

coming attractions

Grab your phone—the first year of your baby’s life will be full of memorable moments you’ll want to record. We’ve got a sneak peek at all the firsts you have to look forward to.

by JEANINE DETZ

➔ Smiling

You’ve been feeding, burping, and changing your baby for weeks—and gotten little recognition in return. Then one day around the 2-month mark, she’ll give you a genuine grin. “A smile shows that your baby is

connecting with you,” explains Laura Jana, M.D., coauthor of *Heading Home With Your Newborn: From Birth to Reality*. “It’s the start of a lifetime of engaging with the world around her.” In fact, a study at the Universities of Miami and

California, San Diego found that your baby will time her smile to make you respond. That social ability is one of her earliest steps toward talking, because she learns from back-and-forth interactions, says Amelia Bachleda, Ph.D., an

What amazing thing
will he do next?



kids ● milestones

outreach and education specialist for the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Nurture it Do all those things your mother-in-law may worry will spoil your little one, such as picking her up every time she cries. "Meeting all of your baby's needs helps her feel secure and encourages her to interact with other people," says Adiaha Spinks-Franklin, M.D., a developmental-behavioral pediatrician at Texas Children's Hospital, in Houston.

Dealing with delays A lag in this area may be an early predictor of autism spectrum disorder. "If your 3-month-old doesn't smile a lot but seems fine otherwise, your doctor may suggest waiting and watching," says Dr. Jana. "However, you should be referred to a developmental specialist immediately if your baby also doesn't make eye contact or seem aware of other people." Why the urgency? "About 85 percent of a child's brain growth occurs during the first five years, so if you wait six months to intervene, you're missing

out on a lot of opportunity," says Dr. Jana. You can also go to motor.delay.aap.org or zerotothree.org to find your state's early-intervention agency, which can provide free or low-cost evaluation and treatment.

➔ **Rolling Over**

Babies usually reach this early motor milestone between 4 and 5 months, and most can turn in both directions by the half-year mark. "However, there's a range of ages for every motor skill to develop, so your baby's timeline might differ," says Yocheved Bensinger-Brody, Ph.D., assistant professor of physical therapy at Touro College and University System in New York City.

Nurture it Build plenty of tummy time into the day. "Your baby needs to be on his belly in order to strengthen the muscles necessary to move," says Dr. Bensinger-Brody. Begin with one- to two-minute increments, and gradually build up each week until your baby is happily spending at least 30 minutes at a time on his tummy every day. Also don't leave him for too long in a swing or a bouncy seat—both restrict movement, which provides the opportunity to learn motor skills and build strength.

Dealing with delays If your 6-month-old can't roll over, your doctor will likely refer you to a physical therapist, who can determine why your baby is having this difficulty and then show you exercises to help your baby get stronger and practice rolling.

➔ **Crawling**

Many babies are on the move at 7 months, but others don't start until closer to their first birthday. If your baby crawls like a crab, pulls herself forward with her elbows, or has another strange style, that's okay. "What's important is that she's able to use and coordinate all the muscles in her body to get from one place to another," says Dr. Jana.

➔ **keep track**

If your baby hasn't reached a marker or can no longer do a skill she once knew, speak up. (Note that if she's a preemie, she'll probably be on a different timeline.)

	your baby will most likely ...	tell your doctor if your baby doesn't ...
by 4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smile at people Start to babble Follow moving object with eyes from side to side Push up to elbows when lying on belly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold head steady unsupported Smile at people Coo or make sounds Bring things to mouth
by 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to other people's emotions String vowels together when babbling ("ah," "oh," and "eh") Begin to pass things between hands Roll over in both directions (front to back, back to front) Begin to sit unassisted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Babble Try to get things that are within reach Show affection for you Make vowel sounds Roll over in either direction
by 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have favorite toys Copy sounds and gestures Look for things she sees you hide Crawl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bear weight on legs with support Respond to name Move toys from one hand to the other
by 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand you a book when he wants to hear a story Use simple gestures, like waving "bye-bye" or shaking head "no" Say words like "Mama" and "Dada" Pull up to standing and cruising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crawl Say single words Point to things Search for things he sees you hide

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The little guy deserves a round of applause for all those accomplishments!

Crawling also helps develop her depth perception. One study found that babies who had been crawling for about six weeks were more likely to avoid the edge of stairs or a

simulated cliff than babies without as much crawling experience.

Nurture it Raise the stakes during tummy time. "Try putting a toy just out of reach, so your baby has to

stretch and rotate to get it," suggests Susan W. Cecere, vice president of the Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy. This will help strengthen her core and leg muscles.

Dealing with delays "If your baby isn't crawling, it can be reassuring when she's able to do other things that demonstrate normal muscle strength," says Dr. Jana. In fact, some babies skip crawling and go straight to cruising or walking. However, you should still discuss it with your pediatrician, who may suggest a physical therapist if your baby's not mobile by 12 months.

➔ **Talking**

When your baby listens to speech sounds, the areas of his brain involved with language are activated, research has found. "His brain is getting ready to make those sounds and words later on," says Dr. Bachleda. He'll

TOM MERTON/GALLERY STOCK



probably start babbling somewhere between 4 and 6 months and will eventually work his way up to his first words closer to one year.

Nurture it Sing and speak often. Go ahead and use baby talk—your little one is more likely to pay attention because it sounds different from the way grown-ups normally speak to each other. Reading books is also vital to learning language. “When you read, you say lots of words that you may not use on a regular basis,” explains Dr. Spinks-Franklin. “That will foster speech and language development and eventually boost your child’s vocabulary.”

Dealing with delays Don’t panic if your 1-year-old hasn’t said his first word yet—the American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that one out of five children will learn to talk or use words later than other kids their age. However, if your pediatrician

does have any concerns about your baby, she may refer you to a speech and language specialist.

➔ **Walking**

Once your baby is able to pull herself up to stand, it’s only a matter of time before she’s cruising along the couch and then tottering toward you solo. The majority of babies take their first steps by one year, although some won’t get started until a little later.

* Your baby’s first smile shows she’s connecting with you. It’s the start of a lifetime of engaging with the world around her.

Nurture it Walking requires coordination, muscle strength, and experience—but it also takes balance and confidence. Playtime can help your baby develop all of these skills. “Place a basket on the floor, scatter toys around, and encourage your baby to place the items in the basket,” suggests Cecere. This encourages her to go from squatting to standing. You can also place some of her favorite toys in different areas and at different heights to encourage walking and exploration.

Dealing with delays If your child isn’t walking by 18 months your pediatrician may advise an evaluation by a physical therapist. She’ll be able to support your child’s movement development and provide suggestions to get your child moving. And from there, it won’t be long until she’s already on her way to her next milestone. ☺

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