



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

7-8

How baby is changing

Baby is sitting up better as his lower back gets stronger. He may be able to keep busy for a while playing with toys on the floor.

Your baby is ready to get moving! Soon you'll see him pushing up on his hands and knees and crawling across the floor.

If your baby isn't moving on his tummy yet, encourage him. Sit in front of him and put a favorite toy just out of his reach. Praise him when he tries to get the toy.

When a baby rocks back and forth on hands and knees, crawling isn't too far off.

Watch his hands. He can pass a toy from one hand to the other. Give him two toys at a time. What does he do when you hand him a third toy?

Your baby may like finger foods that let him practice picking things up and feeding himself.

Baby is trying new sounds. Keep listening! He may choose a favorite or two that he says often. Imitate the sounds so he can hear them again. He will love to hear you saying his "words."

Have you met other parents?

Out for a walk or at the market, you may meet other parents with their babies. Stop and talk. Ask their baby's age. It's fun to compare notes. Ask them:

- ♥ How has your baby changed in the last 1 to 2 weeks? Has he or she learned anything new?
- ♥ What is his or her favorite time of the day? What does he or she enjoy doing the most?

You will have your own questions, too. Perhaps other parents know a trick to soothe a crying baby or to make feeding easier. Ask them. They are like you: They have learned a lot, and they love to talk about their baby!

Child guidance: Keeping calm

When your baby is pulling leaves off your favorite plant or smearing cereal in his hair, it's hard to stay calm.

If tempting things like houseplants or wastebaskets are left in your baby's reach, he will explore them. The easiest way to prevent this is to put things where he can't see or reach them.

Small babies do things that are upsetting to parents. But they don't do it on purpose.

Feeding babies is messy. They like to help, and their efforts help them learn to feed themselves. You can reduce the mess, though, without spoiling the fun.

Let your baby help with less messy foods. Feed only as much at a time as you're willing to pick up off the floor. Try giving him two cubes of soft cheese. When he finishes, give two more.

Remember: Your baby does not drop food to upset you. He is just learning where things go when they fall.

When your baby bangs toys together, it's because he likes the noise. If that gets on your nerves, give him a quiet toy and take the noisy ones away. He's still just a baby. Try to see things from his point of view.



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.

By the end of 7 months, most babies are able to:

- turn their head when their name is called.
- smile back at another person.
- respond to your voice with their own sounds.
- enjoy social play (such as peek-a-boo).

Your baby might reach these milestones earlier or later than others.

If you become concerned about your baby's progress, you can seek advice from:

- CDC National Center: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) or online at www.cdc.gov/actearly
- Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program: 1-800-642-7837

Your baby wants you to know:

How I grow:

- ♥ I creep on my stomach; I may even crawl.
- ♥ I can get around on my back by lifting my bottom and pushing with my feet.
- ♥ I balance myself and sit for a while with no support.
- ♥ I keep my legs straight when you pull me up, and I try to stand by myself.
- ♥ I explore my body with my mouth and hands.
- ♥ I can keep my diaper dry for up to 2 hours.
- ♥ I may have some teeth.
- ♥ I feed myself finger foods, but I'm pretty messy!
- ♥ I play with a spoon and a cup, but I'm not so good at using them yet.

How I talk:

- ♥ I imitate the sounds I hear; that's how I learn.
- ♥ I say several sounds in one breath, like ma, mi, da, di, and ba.

How I respond:

- ♥ I want to be included in all family activities.
- ♥ I like to see and touch my image in the mirror.
- ♥ I get excited at pictures of babies.
- ♥ I like to grab, shake, and bang things and to put them in my mouth.

How I understand:

- ♥ I concentrate better now, and I spend lots of time examining things.
- ♥ I can tell if something is near or far.
- ♥ I can tell when people are angry or happy by the way they look and talk.

How I feel:

- ♥ I'm afraid of strangers, so stay with me when they're around.
- ♥ I feel strongly about what I want to do and what I don't want to do.
- ♥ I feel playful and like to tease.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Give me toys that make noise, such as bells, music boxes, or rattles.
- ♥ Let me try to feed myself, even though I'm messy.
- ♥ Say different sounds for me to imitate.

Baby's eyes

Since babies learn a lot by looking, it is helpful for you to know about their eyes and vision.

Vision specialists say it is normal for an infant's eyes to look crossed sometimes for a moment during the first 5 or 6 months of life. This can last up to 18 months.

It takes time to develop **binocularity** — having both eyes work together. If your baby's eyes are crossed often or she isn't getting better at using both eyes together, talk to a doctor or to an eye specialist.

Eye screening is done regularly by your child's pediatrician or family doctor. Some eye specialists recommend vision screenings by specialists (ophthalmologists or trained optometrists) beginning in the first year. But we follow the

advice of other experts who believe that vision screening in infancy can be done by family doctors, who will know if you need to see a specialist or not. Unless there are problems, the first visit to an eye specialist should be at about 3½ years old.

