

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN FROM 7–24 MONTHS OF AGE



## STRENGTHENING REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN'S HEALTH STATUS

IN SOUTHERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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Co-funded by  
the Health Programme  
of the European Union



COMMISSARIAT  
FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRATION  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Life on the move leads to physical exhaustion and psychological trauma, and that in these circumstances many parents and children need health care and protection.

For this reason, this educational material with key advice on child health, nutrition and development, as well as information about the key abilities and skills expected to be developed by children at specific ages, is meant to provide parents with a single point of reference for their child's progress.

If any problems occur upon entry into or during stay in the country, parents should seek assistance from specialised services.



## IMMUNISATION CALENDAR

Timing	Vaccines
At birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against hepatitis B – first dose;</li> <li>▶ against tuberculosis;</li> </ul>
At one month of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against hepatitis B – second dose;</li> </ul>
At two months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b disease – first dose;</li> <li>▶ against Streptococcus pneumoniae – first dose;</li> </ul>
At 3.5 months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b disease – second dose;</li> <li>▶ against Streptococcus pneumoniae – second dose;</li> </ul>
At 5 months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b disease – third dose;</li> <li>▶ against Streptococcus pneumoniae – third dose;</li> </ul>
At 6 months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against hepatitis B – third dose;</li> </ul>
<b>At 9 months of age (no immunization in this age)</b>	
Between 12 and 15 months of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against measles, mumps, rubeola, against Streptococcus pneumoniae – revaccination;</li> </ul>
At one and a half years (18 months) of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b disease – first revaccination;</li> </ul>
<b>In the third year (between 24 and 36 months of age) (no immunization in this age)</b>	
Before entering primary school (6-7 years of age)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ against measles, mumps, rubella – revaccination;</li> <li>▶ against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio – second revaccination;</li> </ul>

## HEALTH

Plan to make appointments for preventive paediatric examinations and vaccination according to the Immunisation Calendar.

### Newborn (first month)

- ▶ Visiting nurse's visit to the newborn and postpartum woman (five times for all children, and as per paediatrician's orders for children at risk)
- ▶ Preventive examination by a paediatrician in the field (once within 15 days of birth, only for children at risk)

### Infant (from the second month to the end of the first year)

- ▶ Preventive examination (six times for all children, and as per paediatrician's assessment for children at risk)
- ▶ Ultrasound examination for early detection of hip dysplasia
- ▶ Preventive dental examination
- ▶ Visiting nurse's visit to the family (two times for all children, and four times for children with disabilities)

### Second year of life

- ▶ Preventive examination (two times, at 13 to 15 months of age and at 18 to 24 months of age)
- ▶ Dental examination
- ▶ Visiting nurse's visit to the family (once)

Take the opportunity to talk to the paediatrician about the child's development, preparation for starting nursery if applicable, as well as any concerns you may have.

Request him/her to administer a development assessment instrument.

## NUTRITION

### From 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> month

Continue breastfeeding the child, giving him/her vitamin D3 and introducing new foods in his/her diet: vegetables, cereals, fruit, meat and egg yolk. Feed the child attentively and patiently, encourage him/her to try new tastes, but do not use force. It is normal for the child to get messy while being fed. Give new foods to the child during the morning hours. Start with a small quantity of food, then increase it gradually. Introduce the next new food 3-5 days after introducing the previous one. Some foods should be offered to the child multiple times (10-15 times), to see if the child will accept them. Help the child learn how to use a mug. The child should have 3 main meals and 1-2 snacks. Do not force the child to eat and to finish the entire meal prepared.

**From 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> month**

Organise joint meals. Cut the food in order to encourage the child to chew. Be patient with the child while he/she is learning to feed him/herself with his/her fingers. If he/she wants to feed him/herself with a spoon, let him/her do it, even though he/she will spill a lot of food.

**From 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> month**

Seat the child to eat at the table with the adults. He/she should have three main meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner, and two snacks between the meals. Respect the child's eating pace and do not rush him/her or force him/her to finish everything that you have prepared. Try to make sure that all the necessary food groups are present in the child's diet: cereals, vegetables, fruit, meat, milk and dairy products, fish, eggs and legumes. Do not let solid pieces of food, e.g. peanuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, seeds, pieces of hard cheese and cured meats, be offered to the child, as they might enter his/her airway.

**From 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> month**

Let the child feed him/herself, but also let him/her continue to pick up food with his/her hand. This allows the child to explore food quality, its taste, smell and consistency, and to eat at a pace appropriate to him/her and develop independence. Have in mind that the child copies you.

## **CARE AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT – GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Maintain a daily routine – this is very important for the child.

Arrange the space at home to make it safe for the child's movement, in order to use the word “no” as little as possible. Only say “no” when there is the danger of your child hurting him/herself or others. Refer to desirable behaviour (e.g. say “It is time to sit down now” rather than “Don't stand up”).

