



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

5-6

How baby is changing

Baby has lots of energy! She seems to be moving all day when she isn't asleep. Many 5-month-olds can move around by rolling or wriggling. You may need extra patience to keep up with her!

Baby knows her mom and dad from strangers and may cry when one of you leaves. Don't sneak out! Tell her, "Good-bye," and that you will be back. Help her learn to trust you.

Soon your baby will show signs of being afraid of some people she doesn't know well. Let her get used to new people slowly. She may be less afraid if you are nearby.

Baby may like toys that make noises now. Ring a bell or squeeze a squeaky toy and watch her try to find out where the sound came from. Then let her try it herself. Say different sounds. Does she copy you?

Your baby has discovered her feet and may love to suck on her toes. She is getting stronger and may start to push up on her hands and knees. For safety, remove toys like crib gyms that are strung across the crib.

From this age on, your baby will be very interested in toys that she can touch, look at, chew, suck, and bang together.

Do yourself a favor...

Some parents are able to make a regular date to be with other parents and babies. Once a week, two or three parents and babies get together for an hour or more.

Babies enjoy these play groups. Parents may enjoy them even more! You can watch your babies grow together and learn from each other.

You may be able to use each other for emergency babysitting, too. Every parent has days when baby drives him or her crazy. It helps to have a friend you can call on for an hour or so if you need to run an errand or if you just need some time alone.

No one raises a baby well without help. Is there someone in your neighborhood who likes to talk about babies?



Child guidance: Discipline and safety

Baby is starting to get into things and may get hold of something you don't want him to have. Since everything he picks up goes into his mouth, it's time to think about safety.

One way to guide your child — and simplify your life — is to take the time now to **baby-proof** (see page 5).

Baby needs and wants to explore. So it makes sense to baby-proof, rather than to follow him around saying "No" to everything he does.

Another form of child guidance is to **re-direct**. This means moving him away from a hazard — such as a lamp cord — to some place safe.

And you can **substitute**. Interest your baby in a toy he can play with, then gently remove the thing you don't want him to have. For example, find a different drawer in the kitchen that is OK for him to empty.

DO NOT slap your baby's hands or yell at him. Baby can't control his behavior yet. If you spank him, he learns that it is OK to hit. It's up to you to keep him out of danger, not to punish him for getting into it. Try the three methods listed above instead.

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.

Premature babies

A **premature baby** is born earlier than normal. If your baby was premature, then the age norms may be off a little.

So don't be concerned if your baby isn't doing things you read on this page yet. This issue of the newsletter is for babies who are 5-6 months past their due dates — not their actual birth dates. You may need to save this issue for a month or more until it is accurate for your baby.

Your baby wants you to know:

How I grow:

- ♥ I rock, roll, and twist my body.
- ♥ I kick my feet and suck on my toes.
- ♥ I stand up if you hold me under my arms; I jump up and down and stamp my feet.
- ♥ I have pretty good aim when I grab something.
- ♥ I can roll over.

How I talk:

- ♥ I watch your mouth and imitate you when you talk.
- ♥ I make sounds like ee, ah, ooh, dada, bye-bye, and mama.
- ♥ I babble to myself, to my toys, and to people to get attention!

How I respond:

- ♥ I may cry when I see strangers.
- ♥ I smile at faces and voices that I know.
- ♥ I look around when I hear sounds.
- ♥ I make sounds and interrupt your conversations because I want attention.
- ♥ I want to touch, hold, turn, shake, and taste everything.
- ♥ I put a lot of energy into everything I do.

How I understand:

- ♥ I recognize my name.
 - ♥ I can tell the difference between myself and others in the mirror.
 - ♥ I remember what I just did.
- ### How I feel:
- ♥ I usually cling to you when you hold me.
 - ♥ I stop crying when you talk to me.
 - ♥ I show fear, anger, and disgust.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Talk to me in complete sentences about what you're doing.
- ♥ Face me, so I can watch your lips when you talk. Then I can try to imitate you.
- ♥ Play peek-a-boo with me.
- ♥ Let me listen to music for short periods of time. Let me have quiet times, too.

