



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

4-5

How baby is changing

Baby is starting to tell people apart and know his mom and dad. He will smile more at real people than at pictures. Baby might also have favorite toys.

Baby can probably roll from side to side, and might even be able to go from his tummy to his back. Watch out: Your little athlete could roll off a counter, changing table, or bed.

Baby is starting to learn that things go together. When he hears the front door, he expects his mom or dad to appear. Your infant likes to splash in the bathtub, and he loves to look in the mirror.

Your baby's reaching and grasping skills are improving. Watch baby when he wants a toy. At first, baby had to look from his hand to the toy. As he gets better, baby grabs for it directly without looking at his hand first.

Whatever baby reaches goes right into his mouth! You'll want to be sure he can only reach things that are clean and safe to chew on.

Baby may be getting teeth, though most babies begin teething at 6 months. Usually, the two lower front teeth are first.

Do yourself a favor...

Researchers have found that when parents respond quickly to baby's cry, baby stops crying sooner. You need to do less to settle a crying baby if you respond quicker. Responding to baby's small cries may also keep baby from building up to louder crying.

Many people think that responding quickly to a cry will spoil the baby. But babies aren't like that. You can spoil a child, but you can't spoil a baby.

A quick response teaches baby to trust you. When baby learns that you will always meet her needs, this helps her develop a secure relationship with you. Babies who are securely attached with parents (and other caregivers) feel more confident exploring and learning about their world. This helps baby become more independent later.

Can a baby obey?

It is important for a child to obey her parents, but a 4-month-old infant does not understand what you say to her. She hears your tone of voice and may sense when you are angry.

Research shows that a baby this young is not able to control her actions long enough to follow your instructions. And your baby won't be able to for some time. So spanking or slapping her hand won't help at all; it will only confuse her.

Being kind and gentle with your baby will help more than anything else. Baby doesn't do things to bother you on purpose.

To learn and grow, your baby needs a calm and loving home. It's very easy to get your baby interested in different things at this age. Instead of slapping her hand or shouting at her, try redirecting her attention to something else.



Activity: Baby exercises

One way to have fun together is to have a daily exercise time. There may be books on baby exercises in your public library. Here are a couple to try:

Pull to sitting

Lay baby on her back on a blanket or rug and hold both of her hands. Slowly pull baby up until she is sitting. To encourage her, you can say things like, "Up we go!"

At first, you may do more of the work. But baby will get the idea and may soon work hard to help herself up.

Rolling over

Lay baby on her back on a blanket and sit behind her head, holding a toy. Squeaky toys work well for this. Hold the toy where baby can see it. Slowly move it so baby has to turn her head to follow it.

Praise baby if she arches her back and starts to turn. If she turns with her shoulders but her legs aren't following, gently push on her bottom to help her over. Save this game for a later time if baby doesn't try at all.

Later, you'll be able to help baby practice crawling.

Safety alert:

Keep plastic bags away from baby, and do not use them as a mattress cover. This can cause suffocation.

Your baby wants you to know:

How I grow:

- ♥ I turn my head in all directions.
- ♥ When I'm on my back, I lift my head forward and grab my feet with my hands.
- ♥ I sit up for about 15 minutes with my head and back straight if you support my body.
- ♥ I prefer sitting instead of lying down; it's more interesting!
- ♥ I roll from my back to my side, but sometimes I get my hand caught under my stomach.
- ♥ I put things in my mouth.
- ♥ I splash and kick with my hands and feet in the bath.

How I talk:

- ♥ I babble, imitate sounds, cough, and click my tongue for long periods of time.
- ♥ I coo, grin, or squeal with joy when you talk to me.

How I understand:

- ♥ I love to see myself in the mirror.
- ♥ I'm fascinated by my hands.
- ♥ I like some people and am shy or scared of others.
- ♥ I can remember things for about 5 seconds.
- ♥ I remember important people, like my parents, from night to morning or even longer.
- ♥ I know if something is near or far.

How I feel:

- ♥ I get excited when I have fun. Everything is a game to me.
- ♥ I cry and get mad when you stop paying attention to me or take a toy away.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Put me on my tummy and hold up a toy for me to follow. This helps me learn to roll over.
- ♥ Blow soap bubbles for me to follow with my eyes.
- ♥ Read nursery rhymes to me. I like to listen to your voice.
- ♥ Play "This little piggy..." with my toes or fingers.

Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth. This is important: Look for and notice your child's growth in each area. Then you can encourage each new ability.

High chair safety

When baby starts to lean forward out of her infant seat — and you're afraid she'll tip over — it's time for a high chair. Here are some things to look for to be sure the high chair is safe for your baby:

- ♥ It should be sturdy with a wide base so it won't tip easily.
- ♥ There should be a seat belt with a crotch strap to go between baby's legs to keep her from sliding out.
- ♥ The tray should lock securely on both sides with no sharp edges.
- ♥ Belt buckles and tray locks should be easy for you to use, but not easy for your baby to use.
- ♥ The seat should not be slippery. If it is, put rubber bathtub stickers on it so she doesn't slide around.

DOs and DON'Ts for using a high chair:

- DO** always use the seat belt and crotch strap.
- DO** lock the tray into place.
- DO** be sure baby's fingers are out of the way when you lock the tray.
- DO** keep the high chair at least 12 inches away from the counter or table when baby is in it. Baby could push off and tip over.
- DO** watch baby closely when she is in the high chair. Some babies have slipped down between the leg straps and strangled.
- DON'T** let baby stand up in the high chair.
- DON'T** let other children climb on the high chair.



Learning through touch

Baby spends a lot of time playing with his hands and feet and learning about his body. This is also how he learns about others. Baby may grab for your hair or pat your face as a way of learning who you are. He doesn't mean to hurt you. He is just curious.

Feeling a blanket, a cuddly toy, or the bath water helps him learn about other things in the world. Allow your baby to feel different textures by giving him soft, fuzzy, hard, or bumpy objects. Avoid small things that could choke baby. And make sure mittens or bulky clothes don't prevent him from touching things and moving around easily.

Your baby also learns by being touched. From your handling, he senses how you feel about him.

If you hold your baby only when you have to bathe or change him, you both miss time to be close and to learn.

Touch and hold your baby often. That's how baby learns that you're near and that you care. Most of all, baby learns that he is loved. Research shows that when parents hold their babies more, the babies cry less. You can use a specially made front pack or scarf pouch to keep baby next to you while you are doing things.

Give baby lots of hugs and kisses, pats, rocking, stroking, and massages.

Nurturing families

All parents want to create a nurturing family for their baby, and all kinds of families can be nurturing. Some children grow up with birth or adoptive parents, some with stepparents and stepsiblings, and some with single parents. Different families face different challenges when raising children, but all can raise children well.

Virginia Satir, a well-known family scholar, said that in nurturing families:

- ♥ self-worth is high
- ♥ rules are flexible
- ♥ communication is honest and clear
- ♥ problems are faced with a sense of hope

When you love baby for the unique person she is and let her know it by smiling, touching, kissing, and cuddling, baby is learning self-worth. Do you encourage and compliment other family members? This can enhance their feelings of self-worth. Self-worth helps people to communicate in an honest, direct style and to feel hopeful in the face of challenges.

Learning to talk

Learning to talk is a process with many steps. Each child is on his own time schedule. You may have noticed that baby is now listening very closely to you and watching your face when you talk.

Baby will even talk back to you now. At first, he makes mostly vowel sounds like “aaah” and “oooh.” But soon, he will add consonant sounds like M, B, and P. Each sound your baby makes is a step toward true speech.

Encourage baby to talk by talking to him and **pausing to give him a chance to answer**. At first, baby may smile and wave his arms instead of making a sound. That is OK. Talking is hard work. Give him lots of chances to practice making sounds and praise him when he succeeds. Baby is learning that conversation involves **taking turns**. He is also learning that you are a fun person to talk to.

Research shows that parents who talk more to their babies have babies who talk more and learn language better.

Even when you are working, talk to your baby! Some parents find it easy to chat to baby while cooking, cleaning, or sorting the mail. Other parents may feel silly doing this at first. It doesn't matter what you talk about. Your baby can't really understand much of what you say yet. But he'll be pleased to be included.

Use bath times, meal times, and diaper changing times to “teach” language. Parents can help baby learn by telling baby what they are doing as they do it. For example, say “up” as you pull him to sit. Say “banana” as you offer him some. Say “toes” as you wash his toes in the bath. It will take a long time, but this practice helps baby to learn the meaning of words.

What about baby talk?

Baby talk such as “Isn't oo mama's precious uzzums” probably doesn't help your baby learn to talk. This is hard to understand, and some of the words don't mean anything.