You are the child's role model, so do things the way you would like the child to do them. When using the word “no”, be consistent. Do not shout at the child, hit him/her or give him/her overly long explanations. A break of 30 seconds to one minute can shift the child's attention to another activity.

Time before going to sleep should be spent in calming activities, cuddling and warmth. When the child wakes up during the night, come near him/her, try to comfort and calm him/her in his/her bed, without picking him/her up.

Do not use the TV, computer, video games and mobile phone in the child's presence, especially not as a means of calming, distracting or entertaining the child.

If you are preparing the child to start nursery, give him/her time to adjust gradually. Allow him/her to take his/her favourite toy to give him/her additional security.

Provide the child with a safe environment with a predictable daily schedule to allow him/her to continue exploring freely.

## CARE AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT – HOW PARENTS SUPPORT THE CHILD’S DEVELOPMENT

### From 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> month

Pay attention to how the child reacts to new situations and people. Make sure the adjustment is gradual, to make the child feel comfortable and happy. Name the feelings you observe in the child. Talk, read, sing, play music to the child every day. Name and describe objects that the child looks at or points to, as well as what you do with the child. Be consistent in your actions. Repeat the sounds pronounced by the child. Play hiding games and hide-and-seek with the child. Give the child a toy to put into and take out of a container. Put the child near objects that he/she can pick up safely. Allow the child to move freely around the room, and follow him/her so that he/she knows you are near.

### From 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> month

Respect the child’s shyness in the presence of strangers and allow him/her to get to know them gradually. Let the child see that you are near even when he/she moves around. Play give-and-take games with the child. Talk to the child in all situations: during feeding, bathing or walk. Announce to him/her what you will do next. Repeat the words and sounds that the child pronounces and ask him/her to repeat them after you. Read books to the child and play music or nursery rhymes to him/her. Let him/her turn the pages in picture books. Teach him/her to point to body parts. Hide a small toy and encourage the child to look for it. Allow him/her to explore different textures of objects with his/her hands, to bang objects one against another, to put them in containers and take them out, and to pick up crumbs from the table. Give the child a pencil or crayon to scribble on paper, a scarf or cloth to wave around, a spoon and plastic bowl to play with. Teach the child what is cause, and what is effect: roll a ball back and forth, push a toy car and toy truck, put blocks in a container and take them out of it. Allow the child to practice standing up, falling, sitting, holding onto something and hopping independently.

### From 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> month

Name and describe the child's feelings, e.g.: "You are happy when you see Daddy coming." Encourage compassion in the child, e.g. when another child is sad, tell him/her: "The child is sad, go hug him/her." Read something to the child every day and talk about pictures.

When you speak, use short and simple sentences. Ask simple questions. Encourage the child to play pretend games and make sure he/she has toys for this (doll, telephone). Play with blocks, ball, jigsaw puzzles, books and toys that will teach him/her about cause and effect (in order for him/her to develop problem-solving abilities). Name body parts and pictures of figures in books, as well as what you do together. Show the child how to make soap bubbles, how to catch them and pop them with his/her forefinger. Play with a ball together. First take turns rolling it, and later ask the child to kick or throw it. Make or purchase toys that the child can push or pull safely (interactive toys).

### From 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> month

Describe the feelings that the child shows or that you encounter in everyday life and in stories. Read to the child every day and talk about pictures using simple words. Ask him/her simple questions. Teach the child to name body parts, animals and items for everyday use. Play animal sound games. Sing nursery rhymes together. Encourage the child to use words instead of gestures. If the child cannot say the whole word, give him/her the first letter. Encourage the child to play with blocks and to build and demolish structures. Give him/her toys to push and pull. Give the child paper and pencil or crayons to use. Draw together and explain to him/her what you are doing and drawing. Play with a ball together. First take turns rolling it, and later ask the child to kick or throw it. Take the child outdoors, to run and walk on the grass, to climb, but make sure it is in your presence.

## CARE AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT – ABILITIES AND SKILLS ACQUIRED BY THE CHILD

### From 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> month

Knows household members, expresses joy at seeing them, and distinguishes between them and strangers. May be afraid of strangers. Becomes agitated when the parent leaves the room and relaxes when the parent returns. Reacts to hearing his/her name. Begins to understand the meaning of “no”. Babbles, makes syllables and makes many different sounds. Makes eye contact. Repeats, copies the gestures and sounds made by adults (waves his/her head, offers his/her arms to ask to be held). Starts pointing to objects with his/her hand. Follows a falling object. Looks for a hidden object. Still puts objects in his/her mouth. Smoothly shifts objects from hand to hand, shakes them. Picks up small objects. Can sit down unassisted and stay seated without support. Gets up into the crawling position. Some children already crawl. Pushes him/her self up and tries to stand up.

