series of safe, preventive tests conducted to detect metabolic, blood, endocrinal, and respiratory problems as early as possible. Newborn screening tests include identification of potential hearing loss in infants. In some cases, especially if a baby is born with low birth weight, an eye examination is also conducted by an ophthalmologist. Newborn screening helps doctors to make sure that your baby receives the best care right from the start.



First Ride Home

In the UAE, it is mandatory to use a child car seat from birth. Select a rear-facing car seat that fits newborns and young babies and have it installed well ahead of time. Follow the detailed instructions provided by the car seat manufacturer or seek professional assistance.



By being well prepared, you can focus more on enjoying your first moments at home with your new baby. Remember, it's perfectly normal to feel both excited and nervous at the same time. Don't hesitate to ask for support when you need it.



Preparing Your Home

In anticipation of your baby's arrival, make your home a sanctuary that supports your baby's comfort and safety:

- **Diaper Changing Station:** Dedicate a safe changing area in your home, stocked with all the essentials: diapers, baby wipes, diaper rash cream, and a comfortable changing mat. Newborns typically require 10-12 diaper changes a day, so ample supplies are crucial in the early weeks. Some environmentally conscious parents prefer to use washable and reusable diapers rather than packaged and disposable ones.
- **Temperature:** Maintain a comfortable room temperature, ideally between 22-24°C.
- **Sleeping Area:** Set up a crib or bassinet with a firm mattress, ensuring it is free from pillows, loose bed linen and soft toys.
- **Quiet Spaces:** Identify areas in your home where you can keep noise to a minimum to facilitate your baby's sleep.
- **Comfortable Armchair:** Make sure to have an armchair in which you can sit comfortably to breastfeed your baby.
- **Health and Safety Kit:** Prepare a basic healthcare kit containing a baby thermometer, baby-safe nail clippers, a gentle wash, and a soft hairbrush. It is also a good idea to familiarize yourself with first aid tips as well as the location and contact information of the nearest pediatric emergency center.

Pets: Consider how your pets may react to the new arrival. Sometimes dogs may become jealous of a newborn, so it's important to introduce them gradually.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Becoming a parent can be joyful, but it also requires significant adjustments. As a parent of an infant or young child, it is important to look after your own well-being, to develop a strong relationship with your baby and enjoy your parenting journey.

Make sure to look after:

- **Your diet:** Do not skip meals. Your diet impacts your energy levels and emotional health. Stay hydrated – this is especially important for breast feeding mothers.
- **Your sleep:** Though challenging with a newborn, whenever possible sleep when your baby sleeps.
- **Your emotions:** The life of a parent introduces a wide range of emotions. Because of fluctuations in hormones after delivery, mothers may experience anxiety and sadness. This is normal in the first few weeks after the birth of the baby. If these feelings persist, you may be experiencing postnatal depression. Other symptoms of postnatal depression could be low energy, irritability, and disturbed sleep and eating patterns. Post-natal depression is a commonly occurring condition in new mothers and can be treated. Less commonly recognized is post-natal depression in fathers. The huge change in family life because of a new baby, new responsibilities, financial concerns, sleep deprivation, and many other factors can be at the root of paternal depression.



Don't hesitate to reach out to:

- **Your partner:** Parenthood is a responsibility that should be assumed by both parents. Communicate with each other and look after one another – parenting is a team effort.
- **Your family and friends:** Accepting help is not a sign of weakness but a smart strategy to manage your responsibilities. Engage your family and friends in caregiving and household tasks.
- **Your local community:** Join local groups like antenatal classes or parenting groups. Your local community centers and online platforms can be valuable sources of support, friendship, and activities.
- **Your health professional:** If you think you are experiencing depression, your doctor will be able to help alleviate feelings of anxiety, sadness and/or listlessness.



Parenting a newborn can be overwhelming, but it's also a beautiful, fleeting time. Remember to rest whenever possible, as sleep will help you stay energized and present with your baby. Cherish the small moments and be kind to yourselves—every day brings new joys and challenges. Take time to express your feelings, whether it's talking to your partner or reaching out to loved ones for support. Lean on each other, trust your instincts, and don't forget to laugh through the chaos. You're doing an amazing job, and this journey is one you're navigating together.

WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

1 BREASTFEEDING:

it's about nutrition, protection and bonding

Breast milk is the best – it meets all the baby's needs for nutrition in the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding promotes attachment and strengthens the baby's immune system.

Your newborn will grow and develop well if you start breastfeeding within an hour of birth. Feed your baby with only breastmilk and no other solids, water or other liquids. Introduce solid foods (such as mashed bananas or pureed vegetables) once the baby is 6 months old. It is important to breast feed frequently and on demand. Continue to breastfeed when the baby is sick or has runny stools. The mother's body works hard to make breastmilk full of nutrients. Mothers must take care of their physical health – this is essential for both the mother and the baby.

Some mothers may face challenges when breastfeeding. Fathers and other family members play an important role in supporting and encouraging them. In case you need medical advice or if you have a serious difficulty breastfeeding, seek out your doctor or a licensed lactation consultant.

A breastfeeding mother should pay particular attention to:

Diet and hydration: Be aware of your diet and ensure it contains sufficient but not excessive, proteins, fats and carbohydrates. Included in your diet should be micro-nutrients such as calcium, iodine, iron, omega-3 fats, vitamin B12, vitamin D, and zinc. You can get all the nutrients and micronutrients that you need from a balanced, high fiber, diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, in addition to cereals, meat, fish, eggs and dairy products. You should aim to have around 2.5 liters of water a day. You may need more on hot or humid days or if you are very active.

Exercise: It is important to let your body recover after birth. When you are ready, some gentle exercises, like swimming, yoga, or Pilates, will improve your strength and boost your health and wellbeing.

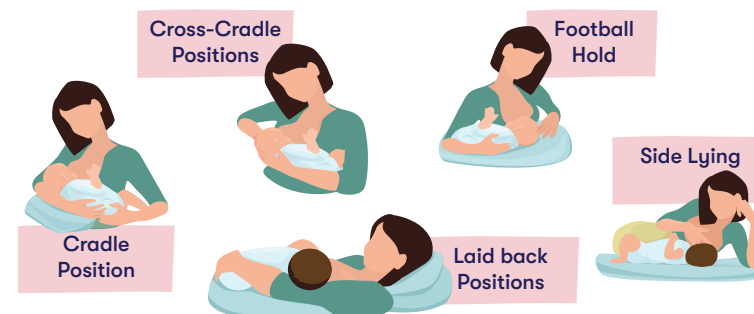


Signs of good feedings

- Baby has rhythmic suck/swallow pattern with occasional pauses
- Baby has audible swallowing
- Baby's body and hands are relaxed
- Baby steadily gains weight after the first week



What are ideal breastfeeding positions?



