

Infant Milestones & Care: Birth to 3 Months

“All right, handsome man.”

Ali and Edward Rueda are enjoying a lot of “firsts” these days: first-time parents, three-month old Matteo’s first smile and first sounds.

“Do you want to play basketball?”

And one sound recently was perhaps their biggest “first” yet.

“I was playing with our dog in the basement. Matteo was watching us. I squeezed the toy; it made this low ‘quack’; and I saw to the side, I heard Matteo laugh for the first time. It was amazing to hear; we never heard anything like that out of him before.”

And while a baby’s first reactions to his or her surroundings are an emotional thrill for parents, they’re an important sign for pediatricians: one of the first in a series of Developmental Milestones.

“Developmental Milestones are guidelines based on research done by the American Academy of Pediatrics, to guide parents on how their child is supposed to be developing, on what to look for and, more importantly, what to look for if they’ve missed a milestone, in order to act upon that.”

Developmental Milestones fall into specific categories: Speech, Motor Skills, and Personal and Social Development.

“The key milestones between birth and three months are, Number one: they’re about interaction. So, a child opening their eyes, a child looking at their parent. A child tracking where their mommy’s moving. As far as motor milestones: I like to see babies on their stomach when they’re awake, and I like to see them learning how to do what I call “baby push-ups.” So, you have your hands up here. I like to see them activating their neck muscles, activating their chest muscles. And really beginning that movement process.”

Other milestones during the first three months include: Stretching legs and kicking when the infant is on his or her stomach; Opening and closing hands; Showing first signs of hand/eye coordination; Turning head toward sound; Imitating some movements and facial expressions. Enjoying playing with others and perhaps crying when it stops.

“Do you have any concerns about his development?”

Your pediatrician will test your baby’s progress at each well-baby visit. But experts caution: not every child will hit every milestone at the exact same time.

“When I discuss with my parents, they get really concerned about milestones, as if it’s written in stone. But I tell them not to think about that. I say think about it as mile markers on the highway that really mark the time. You are fine passing a whole bunch of mile markers, but you don’t want to miss an exit.”

“You’re doing such a good job sitting up, babe.” “Look at you.” “Dada’s barely got you.”

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Still, it is just as important to be as aware of certain things you may *not* be seeing as your baby develops from birth to three months, as what you are seeing. For example: muscle control.

“So, if we’re picking up a child under their arms, they shouldn’t slip through. You should have some sort of ability to, sort of, catch them. A child should be able to support their own weight, in terms of their muscle tone.”

Among the signs of potential developmental delay in these first few months: Doesn’t notice his or her hands by around two months; Doesn’t smile at the sound of your voice by around two months; Doesn’t follow moving objects with eyes by two to three months; Can’t support head by three months; Doesn’t babble by around three to four months; Has trouble moving one or both eyes in all directions.

Pediatricians say that, in many cases, what may seem to be a sign of a delay turns out not to be an issue at all. Still, parents should be vigilant and act on any concerns.

“I would much rather have a parent call and say, “Doctor, I’m really concerned,” and say “You don’t need to be” or say, “I am, too,” and work together as a team, than to have a parent worried and concerned by themselves.”

“You look so nice in this outfit.”

Though it’s been only three months, Ali and Edward know those feelings well. But, like Matteo, they, too, are “developing” and learning to find balance.

“We try to celebrate them, but I think that we also try not to place that much importance on it that I would feel as if, if he didn’t reach whatever it was, that he was a bad kid. Like he’s my kid, and he’s amazing and whatever he does, he’s amazing.”