



## Movement: Babies 8 to 12 Months

Once babies reach about 8 months of age, they are starting to become a lot more mobile.

Here are some of the movement milestones you can expect to see your baby working on at this age.

### Sitting up without support

By this age, your baby probably will be sitting without support. Although she may topple from time to time, she'll usually catch herself with her arms. As the muscles in her trunk strengthen, she'll also start leaning over to reach objects.



Eventually she'll figure out how to roll onto her stomach and get back up to a sitting position. If she is not sitting by herself by nine months, let your pediatrician know.

### Flipping over

When lying on a flat surface, your baby is now in constant motion. When on her stomach, she'll arch her neck to look around, and when on her back, she'll grab her feet (or anything else nearby) and pull them to her mouth. She won't be content to stay on her back. She can turn over at will now and flip without a moment's notice. This can be dangerous during diaper changes, so you may want to retire her changing table, using instead the floor or bed, from which she's less likely to fall. Never leave her alone for an instant at any time.

### Crawling, scooting & slithering

As this activity strengthens muscles for crawling, a skill usually mastered between seven and ten months. For a while she may rock on her hands and knees. Since her arm muscles are stronger than her legs, she may even push herself backward. But with time and practice she'll discover she can propel herself forward across the room toward the target of her choice.

A few children never crawl. Instead, they use alternative methods, such as scooting on their bottoms or slithering on their stomachs. As long as your baby is coordinating each side of her body and using each arm and leg equally, there's no cause for concern. The important thing is that she's able to explore her surroundings and is strengthening her body in preparation for walking. If you feel your child is not moving normally, discuss your concern with the pediatrician.

### Encouraging your child to crawl

How can you encourage your child to crawl? Try presenting her with intriguing objects just beyond her reach. As she becomes more agile, create miniature obstacle courses using pillows, boxes, and sofa cushions. Join in the game by hiding behind one of the obstacles and surprising her with a "peekaboo!" Don't ever leave your baby unsupervised, though. If she falls between pillows or under a box, she might not be able to get out. This is bound to frighten her, and she could even smother.

Remember not to leave small objects on the floor, under the couch, or in any location where she can find them and put them into her mouth. Things like balloon fragments, small button batteries ([/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Button-Battery-Injuries-in-Children-A-Growing-Risk.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Button-Battery-Injuries-in-Children-A-Growing-Risk.aspx)), and coins are especially dangerous.

Stairs are another ready-made—but potentially dangerous—obstacle course. Although your baby needs to learn how to go up and down stairs, you should not allow her to play on them alone during this time. If you have a staircase, she'll naturally head straight for it every chance she gets. Place sturdy gates at the top and bottom of your staircase. When you're playing with her on stairs, encourage her to work her way down them backward, a skill she's likely to pick up quickly. Even when she does, however, keep the stairs gated at all times.

Although crawling changes dramatically how your baby sees and interacts with the world, don't expect her to be content for long. She'll see everyone else walking, and that's what she'll want to do. In preparation, she'll pull herself to a standing position every chance she gets—although when she first starts, she may not know how to get down. If she cries for help, physically show her how to bend her knees to lower herself without falling. This may help and may save you many trips to her room when she's standing in her crib and crying because she doesn't know how to sit down.

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## Standing, tottering & starting to walk

Once your baby feels secure standing, she'll try tentative steps while holding on for support. When your hands aren't available, she'll cruise alongside furniture. Just make sure whatever she uses for support has no sharp edges and is properly weighted or attached to the floor.

As her balance improves, she may let go occasionally before seeking support again when she feels herself totter. Her first steps will be shaky. She may take only one before dropping, either in surprise or in relief. Soon, however, she'll manage to keep herself up and moving until you catch her several steps later. As miraculous as it may seem, most children advance from these first steps to confident walking within days.

Although you both will feel excited over this dramatic development, you'll also be unnerved at times, especially when she stumbles and falls. Even if you took pains to provide a safe environment, it's almost impossible to avoid bumps and bruises. Just be matter-of-fact about these mishaps. Offer a quick hug or a reassuring word and send her on her way again. She won't be unduly upset by these falls if you're not. Also, don't be alarmed if she chooses to crawl at times after she has started walking; babies use whatever is easiest and fastest!

At this stage, or even earlier, some parents use a baby walker (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/baby-walkers-a-dangerous-choice.aspx>). Contrary to what the name suggests, these devices do not help children learn to walk. They actually eliminate the desire to walk. To make matters worse, they present a serious tipping hazard when the child bumps into an obstacle, like a small toy or a throw rug. Children in walkers are also more likely to fall down stairs and get into dangerous places otherwise beyond their reach. For these reasons, **the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly urges parents not to use baby walkers.**

A stationary exercise saucer or activity center, with a rotating and bouncy seat but no wheels, is a better choice. You may also consider a sturdy wagon or kiddie push car. Be sure it has a bar to push and is weighted so it won't tip when she pulls herself up on it.

## Your baby's first shoes

As your child begins to walk outside, she'll need shoes. They should be closed-toe, comfortable, and flexible, with nonskid soles, and they should provide room to grow; sneakers are a great choice. Your child does not need wedges, inserts, high backs, reinforced heels, special arches, or other features designed to shape and support feet. These have no proven benefit for the average child and may actually make it harder to walk. Her feet will grow rapidly during these months, and her shoes will have to keep pace. Her first pair of shoes will probably last two to three months, but you should check the fit monthly during this formative period.

Many babies' first steps are taken around their first birthday, although it's normal for children to start walking earlier or later. At first, your child will walk with feet wide apart to improve her shaky balance. During those initial days and weeks, she may get going too fast and fall when she tries to stop. As she becomes more confident, she'll learn how to stop and change directions. Before long, she'll be able to squat, pick something up, and stand again. When she reaches this level, she'll get enormous pleasure from push-pull toys—the noisier the better.

## More information

Is Your Baby's Physical Development on Track? (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Is-Your-Babys-Physical-Development-on-Track.aspx>)

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