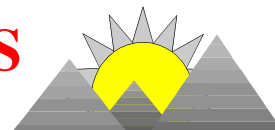


G R E A T B E G I N N I N G S

A Series for Parents of Young Children



3 MONTHS

Talk, Talk, Talk...

If you respond to your child's sounds—even when he is jabbering and cooing—he'll probably learn to talk sooner. He'll also learn to value the good things that happen when two people talk with each other warmly. When talking, get down to the child's level or prop the child safely in a baby seat and look into his eyes.

Let the baby join in household activities. Tell her what you are doing and let her see. It will help to talk to her in complete sentences. For example: "After I fold these clothes, we're going to take a walk."

Your baby doesn't use words yet, but he will understand a universal language—body language. This is a language that doesn't need words. You can tell your baby you love him by giving him a hug, singing a song, or gently rocking him to music. You will find that he talks back to you in the same way. He will give you a smile, a giggle, a coo or a hearty chuckle. You don't need words to tell your baby you care.

What's It Like To Be 3 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I hold my head and back pretty straight when you support my body.
- I lift my head, lean on my elbows, arch my back

and rock when I'm on my stomach.

- I move my arms and legs a lot.
- I push with my arms and legs when I am held.
- I touch my face with my hands.
- I grab at things, but sometimes I miss.

How I Talk

- I coo simple sounds, like ooh, ah, ae.
- I answer sounds I hear by gurgling, cooing, and squealing.
- I don't cry as much as before. Have you noticed?

How I Respond

- I react with my whole body to familiar faces.
- I get excited when I see people I know, or when I see my bottle.
- I stop sucking to hear sounds. Then I look and suck at the same time.
- I follow sounds with my eyes.
- I like listening—talk to me in simple sentences.

How I Understand

- I'm beginning to find out that I am a person.
- I'm beginning to show that I have a memory.
- I recognize different family members.

How I Feel

- I love being cuddled.
- I don't like being left alone.

Social Development

Your child may be able to laugh (or come close to real laughing sounds) during this month. Baby is probably responding to your laugh by this time also. In fact, your child is becoming aware that there are many different people around her.

She's probably turning her head to follow objects, voices and music these days. Your child's best social skill may be saying “thank you” baby-style. When someone does something nice for your child, she may show her delight by smiling and wriggling all over.

Physically, emotionally and intellectually, babies grow and develop at their own rates. If you are concerned that your baby may be developing too slowly in some area, discuss it with your doctor at the next visit.

Babies are small wonders with their own special gifts, temperaments and personalities. The ages and stages children go through can vary tremendously from one child to the next. By respecting the specialness of each child, parents can help children develop strong and healthy self concepts.

Games Babies Play

Getting-the-Feel-of-Things: A Using-the-Senses Game

Purpose of the game:

- Teaches how to tell the difference between things through looking, feeling, tasting, smelling and hearing.
- Encourages your baby to explore the world by using different body movements—for example, banging, mouthing, dropping and rubbing.
- Encourages your baby to examine different objects when alone.

How to play:

1. Choose various harmless objects from around the house with different shapes (square, round, hard, soft, fuzzy, long, short, sticky).
2. Show the objects one at a time and let your baby examine them.
3. Watch the movements your baby makes—she will treat each object differently. She is learning to change her body movements to fit the object she is examining.

More and More Movement

Your infant's movement of kicking and waving the arms and legs are all related to being happy and content. This is your baby's way of expressing delight. Reward and encourage this with warm touches, smiles and happy talk.

Those waving arms might really enjoy batting at objects like mobiles. Baby will love them if they are made of brightly-colored, different-textured, lightweight objects. Be sure that all objects are too big to swallow and that they have no rough or sharp edges. Before you know it, the random batting will turn into reaching—then grasping and then pulling down objects and putting them into her mouth.

Be extra sure that you have safe toys!

A Special Note for Fathers

Well-adjusted babies tend to have fathers who are “crazy” about the child's mother. Are there ways you can make your partner feel special, beautiful and cared for every single day? Dr. Charles Shedd says, “The best dads are good lovers.” Try to let your love show for Mom and Baby every day. Hugs and kisses are great—and so is helping with household and child care chores.

What Busy Eyes You Have!

Not only is the permanent eye color of your baby becoming more apparent this month, but those eyes

are also very busy learning how to do all sorts of new things. Is your baby following moving objects with his eyes? Does he spend a lot of time studying his incredible hands? As soon as he can get them into his mouth, he is likely to suck on them for long periods. Delicious!

Your child is discovering how to pay attention to things. Congratulations on the progress! You might enjoy trying this experiment. Put an object close to your child to look at while nursing. Slowly move it away. The movement is likely to make your child stop sucking and “place hold” until you put it back. (Place holding is holding oneself ready to continue an activity that has been interrupted.) This place holding during nursing allows your child to learn something about the object he found so fascinating. Your baby “takes in” the information from the object and then uses his “will” to determine the appropriate time to go back to nursing.

