



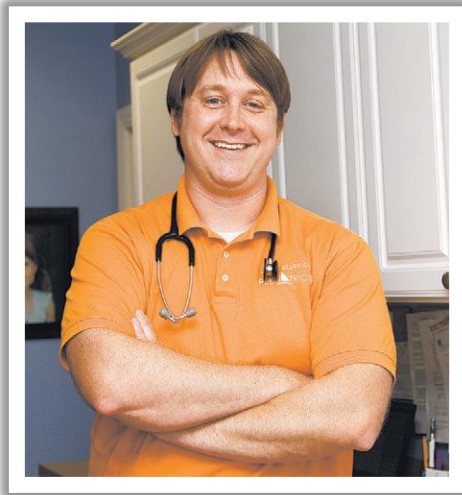
## Milestones offer parents reference points, but each child is unique — and develops at a different pace

Story by Chris Worthy \* Photos by Jaimie Falke

**N**ikki Saxon knows the ropes of babyhood. As the mother of Ilona, 4, and Eloise, 2 months, Saxon has been there and done that, at least in many respects, when it comes to understanding and caring for a baby.

And while she doesn't watch for milestones too closely, Saxon has learned to trust her instincts and ask questions when she needs to know more.

Kyle Guyton, a pediatrician with Lake Murray Pediatrics, said baby milestones are a good point of reference in watching for and discovering possible developmental delays as baby grows, but each child is different and parents should consult their child's pediatrician if there are any concerns.



**Kyle Guyton, a pediatrician with Lake Murray Pediatrics, says he is more concerned about milestones in a broad sense, because children develop at different paces, even within families.**

“In the beginning with my first child, I was getting to know my pediatrician,” Saxon, a Columbia resident, said. “Now I feel more confident and if I have a concern, I can ask. With the second baby, I trust my instincts more. The milestones are more of a guideline.”

Guyton said well checks help pediatricians work with parents to check developmental milestones. Guyton said he is more concerned about milestones in a broad sense, because children do develop at different paces, even within families. He said birth order can even have an impact.

“There is a wide range of normal,” he said. “Certain ages are more gross motor, certain ages are fine motor and certain ages are speech.”

Up until approximately 9 months of age, Guyton said he looks for rolling, sitting and then crawling. After 9 months, babies often turn more to developing fine motor skills, such as picking up objects.

“From 18 months to 2 years, that’s when we hope to see speech flourish,” he said.

Sherry Larson, a program coordinator with Family Connection of South Carolina and the mother of a child with special needs, said she often gets calls from parents who have concerns about their child’s development. Though she isn’t a developmental specialist, Larson can provide parents with



Eloise Saxon, 2 months, plays with a mobile. Although her mom, Nikki, doesn’t watch milestones too closely, she has learned to trust her instincts and ask questions.

an “ages and stages” questionnaire and direct them to BabyNet, South Carolina’s early intervention program for children birth to age 3, for evaluation. She can also match parents with other parents for support, if needed.

Larson said early intervention made a significant difference in her daughter’s development. Shelby, Larson’s daughter, is now 20. She was evaluated by BabyNet at age 1.

“She made progress thereafter and she learned to crawl and walk and run,” Larson said. “Getting started early was critical. It also really helped me as a mom to understand why things were different for her and what I could do to help.”

Guyton said parents should be careful not to chart a child’s progress based on that of an older sibling or a friend.

“The worst thing you can do is compare,” he said. “We have time frames where, if we aren’t seeing expected behavior, we need to look into it. Particularly for first-time parents, the most important thing is to ask.”

Saxon said she has noticed that time seems to pass more quickly now that she is watching two little people grow and change. She urges other parents to get comfortable with their health-care providers — and their own judgment.

“It’s amazing how fast it happens,” she said. “Get a good relationship with your pediatrician and know they are there to help you. Trust that you are going to know if something isn’t right. Know your baby and enjoy the milestones as they happen because they come quicker and quicker.”\*

# Baby milestones

What happens when?  
Here's a look at baby's first year



Compiled by Chris Worthy

The Medical University of South Carolina provided the information in these milestones.

## Birth to 3 months of age...

**Weight:** Average gain of about 1½ to 2 pounds each month

**Height:** Average growth of more than 1 inch each month

**Head size:** Average growth of about one-half inch each month

### Hearing skills: A child should

- react to loud sounds with startle reflex;
- be soothed and quieted by soft sounds;
- awoken by loud voices and sounds;
- smile in response to voices when spoken to; and
- seem to know your voice and quiet down if crying.

### Gross motor skills: A child should

- kick legs back and forth;
- hold head erect when on her belly; and
- turn head from side to side when placed on abdomen.

