



# from Baby to **BIG Kid**

How Your Child Grows  
from *ZERO TO THREE*®

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From Baby to Big Kid showcases children's growth and development each month from birth to 3 years. These resources translate the science of early childhood and offer strategies parents can tailor to their unique family situation and to the needs of their child.

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This **ZERO TO THREE** newsletter series was made possible by generous funding from MetLife Foundation



National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 1

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional..

### Development from Birth to 3 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am getting to know you and the other people who love and care for me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I recognize your faces, voices, and smells almost from birth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Talk to your baby about what you are doing together.</b> <i>You're looking at the light. Yes, it's interesting and bright.</i> This makes him feel loved, and helps him bond with you.</li> <li>• <b>Hold your baby.</b> Try different positions to see which he likes best and which soothes him.</li> <li>• <b>Try some skin-to-skin cuddle time with your little one.</b> This makes him feel loved and comforted.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am learning how to "tell" you what my needs and wants are.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can use my sounds, facial expressions, and body movements to tell you how I'm feeling—sleepy, hungry, happy, or uncomfortable.</li> <li>• I show you when I want to interact and play, and when I need a break.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch your baby to learn her signals.</b> Does she have a "hunger" cry? Does she rub her eyes or look away from you when she is tired? Does she grimace when she has a bowel movement?</li> <li>• <b>Respond to your baby's signals.</b> When her eyes are bright and she is awake and alert, it is time to play. Slow things down when she cries, turns away, or arches her back.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am learning a lot by listening.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I recognize the sound of your voice and love to hear you talk.</li> <li>• Talking with me, even though I don't yet understand what the words mean, will help me learn to talk as I grow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Help your baby begin to learn language</b> by responding in words to his facial expressions, sounds, and gestures. When he nuzzles into your chest, you might say, <i>Oh, you are hungry now. Let's get you some milk.</i></li> <li>• <b>Talk to your baby about what is happening to him:</b> <i>I'm changing your diaper. Yes, you feel a little chilly right now. Don't worry, I'm almost done.</i></li> </ul>

Chart continued on next page



*When you comfort me, you are helping me learn to comfort myself.*

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am beginning to use my body to make things happen.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I am hungry, I might move my head so that my mouth is close to my mother's breast.</li> <li>• It's good for me to be in different positions. I begin to develop muscle strength when I spend time on both my back and my belly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch to see how your baby is "discovering" her body.</b> Does she look at her hands, suck on her feet, or kick and roll?</li> <li>• <b>Let your baby experience different positions throughout the day</b>—on her belly, back, and sitting up. This helps her develop strength and muscle coordination. (But remember, your baby should always sleep on her back to keep her safe.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am interested in the world around me!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I start by looking and listening. I gaze at people and things that interest me: Your face, brightly colored objects, or objects with contrasting colors. I will follow an object with my eyes if you move it slowly in front of me.</li> <li>• By 3 months I will be able to reach out and explore things with my hands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create an interesting environment for your baby.</b> Give him safe toys and objects to explore such as your finger or a toy. Let him touch objects with different textures and shapes. Hold a toy within your child's reach so he can swat it with his hands or feet.</li> <li>• <b>Let your baby gaze at a toy, object or picture for as long as he wants.</b> When he looks away, you know he is done.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I grow to love books when you start reading to me early.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoy looking at bright pictures, hearing your voice, and cuddling in your arms while we read.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Choose "chunky" board books or cloth or soft vinyl books</b> (that can easily be washed).</li> <li>• <b>Look for stories with simple, large pictures of people or familiar objects.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>We are becoming closer and closer every day.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am learning to depend on you for comfort and support.</li> <li>• When you comfort me, you are helping me learn to comfort myself.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comfort your baby when she cries.</b> You can't spoil a baby. Soothing makes her feel safe, secure, and loved.</li> <li>• <b>Help your baby calm herself</b> by guiding her fingers to her mouth or giving her a pacifier.</li> <li>• <b>Find ways to stay calm yourself</b>, as tough as that may be at times. You teach your child self-control by staying calm when she is upset.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Right from the beginning, you are teaching me who I am by how you care for me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your love helps me grow up to be confident in myself and my abilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nurture your baby's sense of self-confidence</b> by comforting him, responding to his cries and needs, talking and playing with him. Caring for him in these ways lets him know that he is loved and important to you.</li> </ul>



# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 1

## What It's Like for Baby

*Sometimes when I cry, it has nothing at all to do with being hungry. I may cry when I am tired or wet, or because I'm overwhelmed and I need a break. Adjusting to the world outside mom's cozy body takes a lot of energy! When I cry and you come as fast as you can, you make me feel so much better. Don't worry about spoiling me. Comforting me now means that I will cry less when I am bigger because I will know that I can trust you to care for me.*

*It's okay if I don't stop crying right away. When you try different things to comfort me, you let me know you care. (And sometimes nothing might work. I may just need to cry a while to let off steam.) As you get to know me, you'll learn to understand my different cries and what I need. If you need a short break from my crying, it's okay to put me down in a safe place, like my crib, for a few minutes. We're both adjusting to big changes in our lives.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Development:

- That she is important and loved.
- That she can rely on you to comfort her and help her calm when she is overwhelmed.
- How to soothe herself. While your baby is not yet able to calm herself, cuddling her now helps her learn about comforting.

### Language Development:

- That behavior has meaning, when a parent responds to her cues. When newborns are hungry, scared, or overwhelmed, their reflex is to cry. Often this behavior gets them just what they need—attention, food, or a cuddle. Over time, they learn that behavior has meaning.

## Did You Know...

Babies recognize familiar voices and smells from their earliest days of life? One study found that babies as young as 1 month would begin to calm—even before being picked up—just at the sight or sound of their trusted caregiver.

Reference: Lamb, M. E., & Malk, C. M. (1986). Scent: The tie that binds. *Psychology Today*.

## What the Research Means for You

Yes, you are the most special person to your baby from the start. By responding to your baby's cries, working to understand her needs, and being a nurturing presence in her life, you are building a strong bond between the two of you. Your child's connection with you becomes her lifelong model for healthy, loving relationships. Also, by providing comfort to your baby with your words and presence, you help her learn how to soothe herself, which is a key part of developing self-control later on.



*Soothing your baby is a trial-and-error process. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.*

## Spotlight on: Crying and Soothing

Crying, hard as it is to hear, is a normal way babies communicate hunger, discomfort, distress, or a need for your attention. Most newborns reach a crying peak at about 6 weeks. Then their crying starts to decrease. By 3 months, they usually only cry for about an hour a day.

Being with a crying baby who is hard to soothe can be exhausting, stressful, and frustrating. But keep in mind that just by being there—holding and comforting him—you are teaching him that he is not alone and that you will stick by him through thick and thin.

### What You Can Do About Crying:

- **Talk with your health care provider.** Crying may have a medical cause—a food sensitivity, heartburn, or other physical difficulty.
- **Try holding your baby more.** Some babies cry less when they are held more. Wrap your baby snugly in a blanket—called “swaddling”—and rock her gently.
- **Use soothing sounds.** Talk or sing softly to your baby. Try running a fan or humidifier in your baby’s room. Sometimes babies are soothed by this background noise.
- **Reduce stimulation**—lights, sights, sounds, and textures. Sometimes less stimulation leads to less crying for babies with colic.
- **Remember there is no quick fix.** Cereal in the bottle? Rubbing something on baby’s gums? There is no research that shows that these home remedies work. And they can sometimes be harmful to babies. There is no “magic wand” to stop crying.
- **Soothe yourself.** You deserve it. Caring for a crying baby can be very stressful. But when you take the time to calm yourself, it helps your baby calm down too. If you need a break, put your baby in a safe place—like a crib—for a few minutes. This will give you the time you need (and deserve) to take some deep breaths and calm yourself.
- **Don’t give up.** Soothing your baby is a trial-and-error process. If one strategy doesn’t work, try another. Hang in there, and don’t be shy about asking for help. Everyone needs support, and nobody needs it more than the parents of a fussy baby.