In caring for your baby, remember to care for yourself. Your wellbeing is crucial not just for you but for your child's growth and happiness. By attending to your physical, emotional, and social needs, you'll be better equipped to enjoy the beautiful journey of parenthood.

2 SLEEP

safe sleep for babies and young children

Sleep is essential for both babies and parents, playing a crucial role in growth, development, and overall well-being. For infants, sleep helps their brain and body to develop, while also supporting immune function and emotional health.

Establishing healthy sleep habits early on can foster better rest for your baby—and for you. While sleep patterns may be unpredictable in the beginning, creating a soothing bedtime routine and a calming environment can help promote restful nights for everyone in the family.

Think of this scenario - It is the first time your baby has slept continuously for 4-to-5-hour, and you wake up completely startled. Realizing your baby has not cried out like usual, you rush over to the crib, gently place your hand on their tummy or in front of their face and wait for reassurance that they are breathing and well. At some point or another, all mothers worry about their baby's safety during sleep. It is a very important concern and needs to be addressed.

So how do you provide secure, safe sleep for your infant? Look at the tips below and see if there are any adjustments you need to make.

- **Always place your newborn on their back for naps and nighttime sleep.**
- **The baby should sleep on a firm surface with taut, fitted sheets.** Babies should never be placed to sleep on soft surfaces or loose-fitting sheets.
- **Don't keep toys, pillows, or blankets in the crib while your baby sleeps.** Crib bumpers are also hazardous for small babies. To prevent unintentional harm, always keep babies in safe, designated spaces and supervise interactions with young children closely.
- **If you want to co-sleep, that's fine. But make sure the baby is beside your bed rather than in it.**
- **Adjust the room temperature between 22 and 24 degrees.** Baby should wear one extra layer than what their parents are wearing.

Remember that rest is essential for both your baby and you. Prioritize sleep whenever possible, as it will help you stay energized and better able to care for your baby.



3 HYGIENE

bath time bonding and care

Bath time offers a wonderful opportunity to bond with your baby. While some parents choose to bathe their little ones daily, bathing every 2-3 days is typically sufficient during the first year.

However, it's essential to wash your baby's face, hands, and neck regularly—at least once or twice a day—and to clean the diaper area thoroughly after each change.

Newborns only require sponge baths until their umbilical cord stump falls off. A sponge bath is similar to a regular bath, but instead of immersing your baby in water, you gently clean them with a damp washcloth.

Bathing Your Baby:

Before you start, make sure you have everything you need within arm's reach. This includes a basin of warm water, a soft washcloth dampened with soap-free water, a dry towel, and any other supplies you might need.

Lay your baby on a flat, comfortable surface - consider padding it with a blanket or a soft towel. Always keep one hand on your baby if they're on an elevated surface to prevent any accidental falls.

Start by gently cleaning your baby's face with the dampened washcloth, taking care not to get water into their eyes or mouth. Afterward, dip the cloth back into the basin of water to clean the rest of the body, finishing with the diaper area.



Umbilical Cord Care:

The umbilical cord stump typically falls off within 7-21 days. Keep the area clean and dry by folding down the diaper to allow air to reach the cord. Never attempt to pull it off. Look for signs of infection such as redness, discharge, or foul odor, and contact your pediatrician if you notice any. Avoid tub baths until the cord has fallen off and the belly button area has healed.

3 HYGIENE

bath time bonding and care

Baby Bathtub Safety Tips:

Use an Infant Tub or Sink: A hard plastic baby bathtub with a sloped, textured surface or a sling will help keep your baby from sliding. Some parents find it easiest to use a sink or bathinette lined with a clean towel. Always be cautious, as sinks can be slippery and have things like faucets or handles sticking out.

Bath time can be a safe, soothing, and bonding experience for you and your baby. As your baby grows older, make bath time fun with safe toys with which they can play in the water. However shallow the bath water is, **never** leave your baby or toddler unattended during a bath...not even for a minute.



Bath time is a great bonding opportunity for parents and babies, so make it a calm, enjoyable routine by ensuring the water is the right temperature and staying close to keep your baby safe and relaxed.

4 PLAY

be a playful parent

All young children love to play! Which is a good thing – considering it is one of the most important ways for children to explore their world and learn.

Newborns only require sponge baths until their umbilical cord stump falls off. A sponge bath is similar to a regular bath, but instead of immersing your baby in water, you gently clean them with a damp washcloth.

Activities such as gentle rocking, tummy time, and massaging help build muscle strength and coordination. These playful interactions not only promote physical and emotional growth but also provide comfort and reassurance, making your baby feel safe and loved. When your baby is under six months, it's important to engage them during awake and alert times, speaking to them, using colorful toys, and gently introducing activities they can understand.

As babies approach the toddler stage, play becomes more interactive and purposeful. Toddlers begin engaging in activities like stacking blocks, imitating actions, and exploring their environment with greater curiosity. During this time, parents can further nurture development by actively participating in play, offering guidance, and creating a safe space for exploration.

Playful interactions with your toddler allow them to explore and learn through activities that are fun and meaningful, promoting emotional security and fostering deeper inter-personal connections.

Simple activities like talking, singing, and reading to them stimulate language skills and help strengthen your bond. While daily routines and chores can often limit time for play, making time for playful parenting is essential.



4 PLAY

be a playful parent

Here are 5 quick and easy ways to incorporate being a more playful parent into your day.

- As you are going about your daily routine, make some time to tickle your toddler! And let them tickle you! Shake the day up by having a game of tickling.
- Start your day by dancing and singing with your toddler, make funny faces and make funny sounds to bring a light-hearted energy into your morning.
- Play hide and seek with your toddler around the house for 10 minutes during the middle of the day.
- While cooking or cleaning in the kitchen, let your toddler play with kitchen spoons, cups, pots or pans creating an interesting musical experience for them.
- While getting dressed in the morning, spend an extra 15 minutes with your toddler playing with the clothes in the wardrobe and getting silly. Your toddler will love the different materials. You can play with accessories like shirts and dresses.



Applying henna to your baby is a beautiful cultural tradition that many parents cherish and may be tempting during occasions like Ramadan and Eid.

Babies can generally get henna when they are a few months old, typically around 6 to 12 months, but it's important to proceed with caution and make sure the Henna is organic and contains only natural ingredients.

When your child feels safe and attached to you, your child is more likely to have the confidence to explore their world. Playing with your toddler strengthens your relationship and encourages your toddler to explore, observe, experiment and solve problems.

5 READING

reading books can foster a love of reading in children

Reading books, talking about pictures, sharing stories, and singing rhymes and songs help your baby's development in many ways.

Doing these activities every day helps your baby get familiar with speech sounds, words, pictures and books. This builds your baby's early language skills and early literacy skills. Reading to your child also fires their imagination and creativity. Apart from this, it strengthens bonding between parent and child.