Warning: Honey is harmful for babies.

Babies under 1 year old should not be fed honey. Honey has spores that can cause a disease called "infant botulism." Older children have more developed intestinal tracts, so honey is safe for them.



What is your baby like?

You've probably noticed that baby has her own unique temperament or style of behavior. Research shows that babies' temperaments differ in these ways:

- ♥ **Sensitivity:** Some babies react to very little stimulation (sounds, lights, touch, smells). Others can sleep through thunderstorms.
- ♥ **Activity level:** Some babies are always wiggling and moving, while others spend more time sitting, watching, or listening.
- ♥ **Intensity:** Some babies whimper quietly if uncomfortable or hungry, while others cry loudly.
- ♥ **Regularity:** Some babies get hungry or sleepy or mess their diapers about the same time each day. Others seldom do things at the same time.
- ♥ **Adaptability:** Some babies adapt easily to new people, places, and things. Other babies are upset by changes, including shifts from one activity to another (like getting in or out of the bathtub) or by anything new; these babies need more time to get used to changes or new things.
- ♥ **Persistence or frustration tolerance:** Some babies keep practicing an activity, while others are more easily frustrated.
- ♥ **Soothability or distractibility:** Some babies are easy to distract and soothe when upset, while others are more difficult to distract.

Each temperament trait ranges from high to low. Baby's temperament is a combination of all these traits. All temperament styles are normal, but some combinations are more challenging for parents to handle.

Research shows that parents who understand their baby's temperament better handle behaviors that are normal but challenging.



To better understand your baby's temperament, you can fill out a questionnaire for a small fee at **The Preventive Ounce** website (www.preventiveoz.org). After you complete and submit the questionnaire, you will receive:

- ♥ Baby's temperament profile
- ♥ A forecast of likely behaviors
- ♥ Strategies for handling these behaviors that are tailored to your baby's temperament

Once you know your baby's temperament and what strategies work best for her, you can adjust your parenting to fit with baby's temperament. When there is a "good fit" between what you expect of baby and her temperament, baby can grow in a healthy way.

If your baby has a challenging temperament, remember these things:

1. Baby was born with this temperament. You didn't cause it, and baby is not purposely being difficult.
2. Some of the behaviors you find challenging now may be helpful as baby grows up. For example, babies who adapt slowly to change may not be as easily influenced by peers when they're older. Babies who are hard to distract and soothe now may be able to focus on a task more easily when they're older.
3. Babies with challenging temperaments need more caring and **patient** parents who will accept them and help them learn.



Baby gets moving

Baby's first year is filled with milestones. Last month, you read that learning to talk is a process with many steps. Physical development is the same way.

In between the milestones of sitting, crawling, standing, and walking are smaller steps. Your baby's control starts with her head and moves down to her feet. She learns to control her trunk first, then her hands and feet.

One baby may sit sooner than another, but every baby first holds up her head and neck, learns to use her arms and hands, and then uses her body, legs, and feet.

If your baby seems to be developing more slowly than other babies, remember that she has to do things in order and on her own schedule. For example, some babies are too busy working on language or grasping to work on sitting or crawling.

Speedy physical development by itself does not mean she is advanced in other areas. And slow physical development doesn't mean she is slow in other areas. If baby is slow in more than one area, talk to your doctor.

Activity: Helping baby's memory

As your baby approaches 6 months, watch how he reacts when things disappear from view. Does baby lean over to look for things he dropped? Does baby put a toy down and go right back to it later?

These are signs that baby's memory is growing. When he was younger, things were "out of sight, out of mind." Now, he is learning that things exist even when not in sight.