Keep these thoughts in mind:

- ♥ Put baby in the crib different ways so neither eye is favored when she looks around the room.
- ♥ Play with baby in ways that use both eyes and both sides of her body.
- ♥ Take baby for walks or even to the store, so she can see different things. Zoos, parks, flea markets, and museums are fun places for you and baby to see new things together.

Language games

Has your child learned to blow air? Does baby use his tongue on the roof of his mouth to make clicking sounds? These are two important tricks for learning to speak.

If you make a game out of blowing air and clicking your tongue, your child will try to imitate you.

Put a crumpled ball of paper on baby's highchair tray. Blow on the paper until it rolls toward him. See if your baby blows it back to you.

Now is also a good time to play the "touch and name" game. Touch different parts of your baby's body and name them: "This is Billy's foot. Here is Billy's nose. Where are Billy's fingers?"

Touch parts of your own or your partner's body and do the same thing: "Here is Mommy's nose. Here is Daddy's nose. Here is Billy's nose."

This game helps your baby learn about himself and his body, and understand the connection between words and objects.

Most infants cannot point to a named body part until about 17 months of age. But research shows that beginning to play language games now will help your child learn more quickly.



About weaning

As baby becomes more active, some mothers wean their baby from the breast (or bottle). We recommend you continue breastfeeding at least until baby is 12 months, if you can.

Storing baby's toys

Your baby probably has many books and toys by now, and you need an organized place to put them.

Shelves or low bookcases can be good places to store books and toys because everything is easy for you and baby to see and to get. Attach the bookcase to the wall, so baby can't pull it over if he tries to climb up on it. Organize the shelves. Make them attractive, and change them so baby discovers different toys on different days.

A large basket, even a plastic laundry basket, will keep all the toys in one place, and is easy to move. Baby can even play inside the basket.

A toy chest is the traditional place for toy storage. It makes the room look neat, but a baby will be less likely to explore toys that are out of sight. If you decide on a toy chest, look for these safety features:

- ♥ A lightweight lid that a small child can lift.
- ♥ Air holes, in case your child climbs inside the chest.
- ♥ Slow-release hinges, so fingers don't get pinched and so the lid can't drop suddenly on your child's head.
- ♥ Closings that don't lock automatically.
- ♥ No splinters or sharp metal edges.

Calm baby with bubbles

Going to the doctor's office may be upsetting for your baby. The doctor, after all, is a stranger and baby shots (immunizations) are painful. Blowing bubbles can distract and calm baby. Take along a bottle of bubbles with a small wand next time baby visits the doctor. Let the doctor know why you are using the bubbles. Before the doctor starts the examination, blow some bubbles to help baby feel more at ease. If baby needs a shot, save the bubbles for right afterwards so they don't lose the element of surprise. Blowing the bubbles after a shot helps to distract and focus baby's attention elsewhere. Of course, some babies have very strong reactions and may not calm so easily.

Sun safety

Babies need fresh air and light. But too much sun can be harmful. Baby skin is delicate and burns easily.

Researchers have recently found that severe sunburns in childhood can lead to a greater risk of the most deadly form of skin cancer (malignant melanoma) later in life.

Some simple steps can help you and baby enjoy the sun without sunburns:

- ♥ Stay out of the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
- ♥ Keep baby in the shade.
- ♥ Dress baby in a hat and lightweight clothes that cover the body.
- ♥ When baby is older than 6 months, always put a sunscreen lotion with a 15 or higher SPF (sun protection factor) on baby and yourself 30 minutes before you'll be in the sun. Test a small area on baby's skin for a reaction before applying all over. Reapply every 2 hours.
- ♥ If you use a stroller, keep the sun shade on.
- ♥ If you or baby do get sunburned, put cool, wet towels on the burns. Call the doctor about burns with a fever or blisters.
- ♥ Set a good example by practicing sun safety yourself.



Traveling with baby

Becoming a parent doesn't have to mean giving up vacations. With a little extra care, you can travel with children — even babies.

General tips:

- ♥ Make a checklist of everything you'll need, and use it.
- ♥ Try to stick to normal routines for mealtimes and bedtime.
- ♥ Take along a favorite blanket or stuffed animal to help baby feel more secure.
- ♥ Call ahead to reserve a crib if you'll be staying at a motel, or bring your own portable crib or playpen.
- ♥ Bring disposable diapers, a thermometer, bandages, baby's medicines (in the original bottles), and baby's doctor's phone number.

