

Remember, everyday moments are rich bonding and learning opportunities. Enjoy the magic of these moments with your child.

*Don't miss the other booklets in
The Magic of Everyday Moments™ series:*



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the magic of everydayTM **moments**

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ZERO TO THREE®



0-4 months

The Magic of Everyday Moments™: 0-4 Months

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ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit organization of renowned pediatricians, educators, researchers, and other child development experts who specialize in the first years of life.



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The Magic of Everyday Moments™

Loving and Learning Through Daily Activities

If you are like most parents today, your greatest challenge is probably caring for your baby while also taking care of yourself and your responsibilities. The competing demands on your time and energy make finding the time to connect with your baby no small challenge. But daily activities, such as feeding, bathing and grocery shopping, don't need to take time *away* from bonding with and enjoying your baby. In fact, these *everyday moments* are rich opportunities to encourage your child's development by building her:

- *self-confidence* • *curiosity* • *social skills*
- *self-control* • *communication skills*

Most of all you build her desire to learn about her world.

The booklets in this series are not intended to be general guides to *everything* that is happening at each specific age. Instead, they focus on how, through interactions with your baby during *everyday moments*, you can support your baby's social, emotional and intellectual development.

It's the special interplay between parent and child that makes everyday moments so meaningful. The potential is limitless. The starting point is you.



What It's Like for You

When you gaze down at your newborn cradled in your arms, you can't help but feel how miraculous this whole business of nurturing babies is. Soon though, the miracle bumps up against your new reality.

For moms, it's often a huge shift from having this unknown creature kicking and pushing around inside of you to her emergence as a completely separate being who is very much in need of your care and attention. For some, the feeling of connection is so close that when she's cranky and crying, you feel like crying, too. For some moms the hormonal changes plus the intense emotions and demands can lead to baby-blues.

For dads, the experience is different, but every bit as intense. Here she is at last, this tiny person who is completely and utterly dependent on you. You may feel an overwhelming sense of tenderness, unlike anything you've ever felt before. You may feel an enormous sense of responsibility—how will you provide for her? How will you keep her safe and secure? You may feel unsure—how do you handle and comfort her and carve out your own relationship with her? And you may feel competitive with the amount of time your baby needs with your partner.

All of these emotions—and many that we haven't mentioned—are to be expected. Add to this formula serious sleep deprivation, and you'll know why it's so very important for new parents to be kind and forgiving with themselves and with each other.



time to eat

When you feed your baby, you are doing a lot more than providing necessary nourishment. You are helping him feel safe and secure in his world.

If your newborn could talk:

Crying is the best way I have to communicate right now. That's why I use it so often. I might be wet, or need a cuddle, or I might be hungry; and at the rate I'm growing, "hungry" is a safe bet. If you think I'm hungry, touch my cheek gently and I'll turn my head automatically, and begin to suck. Sometimes I need practice sucking. And when I cry from hunger and you come with food, I learn that I'm a good communicator and that I can make things happen! It feels especially good when you cuddle me, look into my eyes and talk softly to me as I eat. I love to be close to you. Right now, I want what I want when I want it. Soon I'll learn to wait a minute or two, but I'll only be able to do that if I know I can trust you to care for me.

What your newborn is learning:

Satisfying your baby's hunger helps him feel calm. This enables him to focus briefly on his most important business—learning about the world around him—by looking at your face, listening to your voice, experiencing the sensation of being rocked. When you talk quietly with him and gently stroke his head as he eats, he knows he is loved and worthy of being well cared for. He begins to understand that he can trust and depend on you. This lesson in trust will become the foundation for healthy relationships throughout his life.

When he sees that his efforts to communicate are successful, you are helping to build his language skills; he cries because he's hungry, you come, you feed him and he feels better. This encourages him to communicate more, first through gestures and vocalizations, and later through words. It is also helping him understand cause and effect (I cry, mom or dad comes) which will help him make sense of the sometimes overwhelming, always amazing world that surrounds him.

What you can do:

- Talk with him in a soothing voice while you feed him.
- Gently stroke his hair and body to let him experience the soothing power of touch.



comforting your newborn

When you comfort your baby, you are letting her know the world is a safe place and that someone cares about her feelings. The more content she feels, the more energy she has to connect with others and learn how the world around her works.

If your newborn could talk:

Sometimes when I cry it has nothing at all to do with being hungry. Sometimes I just cry because I find the world around me overwhelming. Other times I cry to release tension. Adjusting to this outside world is hard work! Whenever I cry, I need you. Please come as soon as you can. As you get to know me, you'll learn to "read" and respond to my different cries through trial and error. Sometimes nothing seems to work. But I'm not mad at you. I may just need to cry awhile to let off steam. If my crying really gets on your nerves—and it might—it's okay to put me down in a safe place for just a few minutes or get someone else to try to help. And always remember, we're both adjusting to big changes in our lives.

What your newborn is learning:

Responding promptly when your newborn cries teaches her that you'll always care for her, and she learns that she is an effective communicator. Don't worry, you won't spoil her. In fact, research shows that babies whose cries are responded to quickly and sensitively tend to cry less overall because they have learned that care is coming.

When you comfort her, you are teaching her ways to soothe herself. For example, if cuddling calms her now, she may later cuddle up with her "love" (perhaps a stuffed bear) to help put herself to sleep. Over the years, your prompt attention will help her feel confident that she can comfort herself and manage, even in stressful situations.