There is another kind of baby talk that is useful. Researchers call it “parentese.” Parentese means keeping your sentences short and simple, repeating words, raising the pitch of your voice, and ending words with an “ee” sound. For example, say “dog” out loud. Now say “doggie.” Isn't it much easier to hear the “g” in “doggie?” You are giving your baby extra chances to hear the sounds of language.

Researchers have found that people all over the world talk a bit differently to babies than they do to adults. Even young children use “parentese” when talking to babies. It's natural, and it really does help.

So talk directly to your baby when you get the chance. Ask questions, and wait for responses. But above all, be a good listener and always try to answer your baby when he talks to you.

Moving to a big bathtub

If you've been using the kitchen sink or a special baby tub for baths, your baby may be starting to outgrow it.

To make the move to a big bathtub easier for you and your baby, here are a few things you can try:

- ♥ If you use a baby tub, try putting it into the bathtub for a few days and bathing baby inside it.
- ♥ The bath water should not be hotter than 100 degrees F. **Set the water heater to 120 degrees F** to prevent hot water burns.
- ♥ Keep the water shallow. Your baby can drown in less than 2 inches of water.
- ♥ Put a towel in the bottom of the tub to reduce slipping.
- ♥ Bathe baby slowly and gently until he gets used to it. Hold him securely.
- ♥ Avoid using baby bath seats in the big tub. Even newer models that clamp onto the side of the tub tip over easily. Baby bath seats also may give parents a false sense of security.
- ♥ **NEVER** leave your baby alone in a bathtub, even for a minute. If the phone rings, wrap him in a towel and take him along or just let it ring.

Bathing baby in a big tub can be hard on your back.

Try this:

1. Bend from your knees, not from your waist. Use your stronger leg muscles to help when you lift baby and keep your back as straight as possible.
2. Hold heavy objects, like baby, close to your body.
3. Don't lift and twist at the same time. Lift, then turn.



Baby lotion or powder

After baby's bath you may want to use some baby lotion or oil if baby's skin is dry. This might be a great time to give baby a massage! Watch to be sure he does not have an allergic reaction to the lotion or oil.

Don't use baby powder with talcum (zinc stearate), since talcum particles can inflame baby's lungs or even cause pneumonia. If you choose to use powder, select one with a cornstarch base, and use it sparingly. Put some on your hand and then rub it on baby. Never shake it directly onto baby.

Parenting makes us better people.

New parents are sometimes surprised by how unselfish they become. For example, many people who know smoking is bad for themselves still keep smoking. But they give it up when they become a parent. This is a noble act, a sacrifice of your own enjoyment for the health of your child, and yet it seems to come easily for many people.

When a father rises without complaint from his bed at night to comfort a crying baby, he is putting his own needs last. When a mother calmly cleans up a baby's spilled food, reminding herself not to be angry because baby doesn't know better, she is putting her own needs last.

Research confirms that becoming a parent tends to make people less selfish. Your baby can bring out the best in your character.

Bottle feeding tips

If you are bottle feeding, **don't prop the bottle** or leave your baby alone. A baby left alone with a bottle could spit up and choke.

It is important for your baby to have the closeness of being held in someone's arms at every feeding. If feeding takes a long time because baby gets distracted, feed her in a dimly lit, quiet room to help speed things up. Other family members may be able to give baby a bottle.

When your baby drinks while lying flat on her back, formula can back up into the tubes between her throat and ears, called **eustachian tubes**. This formula can grow bacteria and cause painful ear infections that could hurt your baby's hearing.

If baby has a bottle in her mouth while sleeping, milk sugars can decay her new teeth causing a condition called early childhood caries (baby bottle mouth). Soda, lemonade, juice, and other beverages that contain sugar should not be fed to babies. Children lose their baby teeth later, but they keep space in the mouth for permanent teeth. To be safe, don't put baby to bed with a bottle.

New foods for baby: Starting solid foods

How do you know when your baby is ready to start eating solid foods? If your baby can sit well without support, hold his head up without wobbling, and seems to enjoy watching you eat... he may be ready to try solid foods. Before your baby can safely eat solids, he has to be able to move the food from the front of his mouth to the back of his mouth. This movement doesn't develop until about 4 to 6 months of age.