You can have fun with your baby and help his memory:

- ♥ Show baby a toy, then cover it — slowly at first — with a cloth or cup. Does your baby try to pull the cover off? What if you cover only part of the toy? Try different toys and different covers.
- ♥ Play peek-a-boo to help baby learn that you come back when you go away. Sometimes cover your face, and sometimes cover his.

Prevent lead poisoning

Old paint often has lead in it, and even tiny amounts can poison an infant. If your home was built before 1980, you may have a problem. Lead reduces memory, intelligence, concentration, and hearing. Damage to babies' developing nervous systems cannot be cured, **only prevented**.

Lead paint becomes a problem when it chips or turns to dust. It becomes dust when doors or windows rub while moving, during remodeling, or as outdoor paint weathers. When baby begins to crawl, then puts her fingers in her mouth, she may be eating dust that contains lead. If she is teething, then chewing on the window sill may feel good.

You can reduce dust levels by washing floors and windowsills. A regular vacuum will just stir up the dust, so you need to buy or rent a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air filter) vacuum. Painting over lead-painted surfaces also helps keep them covered.

But to rid your home of danger, you need to remove the lead. You should have trained experts remove lead paint. Removing lead improperly can make the problem worse. Children and pregnant women should stay somewhere else until the work is finished, and the area is thoroughly cleaned.

For help, call your local health department. For a list of labs that test paint chips and dust for lead, call **(800) 424-LEAD** or visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website at www.epa.gov/lead/.

If your baby spends time in any place built before 1980, ask your doctor, clinic, or tribal maternal-child specialist about a blood test for lead.

Also, if you have lead pipes or copper pipes with lead solder, you may have lead in your drinking water. Have your water tested. To reduce lead in drinking water, run the tap until the water runs cold (at least 2 minutes). Use only cold water for drinking or making baby formula. Never use hot tap water for drinking or cooking.

Baby-proof your home

As a parent, it's your job to make baby's world a safe place for him to learn and grow. Baby-proofing helps protect your baby from dangerous things in your home and helps protect your precious objects from damage.

Start by getting on your hands and knees and looking around your home from a baby's-eye view. Watch out for:

Small or sharp things

- ♥ Anything baby can reach will go into his mouth. Keep floors and tables clear of popcorn, cigarettes, dust balls, coins, paper clips, staples, small balls, and anything smaller than 1¾ inches that you don't want him to eat. Inspect toys often. Safe toys are dangerous when broken. Button batteries and small magnets can cause serious internal injuries if swallowed.
- ♥ Keep paper shredders up on a desk, away from curious fingers. Keep the shredder turned off when not in use, and never let a small child use the shredder.
- ♥ Keep window blind cords out of baby's reach, and do not put your baby's crib near window blind or drapery cords; they can accidentally strangle baby.

Poisons

Move cleaning supplies to a high place. Put childproof locks on cupboards with dangerous chemicals. Children drink things to try them, even if they taste bad. Some houseplants are poisonous.

If you have a party, pour left-over drinks down the sink. It takes very little alcohol to poison a child. Cigarettes can also poison children who eat them.

Medicine cabinets should lock. Never tell baby that medicine is "candy." In large amounts, even aspirin or iron pills can kill. Keep the Poison Control Center phone number near your phone (1-800-222-1222). **Do not** use syrup of ipecac if baby swallows something poisonous.

Electrical things

Cover unused electrical outlets with plastic plugs you can buy at the hardware store. Keep lamp and computer cords out of the way behind furniture. Move fans up high.

In the kitchen, don't leave cords dangling. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

Plastic bags and balloons

Plastic bags are very dangerous. Baby can get plastic bags over his mouth and nose and suffocate. Balloons can choke baby. Keep broken or uninflated balloons away from baby.

Stairs

Install safety gates at the top and bottom of open stairways. Be sure to keep gates fastened at all times when baby is around.

