

Just in Time Parenting



You and Your Baby Are Learning Together

You and your baby are spending a lot of time getting to know each other.

Most of the baby's time is spent crying, eating, and sleeping, while most of your time is spent figuring out the best way to meet your baby's needs.

Do you feel as if you will never sleep through the night again? Are you a little nervous about taking care of this helpless but demanding baby? Do you feel tired a lot but excited, too? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you are like most new parents.

There are new things to learn when you become a parent. If you have questions or doubts, call your doctor or parenting hotline. It is better to get the correct information from a professional than to worry whether you're doing the right thing. Taking care of a newborn is a challenging job, especially the first time around.

Use Car Safety Seats

Always have your baby's car seat professionally installed in the back seat of your car. Call the local police or fire station, or a child care resource and referral agency to find out where to take your car to have the car seat correctly installed.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children should always sit in the back seat of a car. Many cars have front air bags that, when inflated, can injure or even kill small children. Keep your baby in an approved car seat that faces the back seat until she is 2 years old or until she reaches the highest weight or height allowed by the car safety seat's manufacturer.

What's It Like to Be 1 Month Old?

How I Grow and Talk

- ☐ I cry when I'm hungry, wet, tired, in pain, or when I want to be held.
- ☐ I'm beginning to make some throaty sounds.
- ☐ I like your hand behind my neck when you move me, so my head doesn't wobble.
- ☐ I turn my head sideways when I'm on my stomach.
- ☐ I root around and try to suck even when I'm not feeding.
- ☐ I roll part of the way from my back to my side. Never leave me alone in a place where I could fall.
- ☐ I keep my hands in a fist or slightly open most of the time.
- ☐ I have a soft spot on my head. My skull was soft to allow me to be born more easily. My flexible skull will give my brain room to grow.

How I Respond

- ☐ I like to look at things that have a light verses dark contrast.
- ☐ I like to look at your face the most, but I like mirrors, too. I make eye contact with you.
- ☐ I stare at things, but I don't grab for them yet. Please change my position so I can look at different things.
- ☐ I don't show much expression in my face, but I will soon!
- ☐ I may smile when I see or hear you. Don't believe those people who say I'm smiling because of gas. Babies smile for real (it's not just a reflex) within two to eight weeks after birth.

How I Understand and Feel

- ☐ I feel comforted when you hold me close, smile, and talk gently to me. Don't be afraid of spoiling me because I need to be held and touched.
- ☐ I tune in to Mom's voice, and I like to hear her heartbeat and similar beats or rhythms. I spent a lot of time listening to her voice and heartbeat before I was born.
- ☐ I can recognize Mom by her smell. As Dad and other care-givers play with me and help me, I'll recognize them too.

Some children do things earlier or later than described here.

Most differences are normal. Focus on what your child can do and get excited about each new skill. If you notice that your child is lagging behind in one or more areas for several months, circle the things that your child cannot do. Check the things your child can do. Use this list to talk with your doctor about your child's development.



Talk to Your Baby as You Care for Him

- Imitate the sounds your baby makes.
- Use complete sentences. "It's time for your bath." "Now, I'm going to wash your face; scrub-a-dub-dub." "Won't it feel good to be clean?"
- Your child will talk back to you by smiling, crying, making soft sounds, and making arm and leg movements.
- Most of your child's vocabulary will consist of "oo" sounds.
- Try to figure out what your baby is trying to tell you and respond to it.
- Get down on your baby's level and look into his eyes when you are "talking" to each other.

Your Baby Learns by Seeing and Hearing

At first, your baby stares at objects. If an object is just 7 to 8 inches away, she can focus on it pretty well. Later, she begins to watch and follow objects with her eyes.



To help your baby learn to lift her head, lie on your back and put your baby on your tummy. Call her name and encourage her to lift her head to see you.

Encourage your baby to track your face. As you move from left to right, see if she will follow you with her eyes and turn her head.

Talk to your baby from different places in the room. As she searches for you with her eyes, she will start to learn how to coordinate sight and sound.

Hang a mobile over your baby's crib. Select one without string or elastic that could entangle her. Place the mobile on one side of the crib for a few days, and then move it to the other side. This will help your baby look in both directions.

Say simple nursery rhymes to your baby. She will enjoy the sound of your voice and the repetition of the words.

Newborn Screening

Newborn screenings are required in every state. Newborn screenings are important because they can detect problems, many of which can be corrected if found early.

