



Parenting the First Year

MONTH

8-9

How baby is changing

Have you noticed that your baby understands more of what you say? When you say, "Look at the kitty," he listens, then looks around until he finds it. Baby is beginning to grasp whole ideas and is linking his eyesight and hearing together.

Baby may notice when you put something new in his room. He remembers what the whole room looks like, so he sees the new item right away. Try it!

Does your baby move toward the door before Daddy or Mommy walks through? Does he drop a toy and cover his ears, waiting for the thud? His mind is developing.

Baby may sit up on his own for longer periods. He can reach for things without falling, because he doesn't need to prop himself up with his hands. His neck and back are getting stronger, so he sits up straighter, too.

Is your child crawling? If not, he probably will soon. Some babies never crawl. They scoot on their bottoms or roll. Then they walk when they're ready. Is your baby like that?

Activity: Games babies play

"How big is baby? So big!"

At first, you might need to gently show your baby how to raise her arms up over her head while you say, "So big!"

Hide and seek

Big brother or sister can hide nearby. You can say, "Where is _____?" The baby can try to help you find the missing one.

Hiding things

Let your baby watch you as you hide a small toy under a cloth or cup, or in your pocket. Does she try to find it? If not, try covering only part of the toy.

Music fun

Your baby will like listening to many kinds of music with you and trying to dance. Inexpensive music boxes can be fun, and she can learn to start and stop the music all by herself.

Child guidance: Using words

Your baby can't talk yet. But he can understand a lot of words. You can use this to help him behave.

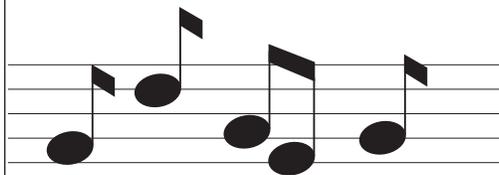
If you see the baby crawling toward your slippers — and you know they'll go into his mouth — say, "Yucky" or "Tastes bad," and give him something else to play with.

If your baby tries to touch the hot oven, say, "Hot," and move him away.

Don't just say "No" to things your baby does. Give him one- or two-word explanations to help him learn **why** he can't behave in certain ways. Research shows this really helps.

As your baby gets older, you can make explanations a little longer — three or four words instead of one or two.

Baby's memory is not as good as yours. Remember how many tries it took him to learn pat-a-cake or peek-a-boo? Don't expect him to learn to stay away from dirty slippers or hot stoves just because you tell him a few times.



Be good to yourself **Your baby wants you to know:**

What your baby needs most from you is the feeling that you really are happy to be her parent. To help you do that, you need to take care of yourself.

You can recharge your batteries by having an evening out with your partner or friends. Or hire a sitter to play with baby while you take a relaxing bath or read a book. If you know another family with a baby, you might trade off babysitting.

However you plan for it, be sure to take some time for yourself. Remember, happy parents make happy children.

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.

How I grow:

- ♥ I may crawl backward and forward on my stomach.
- ♥ I hold onto a toy, such as a rattle, for several minutes.
- ♥ I pick up small things like pieces of string.

How I talk:

- ♥ I let you know if I am happy, sad, or scared by the sounds I make.
- ♥ I still babble a lot and shout to get attention.
- ♥ I may recognize some words.
- ♥ I watch and try to imitate your mouth movements.

How I respond:

- ♥ I like to pat and kiss my reflection in the mirror.
- ♥ I turn and listen when I hear familiar sounds, such as the telephone or my name.
- ♥ I love to imitate people I know.

How I understand:

- ♥ I am very curious, and I want to explore everything.
- ♥ I know how to solve simple problems, such as making a toy bell ring.
- ♥ I remember events that just happened.

How I feel:

- ♥ I am frightened by new experiences and by new people.
- ♥ I may be upset when you leave me, even for a short time.
- ♥ I feel so relieved when you return. *Some babies show this less than others.*
- ♥ I'm upset when people make a lot of fuss over me.
- ♥ I get frustrated or lose my temper when I can't find something.

How you can help me learn:

- ♥ Read books to me. Point out pictures of things I see each day. For example, show me a picture of a ball and give me my toy ball at the same time.
- ♥ Hide a small toy under a cup or cloth for me to find.
- ♥ Take me for a walk outside to see leaves and flowers or icicles and snow figures!

Car safety

If baby is more than 20 pounds, you may have moved to a larger child car safety seat by now. But be sure it is still a *rear-facing* car seat placed in the back seat. Baby should ride in a rear-facing car seat until age 2.