Valuables

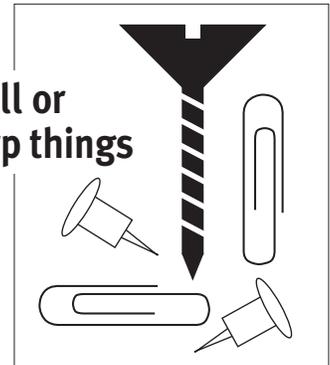
Hide your valuables away for a while or move them to high shelves. It's easier to change your home than to change your baby.

Water

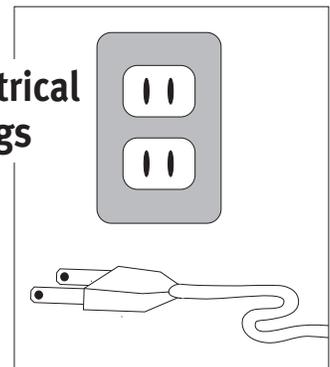
Close toilet lids and don't leave buckets of water unattended while cleaning or washing cars. Babies can drown in as little as 2 inches of water.

For more information on childproofing your home, check out the American Academy of Pediatrics website at www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/default.aspx.

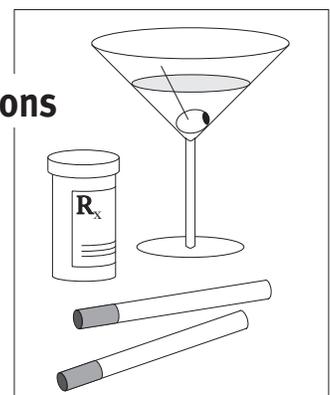
Small or sharp things



Electrical things



Poisons



Introducing the cup

Many 5-month-old babies are ready to learn to drink from a cup, although they still need to nurse or use a bottle most of the time.

Choose a non-breakable cup with handles to hold. A small cup is best. Try these steps:

1. Give baby the empty cup to hold and to look at.
2. Let baby watch you and her brothers or sisters drinking from a cup.
3. Put a spoonful of water, breast milk, or formula in the cup, and let baby help you tip it so she can drink.

As baby gets better, put more in the cup and encourage her to hold the cup. Be ready for spills and drips!

If baby rejects the cup, do not force her. She will have lots of time to learn later.

Book

The Baby Bistro: Child-Approved Recipes & Expert Nutrition Advice for the First Year, by Christina Schmidt, M.S. (Boulder, CO: Bull Publishing), 2009.

New foods for baby

Breast milk has introduced your baby to all the flavors of the foods you have been enjoying. These foods will be familiar when your baby can begin to eat on his own. But you can now start adding some semi-solid foods to the baby's diet. Ask your doctor or clinic for specific advice before starting new foods.

Give new foods for a week before starting other new foods.

That way, you will know which food is suspect if your baby gets a rash, diarrhea, or a stomach ache. Check with your baby's doctor if your baby seems to have a reaction to a new food. Don't worry, though, if your baby's stool changes color with each new food.

Use a small spoon that comfortably fits your baby's mouth. Your baby may take some time to get used to the spoon, so a few spoons of cereal is enough for these early feedings. Be ready to give the baby his usual formula or breast milk after a few minutes.

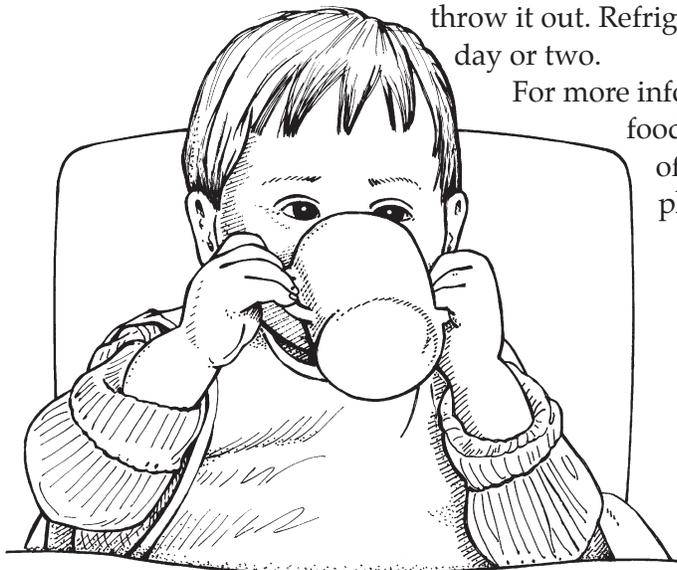
Once your baby has become skilled at eating cereals, you can add other new foods to his diet.