In order to stimulate all those new abilities, put up pictures from magazines or family snapshots for the baby to see. Tape them securely in places she is likely to see often. You might put some near the crib, changing table, or even on the ceiling. Have several on hand to change them when she seems to lose interest in them. Remember, bright colors, contrasts and human faces are big favorites with babies.

Soothing Your Baby

You are not spoiling your baby when you pay attention to her cries. A baby's needs are usually immediate. If she is hungry, she wants to be fed; if she is uncomfortable or scared, she wants to be held. Paying attention to a child's needs makes her feel safe, loved, and worthwhile.

Ignoring her may teach her that the world is not to be trusted. Studies have shown that babies who are given attention when they cry actually cry less often than babies who are ignored.

Try some of these suggestions to calm your baby:

- Rock her rhythmically in a cradle, baby swing, stroller or in your arms.

- See if you can gently burp her.
- Check her clothing. Is she dressed too warmly?
- Darken the area or turn on a soft light in the room where you want your baby to sleep.
- Sing a gentle melody over and over. Play soft, soothing music. Turn on a music box, or provide some monotonous sound such as a fan.
- Wrap your baby in a soft, light blanket or cloth to keep her from thrashing about. She may want to be cuddled or held close or she may want to have her position changed.

In spite of everything, you may not always be able to calm your baby. Sometimes babies cry when nothing is wrong. This may be the time to give yourself a break. Go to another room, take a shower, listen to some music, or call a relative or friend to relieve you for awhile.

Thumb-sucking

Thumb-sucking is normal and can occur even before your baby is born. The need to suck is very strong, especially during the first four months, and your baby may quickly discover her own finger or fists.

Sucking is not always a sign of hunger. It is the way your baby uses her mouth to learn about her world. Babies also use sucking to calm themselves when they are upset.

Sucking helps your baby learn. She will suck, then stop and look around. By the end of the third month, she will be able to look and suck at the same time.

Replace pacifiers frequently because the rubber may break apart. To avoid strangulation, do not put a pacifier or a toy on a string around your baby's neck.

Whether your infant sucks her thumb or uses a pacifier, let her decide when to stop. Many experts feel there is no reason to be concerned with thumb sucking until the child's permanent teeth come in during the early school years. If you do not draw too much attention to it or try to stop your baby from thumb-sucking, she usually will stop on her own sometime before she is five years old.

Feeding Your Baby

If you are bottle feeding, don't prop the bottle and leave your baby alone, or put him to bed with a bottle. Propped bottles can lead to serious health problems. There is a small opening or tube between your baby's throat and his ear. If your baby is lying down and sucking on his bottle, a small amount of formula may travel from the throat to the ear and cause infection. Also, the formula that may remain in his mouth when he falls asleep with a bottle can cause tooth decay.

Leaving your baby to feed himself robs you both of a loving and relaxing time together. One of the most important parts of feeding is the warmth and pleasure your baby feels while being held and fed.

Remember, your baby is not necessarily hungry every time he cries. When babies are fed too often, they eat less at each meal. Their stomachs empty more quickly, and empty stomachs soon make them hungry again. Also, offering a bottle just to keep baby quiet teaches him to connect feeding with discomfort. This may lead to feeding problems later on.

Ready for Solid Foods?

There are good reasons for waiting to introduce solid foods. Your baby's digestive system is not yet ready to handle foods other than breast milk or infant formula. If solids are introduced too early, she might develop allergies to foods that she may be able to tolerate when she is a little older. Her tongue and swallowing movements won't develop until about four to six months. Until then she's adequately nourished by breast milk or formula.

Ready for Cow's Milk?

Homogenized milk, low fat or skim milk, sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, whey-based imitation milk and acidophilus milk should not be given to your baby during her first year of life. These milks vary in composition from breast milk, and may cause kidney damage if used regularly before a baby is six months old. Cow's milk has too much protein and fat, and too little carbohydrate, so it's not appropriate for infant feeding.

Skim milk is not an acceptable alternative to breast milk or iron-fortified formula because it lacks the fat and essential fatty acids a baby needs. According to Dr. Sue Snider, Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, babies use their fat stores as an energy supply, once these fat stores are depleted, illness can result if they are fed skim milk. Skim milk also contains too much sodium, which makes kidneys work harder and can lead to kidney damage. Skim milk is not recommended until a child is at least two years old.

Feeding at Bedtime?

Parents used to think that feeding solid foods at bedtime would help their babies sleep through the night. Now we know that is untrue. Your baby will sleep through the night when she's ready (usually when she weighs about 11 pounds), not because of what she eats.

Formula Safety

Bacteria grow rapidly in infant formula that is not refrigerated. If you take your baby's bottle of formula with you when you go out, be sure that it will remain cold for the entire time.

Safety Tip

Fire Detectors: Cooking fires cause 18% of home fires and 8% of fire-related deaths. Most fire deaths occur at night and are the result of inhaling smoke or toxic gas. There is a critical period of four minutes to get outside after the alarm sounds. Smoke detectors are recommended for each floor, but particularly for furnace and sleeping areas. Extinguishers should also be available in the kitchen and rooms with a furnace or fireplace. Multipurpose dry chemical extinguishers are suggested.

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