Some states screen with one test and other states require two tests. The first test was given at the hospital before your baby came home. If you live in a state that requires two tests, the second test is done at the first well baby checkup, usually at 1 to 2 weeks of age. If you aren't sure whether a second newborn screening test is recommended, please ask at your baby's well baby checkup.

It is also a good idea at this time to ask about immunizations for your baby which should start at 1 to 2 months old. Ask your health care provider for an immunization schedule.



Give Your Baby a Kick Start to Healthy Eating and Fitness

One of the most important things parents can do for their children is to help them learn how to be healthy. They can do this by feeding babies when they are hungry and stopping when they are full. They can help babies enjoy being physically active every day.

Your baby uses signals to “talk” to you. Learn to read those signals so he can learn to depend on you. It helps for you to be there for your baby when he needs you.

When your baby is hungry, he may:

- Begin to move his mouth
- Rapidly move his eyes in his sleep
- Try to suck on his hand or tongue, your shoulder, or anything he can touch
- Bob his head and search around
- Be fussy, squirm, stretch, and clench his fists or toes

When your baby has had enough food, he may:

- Push away the bottle or breast
- Turn his head away
- Put his hands in front of his mouth
- Cry and fuss
- Forcefully move his entire body away from you
- Smile and relax his body
- Fall asleep with the nipple in his mouth

Help your baby learn to enjoy moving. With your baby on his back, hold his ankles and gently move his legs as if he is pedaling a bicycle. Sing a song and keep rhythm with the movements. Lift his arms gently up and down over his head — and then in and out. With your baby on his back, hold a toy above his body. Encourage him to try to reach for it.

Give your baby a gentle massage after his bath. Touching him helps you bond.

Feeding Your Baby

All your baby's food and nutrition needs can be met with breast milk or formula.

When a baby needs to eat every two or three hours, even during the night, it may seem as if you'll never get to sleep again. As she gets bigger, though, she won't need to be fed as often.

When should you feed your baby? Whenever she is hungry. Watch the clock but also watch—and listen—to your baby. Babies usually cry when they're hungry. If fed when hungry, many babies will start to get themselves on a regular schedule in about a month.

If you try to set a rigid feeding schedule, you and your baby may both be frustrated and unhappy. So, be as flexible as you can be during this first month.

Rather than growing a little bit each day, babies grow in spurts. During growth spurts, your baby may seem hungry all the time. She will stop eating when she is full, so don't try to get her to take more than she wants.

Breast Feeding Tips

Breastfed babies usually need to eat more often than bottle-fed babies, especially during the first few months. It is common to nurse a baby every hour or so during the part of the day when the baby is most

active. Breast milk naturally changes based on the needs of the baby.

Breast milk is the best food for babies and the only food they need for the next four to six months. Breast milk is easier to digest and helps protect babies from infections and allergies.

One way to know your baby is getting enough milk is to count wet diapers – there should be at least six a day. If you need help with breastfeeding, contact a lactation consultant at your hospital or your county WIC breastfeeding staff.

Bottle Feeding Tips

If you feed your baby formula, cool formula won't hurt him. Most parents want to warm formula to body temperature. Don't heat bottles in a microwave oven. The bottle may feel cool on the outside but will still have hot spots inside that could burn your baby's tender mouth.

Heat the bottle in a pan of warm water that has been removed from the burner, or hold the bottle under hot tap water for a minute. Always shake the bottle well to mix the formula. Test the temperature by sprinkling some formula on the back of your hand. If it feels lukewarm, it's OK for him to drink.



When should you feed your baby? Whenever she is hungry. Watch the clock but also watch—and listen—to your baby.

Plan for Quality Child Care

If you plan to go back to work or school after having a baby, you should start looking for quality child care as soon as possible.

Quality child care is friendly, warm, and loving care. Such care can be found in a caregiver's home, in a child care center, or with someone who comes into your home. It goes beyond caring for your baby's need for sleep, food, and physical comfort.

Look for a licensed child care center or licensed home that is clean and safe. Be sure there are not too many babies for the caregiver to handle. Ask questions such as:

"What will you do if my baby cries a lot?" "Do you take care of sick children?" "Will my baby have the same caregiver every day?"

The goal is for you to feel as comfortable as you can about the child care provider that you select. Find a caregiver you have a good feeling about. Ask other people you trust for referrals or contact a child care resource and referral agency in your state.