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Building a Foundation for a Love for Reading

To develop a love for reading, children need to be given many opportunities to practice talking and listening, asking questions, enjoying rhythm and rhyme, hearing different sounds in spoken language, and handling print material and books.

- Read aloud to your child several times a day – even before they are able to say their first word.
- When you are reading to your child, use different voices for different characters in the story.
- Encourage your child to participate actively. Let them point to pictures and words and help turn the pages.
- Have attractive books – with pictures of objects, plants, animals and people – in every room of the house.
- Talk to children and encourage them to communicate, whether it be gurgles from a baby or questions from a 4-year-old.
- Allow children to look through magazines and newspapers.
- Don't be in a hurry for children to start recognizing and reading alphabets, words and numbers; with frequent exposure to books and reading, these are skills they will develop at their own pace.
- Let your children see you reading.



5 READING

reading books can foster a love of reading in children

Reading with children in diverse languages

You can read, sing and tell stories with your child in whatever language you feel most comfortable speaking.

Using a language you are comfortable with helps you to communicate more easily. It also helps to make reading, singing and storytelling more fun for you and your child. Your child will still learn that words are made up of different letters, syllables and sounds, and that words usually link to the pictures on the page.

If you want to introduce your child to a second language (example: English), you can look for dual-language books. Or you could read a book aloud in that language or listen to an audio book and then talk about the story with your child in whatever language feels most comfortable.

Reading aloud is a valuable activity that can enhance language development and foster a love of books in children. It's helpful to address reading aloud separately from other activities like storytelling, singing, and rhyming, as each serves a unique purpose in a child's development. Here are some tips for reading aloud based on age groups:

Infants

0-12 months

- **Tip:** Choose board books with bright images and simple text. Engage with your baby by pointing to pictures and making sounds.
- **Activity:** Hold the book close and use different tones to capture their attention.

Toddlers

1-3 years

- **Tip:** Select books with repetitive phrases and rhymes. Encourage interaction by asking questions about the pictures.
- **Activity:** Incorporate actions or sounds that match the story to make it more engaging.

Preschoolers

3-5 years

- **Tip:** Choose stories with more complex plots and relatable characters. Discuss the story and ask open-ended questions to encourage thinking.
- **Activity:** Allow children to predict what happens next or to express their favorite parts of the story.

Reading to your baby from an early age fosters language development, strengthens your bond, and promotes a lifelong love of books.

6 SAFETY

keeping your child safe at all times

A safe environment is crucial to allow your child to explore the world around them without risk. The following checklist will guide you through adapting your home to make it safe for your little one's adventures.

Newborns only require sponge baths until their umbilical cord stump falls off. A sponge bath is similar to a regular bath, but instead of immersing your baby in water, you gently clean them with a damp washcloth.

Childproofing Checklist

- ☐ Install smoke detectors, safety switches, and power point covers.
- ☐ Ensure that water coming out of your bathroom taps is not too hot to touch.
- ☐ Securely store household poisons and medicines in a cupboard that is at least 1.5m high that has child-resistant locks.
- ☐ Never leave children alone in the bath or near water...even a little water can be dangerous
- ☐ Install safety glass in windows and doors or put shatter-resistant film on windows and doors. Put stickers on glass at eye level.
- ☐ Lock windows. Move chairs and other things away from windows.
- ☐ Attach TVs and other heavy furniture to walls or the floor so they can't fall on your child.
- ☐ Put safety gates at the top and bottom of the stairs and at the entrances to balconies.
- ☐ Store sharp items out of children's reach.
- ☐ Watch out for small objects that could be choking hazards or that your child could stick into their nose, ears or eyes.
- ☐ Keep chains and cords on blinds and curtains shorter than 5cm, or wrap them around cleats at least 1.6m above the floor.
- ☐ Display emergency numbers and safety contacts on your fridge or store in your phone.
- ☐ Prevent dangerous electrical shocks by inserting into sockets blank plastic plugs that cannot be removed by little hands!
- ☐ Swimming pools should be properly fenced and/or covered to prevent drowning accidents.
- ☐ Use non-slip mats in the bathroom and under rugs to prevent slipping.
- ☐ Use stove knob covers and install a stove guard to prevent burns and accidental turning on.
- ☐ Secure toilet lids with safety locks to prevent drowning risks.



6 SAFETY

keeping your child safe at all times

At the same time as your child's physical surroundings are safe, you must also ensure that they are always under your or a trusted adult's watchful eyes.

Taking babies to the desert, particularly in places like the UAE, where the desert is an integral part of the landscape, requires special consideration due to the extreme conditions.

While it's possible to visit the desert with a baby, there are several important rules and guidelines to follow for their safety and comfort:

1. Avoid extreme heat
2. Dress appropriately
3. Bring plenty of water
4. Protect your baby from sand and wind
5. Be mindful of safety
6. Choose baby-friendly activities
7. Consult with a pediatrician



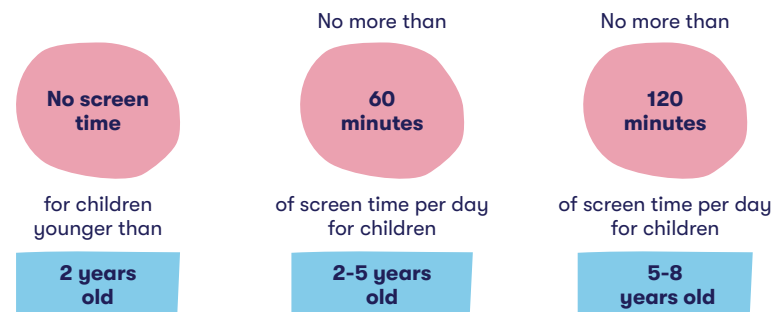
Baby safety is paramount—always supervise your baby, use age-appropriate gear, and baby-proof your home to create a secure environment for exploration

7 SCREEN TIME

human interaction is better!

In today's digital age, screen time has become an inevitable part of daily life, even for young children. While screens can offer educational content and entertainment, it is important to strike a balance.

Experts from global bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Australian Department of Health recommend:



Ages 2 to 4 years

During this phase of development, children are interacting on devices with parents and maybe their siblings too. This is the perfect time to build a bond with your child and create shared experiences. This is less of a safety concern and more about building a positive online experience together, as a foundation for future behavior. It is important to discuss the importance of online safety and what is not appropriate for the little ones to see or hear, with other members of the household including older siblings. Towards the end of this phase children may be allowed a little more independence and be left to explore websites that you have chosen for them, however, no device should be left in the bedroom of the child, as online predators have been known to access children's devices including the camera.



7 SCREEN TIME

human interaction is better!

What can you do as a parent?