### Let’s Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Tracking Time.** Newborns can track, or follow, interesting objects with their eyes. Pick a time when your baby is awake and alert. Hold a colorful object in your hand and gently move it side to side in front of your baby. You will see her eyes follow this object. As she gets older, she will move her head to watch it move.
- **Sing a Song.** It’s never too early to pick up your baby and sing with her as you gently move to the music. You can also play different types of music and see which your baby seems to enjoy most. Which make her more alert? Which soothe her or put her to sleep? You can also swaddle your baby and sway with her to the music. This can be very calming for both of you and can also help comfort a colicky baby. 🌸



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 2

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Development from Birth to 3 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am beginning to use my body to make things happen.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I am hungry, I might move my head so that my mouth is close to my mother's breast.</li> <li>• It's good for me to be in different positions. I begin to develop muscle strength when I spend time on both my back and my belly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch to see how your baby is "discovering" her body.</b> Does she look at her hands, suck on her feet, or kick and roll?</li> <li>• <b>Let your baby experience different positions throughout the day</b>—on her belly, back, and sitting up. This helps her develop strength and muscle coordination. (But remember, your baby should always sleep on her back to keep her safe.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am interested in the world around me!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am eager to learn how the world works.</li> <li>• I start by looking and listening. I gaze at people and things that interest me: Your face, brightly colored objects, or objects with contrasting colors. I will follow an object with my eyes if you move it slowly in front of me.</li> <li>• By 3 months I will be able to reach out and explore things with my hands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create an interesting environment for your baby.</b> Give him safe toys and objects to explore such as your finger or a toy. Let him touch objects with different textures and shapes. Hold a toy within your child's reach so he can swat it with his hands or feet.</li> <li>• <b>Let your baby gaze at a toy, object or picture for as long as he wants.</b> When he looks away, you know he is done.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Right from the beginning, you are teaching me who I am by how you care for me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your love helps me grow up to be confident in myself and my abilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nurture your baby's sense of self-confidence</b> by comforting him, responding to his cries and needs, talking and playing with him. Caring for him in these ways lets him know that he is loved and important to you. This is the foundation of positive self-esteem and self-confidence.</li> </ul>





# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 2

## What It's Like for Baby

*Il just love that red ribbon you are dangling in front of me! I like to watch how it bounces and shivers. It makes me laugh. I like to hear your voice telling me about the ribbon—what it looks like and how it moves. When I move my arms and legs, you bring the ribbon closer so I can feel it. It's slippery and smooth. It feels nice. When you smile and laugh with me, it makes me feel so good because it lets me know I am fun to be with!*

*Uh oh! All of a sudden, that shaking ribbon and the bright color and the sounds and voices talking isn't feeling so good. It's making me dizzy and tired and I need a break. I frown and kick my feet but you just shake the ribbon harder. Then I turn my head and close my eyes. You stop moving the ribbon and start talking in a soft voice. Oh good, I knew you would understand. You pick me up to comfort me. I feel better. I can't wait to play with you again when I have more energy.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Development:

- That he is loved and important as you take the time to interact with him and delight in his discoveries.
- That he can trust you to read and respond to his signal

### Language Development:

- That he is a good communicator. When you respond to his facial expressions, sounds and gestures, it lets him know that he is good at telling you what he needs. This encourages him to keep on communicating with you. This encourages him to keep on communicating with you.

### Physical Development:

- That he is a good communicator. When you respond to his facial expressions, sounds
- That he can use his body to communicate his thoughts and feelings, like showing that he needs a break.

## Did You Know...

**Two-month-old babies carry on “conversations” with their parents?** You may notice that when you say something to your baby, she will coo or move her arms. When you repeat her cooing sounds, your baby smiles and you smile back. At 2 months, babies start to “wait their turn” in conversations and pay attention to another person—showing that they are learning some important relationship-building skills

*Reference:* Blaha, K. *Ba-ba-ba baby talk:* Perfect! Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Downloaded on November 16, 2007. Available online: <http://www.nwrel.org/comm/monthly/babytalk.html>



**Parents may find themselves confused about their babies' responses as they play. It's not uncommon to wonder: "We were having so much fun a minute ago, and now he's crying."**

## What the Research Means for You:

Delight in talking with your baby. This is how she learns language. But it's also important to stop talking sometimes—to give your baby a chance to respond. She may gurgle or coo, kick her feet, catch your eye, or move her hands. Then it's back to you: You may copy her gestures, repeat her sounds or make a new sound back. Having "conversations" like these lets your baby know that you are interested in what she has to say. This makes her want to keep on communicating and connecting with you. Talking—and listening—are two important ways that you build a strong relationship with your baby and help her learn from the start.