### Fine motor skills: A child should

- open and close hands;
- hold, then drop, a rattle or other object;
- look at mom's and dad's faces;
- look at hands;
- follow light, faces and objects;

- listen to sounds;
- move arms, legs, body in rhythm with another's voice;
- follow a moving object with eyes back and forth and up and down; and
- activate arms upon seeing a toy.

### Speech and language skills: A child should

- smile in response to others;
- respond to social contact, may coo;
- vocalize pleasure and displeasure sounds (giggles, cries or fusses);
- make noise when talked to; and
- fix gaze on objects and people for short periods.

### Feeding skills: A child should

- have good suck-swallow-breath coordination when nursing or bottle feeding.

### At the end of 3 months a child should

- raise head and chest when placed on abdomen and prop on forearms;
- begin to reach hands to objects, may bat at hanging object with hands;
- turn head to you when you speak;
- roll from side to back;
- bring hands or objects to mouth; and
- keep hands open 50 percent of the time.
- like different colors.
- dislike being left alone.

## From 4 to 6 months...

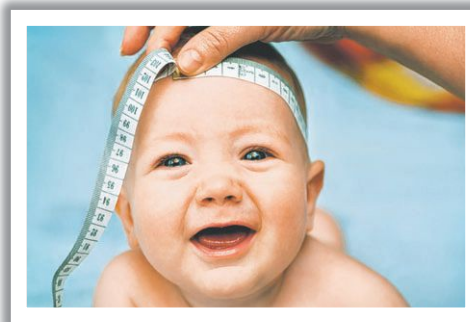
**Weight:** Average gain of 1 to 1¼ pounds each month; by 6 months of age has doubled birth weight

**Height:** Average growth of one-half to 1 inch each month

**Head size:** Average growth of about one-half inch each month

### Hearing skills: A child should

- look or turn toward a new sound;
- respond to changes in tone of voice;
- enjoy rattles and other toys that make sounds;
- turn her head in the direction of a voice or noise;
- become scared by a loud voice or noise; and
- possibly recognize her own name.



### Gross motor skills: A child should

- maintain head control when pulled to a sitting position;
- be able to prop up on wrists;
- push up on hands while on stomach;
- grab feet and toes when lying on back;
- roll from back to side;
- lift head to assist when pulled to sit;
- be able to briefly bear weight on her legs when placed in a standing position;
- sit with support, back is rounded; and
- make “swimming” motions with arms and legs when placed on abdomen.

### Fine motor skills: A child should

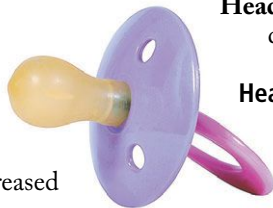
- balance head well;
- maintain head control while in supported sitting position;
- reach and grasp for objects;
- use her entire hand to grasp;
- bang objects during play;
- hold objects placed in her hand; and
- move object from one hand to other.
- touch, hold and taste objects.
- bring hands together.

### Speech and language skills: A child should

- imitate her own voice;
- laugh;
- begin to repeat sounds (such as ooh, aah and ba-ba) at 5 months;
- babbles at 6 months of age;
- makes “raspberries”;
- coo and gurgle by herself, at toys and others; and
- laugh and make funny noises and squeal.

### Feeding skills: A child should

- be able to be introduced slowly to baby foods and foods of increased thickness; and
- be introduced to a sippy cup.



### At the end of 6 months a child should

- roll from back to front and front to back;
- nap two to three times a day, for one to three hours each (on average);
- begin to sleep longer at night (six to eight hours consistently);
- recognize familiar things and people;
- possibly show displeasure when object or person goes away;
- begin to understand cause and ef-



- fect (the sound a toy makes when it is dropped); and
- have full color vision and be able to see at longer distances.

### From 7 to 9 months...

**Weight:** Average gain of 1 pound each month; boys usually weigh about one-half pound more than girls; 2½ times the birth weight by 8 months of age

**Height:** Average growth of about one-half inch each month

**Head size:** Average growth of about one-quarter inch each month

### Hearing skills: A child should

- respond to her own name, the word “no,” the telephone ringing and someone’s voice, even when not loud;
- understand words for common things (cup, shoe) and sayings (bye-bye);
- make babbling sounds, even when alone;
- look at things or pictures when someone talks about them;
- pay attention to conversations; and
- appear to understand some words.