- Be aware and involved with your child's screen exposure. Communicate with your child to better understand their habits and interests.
- Set screen exposure limits for children. This should include a breakdown of time spent on screens per day and the content they should be exposed to.
- Lead by example. Reduce your exposure to screens and spend more time interacting with family.
- Using parental control software can manage the time spent and content viewed on your child's device.
- Ensure your child is exposed to beneficial content. For more information on age-appropriate content please visit: www.common sense media.org.
- Report inappropriate/illegal content. Cybercrimes should be reported to the UAE's federal Public Prosecution using 'the My Safe Society' mobile application.

Limit screen time for your baby to encourage healthy development, focusing instead on interactive play and real-life experiences that support their growth.



For more information, please visit
[Child Online Protection Guide - ECA](#) & [Healthy Use of Technology Guidelines - ECA](#)



8 GOING TO THE DOCTOR

even when your baby is not sick

From birth, children must be seen regularly by a doctor. When visiting the doctor, your child will receive necessary vaccinations and health and development checkups. Share with your pediatrician any concerns that you have about your child's well-being.

Vaccinations in early childhood are mandatory in Abu Dhabi. Vaccines protect children from serious and potentially life-threatening diseases, such as measles, polio, and meningitis. Vaccines are a cost-effective way to protect children from diseases. Vaccines have been thoroughly tested and have been proven to be safe and effective. Vaccines are recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and national health authorities, including the UAE health authorities, as a safe and effective way to protect children from diseases. It is important to note that there is no link between vaccines and autism or other developmental disorders.

Regular developmental check ups for your child are recommended on an annual basis – ask your paediatrician about following the Abu Dhabi Well Child Visit Standard during your first visit.



8 GOING TO THE DOCTOR

even when your baby is not sick

Vaccinations schedule as mandated by the UAE government:

										
	After birth	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	18 months	Grade 1	Grade 9	Grade 11	
BCG										
Hep B										
Hib										
DTaP/ DPT/ Tdap		Hexavalent (DTaP)	Hexavalent (DTaP)	Pentavalent (DPT)		Tetavalent (DTaP)	(DTaP)		(Tdap)	
OPV/IPV		(IPV)	(IPV)	(OPV)		(OPV)	(OPV)		(OPV)	
PCV										
MMR										
Varicella										
Rubella								(Female)		
HPV									(Female)	

Legend

- BCG:** Bacillus, Calmette-Guerin (against tuberculosis)
DPT: Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus
DTaP: Diphtheria, Tetanus and acellular Pertussis
Hep B: Hepatitis B
Hexavalent: DTaP, Hib, Hep B and IPV
Hib: Haemophilus, Influenzae Type B
HPV: Human Papillomavirus
IPV: Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine
MMR: Measles, Mumps and Rubella
OPV: Oral Poliovirus Vaccine
PCV: Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine
Pentavalent: DPT, Hib and Hep B
TDap: Tetanus, reduced Diphtheria and reduced Pertussis
Tetavalent: DTaP and Hib

During **developmental assessments**, the doctor will look at how your child is progressing by asking you some simple questions and by talking and playing with your child to see how they respond. You may be asked to fill out a form with questions about your child's development. Based on your answers, the pediatrician will be able to tell you how well your child is doing and/or give you guidance if there is any cause for concern.



9 DANGER SIGNS

in babies and young children

As you navigate the responsibilities of parenthood, knowing when to seek urgent medical help for your child is essential. Below are some critical situations where immediate action is necessary to ensure your child's safety and well-being.

When to call an ambulance

- **Drowsiness or Unresponsiveness:** If your child is severely drowsy, unresponsive, or cannot be woken, it's critical to call an ambulance immediately.
- **Difficulty Breathing:** Should your child have trouble breathing, show unusual breathing patterns, or stop breathing, emergency services are needed.
- **Unusual Skin Color:** Cold hands or feet, pale, blotchy, or blue skin require urgent attention.
- **Seizures:** If your child experiences convulsions or their eyes roll back, it indicates a need for immediate medical intervention.
- **Rash:** A rash that does not fade when pressed and is accompanied by fever could indicate serious conditions like meningitis. In case of these symptoms call an ambulance without delay.



When to go to the emergency department

- **Continuous Crying or Irritability:** Persistent or unusual crying or difficulty settling could indicate a serious issue.
- **Dehydration Signs:** Reduced urine output, especially fewer wet diapers, should prompt a visit to the emergency department.
- **Feeding Difficulties:** If your child refuses to eat or has trouble feeding, they should be seen in the emergency department.
- **Vomiting:** Persistent, severe, or blood-stained vomiting, especially green vomit, necessitates immediate evaluation.



Fever: when to be concerned about serious illness

Immediate hospital visits are necessary if your child has fever:

- For infants 2 months old, take them to the hospital immediately.
- For children 23-36 months old, see a general practitioner, family physician or a pediatrician promptly in the following cases:
 - Go immediately if temperature is more than 40o C
 - If fever persists at or above 39o C for more than 3 days
 - If fever persists at or above 38o C for more than 7 days
- Regardless of the degree if fever is associated with a rash, difficulty breathing, vomiting or change in the level of consciousness



Remember, your prompt response can make a significant difference in ensuring your child's health and safety. Trust your instincts and do not hesitate to seek help when needed.

Emergency Numbers in Abu Dhabi

Police	Ambulance	Fire Department
999	998	997
Child Protection Center	SEHA Pure Health	Family Care Authority
116 111	800 50	800 444

10 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

challenging behaviours in the early years

Sometimes, infants and young children may behave in ways that parents may find frustrating or worrying. This is not unusual.

When your child shows challenging behaviours, it is important to remember:

- There is usually a reason behind the behaviour,
- The reason is not to deliberately provoke or annoy the parent
- Never hit or shout at the child – hitting and shouting is an expression of the parent's loss of control and is likely to reinforce the challenging behaviour rather than change it

In the face of a challenging behaviour, always calm down and then deal with your child in a patient and rational manner.

The following are some challenging behaviours in early childhood.

Excessive crying

The reasons for excessive crying include teething, pain, soreness, nausea, abdominal discomfort & headaches. Since young infants cannot use language, crying is the only means by which they can communicate what they are experiencing

Soothe the baby by rocking, cuddling, and speaking to them in a gentle voice. Remember you cannot spoil a baby when you respond to their crying with love and care. If excessive crying persists, consult your pediatrician.



Temper tantrums

One of the important areas of development in the early years is emotional regulation. When children become overwhelmed by their emotions & do not know how to properly express them, they throw temper tantrums. Temper tantrums are a child's means of expressing their frustration through screaming, crying or physical or verbal aggression. Temper tantrums may be a child's response to not understanding why their parent is saying "no", or not understanding why they cannot get their way the way they want it.

It is best to let a tantrum pass without intervening. Of course, you must intervene if the child is in danger of hurting themselves. Once the tantrum has passed, cuddle your child and speak to them calmly and rationally. Research has shown that children who are around parents who are emotionally available and supportive grow to have better regulated mood and typical emotional competence.