What you can do:

- When your baby "tells" you she's distressed, try different things. See if she's hungry or needs to burp. Check her diaper. Hold her in different positions. Sing or talk to her softly. Swaddle her in one of her baby blankets. Take her for a ride in her stroller or in the car.
- Learn how *your* baby likes to be comforted. For example, some babies might find it overwhelming if you talk to them *and* look at them at the same time. You may need to do one thing at a time; gaze into her eyes without talking, sing to her without making eye contact.



Reading Your Baby's Cues

What follows is a chart that describes what children are learning at this stage and what you can do to support the development of these new skills. As you go through the chart, it's important to remember **that every baby is an individual person, and grows and develops in her own way, at her own pace.** Building a strong and close relationship with you is the foundation of her learning and her healthy growth and development. Any concern about your baby's behavior or development deserves attention. Always discuss your concerns with your child's pediatrician or other trusted professional.

what to expect

between birth and 2 months:

I Need Support

A newborn's head is large in proportion to the rest of his body. In fact, until his neck muscles develop over the next 6 weeks, he couldn't possibly support it on his own.

So Much To Hear

Research shows that infants are great listeners. By 1 month they connect sounds with their sources, and their favorite sound of all is the human voice.

So Much To See

For the first 2 months, your infant will focus best on things that are 8 to 12 inches from his eyes—just the distance of your face during feeding.

Hold Everything

Newborns have great grips, but they can't intentionally hold on to things. They grasp on to things that you put in their palm because of a reflex that they're born with.

what you can do:

- Make certain to support his neck and head whenever you're lifting him or laying him down; and make sure that his car seat and stroller are set at an angle that will keep his head from flopping forward.
- Help strengthen those neck muscles with lots of games that involve moving his eyes (and, eventually, his head) from side to side (known as "tracking") while he's propped up or lying on his back. When he focuses on a toy, move it back and forth above him.
- Make it a point to talk to your infant about everything. "Now I'm going to take off that wet diaper." "Daddy is starving. What should I eat?" Remember though, if your baby turns away when you're talking, it may be her way of saying, "Quiet please."
- Be attentive to what kind of sounds your baby likes best. Some infants love music with strong beats, while others prefer softer melodies. And don't be shy about singing. No matter how in or out of tune, she'll like your voice best of all.
- Hold your baby's toys in that optimal vision range, and try to find toys that have high contrast (black and white) and bright colors.
- Play lots of tracking games that involve moving an object slowly from side to side while you're talking to your baby. If he's awake and alert, he'll follow with his eyes.
- Respect your baby's cues. He'll tell you when he needs a break by turning away or crying.
- Try to find toys that make gentle sounds when they move. The sound will draw your baby's attention to the toy and to her hands.
- Safety is priority number 1! Make sure all objects are too big to fit in her mouth.

what to expect

between 2 and 4 months:

I'm a Hands-On Learner

At around 3 months, when babies realize that their hands are part of their bodies and that they can control them, they delight in using them.

Within My Reach

Although infants can grasp things you place in their hands, they don't begin to really reach for things until around 3 months, and they do it with both hands together.

Big Time Babbling

Between 3 and 4 months babies begin to really enjoy babbling, and there's no one they'd rather babble to than you. They'll progress from open vowels (ohs and ahs) to new sounds and combinations, with P's, M's, B's, and D's.

My Smile Says It All

Your baby's earliest smiles (the one she does in her sleep) are reflex reactions from her early nervous system. By 2 months, however, she has a very special smile just for you, and it's a true reflection of her love for you.

what you can do:

- Offer your baby lots of opportunities to hold, grab, poke, and wave safe objects.
- As soon as your baby develops control of his hands, you can expect him to move whatever he happens to be holding to his mouth. Make sure everything he holds is clean and too big to fit entirely in his mouth.
- Lay your baby on her back, and hold a brightly colored toy over her chest within arm's reach. She'll delight in reaching up for it with both hands together and bringing it to her face for closer examination.
- Talk to your baby while she's reaching out for things. Cheer her on. Even at this age, she loves to know that you appreciate her efforts.
- When your baby babbles to you, don't just babble back. Talk to him as though he understands every word you're saying. Long before he utters his first real word he'll understand hundreds of them as a result of these early conversations.
- Pay special attention to the rhythm of your baby's babbles. He'll babble and then pause, waiting for you to respond. When you say something and then pause, he'll pick right up. This is how babies learn the art of conversation.
- We obviously don't have to tell you to smile back at your baby whenever she smiles at you! We can tell you that the exchange of smiles is the earliest form of play, and it sets the stage for a lifetime of loving relationships.
- When she feels like playing, let the games begin. Blow gently on her belly, play peek-a-boo, make happy sounds and expect to see a toothless grin. If she's not in a smiling mood it may be time for a cuddle and a cozy nap.



What Your Baby Needs Most

We know that you want to do your best to nurture your baby's healthy development. We also know that many parents are overwhelmed by busy days, and the thought of adding extra activities to boost their child's development may simply be too much.

That is the power of the magic of the everyday moment. What your baby needs most to thrive is *you*. Nothing else can replace the power of what your child learns as he explores the world and shares his discoveries during everyday moments with you.

We hope this booklet has shown you that the *magic* of parenting is not in any toy you buy or in the latest product claiming to make your baby smarter. The *magic is* in your everyday interactions that help your child build the crucial capabilities — such as confidence, curiosity, cooperation, and communication — needed for lifelong learning and success.