Many people use a “convertible” child seat at this age. It can face the rear now, and later — after baby is 2 years old — can be strapped in facing forward.

Car crashes are the most serious threat to your baby’s safety. Here are a few points to remember to help you keep your whole family safe in the car:

- ♥ **Use baby’s car safety seat for every ride.** It won’t protect baby if he isn’t in it or if it isn’t installed right. See *Parenting the First Year, Month 1-2*.
- ♥ **All passengers and the driver should wear seat belts, with all children age 12 and under properly restrained in the back seat.**
- ♥ **Don’t allow yelling, horseplay, or other distractions when you drive.** If your child needs attention, pull off the road and stop. Never turn around in your seat when you’re driving.
- ♥ **Provide quiet games to keep children busy on long trips.** Tape-recorded stories or favorite songs are good, too.
- ♥ **Keep a flashlight, first aid kit, and emergency flares in the car.**
- ♥ **Stop every 2 hours.** Don’t try to go too far in one day.
- ♥ **NEVER** leave children alone in a car, even for a few minutes.
- ♥ **NEVER** let children play with the car controls, even when the car is parked.

Establish routines for baby

You may already have mealtime or bedtime routines for baby. Routines mean doing things in a certain order, at about the same time each day. Your baby feels more secure when you have a daily routine.

As baby’s mind develops, routines help him know what to expect. For example, if after baby’s bath you always read a story and then put him down for a nap, he starts to anticipate what is coming next. When baby knows what to expect this may cut down on mealtime or bedtime struggles. Soothing bedtime routines help calm baby for sleep. Babies, who are more easily upset by changes or new things, especially thrive on routines.

Try to stay consistent with your routines, but allow for some flexibility. On days when you or baby aren’t feeling well or a surprise guest arrives, the routine may need adjusting. Stick to baby’s routine as much as possible during busy holiday times or when you’re traveling. Routines are comforting!

Fear of strangers

Mixed up with baby’s fear of separation from you is a new fear or wariness of people he doesn’t know well.

Sometimes your baby will just have a serious, watchful stare at new people. Other times, he will look at the new person, then look away a few times before warming up and smiling. And sometimes he may cry and try to get away from a new person.

Usually, baby is afraid of what the stranger **DOES** rather than who that person **IS**. Try to see things from your baby’s point of view. You don’t want a stranger hugging you; your baby doesn’t like it, either. So don’t just hand him to someone he doesn’t know well. Hold him while he gets to know the person. Have the new person smile, talk to him, and perhaps offer him a favorite toy. Let your baby make new friends at his own pace.

Grandparents or friends may have a hard time understanding why your baby gets upset when they pick him up. Assure them that it will be worth the effort to get acquainted slowly.

Traffic safety experts recommend that **all children age 12 and under sit properly restrained in the back seat** due to dangers from air bags.



Spanking baby doesn't work.

Every parent uses some form of punishment with children, such as taking away a toy.

No baby should ever be spanked or slapped. Reasonable people may disagree on whether a preschooler or school-age child should be spanked by a parent, but it is difficult to defend the spanking of babies under any circumstance. Child development experts tell us that discipline is important for good child rearing, but physical punishment is not necessary to teach children good behavior. Hitting or spanking a child is against the law in child care homes and centers in many states.

Spanking a baby is dangerous.

Many babies are injured this way every year. Also, spanking doesn't work. Babies are too young to understand, so they don't learn from spanking. It just makes a baby cry more, and it will make you feel bad.

When your baby does something you don't like, **redirect** her to an activity you do like. Show her a better way.

Your baby may upset you by waking you up all night, crying a lot, or messing a diaper just as you put it on. **Remember:** Baby doesn't do this on purpose to make you mad. Baby's not smart enough for that yet. She can't help it, so it makes no sense to get angry.

What can you do? Call a friend and ask what she would do. Get someone to watch your baby while you get some fresh air. You may come back with a new outlook on living with your baby.

Sleep problems

Many 8-month-olds have trouble settling down to sleep. They're so excited about sitting, crawling, and exploring that they don't want to go to bed!

Parents need time to themselves. Don't feel guilty about wanting to enjoy some peace and quiet or time with your partner. Baby's bedtime is your decision.

