



# Just in Time Parenting

## Take Good Care of Yourself

You need energy and stamina to be a good parent, so do your best to be healthy. Sleep. Eat. Try to find time each day to relax and exercise, but that can be hard with a new baby.

**The following exercises take only a few minutes and will help you feel refreshed.**

- Lie flat on your back. Take a deep breath. Now, breathe out slowly. Repeat five times.
- Lie flat with your arms at your sides. Move your arms out to shoulder level, keeping elbows stiff.
- Raise your arms over your head and bring your hands together. Repeat five times.
- Lie flat and raise your head, touching your chin to your chest. Try not to move any other part of your body. Repeat a few times.

Eat healthy foods. For more information on eating healthy, call your local Extension office or go to [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).

Plan and take time for yourself. Find a friend or relative to watch your baby while you take time away. Do something that will refresh you and make you happy to be back home. Anything that makes you a happier, more enthusiastic person is bound to make you a better parent. Be kind to everyone, and take a “parenting break.”

## Parents Are Baby’s First and Best Teachers

Your child will learn more from you than anyone else. She is continuously learning about the world around her through her senses of smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch. You can help your baby develop her senses by showing her things that can be seen, heard, and touched.

Help your baby strengthen and use her muscles. Find attractive items that will catch her attention. Show her interesting things to look at and reach for. As you show her an item, tell her about it.

Playing with your baby gives her a chance to explore the world and satisfy her growing curiosity. She will enjoy and benefit from your loving attention.



# Take Your Baby to the Doctor and Keep Him Healthy

Check with your doctor, nurse, or clinic about the immunizations your baby needs. Immunizations help to prevent diseases that could change the life of your baby and your family. Ask your doctor for an immunization schedule so you can keep track of his immunizations.

Keep going to the well baby visits. The doctor will check to see that everything is developing well. Many problems can be corrected if they are caught early.

Don't be afraid to call your baby's doctor or local nurse hotline and ask for advice. There will come a time when your baby will have a cold or fever, or when he acts as if he doesn't feel well. The doctor expects you to call when there is a problem or when you have a question.

If you are concerned about your baby, tell your doctor that you would feel better if you could bring him to the office to be checked. Your doctor will listen to you. Remember, you know your baby better than anyone else.

Your doctor will want to know if your baby has a fever and whether it is a low fever or a high fever. Learn how to take your baby's temperature by looking in a baby care book or asking a friend, nurse, or doctor.

Before you go to the doctor, write down your questions so you won't forget them. When you talk with the doctor, whether it is in person or on the phone, have the following information written down in front of you:



## Baby Exam Checklist

### Your Baby's Temperature

#### Pain

- Screaming
- Head rolling
- Pulling up legs
- A different kind of cry
- Cries when touched

#### Appetite

- None
- Very little
- Vomiting

#### Breathing

- Difficult
- Fast
- Slow
- Coughing
- Wheezing

#### Eyes/Ears

- Discharge
- Pulling or rubbing

#### Skin

- Flushed or sweaty
- Pale
- Rash

#### Bowels

- Watery
- Slimy
- Hard or dry

#### Mood

- Too quiet
- Fussy
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits

Listen carefully to the instructions the doctor gives you. Write them down. Don't be embarrassed if you need the doctor to repeat or explain something. Read the instructions you have written back to the doctor to make sure you understand them. The instructions need to be followed carefully. Look at them later to see that you are following them.

# What's It Like to Be 2 Months Old?

## How I Grow and Talk

- My head is still a little wobbly when I'm propped up.
- I hold my head up for a few minutes and turn it sideways, when I'm on my stomach.
- I cry with real tears now, but usually only enough to wet my eyes.
- I move my arms and legs and "bicycle" with my feet when I get excited.
- I hold onto things for a little while. Did you notice that my hands are open most of the time now?
- I gurgle, laugh, and smile when I'm happy.
- I like to try out cooing sounds.
- Make it easier for me to hear and learn the patterns of words. Talk slowly, raise the pitch of your voice, and say your words VERY clearly. When you repeat words and phrases, that helps me learn, too.