Travel by car:

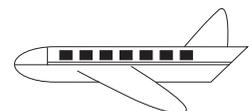
- ♥ Always use an approved infant car safety seat buckled properly in the back seat.* If your baby is unhappy, stop. Don't take her out of the car seat while the car is moving.
- ♥ Bring toys for her to play with in the car seat, but give her only one or two at a time. Save some toys for later.
- ♥ Be sure the passenger area is free of heavy things that could fly around and injure someone in a sudden stop.
- ♥ Allow more time than you think you'll need, and stop at least once every 2 hours for a change of scenery and a stretch.
- ♥ Bring a tape recorder and tapes of yourself reading stories or singing baby's favorite songs to play in the car.
- ♥ Plan to spend time reading stories and playing with your baby if someone else can drive.
- ♥ Bring simple snacks, finger foods, and iron-fortified infant formula if not breastfeeding.



*See "Buckle up baby, too," *Parenting the First Year, Month 1-2*, page 3 and "Car safety seat," *Parenting the First Year Month 6-7*, page 5.

Travel by airplane:

- ♥ Front seats have more room for baby things. Ask for them when you make your reservation.
- ♥ Although the airlines don't require the purchase of a seat for children younger than 2 years, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends using a child safety seat for your baby on the airplane. So you will need to reserve a seat for baby. Ask the airlines whether your infant car seat is approved for air travel.
- ♥ If you choose to travel without reserving a seat for baby, travel at non-peak times to improve your chances of having an empty seat next to you for your child. Bring the car safety seat along as luggage. Car rental agencies may not have car safety seats.
- ♥ Change baby in the airport restroom before boarding the plane. There is more room there than in the plane.
- ♥ Pack your carry-on bag with: baby's medicine, small toys, a change of clothes for yourself and for baby, non-messy snacks or baby food for each meal, infant formula if you are not breastfeeding, and enough disposable diapers and baby wipes to last until the next day.
- ♥ Sucking a bottle or pacifier or breastfeeding may help keep baby's ears from clogging painfully during take-offs and landings. Some people suggest cupping your hands over baby's ears.



Children learn by watching parents

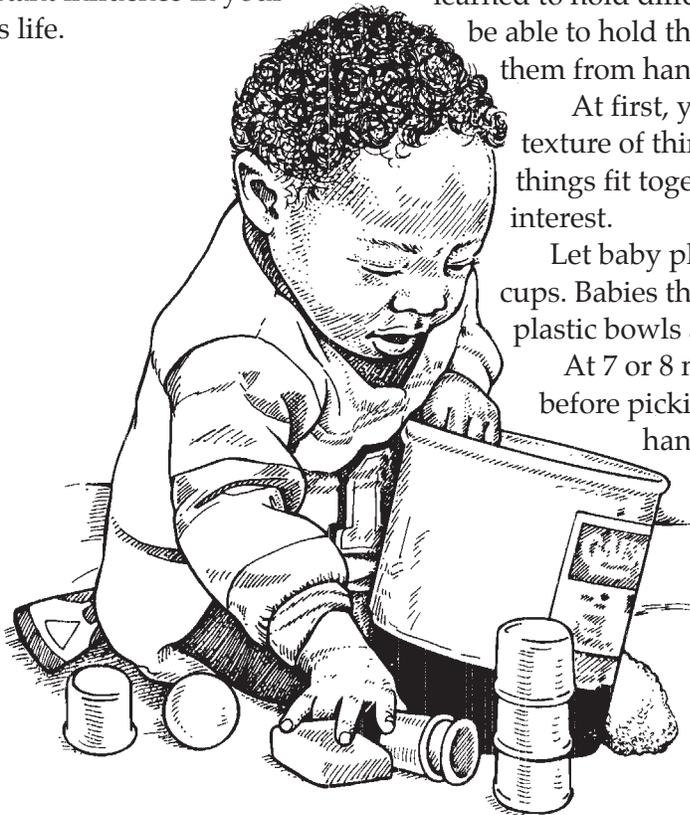
When raising their children, many parents either do what their parents did or do just the opposite. Have you thought about why you copy some things and reject others?

Even though your baby is only 6 months old, she is learning from your example. That is why it is so important to think about the examples and patterns you set, even at this early age.

Some patterns that influence your child's life are:

- ♥ How you talk to each other
- ♥ How you work out your problems
- ♥ How you show your feelings

Remember, you are the most important influence in your baby's life.



Separation distress is normal.

Does your baby get upset and clingy every time you step out of his sight? Then, your baby's behavior is very normal. This is the age when children learn to create a mental picture of Mom or Dad inside their heads, so they can miss them a lot when separated. That is why babies 7 or 8 months of age usually increase their separation distress.

You are the most important thing in your child's life right now — his main source of security — and your child will try to keep contact with you. As baby matures and learns that you always come back for him, he will be able to put up with longer separations. He will carry within himself the security you have provided.