Here are a few tips to make bedtime easier:

- ♥ Don't play exciting games or roughhouse with baby just before bedtime.
- ♥ Always put your baby to bed at around the same time.
- ♥ Put your baby to bed when he is drowsy but awake.
- ♥ Put your baby to bed in the same place in which he will wake up.
- ♥ Spend some time each evening cuddling, reading, singing, or talking to your baby at bedtime. **Routines** — doing the same thing in the same way — help children settle down to sleep.
- ♥ Try giving baby a gentle massage for 15 minutes. Research shows this helps most children sleep through the night.
- ♥ Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle; this can cause cavities or choking.

Some parents like to hold and rock their baby or walk with him until he falls asleep. Some parents like to lie down and cuddle with baby at bedtime until he sleeps. These are normal practices in most of the world. If you like this, then do it! Nothing else could make baby feel more secure.

If baby wakes alone, he can be scared and may cry for you. If he is frightened, then of course you should comfort him. He needs to know he can count on you when he is afraid.

Some parents want to teach their child to fall asleep on his own, even at this young age. If you want this and your baby cries for you after you leave the bedroom, what should you do? Check on him right away but keep the lights dim. If he is OK, pat his back for 1 to 2 minutes and leave.

If he continues to cry for you, check on him every few minutes until he falls back to sleep. Slowly increase the time between your checks. Try to be understanding, not angry. Show him that you are there for him, but that he must learn to sleep on his own. If you are consistent — and if he is not truly afraid of being alone — then in time he will learn to sleep on his own.

Activity: Reading to baby

Showing books to your baby is a great way to help her feel good about reading. You'll probably agree that success in school and in later life depends on reading.

Keep books where your baby can see and get them. But also find time **every day** for sharing books together.

Babies like books with big, colorful pictures of things they know about, such as clothes, food, trees, cars, and animals. Sometimes you can read the story. Sometimes you can point to the pictures and talk about them. For example: "Look at the kitty. She's smelling the flowers." Sometimes you can just make up a story.

If you don't have many books at home, maybe you can borrow them from a friend or the library. Or it's fun to make a book.

You can make a book for your baby:

1. Cut sturdy fabric or cardboard into 8 to 10 square pieces.
2. Glue a large, colorful picture and, if you want, write a single word or phrase in big letters on each page.
3. Sew the book together or punch holes and tie it with yarn.

Here are some suggestions for pages:

- ♥ Pictures of baby, other family members, and pets.
- ♥ A small shatter-proof mirror.
- ♥ A picture of baby's favorite toy.
- ♥ A picture of baby's favorite food.
- ♥ Pictures of familiar things cut from magazines.
- ♥ A picture of plants or flowers like ones that grow nearby.
- ♥ A bunny made from fake fur.
- ♥ A shoe made from a scrap of leather with holes and laces.
- ♥ A piece of sandpaper.



Baby's mind is developing

Baby is beginning to make connections between things. She may crawl toward the kitchen when she hears Mom or Dad fixing dinner. Or she may turn toward the door when she hears the car in the driveway.

Watch for signs that your baby's mind is growing. Try eye-to-eye contact. See if you can create **joint attention**, where both you and baby are looking at the same thing at the same time, and both of you KNOW it!

See if you can spot baby pointing to something and looking back and forth between you and the thing to get you to notice and talk about it. Your baby is engaging you in "joint attention" on the same subject. This is conversation!

Babies who are blind do the same thing, beginning at the same age (around 8 months). They stop doing this after a few months, however, because they don't receive the same (visual) feedback from parents. Parents of these babies need to use voice and touch to create joint attention.

Tooth care

By now, your baby may be teething. In about 2 years, she will have 20 teeth.

If any of these teeth are decayed, your child may have what dentists call “nursing bottle mouth.” Bacteria in baby’s mouth react with sugar to make acid.

When she is awake, swallowing helps wash acid away. When your baby sleeps, more acid stays on her teeth to cause cavities. So don’t put your baby to bed with a bottle.

Even though your child will lose her baby teeth, it is important to keep teeth healthy. Baby teeth help keep space open in the mouth so adult teeth aren’t crowded. Baby teeth also help baby chew foods and make sounds for learning to talk.

You can care for your baby’s teeth by providing a balanced diet and by wiping her teeth with a clean washcloth or gauze pad after meals.

If your water comes from a well, your doctor may suggest testing it and adding fluoride if needed. This helps teeth grow strong.

New foods for baby

Mashed foods — Now that your baby is 8 months old and may have some teeth, you can give her some foods that are mashed with a fork in addition to puréed foods.