Defiance

As they grow and develop, children begin to assert their independence. This sometimes means that they ignore or reject rules or requests made by the parent. Do not react immediately to defiant behaviour – unless of course the child is in danger of causing harm to themselves or others. Do not react to a child who is being defiant with anger or impatience. Try as much as possible to give your child positive feedback when they behave well. Defiance and testing boundaries are natural parts of a baby's development as they begin to explore their independence.

During toddler phase (roughly ages 1-3) children start to understand what behaviors are effective in getting their needs met and expressing their desires. By responding calmly and consistently and taking the time to understand what your child is trying to communicate, you can help them navigate this toddler phase while fostering a sense of security and trust. This approach not only strengthens your connection with your child but also supports their growing emotional and social development.

Hurting/Biting people

Some children may go through a phase of biting or hurting others, often as a response to feelings of frustration or powerlessness. Such behaviors typically elicit an immediate reaction from the individual who is bitten or hurt. Additionally, self-harm is a concerning behavior that may indicate abnormal brain development. Self-biting & head-banging can occur in children with autism or intellectual disabilities & should be addressed with care.

Here are some ways parents should react:

- **Stay Calm:** React calmly and immediately when biting happens.
- **Set Boundaries:** Firmly say, "No biting" or "Biting hurts."
- **Attend to the Victim:** Focus on the child who was bitten to show biting doesn't get attention.
- **Teach Alternatives:** Encourage using words or gestures to express feelings.
- **Identify Triggers:** Watch for signs like hunger or frustration and address them.
- **Supervise Closely:** Step in early if you see warning signs.
- **Praise Good Behavior:** Reward gentle interactions with praise.
- **Use Positive Reinforcement:** Reinforce non-biting behavior with encouragement.
- **Age-Appropriate Consequences:** Use consistent, age-appropriate consequences.
- **Be Patient:** Understand this behavior often improves as communication skills develop.



Parents may need to use different strategies with children of different ages to address challenging behaviours. In general, children need plenty of opportunities to play, to learn, to converse, to engage with ideas, and to understand their “big” emotions and how to deal with them. Children should be made aware of rules, of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable and these rules should be applied consistently by both the parents as well as other caregivers. But most of all children need love, support, empathy and patience.



Limit screen time for your baby to encourage healthy development, focusing instead on interactive play and real-life experiences that support their growth.



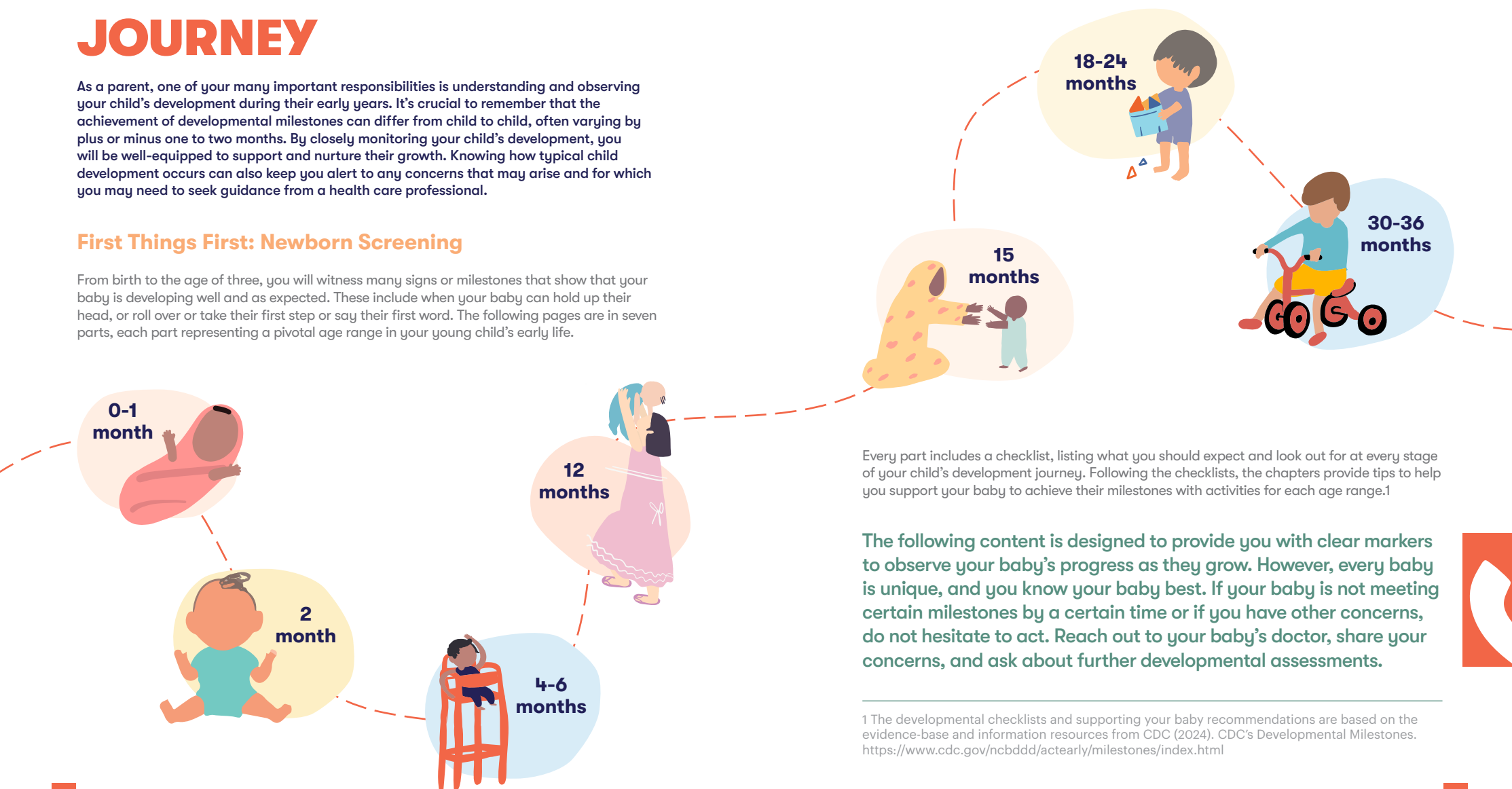
Part 2

YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL JOURNEY

As a parent, one of your many important responsibilities is understanding and observing your child's development during their early years. It's crucial to remember that the achievement of developmental milestones can differ from child to child, often varying by plus or minus one to two months. By closely monitoring your child's development, you will be well-equipped to support and nurture their growth. Knowing how typical child development occurs can also keep you alert to any concerns that may arise and for which you may need to seek guidance from a health care professional.

First Things First: Newborn Screening

From birth to the age of three, you will witness many signs or milestones that show that your baby is developing well and as expected. These include when your baby can hold up their head, or roll over or take their first step or say their first word. The following pages are in seven parts, each part representing a pivotal age range in your young child's early life.