## How I Respond

- If I am a quiet baby, I spend a lot of time just looking. If I am an active baby, I will spend more time moving, smiling or screaming depending on how I feel.
- I am fascinated by my own hands. First, I may just look at them. Then I may bring them to my mouth. This may have happened before, but now it is because I decided to move them.
- I blink at shadows made by my own hands.
- I follow you with my eyes when you move.
- I can follow moving objects with my eyes.
- I can see bright colors now.
- I smile at people.
- I quiet down when I suck my fingers, a bottle, or a pacifier.
- I perform just to get your attention. I love it when you get excited about what I do.
- I don't like some noises, such as loud televisions and radios. I will tell you this by fussing. Turn it down, Mom and Dad!



## How I Understand and Feel

- I need lots of cuddling and holding.
- I can have lots of feelings, including feeling happy, scared, or uncomfortable.
- I feel happy when I hear you tell me that I am beautiful and you love me.
- I feel happy and secure when you give me what I need, such as feeding me when I'm hungry, changing my diapers when I'm wet, or rocking me when I'm tired.
- I recognize different voices and people.
- I recognize a few familiar things, such as my bottle.
- I like to stare at people and things.

**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.*

# CRYING IS A CALL FOR HELP!

Researchers believe that babies increase the amount of time they cry between birth and 2 months of age. That is why it's so important to learn what the crying means and how to cope with it. When your baby is crying, use this checklist to help figure out what the cries mean:



## Does your baby have wet or soiled diapers?

- ▶ Check her diapers to see if she needs to be changed.

## Is she hungry?

- ▶ Offer her some milk and see if she is ready to eat. Be sure to burp your baby often to get out air bubbles.

## Is she lonely?

- ▶ Call her name to let her know you are coming. She may even stop crying before you get there. If your baby calms and stays calm after you pick her up, she missed you! Your baby's need for closeness is very real.

## Is she bored?

- ▶ Give your baby a new view. Change her position. Hang something over the crib that she can see but not reach. Put her where she can keep an eye on you.

## Is she tired?

- ▶ Some babies get fussy before falling to sleep.

## Is she too hot or too cold?

- ▶ Touch your baby's tummy. If she feels too hot or too cold, adjust her clothing. Try to keep the room an even temperature — neither too hot, nor too cold.

## Is she uncomfortable?

- ▶ Does she have diaper rash? Leave diapers off so air can help her skin heal. Is your baby's clothing too tight? Is a pin pricking her? Are there sharp or scratchy edges on labels or zippers?

## Is there too much going on around your baby?

- ▶ Take her to a quiet place with dim lights. Hold her close and talk to her with your soothing voice. Rock your baby in a rocking chair.

## Is your baby having trouble calming down?

- ▶ Sing a gentle song over and over. Play soft, soothing music. Help her learn to comfort herself. Hold her hand in yours or help her find her hand to suck on.

## Give Your Baby a Kick Start to Healthy Eating and Fitness

Your baby is beginning to hold her head up, but her tongue cannot manage food, not even cereal. If you try to feed your baby with a spoon, she will push the spoon and food out of her mouth with her tongue. She could choke if you put cereal in a bottle and try to feed it to her.

Your baby uses signals to “talk” to you. Learn the cues she gives when she is hungry and full. This will help set the stage for a lifetime of fitness.

### When your baby is hungry, she may:

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

### When your baby has had enough food, she may:

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

Help your baby learn to enjoy moving. Encourage her to turn over by placing toys just out of her reach. She may try to twist toward them.

Help your baby stand up on your lap. Hold her up under her arms and bounce your legs. Dance with and sing to your baby. She loves to move to music.

Watch your baby. She may propel herself up on her chest. Encourage her to try.



## Feeding Time Is a Special Time to Build Love and Trust

Hold your baby so he can see your face when you feed him. Feed him with breast milk or fortified infant formula. Do not feed him solid food yet.

Breast milk is best. It has all the nutrition babies need and protects against food allergies and some diseases. If you have started breastfeeding, keep up the good work.

Parents once thought that feeding solid foods at bedtime would help their babies sleep through the night. Not true! Feeding solids before your baby is ready may trigger allergies and/or cause him to eat too much.

Your baby's digestive system is not ready to handle foods other than breast milk or infant formula. His tongue and swallowing skills won't develop enough for solid foods until he is about 4 months old.

Night feedings don't last forever. Babies will usually sleep through the middle of the night feeding by the time they weigh about 11 pounds.

# Let's Play. It Helps Me Learn!

## Watch Out!

Stay close to your baby and don't leave him alone on a table or chair. You will be surprised at how fast he can turn and roll off. Active babies can move or tip infant carrier seats. Always use the safety belts that come with the seats.