## Spotlight on: Playing With Your Baby

Playing...with a tiny baby?! How do you play with a 2-month-old?

Actually, as babies enter the second month of life, they become noticeably more interested in the world around them. While they don't "play" in the way that we often think of—pushing trains around a track or feeding a baby doll—they are eager to explore the objects and interact with the people they see every day. At this age, play is not just about toys, it's about interaction—anything from singing a song to your baby as you change his diaper, to cooing and smiling back-and-forth with him. Loving and playful experiences like these help your baby learn.

Parents may find themselves confused about their babies' responses as they play. It's not uncommon to wonder: *We were having so much fun a minute ago, and now he's crying. What happened?* It's likely that your baby reached his stimulation threshold and was telling you he needed a break. Babies have their own individual ways of responding to stimulation—light, sound, touch, activity. Some can take in a lot of stimulation before they top out and become distressed. Other babies get overwhelmed very quickly by what may seem to be just a small amount of stimulation (like brightening the lights in the room). There's no right or wrong way to be. A baby's ability to manage stimulation is part of his in-born nature—part of who he is.

Some common "I need a break" signals include:

- Turns head away
- Back arches back
- Closes eyes/falls asleep
- Fussing and/or crying, making "fussy" sounds, or even hiccupping

When you see these kinds of signals, try giving your baby a rest for awhile. Put aside her toys and try rocking and singing quietly to her. If that's still too much, just hold her. And keep in mind that even eye contact can be very stimulating for young babies, so just snuggling her against your chest may feel best to her. It's all about trial and error.

If your baby is falling asleep in order to rest from playing, let her snooze. You can also swaddle your baby to give her a break. The idea is to reduce the amount of stimulation—sights, sounds, touches, and movements—that she is experiencing. This gives her time to calm down and "re-group," pull herself together. You'll know your baby is ready to play again when she is calm and clear-eyed, when she meets your gaze, moves her arms or legs, turns toward you, or makes sounds to engage you.

Watching your baby to see how she reacts to, manages, and responds to stimulation gives you very useful information. You can begin to understand what and how much play your baby enjoys, how to recognize when she needs a break, and how to comfort





*Being massaged helps your baby develop body awareness—the understanding that she is a separate being from others.*

her when she is distressed. Don't worry if you don't get it right immediately. Learning about your baby's individual needs and temperament takes time. Eventually the two of you will get more "in sync."

Here are some fun ways to interact with your baby in the early months:

- **Offer interesting objects for your baby to look at.** You will see that as you move an interesting object slowly from side to side, your baby will follow it with his eyes. This is called tracking and is one of the first ways that young babies explore the world while building their visual skills.
- **Offer interesting objects to touch.** You can bring the objects close so your baby can touch them and begin to learn about how different objects feel. This helps her learn through her senses. Exploring objects with eyes, and later hands and mouth, also helps babies discover how different objects work and what they do. This helps your baby become a good thinker and problem-solver.
- **Place your baby so that he can kick or hit at a mobile or rattle.** Over the next couple of weeks, he will connect the act of kicking with the sounds the mobile makes when struck. This helps him understand cause and effect. Your baby will also discover that making noise is just plain fun.
- **Make everyday routines playful.** For example, you can add a massage for your baby after baths or before bedtime. Being massaged helps her develop body awareness—the understanding that she is a separate being from others.

### Let's Play: That Nature Bonding and Learning

- **Follow the Light.** Lay your baby down on his back. Darken the room slightly and shine a flashlight on the ceiling above him. Wait until he has focused on the light and then move the beam gently, slowly back and forth, up and down. Stop if he begins to fuss. Games like this help babies practice focusing their visual attention on objects.
- **Head and Shoulders Above.** Hold your baby with her head on your shoulder. Walk through the house, pointing out interesting objects and talking about them. Encourage your baby to move her head to look up at a mobile, or turn to look out a window. Games like this develop neck, shoulder, and trunk strength. 🌻



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 3

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional..

