



# Parenting the First Year

MONTH

3-4

## How baby is changing

Your baby probably spends less time crying and sleeping now, so she has more time to learn about herself and the world. Baby has just found that she has hands and feet she can control, and she loves to watch them.

Try putting a toy in her hand. Baby will probably hold on and watch it as she moves her arm. Baby might even reach for things and grab them. Even if she can't do it yet, it's fun to practice.

She can get her hand to her mouth and suck on her fingers. But your baby doesn't have full control over her arms and legs yet. So she may get angry or frustrated when she can't make her body do what she wants it to.

Baby likes to watch things. She may stop what she is doing to follow a toy with her eyes. Hold the toy near, then move it away. Bring it close again, or move it out of sight. Did you notice that she doesn't seem to know yet that things still exist when she can't see them?

Baby loves making noises. She can even laugh now! The more you respond to her when she "talks," the more baby will answer back and smile at you. This is good practice for real talking later and makes life more fun for everyone.

## Some babies don't like change.

### If your baby...

- ♥ reacts with fear or anger to new situations...
- ♥ adapts very slowly to any change in schedule...
- ♥ doesn't keep a regular schedule...

### then you could easily get...

- ♥ angry...
- ♥ impatient...
- ♥ confused...

### but your baby really needs you to...

- ♥ be patient.
- ♥ introduce new people, places, and things gradually.
- ♥ establish a daily routine.
- ♥ make life simpler and quieter.

This is the best way to help your baby overcome feelings of fear or insecurity.



## Some babies cuddle more than others.

Most babies love to be held, rocked, and cuddled. But other babies don't need as much.

If your baby seems to need less cuddling, it doesn't mean that he doesn't like you. It may be the way your baby is made, part of what makes him a unique new person.

Some very active babies don't like to slow down long enough to cuddle. Watch this kind of baby closely. Is there a time of day — maybe first thing in the morning, after naps, or at bedtime — when he slows down and is more ready to be held?

Other babies may be extra-sensitive to the world around them. Bright lights, loud noises, sudden changes, and holding can sometimes be too much. These babies are often jumpy.

For this type of baby, try to reduce the stimulation level. Turn down the radio or TV, put a dimmer switch on the nursery light, and handle him gently. Show love to him in other ways. Smile and make eye contact when you talk to him. Sing to him. **Remember**, all babies want and need to be held lovingly sometimes, and not just when they are crying.

## Exercise

With all the new responsibilities in your life, you may find it hard to find time for exercise. But exercise is important!

One of the best exercises is walking. You don't need special equipment and you can take baby with in a stroller or baby carrier. You might want to make walks a family affair!

One simple exercise you can do at home to strengthen abdominal muscles is leg lifts. Lie on the floor on your back with toes pointed, raise your right leg slightly, then slowly lower it; repeat with your left leg, and then repeat with both legs. You might also want to join an exercise class for new mothers and babies.

## Smokers

You already know smoking is bad for your health. It is also bad for your baby's health and the health of anyone else who breathes your smoke. Smoking is the most frequent environmental cause of health problems in children in the United States; it is even related to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Do your best to quit for your baby.

## Your baby wants you to know:

### How I grow:

- ♥ I hold my head and back pretty straight when you support my body.
- ♥ When I'm on my tummy, I can lift my head, lean on my elbows, arch my back, and rock.
- ♥ When I'm on my back, I wave my arms and kick my legs.
- ♥ When you hold me, I push with my arms and legs.
- ♥ With support, I can be pulled from lying down to sitting up.
- ♥ I touch my face with my hands.
- ♥ I grab for things with both hands, but sometimes I miss.

### How I talk:

- ♥ I coo simple sounds like ooh, ah, and ee.
- ♥ I answer sounds I hear by gurgling, cooing, and squealing.
- ♥ I may not cry as much as before. Have you noticed?

### How I respond:

- ♥ I stare at the place things drop from, but I don't watch where they go when they fall.
- ♥ I get excited when I see people or things I know.
- ♥ I stop sucking to listen to sounds or to look at things. Then I look and suck.
- ♥ I like to listen. Talk to me in simple sentences.

### How I understand:

- ♥ I'm starting to have a memory.
- ♥ I like some toys better than others.