### Gross motor skills: A child should

- roll easily from back to front;
- sit leaning forward on hands at first, then unsupported;
- stand with the support of furniture;

- cruise along furniture;
- use whole hand gestures to communicate;
- bounce when supported to stand;
- get on hands and feet and rock back and forth;
- may creep, scoot or crawl — backward first, then forward;
- begin to pull up to stand;
- reach for and grasp objects using whole hand;
- bang toys on a table;
- be able to hold an object in each hand;
- possibly hold a bottle;
- learn to drink from cup; and
- put things into her mouth.

### Fine motor skills: A child should

- transfer objects from one hand to another;
- grasp with the first two fingers and thumb;
- begin to grasp small objects;
- actively explore toys in play; and
- look for dropped toys.

### Speech and language skills: A child should

- consistently babble consonant sounds;
- try to imitate sounds;
- say da-da and ma-ma nonspecifically;
- start to respond to requests such as “come here”;
- look at objects when labeled;
- play peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake;
- understand what “no” means, although

- she may not always obey; and
- make attention-getting sounds such as a cough or snort.

### Feeding skills: A child should

- be introduced to finger foods and mashed table foods;
- have increased lip closure;
- feed herself food or cookies; and
- show interest in and dislike of foods.

### By the end of 9 months a child should

- pull up on furniture to stand, holding on for support;
- make stepping movements;
- begin teething, usually starting with the two center front teeth in the lower jaw, then the two center front teeth in the upper jaw;
- nap usually twice, sometimes three times a day, for one to two hours each (on average);
- begin to awaken during the night and cry;
- possibly prefer her mother over others;
- enjoy seeing self in mirror;
- respond to changes in the emotions of others;
- may have some stranger anxiety;
- begin to understand object permanence and can uncover a toy after seeing it covered;
- may follow one-step commands with a sign to demonstrate (i.e., “get the ball” while a parent points to a ball).

## From 10 to 12 months...

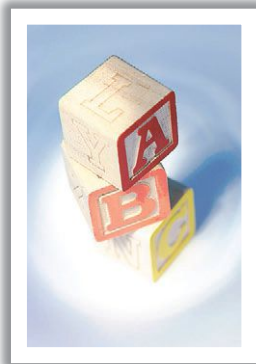
**Weight:** Average gain of about 13 ounces each month; birth weight is tripled at 1 year of age

**Height:** Average growth of about one-half inch each month

**Head size:** Average growth of about one-quarter inch each month

### Hearing skills: A child should

- play with her own voice, enjoying the sound and feel of it;
- gesture toward or look at familiar objects or people when



- asked to do so;
- respond to/understand “no”; and
- follow one step commands when shown by a gesture.

### Gross motor skills: A child should

- be able to get from a sitting to crawling or prone (lying on stomach) position;
- crawl on her hands and knees;
- pull herself up to stand;
- sit back down from a standing position;
- stand alone for a few seconds without support;
- cruise or walk around holding onto furniture;
- hold arms out to be picked up;
- walk holding on to a finger or hand; and
- walk two or three steps without support.

### Fine motor skills: A child should

- be able to put objects in and out of a container;
- be able to have controlled release of objects;
- use the tip of her index finger and thumb to grasp small objects;
- use one hand more than the other;
- enjoy looking in mirrors;
- play ball, receiving and returning a rolled ball;
- turn pages in a book, often several at a time;
- bang objects together; and
- make a crayon mark.

### Speech and language skills: A child should

- have vocalization during play;
- respond to music;
- imitate simple words and sounds and possibly use a few single words meaningfully;
- follow simple commands;
- use simple gestures to communicate — such as shaking head “no”;
- enjoy games such as peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake;
- imitate sounds and some speech;
- say two words other than “mama,” “dada”; and
- imitate animal sounds in response to questions (i.e., “what does the cow say?”).

### Feeding skills: A child should

- exhibit improved lip closure;



- be able to pick up food and small objects with fingers;
- feed herself finger foods; and
- drink from a sippy cup.

### By 1 year of age, a child should

- know the concept of object permanence (i.e., a partially hidden object under a blanket is still there);
- possibly have four to six teeth;
- take two naps a day and be able to sleep up to 12 hours at night without a feeding;
- possibly wake up at night looking for parents;
- say “dada” and “mama” and know who these persons are;
- recognize familiar objects and pictures in books, and may point to some objects when asked what they are;
- follow one-step commands with the parent having to show the child how to do it;
- show preferences for people and toys, and may have a favorite toy or blanket;
- be curious and want to explore;
- move to music;
- give and take objects during play;
- take items of clothing off;
- climb into your lap;
- untie shoes;
- drop objects on purpose for others to pick up;
- point and gesture for objects and actions;
- possibly pretend simple activities, such as cleaning or drinking from a cup;
- possibly have fear and anxiety of strangers;
- wave bye-bye; and
- cry or show emotions when told “no.”