Every part includes a checklist, listing what you should expect and look out for at every stage of your child's development journey. Following the checklists, the chapters provide tips to help you support your baby to achieve their milestones with activities for each age range.¹

The following content is designed to provide you with clear markers to observe your baby's progress as they grow. However, every baby is unique, and you know your baby best. If your baby is not meeting certain milestones by a certain time or if you have other concerns, do not hesitate to act. Reach out to your baby's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about further developmental assessments.

¹ The developmental checklists and supporting your baby recommendations are based on the evidence-base and information resources from CDC (2024). CDC's Developmental Milestones. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

0-1 MONTH

Cuddling, sleeping, feeding. That's what it's all about in the first few months. Your baby's brain is growing and developing as they see, hear and touch the world around them for the first time. Every day you and your baby will learn a little more about each other and as your baby grows, you'll learn more about what your baby needs and how you can meet these needs. Here are some things to look out for at this stage of your baby's development.



Observing your baby's development

What babies can typically do by the end of the first week of life

- ☐ Sustain periods of wakefulness for feeding
- ☐ Make brief eye contact with adult when held
- ☐ Cry because of discomfort
- ☐ Calm to adult's voice
- ☐ Lift their head briefly when on their stomach and turn it to the side
- ☐ Move their arms & legs symmetrically and reflexively when startled
- ☐ Keep their hands in a fist
- ☐ Look at you
- ☐ Follow you with their eyes
- ☐ Have self-comforting behaviors, such as bringing hands to mouth



...and by the end of 1 month

- ☐ Look at you
- ☐ Follow you with their eyes
- ☐ Have self-comforting behaviors, such as bringing hands to mouth
- ☐ Calm when picked up or spoken to
- ☐ Move both arms and both legs together
- ☐ Hold their chin up when on their stomach
- ☐ Open their fingers slightly when at rest
- ☐ Look briefly at objects
- ☐ Quiet or turn to your voice
- ☐ Make brief short vowel sounds
- ☐ Alert to unexpected sound
- ☐ Have different types of cries for hunger and tiredness



Supporting your baby

- Look into your baby's eyes: this is important for bonding with your baby.
- Smile at your baby.
- Play with your newborn.
- Give your baby tummy time. Start with 1-2 minutes several times a day. Always watch your baby during tummy time and always put your baby on their back to sleep.
- Try baby massage.
- Have skin-to-skin contact, this physical connection helps your baby get to know your smell and voice.
- Talk to your baby in a soft and soothing voice

2 MONTHS

Smiling, cooing, and connecting. In these months, your baby's sensory and social development takes off as they begin to recognize faces, follow objects, and respond to voices, especially yours. Each interaction strengthens your bond and enhances their learning. Watch how they start expressing themselves through smiles, sounds, and movements. Here are some developmental milestones to look for at this stage.



Observing your baby's development

What can your baby do at 2 months?

- ☐ Holds head up when lying on tummy
- ☐ Moves both arms and both legs
- ☐ Opens hands briefly
- ☐ Makes sounds other than crying
- ☐ Reacts to loud sounds
- ☐ Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- ☐ Looks at your face
- ☐ Seems happy to see you when you walk up to them
- ☐ Smiles when you talk to or smile at them
- ☐ Watches you as you move
- ☐ Looks at a toy for several seconds



Supporting your baby

- Spend time with your baby: try reading and telling stories, talking and singing. Doing these things every day also helps your baby get familiar with sounds and words. This develops language and communication skills your baby will need when they're older.
- Play together: Try simple activities like talking, reading, singing songs like 'Hamama noodi noodi', and playing games like peekaboo. Here is a link to song options inspired from traditional Emirati songs.
- Make eye contact with your baby: when you get your baby to follow your eyes, it encourages them to turn their head. This builds your baby's neck strength and head control.
- Build up your baby tummy time to 10-15 minutes several times a day. Tummy time builds your baby's head, neck and upper body strength. Your baby needs these muscles to lift their head, crawl and pull themselves up to stand when they're older.



4-6 MONTHS

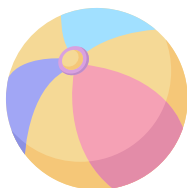
Exploration, emotional growth, and increasing interaction. At this stage, your baby is learning rapidly about communication and emotions. They recognize and react to familiar voices and faces with smiles or laughter. Physically, they're gaining control, holding their head steady, reaching for objects, rolling over and sitting with support. They're exploring more using their hands and expressing curiosity through babbling and physical interaction with objects and people. Here are some developmental milestones to look for at this stage:



Observing your baby's development

What can your baby do at 4 months?

- ☐ Looks at you, moves, or makes sounds to get or keep your attention
- ☐ Holds head steady without support when you are holding them
- ☐ Holds a toy when you put it in their hand
- ☐ Uses arms to swing at toys
- ☐ Brings hands to mouth
- ☐ Pushes up onto elbows/forearms when on tummy
- ☐ If hungry, opens mouth when they see breast or bottle
- ☐ Looks at their hands with interest
- ☐ Makes sounds like "oooo" and "aahh" (cooing)
- ☐ Makes sounds back when you talk to them
- ☐ Turns head toward the sound of your voice



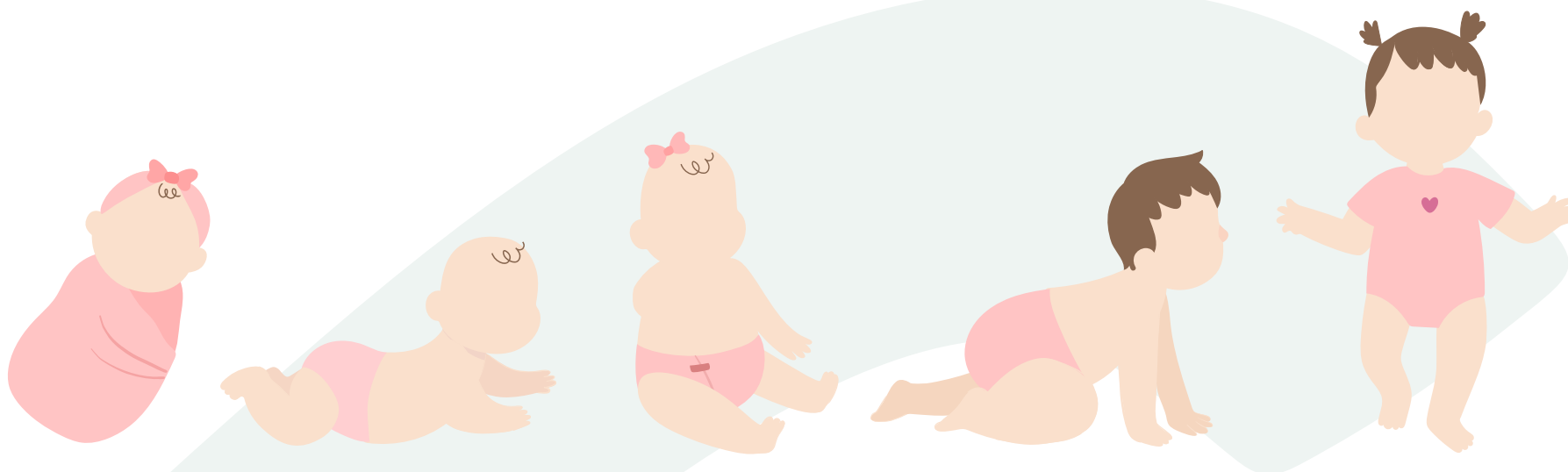
What can your baby do at 6 months?