### Development from 3 to 6 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am learning to control my body.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I push myself up to see the people I love and the things that interest me.</li> <li>• I roll to try to get closer to you or to an interesting toy or object.</li> <li>• I can sit with help and hold my head steady.</li> <li>• I may rock back and forth on my hands and knees to get ready to move and explore.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Place your baby in different positions to help her develop new skills like rolling, creeping and crawling.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure she gets time to play on both her back and stomach.</li> <li>• Help her sit with support. This allows her to explore in new ways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I use my hands and fingers to explore.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I reach for and grasp objects and toys. I explore them with my fingers, hands, and mouth to figure out what they can do.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Offer your baby toys to explore that have different shapes, sizes, textures, and sounds.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show him ways to use these objects by shaking, banging, pushing, and dropping them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I communicate by using sounds, actions, and facial expressions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you shake my rattle, I may smile and move my arms and legs to let you know I want to keep playing.</li> <li>• I can make a few different sounds in response to your sounds—babbling, coos and gurgles.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Watch and respond to your baby's signals.</b> <i>You are smiling—I think you like looking in the mirror. Do you want to look at yourself again?</i></p> <p><b>Have back-and-forth “conversations” with your baby.</b> When you reply to her babbles, she knows you care about what she is saying. This helps her learn to talk.</p>
<p><b>I am ready for books.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even though I'm so young and don't use words yet, I love to look at books.</li> <li>• I like to grab, touch, and mouth my books. It is fun to play with them! Even though I'm not reading, I'm still developing a love of books.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Share books with your baby:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors.</li> <li>• Try stiff cardboard, “chunky” books or cloth and soft vinyl books that can go in the bath or get washed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am getting used to the world around me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may start to eat and sleep on a more regular schedule.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Create a bedtime routine for your baby</b>—for example, bath, stories, milk, and lullaby. This helps him learn when it is time to go to sleep.</p>



# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 3

## What It's Like for Baby

*Today I woke up so hungry from my nap! I cried for you, and you answered me right away. You said, I hear you, Sweetie. I'm just folding up the last shirt in the laundry basket. I'll be right there. While I didn't know what those words meant, the sound of your voice reassured me and helped me feel calmer. I knew you would be coming soon. But I didn't stop crying—no way! I needed you to know that I wanted some milk, so I kept making unhappy noises and sucked on my fingers until you came. When you reached in and picked me up, you smiled and said, You sound hungry. Come and let's have a snack. I calmed down right away. You understood. Milk, here I come!*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Language Development:

- That by using her cries, facial expressions, and body movements she is an effective communicator because you respond. This motivates her to keep on communicating.

### Thinking Skills:

- That her hunger pains are connected to food, and that her source of food is...you! Your baby then uses her communication skills (crying) to "tell" you that she is ready to eat. This process of making connections, that Mommy = milk = satisfying hunger, is an important thinking skill your baby is developing.

### Social-Emotional Development:

- That she can trust you to understand her needs and take good care of her. This gives her the confidence to trust others.
- That some distress is manageable. Your child is learning that feeling upset, while unpleasant, is temporary—that someone who loves her will be there to help her manage these feelings.

## Did You Know...

**Babies whose mothers reported high life stress cried and fussed more than babies whose mothers reported little stress?** For this research, babies were studied at 6 weeks and then again at 3 months and 6 months.

*Reference:* Wurmser, H. Rieger, M., Domogalla, C., Kahnt, A., Buchwald, J., Kowatsch, M., Kuehnert, N., Buske-Kirschbaum, A., Papouek, M., & Pirke, K. (2006). Association between life stress during pregnancy and infant crying in the first six months postpartum: A prospective longitudinal study. *Early Human Development*, 82(5), 341-349.