Never place a carrier seat on soft, plush surfaces, which could make the carrier unstable and tip over.

These games will help your baby develop neck and eye muscles:

### Listening Games

Talk to your baby. Call out when you are coming to your baby's crib. She will learn to recognize your voice and look forward to seeing you.

Babies like simple games best. Look at your baby when you are about 10 inches away. Catch your

baby's eye and make a sound. Wait to see what she does. Make the sound again. If your baby likes the game, do it again and make different sounds.

Speak slowly using a high-pitched voice. Speak in short phrases, and change the tone of your voice. Invite your baby to respond by raising your eyebrows, changing your voice pitch, or saying something such as, "What do you think?"

Use different objects that make noise when you play with your baby. Babies like music boxes, bells, rattles, and squeak toys and even the crinkling of paper. Remember, though, babies like to play for only a minute or two at a time.



Help your baby learn about the world by telling her about the sounds she hears. Tell your baby what is happening when the telephone rings, when you drop something, when you turn on the water in the sink, or even when she burps. When you say, "Did you hear that?" in an excited tone of voice, your baby thinks you are having fun, too.

Learn your baby's way of telling you that she is listening. She might smile, wiggle her body, or stop what she was doing to tell you she is listening. She might also show that she is listening in ways that are difficult to see. For example, she might change her breathing pattern or move her hand.

### Touching Games

Your baby likes your touch. Rub his body and give him a gentle massage after a bath. Give your baby textures to touch. He likes the feel of soft fabric and different textures on his skin. Place him on a clean carpet, a terry cloth towel, or a smooth blanket. Touch his arms and hands with stuffed animals, rubber toys, and smooth and rough fabrics.

## Keep Your Baby Safe When He Sleeps

The three things that belong in the crib are (1) a firm mattress, (2) a tight fitting sheet, and (3) your beautiful baby.

Keep these things OUT of the crib: pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys, bumper pads, and other soft items.

In addition:

Be sure your baby's crib is in a smoke-free place.

Do not place the crib near draperies or blinds where your baby could become entangled and strangle on the cords.

Babies should sleep in a safe crib. Your baby's mattress should be firm and snugly fit the crib. The space between the mattress edge and crib frame should not be more than the width of two of your fingers. Cover the mattress with a fitted bottom crib sheet. If it is chilly, put your baby in a sleeper instead of using a blanket that could cover his face. If you must use a blanket, place your baby so that his feet are at the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, covering only as high as your baby's chest.

Keep your baby from overheating. Never cover your baby's head with a blanket. Keep your baby at a temperature that feels comfortable to you, about 68 to 72 degrees F.

Do not overdress your baby. Watch for signs that he is too warm: sweating, damp hair, flushed cheeks, heat rash, or rapid breathing.

Check the batteries in your smoke alarm. A good time to do this is when the time changes to daylight-saving time.

Always place your baby on his back when he is in his crib. Your baby may sleep anywhere from 2–10 hours at a time.

## Could Your Baby Have Colic?

Colicky babies have tummy pains and loud, piercing cries. Sometimes, this will help:

- Lay your baby across your knees.
- Rub or pat her back.
- Walk with your baby or use an infant swing.
- Change bath time to evening.

Try a pacifier. Sucking helps relax her stomach. If you use a pacifier, use it safely. Replace pacifiers frequently because they can fall apart. To avoid strangulation, do not put a pacifier on a string or ribbon around your baby's neck. Wash the pacifier if it falls on the floor.

Talk to your baby's doctor for more ideas.



# Just in Time Parenting

Month 2

## Help Your Baby Learn to Roll From Side to Back

When you have time to watch, find a rattle or noisy toy. Place your baby on his side. See if he will follow the noisy toy with his eyes and then roll to his back. If he doesn't, help him by gently moving his shoulder or hip.

Rolling from back to side is difficult for a baby. When he does roll over, even with your help, be sure to praise him by talking to him and giving him loving hugs.

When reading this newsletter, remember: Every baby is different. Children may do things earlier or later than described here.



## Want to learn more?

For a free online version of this newsletter, more parenting info and updated links, visit [www.jitp.info](http://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.*



Text4baby will send free text messages to your cell phone with health tips for you and your baby. **It's all free!** To sign up, text **BABY** to **511411** or go to <http://www.text4baby.org/>

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