Try one or two spoons of puréed vegetable. You can use baby food from the store or make your own by mashing cooked, unsalted vegetables with a fork, baby food grinder, or blender. Hold off on finger foods until your baby is about 8 to 9 months old. **Remember:** Honey is dangerous for babies, so avoid it.

Make sure your hands, dishes, kitchen equipment, and surfaces are clean whenever you prepare food for baby.

If you use commercial baby food, be sure the safety button on top is down when you buy it. Listen for the "pop" when you open the jar so you know the jar was not opened before. If a jar is unsealed, throw it away or return it to the store. Don't feed baby straight from the jar — put a small amount in a dish instead. If food is left over from the dish, throw it out. Refrigerate the rest of the jar, and use it within the next day or two.

For more information about nutrition, food preparation, and food safety, contact your doctor or county Extension office (listed under county government in your phone book).

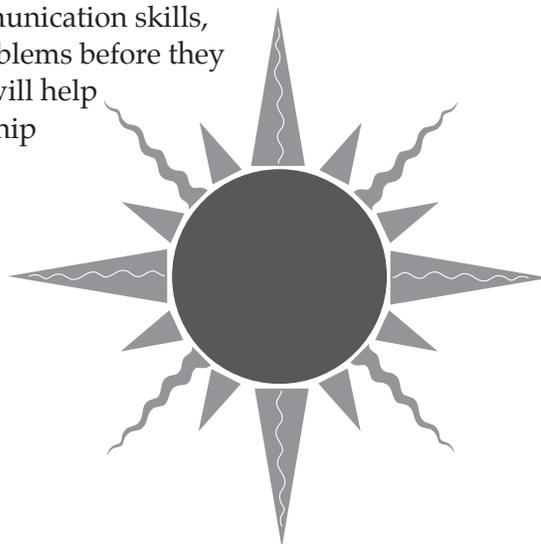


Keep the couple relationship strong

With all the focus on their baby, some couples neglect their own relationship. But new parents need time for each other. Well-adjusted babies have parents who show their love and enjoyment for each other. Keeping the marriage/couple relationship strong is important for your child and yourselves.

- ♥ Find ways to show your love everyday — hugs and kisses are great, as is helping with childcare and household chores.
- ♥ Schedule a date each week. This can be going to a movie or restaurant or taking a walk and having a picnic supper.
- ♥ Set aside a time each day when you can talk. Communication is key to a strong relationship.
- ♥ If something is bothering you, find a way to talk without blaming.
 1. **By using “I” messages**, your partner will not feel blamed or accused and will be more interested in finding a solution so you can feel better. For example, instead of saying, “You never help with the house and baby,” try saying, “I feel overwhelmed with all the household chores and baby care.”
 2. **Be direct.** Say what you mean, rather than hoping your partner can guess. For instance, say, “I get upset when the newspapers are scattered around the living room and I have to pick them up,” rather than, “The living room is a mess.”
 3. **Avoid the question trap.** Instead of saying, “Why didn’t you call to tell me you were going to be late?” say, “I was worried something happened to you when you didn’t come home on time. Please call next time so I don’t worry.”
 4. **Listen.** Give your partner a chance to talk about his/her feelings. Check back to see if you really understood what was said; for example, say, “Let me see if I understand. Are you saying that...?”

If you both use these communication skills, you’ll find solutions to problems before they get out of hand. And you will help keep your couple relationship strong!



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