### How I feel:

- ♥ I usually love to be cuddled.
- ♥ I don't like to be left alone. Let me sit where I can watch you!

### How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Give me safe squeaky toys and rattles to grab or kick.
- ♥ Play pat-a-cake with me.
- ♥ Look into my eyes when you talk to me.
- ♥ Let me see myself in the mirror. Or, get me a safe mirror of my own for my crib or changing table.

## Choosing safe baby toys

Toys don't have to be bought at a store, or even specially made for babies. Here are some tips for choosing toys:

- ♥ Babies can put things in their mouths, but they can't always take them out. Never give babies toys smaller than  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches across. See the circle below for size.
- ♥ Avoid toys with small parts that could come off, like plastic eyes on stuffed animals, or the squeakers in rubber toys.
- ♥ Toys for babies should not be made from anything that could break or splinter.
- ♥ Don't give baby anything with sharp edges, points, or corners that could hurt his mouth or eyes.
- ♥ Watch out for stuffed toys or foam toys. Be sure baby can't tear or bite off pieces on which he could choke.
- ♥ Make all strings too short to wrap around baby's neck or fingers.
- ♥ If you have older children or pets, be extra careful to see that small parts of their toys stay out of baby's reach.
- ♥ Some plastic, vinyl, and painted toys contain lead. Check for toy recalls at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website: [www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html).



**NEVER** let a baby play with anything smaller than this circle.



## Baby shots reminder

Remember to make a date at your health clinic or doctor's office for more baby shots when baby is about 4 months old. Today's shots protect against 15 serious diseases, some for life. Baby needs a **series** of shots over the first few years.

If baby hasn't had any shots yet, don't worry. It isn't too late to start. The shots are much safer than are the diseases.



### Books on parenting

*Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five*, by Penelope Leach (New York: Knopf), 2010.

*What to Expect the First Year*, by H.E. Murkoff *et al.* (New York: Workman Publishing), 2003.

*Touchpoints Birth to 3: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development*, by T. Berry Brazelton and Joshua Sparrow (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press), 2006.

### The other parent

If you are a single parent and like this newsletter, maybe your baby's other parent would like it, too. Call the people who have mailed this to you (see back cover) and ask that your baby's other parent be added to the mailing list.

## Baby's sisters and brothers

How are your other children reacting to the baby now? It's normal for sisters and brothers to be upset at the change in their family, especially if they're younger than 5 years.

A toilet-trained child may go back to diapers for a while. Good eaters may lose their appetites. You may notice other changes, too.

Since young children can't always control their actions, don't leave the baby alone with a child younger than 4. He or she may hurt the baby accidentally.

Include older children in caring for baby, and praise their efforts. They want to do the right thing but need to be shown how. Teach them how to hold baby, how close to sit, and games baby might like.

If baby gets lots of gifts, ask your family and friends to remember your older children, too. Keep a few small gifts on hand for them, or let them open the baby's presents.

It's important for you and your partner to spend special time alone with each older child, even if it's just 15 minutes or half an hour.

Try to find time to take your older child for a walk or an ice cream cone, or play a favorite game. Read to your older child during baby's feeding or after baby's bedtime.

Try to do this often so your older children feel that they're important, too.

## Activity: Baby games

Babies love to be with people, and games are a good way to have fun and learn at the same time. Brothers and sisters can play, too.

### Here are some suggestions about how to play with your baby:

- ♥ Show baby you're really interested in the game. Open your eyes wide, look surprised, smile, or talk excitedly.
- ♥ Talk while you play. Baby understands your tone, even though she doesn't understand words. Naming things baby sees helps her learn that words stand for things.
- ♥ If baby's attention starts to wander, it's time to stop.

### Peek-a-boo:

If baby can't see something, she doesn't know it's still there!

For example, hide your face behind your hands and say, "Where's Mama (or Papa)?" Then take your hands away and say, "Peek-a-boo!"