What: Iron-fortified rice cereal is often recommended as a good "first food," but it's more of a tradition than a science-based rule. When first starting cereal, mix 1 tablespoon of cereal with breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula until the mixture is smooth and about as thick as cream.

When: A good time to try solid foods is when your baby is relaxed and hungry but not starving. It will also help to find a time when you are relaxed as well. Consider giving your baby some breast milk or infant formula, then try the cereal, and then finish up with more milk or formula.

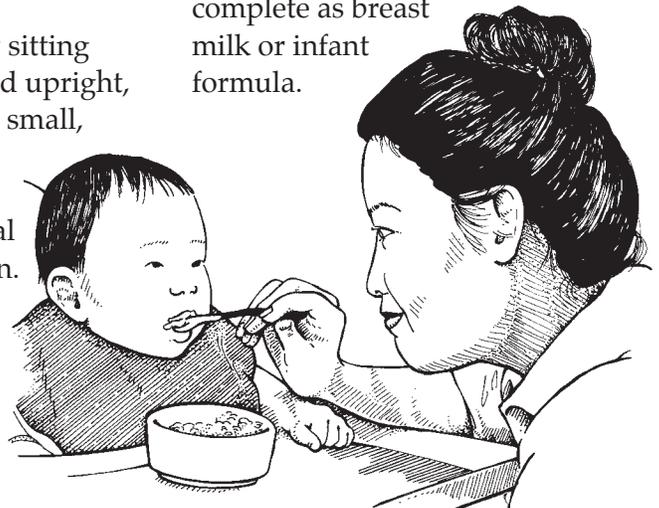
How: Have your baby sitting straight up or propped upright, facing forward. Use a small, narrow spoon with a long handle. Put a small amount of cereal on the tip of the spoon. Place the cereal on the middle of your baby's tongue. The food may get pushed back out but

that's okay... this is something very new for your baby. It takes time to learn how to chew and swallow. Be patient and expect there to be some mess. It's part of the process! Do not use an infant feeder, syringe, or bottle to feed solid foods. These can cause choking and don't teach your baby to learn to eat from a spoon.

How much: Begin with the goal of 1 or 2 teaspoons once a day. Work up to 1 or 2 tablespoons 2 to 3 times a day. Follow your baby's lead for how fast or slow to feed.

Foods to try next: After your baby has gotten the hang of eating cereal, you can begin to introduce him to new foods. Start with a single food (a pureed vegetable, fruit, or meat) and give this for 3 to 5 days. If your baby doesn't show any signs of food allergies or intolerance (no diarrhea, rash, or vomiting) you can try another new food.

Don't forget the milk or formula: Even with solid foods, baby still needs breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula. Do not start cow's milk until he is 1 year old. Cow's milk is not as nutritionally complete as breast milk or infant formula.



Think twice about baby walkers.

Baby walkers have had so many safety problems that some officials think they should be banned.

Babies in walkers have fallen down stairs and have been badly hurt or killed, even with safety gates on the stairs. Some babies have lost fingers when the walkers folded up. Some babies have strangled in some models when the strap buckle slipped and allowed them to slide down.

Some parents think walkers help children learn to walk, but they don't. If walkers are used too much, they take away time that a baby could use learning to crawl or walk.

If you do decide to use a walker:

- ♥ Close doors to stairways and latch safety gates.
- ♥ Watch baby closely; a baby can move very quickly in a walker.
- ♥ Remove dangerous things from baby's reach.
- ♥ Use it no more than 2 hours a day.
- ♥ Don't use old models.

The JPMA (Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association) now certifies walkers. New ones must either be too wide to fit through a typical doorway or have a gripping mechanism that stops the walker at the edge of a step. Certified models also are made so they won't collapse accidentally, pinch fingers, or tip over easily.

A safe alternative to baby walkers is a "stationary activity center" that doesn't have wheels. Whatever product you use, **remove all plastic labels or decals**, as these present a choking hazard for baby.

Crib toy safety alert

Be sure to remove crib toys that fit across the crib by the time your baby is 5 months old.

At that age, babies can push up onto their hands and knees. They might fall over the toy, be unable to free themselves, and be strangled.

Hooded sweatshirts and other loose clothing could also be caught on parts of these toys, causing strangling.

Contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to ask questions, report problems with baby products, or find out about product recalls at **(800) 638-2772** or www.cpsc.gov.



When baby is 5 months old, remove crib gyms or toys that string across the crib.

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