Mash a favorite cooked vegetable or meat with a fork. Use a potato masher or a blender for foods like bananas, cooked apples, winter squash, white or sweet potatoes, or carrots.

Make sure the food has no big lumps, pieces of skin, seeds, or strings. Mashed foods are a little thicker than puréed foods.

Baby food tips:

- ♥ Don’t add salt, sugar, or seasonings to baby foods. Foods that taste bland to an adult are new to babies. There is enough natural sodium in foods to keep baby healthy.
- ♥ Make baby foods out of food soon after it has been cooked. Leftovers may be contaminated with bacteria. Use fresh, frozen, or canned food. If you use frozen or canned food, buy the form with the least amount of added sugar, salt, and fancy sauces that baby doesn’t need. For example, use fruits canned in water or juice rather than heavy syrup.
- ♥ Raw or soft-boiled eggs and unpasteurized (raw) milk or cheese are not safe for babies. They can cause food poisoning.
- ♥ Don’t give baby chunky foods such as corn, nuts, popcorn, and seeds or coarse-textured foods such as crumbly cookies. These foods are hard for baby to eat and can cause choking. Whole grapes and round pieces of hot dog are especially dangerous.
- ♥ It’s OK to serve foods cold. Most babies don’t mind. If you want to warm baby food, do it just before serving. If you use a microwave oven, stir the food after heating and re-check for hot spots.
- ♥ **Never** leave a baby alone while eating.



Children of battered women

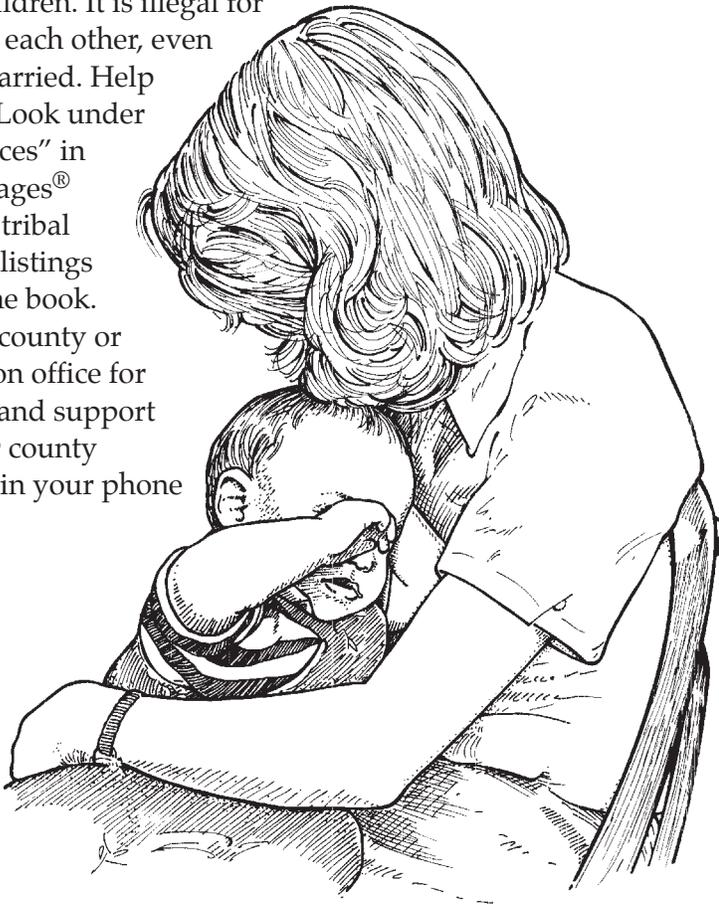
About 1 in 6 U.S. families experiences some violence against women. Even if the children in these homes are not being beaten, they are affected by what they see their parents doing.

Research shows that seeing parents hit each other has different effects on girls and boys. Girls who see their parents hitting each other are more likely to be beaten themselves when they grow up and enter their own relationships with men. Boys who see their parents hitting each other are more likely to be violent against women later in their lives.

Children in violent families learn that it is OK to hit the people they love. They also learn to solve family conflicts with violence.

Most families solve their disagreements by talking them out, not by hitting. When partners don't agree, they can try to compromise, take turns doing what they want to do, or seek outside help to come up with a solution.

If you or someone you know is living in a violent home, think about the children. It is illegal for people to hit each other, even if they are married. Help is available. Look under "Social Services" in the Yellow Pages® or county or tribal government listings of your phone book. Or call your county or area Extension office for information and support (listed under county government in your phone book).



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