***Soothing your baby is a trial-and-error process. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.***

## What the Research Means For You

Even very young babies pick up on how their loved ones are feeling. When you are relaxed and content, your baby is more likely to feel safe and secure. When you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed, your baby senses that too. *That's why one of the best things you can do to take care of your baby is to take care of yourself.* Ask for help from trusted family and friends to give you time to do things that make you feel good. And if you are feeling down or depressed, be sure to talk to a health care provider. New parents need and deserve lots of support—not just in the first few weeks, but for the first year and beyond.

## Spotlight on: Choosing Child Care

More and more infants and toddlers are spending time being cared for by someone other than their parents. Babies and toddlers need caregivers who understand how to promote their healthy growth and development. They also need people who can tune in to and respond to their individual needs. And all young children need lots of love and attention from nurturing adults who will talk and play with them. Read more about what makes a good caregiver and a high-quality infant-toddler child care program.

### Loving and responsive

A loving and responsive caregiver looks like she really enjoys children. She hugs, rocks, cuddles, and has fun playing with them. She notices their interests and responds by offering them chances to explore the things that engage them. For example, if a baby shows a liking for a particular book, the caregiver may make this story part of the child's naptime routine each day. Skilled caregivers get down on the children's level and talk with them about what they are doing and seeing. They are playful partners who introduce new ideas, objects and games.

### Respects the baby's individuality

A good caregiver respects a baby's individuality. She recognizes his personal rhythms, temperament, strengths and needs. She takes this information into consideration when planning the pace and time for eating, sleeping and playing. For example, for a baby who is very sensitive to lights and sound, the caregiver might decide to turn off any battery-operated noise-making toys in the room. Skilled caregivers also look for ways to accommodate children's special needs or conditions.

### Provides a stimulating and child-friendly environment

Caregivers create a play area that is clean and safe so babies can explore their surroundings. They fill the play space with interesting and stimulating things to touch, look at, and listen to. Caregivers ideally change the room (even just slightly) on a regular basis to accommodate the needs of growing babies and toddlers. They organize the room to have separate eating and diapering areas, provide soft, "cozy" areas for reading and cuddling, and create spaces that are comfortable for adults so that parents feel welcome to stay and be with their children when appropriate.

### Before you sign on the dotted line

If at all possible, visit the program and watch the caregiver(s) interacting with the children in their care. Parents can learn a lot about a caregiver and program simply through careful observation. Here are some suggestions of questions you might ask when visiting a child care program:

- What training do staff members have in infant-toddler development? Be sure you feel comfortable with their level of expertise and skill.



*Do caregivers respect the language, culture, and values of families in the program?*

- What is the caregiver-to-child ratio (how many children are caregivers responsible for at any one time)? For babies, one caregiver for every three infants is a good *minimum* standard.
- For toddlers age 2 and up, one caregiver for every six children is a benchmark.
- Is each baby allowed to eat and sleep according to her own individual needs, and not based on a schedule set up by the caregiver?
- Are caregivers able to accommodate the special needs of children?
- What is the caregiver's approach to discipline? Weaning? Toilet training? Feeding? Do the caregiver's beliefs match your own?
- Are you welcome to drop in at any time?


#### Ask Yourself:

- Would your child feel good about coming here? Would you feel good about leaving your child here?

#### Look for:

- Do caregivers speak to the children, even babies? Do they sing and read to the children?
- Do they answer children's questions patiently? Do they ask children questions?
- For toddlers, is a daily schedule posted, using pictures and visuals, so that children can anticipate what will happen next?
- Are toys and materials well organized so that children can choose what interests them?
- Does the environment accommodate the special needs of children?
- Do caregivers respect the language, culture, and values of families in the program?
- Does the caregiver handle conflicts without losing patience, shaming a child, or frequently displaying anger?
- Does the caregiver seem to enjoy children?
- Is the environment sanitary and safe?
- Is the setting appealing with comfortable lighting and an acceptable noise level?

#### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Airplane.** Hold your baby securely in front of you. Gently move him so that he is "flying" through the air like an airplane. Carry him to interesting objects (near colorful toys, over a patterned rug, or near a mobile) and move him to different heights. (Be sure to watch for and respect his cues that he needs a break.)
- **Bicycle.** Lay your baby on her back and gently move her legs back and forth as if she is pedaling a bicycle. You can also change the pace of the movements, going slower or faster. As you pedal, sing to her or talk with her about your game: *Now let's go up the hill...now downwwwn the hill. Should we go fast or slow?* 





# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 4

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional..