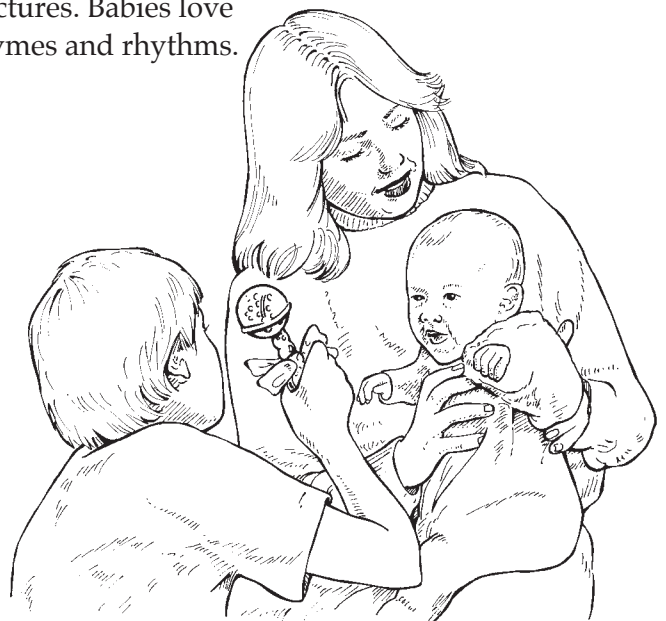
### Shake the rattle:

You can play this game with a rattle or any baby toy. Hold the toy in front of her, and move it gently to get her attention. Then, try to keep her eyes on it while you slowly move it from side to side or up and down.

Hold the rattle off to one side and shake it. Does she look to find the source of the sound? She soon will.

### Reading to baby:

Now is a good time to start reading to baby. Select durable plastic or cardboard books with bright, colorful pictures. At this age baby will like chewing on the books as much as looking at the pictures. Point to and talk about the pictures. Babies love books with pleasing rhymes and rhythms.





## NEVER hit or shake a child!

You probably haven't thought about discipline for your baby. After all, your baby is only 3 months old! But there are some things about discipline you may want to start thinking about.

"Discipline" comes from the word "disciple," meaning student. Think of discipline as **teaching**, not punishing.

The most important thing you can teach your baby now is to trust you. You can do this by meeting her needs, so she learns that you are there when she needs you. Later on, you will need to set limits to keep her safe. The trust your baby has in you will help her try to obey so she can please you.

**Tiny babies like yours don't do things on purpose to annoy you**, even if it seems like that sometimes. Baby can't help crying, messing her diapers, or waking up at night when you want to sleep. Spanking won't help; it will only hurt. You can't teach your baby to stop pulling your hair, dropping toys, or putting things in her mouth by slapping her. Be patient. Baby is doing the best she can.

**NEVER** hit or shake a child. Shaking can cause permanent brain damage, blindness, or even death.

Every parent gets upset and frustrated sometimes. But if you ever feel so angry that you're afraid you might hurt your baby, get help.

Call a sitter or friend so you can take a break. As a last resort, put baby safely in her crib, shut the door for 15 minutes, and rest. Call Parents Anonymous or another group to talk.



## Make baby's room interesting.

Baby is more alert and active now, and his vision is more like yours. He discovers he can change his view of things by lifting his head, turning it to either side, and rolling over. Help increase his interest in his world by putting fun things to look at where he can see them.

### Walls

Hang bright-colored wall hangings or pictures. Pictures can be posters, art prints, family photos, or cutouts from magazines.

Change the display often. If you have older children, they can supply art work. An unbreakable mirror in the crib or over the changing table is also good.

You might also hang a bright-colored toy or stuffed animal from the ceiling and out of reach.

### Windows

If you put baby's crib so he can look out a window, he'll have lots of new things to look at. To keep baby safe, don't put him in reach of the window, blinds, or curtains. Don't place baby in direct sunlight.

A hanging plant or bird feeder outside can make it even more interesting.

A crystal prism in front of the window will throw rainbows into the room. How about wind chimes? Your baby can look at and listen to them. Be sure to keep these out of his reach.

## Fire escape plan

In case of fire, decide on a place outside where everyone in your family will meet.

Make sure someone is responsible for getting young children out. Plan multiple escape routes.

Teach everyone to crawl along the floor if they smell smoke. In a fire, smoke rises, and air along the floor is better to breathe.

Feel doors with your hand before opening them in a fire. If the door is hot, don't open it. Use an alternate route.

Get everyone out of the house first, then call the fire department.