### From 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> month

Exhibits shyness and nervousness in communication with strangers. Cries when separated from parents. Has a favourite toy. Spontaneously seeks to share interests or pleasures with adults and to play “me to you, you to me”. Understands his/her name, names of familiar persons, names of objects in his/her surroundings, everyday activities and the word “no”. Repeats syllables, and some children can already pronounce meaningful words, e.g. Mommy, Daddy. Understands when you tell him/her: “Bring the ball.” Copies and uses gestures, says “ta-ta”, waves his/her head for “no”. Looks for a small hidden toy. Points with his/her hand to the object that he/she wants. Curiously explores toys: shakes, bangs, throw them, pays attention to details. Picks up small objects with his/her fingers, feeds him/herself with his/her fingers. Puts objects in a box and takes them out of it. Sits down unassisted and maintains balance in a sitting position. Rises to an upright position by holding onto furniture and starts walking beside furniture. Helps with getting dressed.

### From 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> month

May still exhibit fear from strangers and unfamiliar situations. Follows a simply worded instruction without pointing. Pronounces meaningful words. Says a few individual words. Tries to copy the gestures made by adults and words pronounced by them. Uses a meaningful gesture in response to a request (“no”, “ta-ta”). Knows how everyday items are used: toothbrush, spoon, telephone. Points his/her forefinger at what he/she is interested in. Offers items that he/she is interested in to others in order to be included in play. Can point to at least three body parts. Plays pretend games (e.g. feeds a doll). Scrawls on paper, floor, sand with a pencil or crayons on his/her own. Opens hardcover picture books. Puts objects in a container and takes them out of it. Stands, moves beside furniture, walks on his/her own. Can pull toys while walking.

## From 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> month

Shows different feelings: fear, anger, guilt, joy, compassion. Becomes increasingly independent, resists orders, gets angry, wants to control others, argues, gives orders, defends his/her belongings. Copies the behaviour of adults and older children. Plays beside other children and gradually begins to include them in play. Recognises the names of close family members and names of everyday items. Understands and follows more than one simple instruction. In communication with people, uses a combination of words and gestures. Says a sentence of 2 to 4 words. Links sounds to animals. Parts of the child's communication are also understood by people who are not with him/her every day. Plays simple pretend games. Finds objects hidden under two and three covers. Uses toys meaningfully. Begins to sort and pair items: animal with animal, sock with sock. Scrawls on paper on his/her own, draws or traces lines and circles. Builds 4-block-high towers. Uses one hand more than the other. Can stand on tiptoes. Runs, jumps, kicks a ball and throws it over his/her head. Walks up and down stairs while holding onto something.

## WARNING SIGNS

Share any concerns about the child's development with the visiting nurse or paediatrician. Inform them if you notice that the child:

### From 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> month

Cannot support his/her own weight on his/her feet while holding onto something; does not sit without support; does not begin to babble and repeat sounds: ba-ba, ma-ma, da-da; does not react to his/her own name; does not recognise household members; does not look in the direction you point to; does not shift a toy from hand to hand.

### From 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> month

Does not crawl; does not stand while holding onto something; does not look for objects you have hidden; does not point to objects; has not learned the usual gestures: waving "ta-ta", waving his/her head when expressing objection.

### From 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> month

Does not show objects to others; cannot walk; does not know the purpose of everyday items; does not copy adults; does not pronounce at least 6 words; does not care if the parent is leaving or returning; loses the skills he/she already acquired.

### From 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> month

Does not know how to use everyday items; does not copy adults' words and activities; does not follow simple instructions; does not use two-word combinations; does not walk steadily; loses the abilities he/she already acquired.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND CONDUCT



- ✓ Make sure to remove small objects, under 2.5 cm, e.g. marbles, paperclips, needles, coins or medications, out of the child's reach.
- ✓ Cover all power sockets and make sure all cables are properly isolated.
- ✓ Do not leave heavy or hot items on the table, if it is covered by a tablecloth that the child can pull.
- ✓ Keep all hazardous substances (cleaning agents for objects and premises, medications and other toxic chemical agents) in elevated and locked places, out of the child's reach.
- ✓ Never leave the child alone, especially not near water or heating devices. The child should be within your arm's reach all the time. Never leave the child alone near a filled bath tub, pool, lake or other open water surface. Also, do not leave the child alone, without adult supervision, in the home or yard, and especially not in the proximity of cars or moving machinery.
- ✓ Move large pieces of furniture away from windows so that the child cannot access windows.
- ✓ Keep alcoholic beverages out of the child's reach and make sure you empty any glasses in which there is leftover drink. Also, remove matches and lighters out of the child's reach.
- ✓ Do not keep a pistol at home. If you must have a weapon, keep it in conformity with the prescribed procedure.
- ✓ Children up to the age of three should be transported in a safety seat or basket, as appropriate, except in public passenger transport vehicles.

This leaflet is adapted version of original material developed in cooperation with the Pediatric Association of Serbia and supported by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development and Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs.

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