- ☐ Knows familiar people
- ☐ Likes to look at themselves in the mirror
- ☐ Laughs
- ☐ Rolls from tummy to back
- ☐ Pushes up with straight arms when on tummy
- ☐ Leans on hands to support themselves when sitting
- ☐ Puts things in their mouth to explore them
- ☐ Reaches to grab a toy they want
- ☐ Closes lips to show they do not want more food
- ☐ Takes turns making sounds with you
- ☐ Sticks tongue out and blows
- ☐ Makes squealing noises



Supporting your baby

- Respond positively to your baby. Act excited, smile, and talk to them when they make sounds.
- Talk and sing to your baby.
- “Read” to your baby every day by looking at colorful pictures in magazines or books and talk about them. Respond to them when they babble and “read”. Point out new things to your baby and name them.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby.
- Limit your screen time when you are with your baby.
- Point out new things to your baby and name them.
- Learn to notice and respond to your baby’s signals to know what they are feeling and need.
- Lay your baby on their tummy when they are awake and put toys at eye level in front of them.
- Feed only breast milk or formula to your baby for the first 6 months of life.
- Learn when your baby is hungry by looking for signs, such as putting hands to mouth, turning head toward breast/bottle, or smacking/licking lips.
- Look for signs your baby is full, such as closing their mouth or turning their head away from the breast/bottle.
- Have routines for sleeping and feeding. This will help your baby begin to learn what to expect.



12 MONTHS

Your toddler at 12 months begins to enhance their mobility through rolling and crawling and might even take their first tentative steps. From babbling you may even possibly hear them saying their first words. They also start to engage more meaningfully with their surroundings, showing curiosity about objects and expressing a wider range of emotions. This stage is all about supporting them through interactive play and communication to foster both physical and cognitive growth. Here are some developmental milestones to look for at this stage.



Observing your baby's development

What can your toddler do at 12 months?

- ☐ Plays games with you, like pata-cake
- ☐ Pulls up to stand
- ☐ Walks, holding onto furniture
- ☐ Drinks from a cup without a lid, as you hold it
- ☐ Picks things up between thumb and pointer finger, like small bits of food
- ☐ Puts something in a container, like a toy in a box
- ☐ Looks for things they see you hide, like a toy under a blanket
- ☐ Waves "bye-bye"
- ☐ Calls a parent "mama" or "dada" or another special name
- ☐ Understands "no" (pauses briefly or stops when you say it)



Supporting your toddler

- Your baby probably enjoys finger food, which is also good for developing their fine motor skills. Make sure your baby sits while they're eating – this can help to prevent choking.
- Encourage moving and exploring to build your baby's muscle strength. This is important for more complex movements like pulling to stand and walking.
- You can encourage your baby's talking and imagination by reading together, telling stories, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes. These activities also help your baby learn to read as they get older.
- Spend time playing outdoors to give your baby many different experiences – there's so much to see, smell, hear and touch. Remember to be safe in the sun.
- Give your baby toys that encourage imagination and creativity, like blocks and cardboard boxes. Playing together helps your baby feel loved and secure.
- Respond to 'dada', 'mama' and other words. This encourages conversation and builds your baby's communication skills.
- Help your baby understand what words mean by chatting as you do everyday activities like bathing your baby or changing nappies.



15 MONTHS

This vibrant period focuses on your toddler's burgeoning abilities and emotional connections. They are mastering walking, possibly without assistance, and delight in more complex play like building towers or scribbling. Your toddler is forming deeper bonds, showing affection through hugs and kisses. Emotional development is rich as they experience and express a wider range of feelings and start to engage in pretend play. This stage is all about supporting their independence while providing loving reassurance to foster confidence and curiosity. Here are some things to look out for...



Observing your toddler's development

What can your toddler do at 15 months?

- ☐ Takes a few steps on his own
- ☐ Uses fingers to feed herself some food
- ☐ Tries to say one or two words besides "mama" or "dada," like "ba" for ball or "da" for dog
- ☐ Looks at a familiar object when you name it
- ☐ Follows directions given with both a gesture and words. For example, she gives you a toy when you hold out your hand and say, "Give me the toy"
- ☐ Points to ask for something or to get help
- ☐ Copies other children while playing, like taking toys out of a container when another child does
- ☐ Shows you an object she likes
- ☐ Claps when excited
- ☐ Hugs stuffed doll or another toy
- ☐ Shows you affection (hugs, cuddles, or kisses you)
- ☐ Tries to use things the right way, like a phone, cup, or book
- ☐ Stacks at least two small objects, like blocks



Supporting your toddler

- Be there for your toddler. If you're nearby while your toddler plays and explores, it gives your toddler the confidence to try new things on their own.
- Encourage playing with others for your toddler to learn how to be with other children, make friends and start developing social skills like sharing and taking turns.
- Encourage your toddler to practice everyday skills like feeding themselves, drinking from a cup and taking off a hat.
- Talk with your toddler by naming and talking about everyday things – body parts, toys and household items like spoons or chairs – to develop their language skills.
- Give meaning to your toddler's talking by listening and talking back.
- Encourage your toddler's talking and imagination by reading together, telling stories, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes.
- Make your home safe to support your active toddler move about without getting hurt as they begin to walk and run.



18-24 MONTHS

As your toddler navigates the world, they are embracing new emotions such as excitement and frustration, which can lead to tantrums as they learn to cope. Their growing independence is evident as they start feeding themselves and helping to dress. During this time, they're learning quickly, using new words daily, and enjoying pretend play, which helps develop their imagination and emotional understanding. Here are some developmental milestones to look for at this stage.



Observing your toddler's development

What can your toddler do at 18 months?