## Carbon monoxide safety

Every home needs a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm located near the bedrooms. CO is a deadly gas that is colorless and odorless, making it difficult for people to know they are being exposed. Always have a professional check your furnace and other fuel-burning appliances to make sure they are working correctly. Do not leave your car running in an attached garage.

Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, nausea, dizziness, confusion, vomiting, and loss of consciousness. If your CO alarm sounds or you experience these symptoms, get outside to fresh air immediately. Call emergency services from a neighbor's home.

## Family fire safety

The best way to prevent burns or deaths from fire is to be prepared ahead of time.

Every home needs at least one smoke detector located outside the bedrooms. Having one on each level of a home is a good idea. Test the smoke detector on the first of each month, and replace the batteries yearly.

### In the kitchen:

- ♥ Turn pot handles toward the stove's back, so children can't pull them down. Never leave appliance cords dangling.
- ♥ Keep a box of baking soda on hand to put out grease fires.
- ♥ Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher in the kitchen.
- ♥ Don't drink hot coffee with a child on your lap; it might spill and cause burns.

### In the bathroom:

- ♥ Keep plugged-in electrical appliances, like hair dryers away from water. They can

cause shock or death if they fall into water or if someone in water touches them — even if they are turned off.

### In other rooms:

- ♥ Don't run electric cords under rugs.
- ♥ Throw cigarette butts in the toilet, not in the trash.
- ♥ Never smoke where you sleep.
- ♥ If you light a fire in the fireplace, be sure the coals are out before you go to bed.
- ♥ Keep portable heaters away from people, drapes, and furniture. Turn heaters off when no one is in the room.

### In storage areas:

- ♥ Keep flammable objects (rags, papers) far away from the furnace and the water heater.
- ♥ Keep gasoline only in specially designed cans, preferably in the garage, and keep it away from heaters and sparks.

## Hiring a babysitter

- ♥ Some parents stay home the first time the sitter is hired. Other parents ask the sitter to come early the first time, so they can show her the house and introduce her to the baby.
- ♥ If possible, hire a sitter who has first aid training and references.
- ♥ Provide the sitter with this info: your location, baby's doctor, emergency response systems (911, fire, police, Poison Control Center), trusted neighbors, and home address.
- ♥ Tell the sitter about your baby (his routine; how you feed, burp, diaper, and put him to sleep on his back; any allergies; how you calm baby; activities or toys baby likes; and any specific needs baby has).
- ♥ Show the sitter the location of flashlights, first aid kits, telephones, all outside doors, smoke detectors, and fire escapes.

## Breastfeeding tip

Breastfeeding mothers do not have to give up nursing if they go back to work or school, but they do need to plan ahead.

A couple of weeks before returning to your job, build up a supply of frozen breast milk for your child care provider to give your baby. Pumping twice a day in addition to nursing will build up your milk supply. Refrigerate expressed (pumped) milk and use it the next day.

Breast milk can also be frozen for up to 2 weeks in the freezing compartment of a refrigerator or up to 4 months if kept solidly frozen in a freezer. When freezing breast milk, place one feeding (about 3 ounces) in a glass or plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. Freeze right away. The best containers are those that are

easily cleaned in a dishwasher or in hot soapy water and thoroughly rinsed. Breast milk expands as it freezes, so don't fill containers to the very top. Thaw breast milk by placing it in the refrigerator the night before you need it. Never thaw the milk at room temperature. Thawed milk may smell different than freshly expressed milk due to the breakdown of milk fats, but it's still safe and nutritious for your baby to drink.

Once you are back at work, find a quiet, private place to pump. The more you pump, the more milk you produce. If you work full time, try to pump for 15 minutes every few hours throughout the day. When you are home with your baby, breastfeed to keep your supply up.

## Do babies need water?

Breast milk and formula have all the water a healthy baby needs under normal conditions. If your baby has a high fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, ask your doctor if he needs extra fluids. He or she may advise you to use a special drink (electrolyte solution).



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**Authors:** David Riley, professor, Human Development and Family Studies, School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and child development specialist, UW-Extension; Dorian Schatell, technical writer, Madison; Susan Nitzke, professor, Nutritional Sciences, UW-Madison and UW-Extension; and Carol Ostergren, Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison and UW-Extension. Illustrations by Nancy Lynch. Cooperative Extension publications are subject to peer review.

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