Once someone begins taking care of your baby, visit the site during the day. Is the caregiver giving your baby special, loving attention? Good child care is based on mutual respect and open communication between parents and caregivers.



Take Time to Care for Yourself and Your Baby

Mom, make and keep the appointment for your own six-week doctor's checkup. This is very important!

During the first few weeks after your baby is born, it is not unusual to feel tired or depressed or to find yourself on the verge of tears for no apparent reason. Both mothers and fathers may experience a letdown — similar to what most of us feel after any long-awaited moment has come and gone.

New mothers may go through "the baby blues," or postpartum blues. The baby blues come from the many changes your body goes through after your baby is born. You may feel discouraged, tense, or sad. These feelings are normal. Rest assured that many new parents have such feelings and that they are usually only temporary.

To deal with the baby blues, keep your daily routine simple. Talk to your partner, a family member, a good friend, or your doctor about your feelings. It helps to talk to someone who is close to you and cares about you. If you have a partner, remember you're in this together.

Ask nothing of yourself except what you must do. Plan a nap for yourself around the baby's schedule. Eat healthy foods and take relaxing breaks.

Try to be flexible. You will feel less worn out at the end of the day if you can relax more during the day. Give yourself a chance. Pretty soon you will feel better about yourself and parenting.

CRYING IS A CALL FOR HELP!



WHEN YOUR BABY CRIES,

he is trying to tell you something. You just have to figure out what it is. Here are some things your baby may be trying to tell you.

HE MAY BE HUNGRY. Babies may need to eat more often than you expect. If it has been an hour or more since your baby was fed, he may be telling you he's hungry.

HE MAY BE LONELY. If your baby calms down and stays calm as soon as you pick him up, he missed you. Your baby's need for closeness is very real. You can't spoil a baby by cuddling him when he needs it.

HE MAY HAVE A WET DIAPER. Some babies don't mind; others do.

HE MAY BE SLEEPY. Some babies fuss a bit before sleeping.

HE MAY BE IN PAIN. He may be uncomfortable because a pin is pricking him or his clothes have sharp tags or zippers.

HE MAY BE COLD OR HOT. Feel your baby's back or tummy to see if he is too cool or too hot. Adjust clothing to make him comfortable. Dress your baby as you would yourself or add one extra layer of clothing.

HE MAY BE OVERSTIMULATED. Sometimes your baby may get too excited about everything going on around him. Rock your baby in a dimly lit room to calm him.

NEVER SHAKE A BABY! Do not shake your baby. Babies' brains are still fragile. Shaking can cause permanent damage to her brain.

Babies do not intend to upset you. At this age, they can't control when they start to cry. They are too young to understand how much their crying can get on your nerves and will cry more if you spank them or treat them roughly.

If you've tried everything - feeding, changing, cuddling - and your baby still cries, call a friend or relative to watch your baby for an hour while you take a break. Everyone needs a little time away every now and then.

If you feel stressed, your baby's doctor may have a referral to a counselor or other mental health provider.

You Can Cope With a Crying Baby

- While holding your baby with her head up and her feet down, rock and stop. Then rock and stop again. This usually will help her quiet down.
- Rock continuously with your baby lying across your lap. This may put her to sleep.
- Swaddle or wrap your baby in a warm, soft blanket with just her head uncovered.
- Burp your baby gently to see if an air bubble in her stomach is making her uncomfortable.
- Give her a pacifier. Sucking is soothing to many babies and helps them calm down.
- Cure diaper rash by leaving the diaper off and wrapping your baby loosely in a blanket. Powder her bottom with cornstarch instead of powder.
- Care for a crying baby in shifts. Take turns with your partner, a relative, or a friend so you can get a break.

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Month 1

Place Babies on Their Back to Sleep

Put your baby on his back to sleep. This will help prevent breathing problems and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Do not use soft bedding materials such as waterbeds, soft mattresses, pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals. Your baby cannot move them if they happen to get on his face and he may not be able to breathe.

Use a firm mattress, and clothe your baby in a one-piece sleeper outfit to keep him warm while sleeping.

Want to learn more?

For a free online version of this newsletter, more parenting info and updated links, visit www.jitp.info

Questions? Need help? Contact your local extension office.

This newsletter gives equal space to both sexes. If he or she is used, we are talking about all children.

Credits: This newsletter is adapted from Extension Just In Time Parenting newsletters in California, Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Wisconsin.



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Reviewed and updated in 2019 by Dan Weigel, Ph. D.