- ☐ Moves away from you, but looks to make sure you are close by
- ☐ Points to show you something interesting
- ☐ Puts hands out for you to wash them
- ☐ Looks at a few pages in a book with you
- ☐ Helps you dress him by pushing arm through sleeve or lifting up foot
- ☐ Tries to say three or more words besides "mama" or "dada"
- ☐ Follows one-step directions without any gestures, like giving you the toy when you say, "Give it to me".
- ☐ Copies you doing chores, like sweeping with a broom.
- ☐ Plays with toys in a simple way, like pushing a toy car.
- ☐ Walks without holding on to anyone or anything
- ☐ Scribbles
- ☐ Drinks from a cup without a lid and may spill sometimes
- ☐ Feeds herself with her fingers
- ☐ Tries to use a spoon
- ☐ Climbs on and off a couch or chair without help

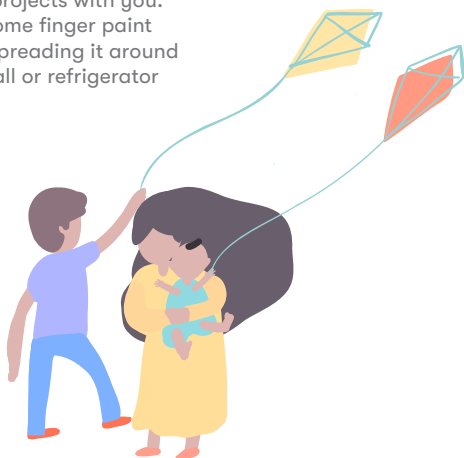
What can your baby do at 24 months?

- ☐ Notices when others are hurt or upset, like pausing or looking sad when someone is crying
- ☐ Looks at your face to see how to react in a new situation
- ☐ Points to things in a book when you ask, like "Where is the bear?"
- ☐ Says at least two words together, like "More milk."
- ☐ Points to at least two body parts when you ask him to show you
- ☐ Uses more gestures than just waving and pointing, like giving them a flying kiss or nodding yes
- ☐ Holds something in one hand while using the other hand; for example, holding a container and taking the lid off
- ☐ Tries to use switches, knobs, or buttons on a toy
- ☐ Plays with more than one toy at the same time, like putting toy food on a toy plate
- ☐ Kicks a ball
- ☐ Runs
- ☐ Walks (not climbs) up a few stairs with or without help
- ☐ Eats with a spoon



Supporting your toddler

- Help your toddler learn how words sound, even if they can't say them clearly. For example, if your toddler says "or nana," say "You want more banana."
- Watch your toddler closely during playdates. Children this age play next to each other, but do not know how to share and solve problems. Show your toddler how to deal with conflicts by helping them share, take turns, and use words when possible.
- Have your toddler help you get ready for mealtime, by letting them carry things to the table, such as plastic cups or napkins.
- Give your toddler balls to kick, roll, and throw.
- Give toys that teach your toddler how to make things work and how to solve problems.
- Let your toddler play dress up with grown-up clothes, such as shoes, hats, and shirts.
- Allow your toddler to eat as much or as little as they want at each meal.
- Have steady routines for sleeping and feeding.
- Ask your toddler's doctor and/or teachers about toilet training to know if your toddler is ready to start. Most children are not able to toilet train until 2 to 3 years old.
- Use positive words when your toddler is being a good helper. Let them help with simple chores, such as putting toys or laundry in a basket.
- Play with your toddler outside.
- Let your toddler create simple art projects with you. Give your toddler crayons or put some finger paint on paper and let them explore by spreading it around and making dots. Hang it on the wall or refrigerator so your toddler can see it.



30-36 MONTHS

At this age stage, your toddler expresses complex feelings like frustration and empathy, often through tantrums or affection. Communication flourishes as they form sentences and engage in storytelling. Play fosters creativity and learning, emphasizing group interaction and independence. Physically, they run, climb, and start simple chores, building confidence. Safety at home remains crucial to support their adventurous spirit. Here are some things to look out for.



Observing your toddler's development

What can your toddler do at 30-36 months?

- ☐ Calms down within 10 minutes after you leave them, like at a childcare drop off
- ☐ Notices other children and joins them to play
- ☐ Talks to you using at least two back-and-forth exchanges
- ☐ Asks "who", "what", "where", and "why" questions
- ☐ Says what action is happening in a picture or book
- ☐ Says first name when asked
- ☐ Talks well enough for others to understand, most of the time
- ☐ Draws a circle, when you show them how
- ☐ Avoids touching hot objects, when you warn them
- ☐ String items together, like large beads
- ☐ Puts on some clothes by themselves, like a jacket
- ☐ Uses a fork



Supporting your toddler

- Give your toddler the chance to play with others.
- Spend time playing outdoor. By being out and about with you, your toddler is allowed to explore the world and test out their growing physical skills.
- Encourage everyday skills like using a spoon and putting on shoes.
- Give meaning to your toddler's talking by listening and talking back to them. If your toddler says 'Mama milk', you might reply by saying 'You want Mum to get you some milk?'
- Read to your toddler to encourage their talking and imagination by reading together, telling stories, singing songs and reciting nursery rhymes.
- Do some cooking with your toddler to increase their interest in healthy food, learn some new words, and start to become familiar with mathematical concepts like 'half', '1 teaspoon' or '30 minutes'. You can give your toddler simple cooking activities, like mixing batter for regag and spread a thin layer of honey or cheese.



APPENDIX

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

As a parent, one of your many important responsibilities is understanding and observing your child's development during their early years. It's crucial to remember that the achievement of developmental milestones can differ from child to child, often varying by plus or minus one to two months. By closely monitoring your child's development, you will be well-equipped to support and nurture their growth. Knowing how typical child development occurs can also keep you alert to any concerns that may arise and for which you may need to seek guidance from a health care professional.

Books for New Parents:

1. **What to Expect the First Year** by Heidi Murkoff
2. A comprehensive guide that covers the first year of a baby's life, from feeding and sleep routines to developmental milestones.
3. **The Happiest Baby on the Block** by Harvey Karp
4. Provides techniques to soothe and calm babies, particularly helpful for parents of newborns.
5. **Bringing Up Bébé** by Pamela Druckerman
6. Offers a unique perspective on parenting based on the author's experience raising children in France, emphasizing the importance of boundaries and routines.
7. **Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child** by Marc Weissbluth
8. An essential read for parents struggling with sleep training, this book provides strategies to help infants sleep through the night.

Articles and Blogs:

1. www.aap.org
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
The AAP provides evidence-based resources on a wide range of topics from infant care to parenting tips.
2. www.babycenter.com
BabyCenter
Offers practical advice on pregnancy, newborn care, and early childhood development.
3. www.thebump.com
The Bump
A trusted resource for parents navigating the first years, covering everything from baby gear reviews to growth milestones.

Websites for Specialized Parenting Needs:

1. www.llli.org
La Leche League
Offers support and information about breastfeeding for new mothers.
2. www.parentingscience.com
Parenting Science
Provides evidence-based research and advice on various aspects of parenting, from discipline to child development.

If you are a parent or caregiver of a child with a developmental delay or disability, this guide will help you access essential information and resources. Early childhood intervention is key to supporting your child's growth during critical years, improving their potential and long-term outcomes. Refer to this guide for further information on services available in Abu Dhabi for children with developmental delays or disabilities.





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