

Milestones in Motion

GUIDING FAMILIES THROUGH FEEDING 2 & 4 MONTH OLDS



Healthy nutrition supports children's growth and development. In WIC, you can help families connect their child's nutrition and feeding behaviors to developmental milestones for their age. Reviewing a milestone checklist with families can count as a nutrition education contact when you include WIC-appropriate guidance on growth and development.

Tracking and discussing nutrition-related milestones helps families support their child and identify concerns early. Developmental milestones are things most children (75% or more) can do by a certain age. Children develop at their own pace, and those born premature or with medical complexities may reach milestones on a different timeline.

AGE

NUTRITION-RELATED MILESTONE

by 4 months

- If hungry, opens mouth when they see breast or bottle.
- Holds head steady without support when you are holding them.
- Brings hand to mouth.



Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Reinforce that feeding is more than nutrition; it's also bonding and development!

Activities for Building Feeding Skills

During the first year, babies need proper nutrition to grow and develop. WIC staff can help families support healthy eating patterns by sharing these key tips:

- **Offer breast milk or formula only.** For about the first 6 months, babies are not ready for other foods, water, juice or other drinks.
- **If breastfeeding, encourage the family to eat a variety of healthy foods.** Flavors from foods can pass through breast milk and help babies accept new tastes later.
- **Watch for hunger cues.** Signs your baby is hungry include putting hands to the mouth, turning the head toward the breast or bottle, or smacking/licking lips.
- **Notice fullness cues.** If your baby closes their mouth, turns away, or loses interest in feeding, they may be full; it's okay to stop feeding.
- **Follow your baby's lead.** Responding to your baby's hunger and fullness cues helps build trust and supports healthy feeding habits over time.
- **Create consistent routines.** Regular sleeping and feeding times help babies learn what to expect and feel secure.



- **Encourage supervised tummy time when the baby is awake.** Place them on their tummy on a flat surface with toys or your face at eye level to help build neck and shoulder strength needed for future feeding. Never leave the baby unattended.
- **Offer safe, easy-to-grasp toys** like rattles or soft books with bright colors. Letting babies hold and explore toys helps strengthen hands and supports future self-feeding skills.

Advice for WIC Nutritionists:

Use the milestone checklists to spark conversation about feeding milestones.

For more information on developmental milestones and resources to share with families, visit www.cdc.gov/ActEarly and <https://asphn.org/learn-the-signs-act-early/>.

Source: Ideas adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).



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