Researchers have shown that children who are less clingy as toddlers and preschoolers had parents who consistently calmed their distress at this age. These children learned to feel secure and to calm themselves, and then became more independent as toddlers. Parents who tried to teach their 8-month-olds to be independent created just the opposite—toddlers who remained clingy because they had not learned to feel secure when separate from parents.

So go ahead and hug your baby when he cries. At this age, this is normal for both him and you.

Grasping and holding

In the early months, your baby held things in her hands in a single, clumsy way no matter how the object was shaped. Slowly, your child learned to hold different things in different ways. By now, she may be able to hold things between her thumb and forefingers, move them from hand to hand, and turn them skillfully around.

At first, your baby was interested in the size, shape, and texture of things. By now, she may also want to know how things fit together. If a toy has several parts, it will hold her interest.

Let baby play with nesting cups, such as plastic measuring cups. Babies this age also like to put things into containers. Try plastic bowls and small blocks.

At 7 or 8 months, most babies will put one thing down before picking up another. But baby is learning to use each hand by herself. She may be able to pass a toy from one hand to the other now. Soon your baby will be able to hold two objects at the same time.

Around 9 months, baby will hold and compare two toys, bang them, and try to fit them together or put one inside the other.

New foods for baby

Protein foods

Between 7 and 9 months, add strained or puréed meats, poultry, and fish to your baby's daily diet, if your doctor recommends them. Many infants are eating mashed foods by 8 months and finely chopped foods by 10 months.

Plain, single-ingredient foods such as chicken, beef, and fish are a better buy than vegetable-meat "baby dinners." There is as much protein in one jar of strained chicken as there is in more than four jars of strained chicken and noodles. Read baby food labels.

Note: Wait until your baby is about 1 year old to give whole eggs or egg whites. When you do, make sure they are fully cooked. Egg whites can cause allergic reactions in young infants. Undercooked eggs can cause food poisoning at any age.

Finger foods

You can add bread; toast; dry, unsweetened cereals like Kix[®] or Cheerios;[®] crackers; bagels; cooked rice or noodles; or pieces of flour tortillas to baby's diet. Try mild cheese cubes or strips; pieces of soft-cooked vegetables like potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, green beans, peas, or zucchini; or pieces of soft peeled fruits such as bananas, peaches, pears, or melon (no seeds). Give just a few bits at a time — no more than you're willing to pick up off the floor.*

Some foods can easily slip into a child's throat and cause choking. Do not give foods that are firm, round and slippery, or sticky. These include peanuts,

peanut butter, raisins, whole grapes, hard candies, popcorn, hard/raw fruits and vegetables (apple or pineapple chunks, carrots, etc.) and circles of hot dogs. Cut hot dogs the **long** way for children under 4 years old. Never let a child walk or run with food in his mouth. Be sure baby eats finger foods while sitting up.

If you are still unsure if a food is safe for your baby, ask yourself these questions:

- Does it melt in the mouth? Dry cereals and crackers that easily break apart in your mouth with no chewing are good choices.
- Does it mash easily? Well-cooked vegetables and fruits mash easily. Many canned fruits or vegetables also mash easily. (Make sure to choose canned foods that don't have added sugar or salt.)
- Can it be gummed? Pieces of ripe banana and well-cooked pasta can be gummed.

Fruit juice

By now, you may be giving your baby fruit juice from a cup. Read the labels to be sure it's 100 percent juice, and not fruit-flavored drinks that are mostly sugar and water. Your baby still needs to drink mostly breast milk or formula. A **half cup** of juice per day is plenty.

Note: Wait until your baby is about 1 year old to try orange or tomato juice because they can cause allergic reactions.

Credits

Copyright © 2011 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. All rights reserved. Send copyright inquiries to: Cooperative Extension Publishing, 432 N. Lake St., Rm. 227, Madison, WI 53706, pubs@uwex.edu.

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.

Advisory Board: Marguerite Barratt, dean and professor, School of Arts & Science, George Washington University; Stan Englander, pediatrician, All-Saints-Kurten Medical Group; Mary Gothard, public health educator, Bureau of Public Health Maternal & Child Health, Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services; Judith Myers-Walls, professor of human development & family studies and extension specialist, Purdue University.

University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties, publishes this information to further the purpose of the May 8 and June 30, 1914 Acts of Congress. An EEO/AA employer, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. If you need this information in an alternative format, contact Cooperative Extension Publishing or Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 501 Extension Building, 432 N. Lake Street, Madison, WI 53706, diversity@uwex.edu, phone: (608) 262-0277, fax: (608) 262-8404, TTY: 711 Wisconsin Relay.

This publication is available in English or Spanish from your Wisconsin county Extension office (www.uwex.edu/ces/cty) or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free: 1-877-947-7827 (WIS-PUBS) or visit our website: learningstore.uwex.edu.

* Reference to products is not to endorse them nor to exclude others that may be similar. Examples are a convenience to readers.