### Development from 3 to 6 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<b>I am learning to control my body.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I push myself up to see the people I love and the things that interest me.</li> <li>• I roll to try to get closer to you or to an interesting toy or object.</li> <li>• I can sit with help and hold my head steady.</li> <li>• I may rock back and forth on my hands and knees to get ready to move and explore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place your baby in different positions</b> to help her develop new skills like rolling, creeping and crawling.</li> <li>• <b>Make sure she gets time to play on both her back and stomach.</b></li> <li>• <b>Help her sit with support.</b> This allows her to explore in new ways.</li> </ul>
<b>I use my hands and fingers to explore.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I reach for and grasp objects and toys. I explore them with my fingers, hands, and mouth to figure out what they can do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Offer your baby toys to explore that have different shapes, sizes, textures, and sounds.</b> Show him ways to use these objects by shaking, banging, pushing, and dropping them.</li> </ul>
<b>I communicate by using sounds, actions, and facial expressions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you shake my rattle, I may smile and move my arms and legs to let you know I want to keep playing.</li> <li>• I can make a few different sounds in response to your sounds—babbling, coos and gurgles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch and respond to your baby's signals.</b> You are smiling—I think you like looking in the mirror. Do you want to look at yourself again?</li> <li>• <b>Have back-and-forth "conversations" with your baby.</b> When you reply to her babbles, she knows you care about what she is saying. This helps her learn to talk.</li> </ul>
<b>I am ready for books.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even though I'm so young and don't use words yet, I love to look at books.</li> <li>• I like to grab, touch, and mouth my books. It is fun to play with them! Even though I'm not reading, I'm still developing a love of books.</li> </ul>	<b>Share books with your baby:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors.</li> <li>• Try stiff cardboard, "chunky" books or cloth and soft vinyl books that can go in the bath or get washed.</li> </ul>
<b>I am getting used to the world around me.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may start to eat and sleep on a more regular schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create a bedtime routine for your baby</b>—for example, bath, stories, milk, and lullaby. This helps him learn when it is time to go to sleep.</li> </ul>



# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 4

## What It's Like for Baby

*Daddy says, Let's watch your rattle fly! and he moves it through the air for me to see. My arms and legs go like egg-beaters! Then Daddy dips it down and makes it touch my nose. We both laugh. When Daddy hands the toy to me, I put it in my mouth right away to find out: How does it feel, how does it taste, what does it do? Then I decide to shake the rattle and—oh, Wow!—it makes the greatest tinkly noise ever! Dad claps his hands and smiles at me. I feel pretty smart. Then Daddy starts playing my favorite game of all. He starts quietly, saying, Achoo. He keeps making that funny sound over and over again, very quiet. Then he gives me a big smile. I know what comes next! I open my eyes wide and kick my legs out straight. He takes a deep breath and says ACHOO super loud. I start giggling so hard, and so does he. It's really fun to play with Daddy!*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Language and Communication:

- The sound of words and rhythm of language as his dad talks with him.
- The “rules” of communication as he and his dad take turns talking (or cooing) with each other.

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- Confidence and a sense of being loved and appreciated when his dad shows him how much fun he is to be around.
- Positive self-esteem as this baby realizes that he can make people react and respond to him.

### Thinking Skills:

- Cause and effect when he shakes the rattle and it makes a noise.
- Information about the textures and shapes (such as edges and corners) as he explores the rattle with his eyes, hands, and mouth.
- Patterns, like the pattern of the quiet Achoo versus the loud ACHOO.

### Physical Skills:

- Hand-eye coordination when he reaches for and grasps the rattle.

## Did You Know...

**That the way you respond at the doctor's office when your baby is getting a vaccination affects how she reacts to it?** Researchers found that 4- and 6-month-old babies whose parents sang, joked, and talked with them during vaccinations cried the least and showed less intense pain expressions than babies whose parents did none of the above. Interestingly, babies' distress seemed to increase when parents apologized for the immunization or tried to reassure their little ones.

*Reference:* Piira, T., Champion, G. D., Bustos, T., Donnelly, N., & Lui, K. (2007). Factors associated with infant pain response following an immunization injection. *Early Human Development*, 83, 319-326.



*Research shows that the more a parent talks to her child, the larger the child's vocabulary.*

### What the Research Means For You

Even at just 4 months, your baby is responding to your facial expressions, tone of voice, and other “signals” you’re sending. When you act worried, your baby may sense this and become stressed too. When you are calm, your baby is more likely to be calm. You can help your baby get through necessary vaccinations by joking around, singing his favorite silly songs, and chatting about something other than the procedure. Don’t apologize or show fear or worry—this gives the message that something bad has happened, or is about to happen. Instead, stay calm and upbeat and your child will likely recover more quickly from the momentary discomfort of the shot.

### Spotlight on: Sounds and Language

Your baby has been making little coos and gurgles for a while now. These sounds are a key step toward speaking words. Babies learn how to make these sounds through imitation—they copy the sounds they hear you use. That’s why it’s so important to talk to babies from birth, because it’s how they learn to speak. Research shows that the more a parent talks to her child, the larger the child’s vocabulary.

Your baby’s language skills will usually begin with cooing (gurgly ooo and aaah sounds). Then your baby will start to babble, stringing lots of these little sounds together to “tell” you something important. While most babies don’t say their first words until about 9-12 months, they are already telling you what they think, want, and need by using their facial expressions (smiles, frowns), sounds (like crying and cooing), and body movements (like kicking, reaching, stretching, and arching her back). These signals are unique to each baby. Your baby will develop her own ways of telling you what she needs.

Responding to your baby’s communications is important for many reasons. It makes her feel important and loved. It teaches her how to communicate back and forth with others. She learns new words. And, she learns that she is a good communicator. Sometimes you guess right about the message you think she sent—you gave her milk when you saw her sucking on her fingers and boy, was she happy! And sometimes you don’t guess right. You hand her the ball when what she really wants is the rattle. What’s important is that you keep trying. If you thought she was hungry but she turns away from the breast or bottle, try something else. Maybe she wants to be held in a different way or just wants to suck on a pacifier. By listening and watching carefully, and experimenting with different responses, you can learn to “speak” your baby’s language, just like she spends her first few years learning to speak yours.



*Your baby doesn't care if you are on key or good at carrying a tune. Babies just love hearing your voice.*

### What you can do to support early language development:

- **Describe your baby's feelings and experiences.** For example, when you see that she is hungry, you can say: *You are nuzzling at my shirt. You're telling me you're hungry. Okay, your milk is coming right up!* Although your baby won't understand your words right away, your caring, loving tone of voice and actions will make her feel understood and lets her know that her needs will be met. And hearing these words over and over again will help her understand their meaning over time.
- **Copy your baby's sounds and actions.** And encourage him to imitate you.
- **Notice and talk about what engages her.** *You are watching that doggy over there. He is so big and furry. Hi, doggy!*
- **Respond to your baby's efforts to communicate.** When he fusses as you change his diaper, you might tell him: *These diaper wipes are cold and yucky, aren't they? I know you don't like this part very much. Don't worry, we are almost done!*
- **Sing songs you know, or make up songs about your baby.** *Happy bath-time to you, happy bath-time to you, happy bath-time, sweet baby, happy bath-time to you.* Your baby doesn't care if you are on key or good at carrying a tune. Babies just love hearing your voice.
- **Read to your baby.** Books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors are especially interesting to young babies.
- **Don't take crying or fussing personally.** If you try soothing your baby and he keeps crying, it's not because you're doing something wrong. Maybe he needs to be held a different way, or rocked, or he is just cranky today. Experiment with different responses to see what works for him.

### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Beach Ball Time.** Place your baby tummy side down on a slightly deflated beach ball. Turn his head to one side. Then, while securely holding him, rock him slowly forward and back or side to side on the ball. Sing or talk to him while you play. Games like this help babies develop neck, shoulder, and trunk strength. (This gentle rhythm and pressure can also be soothing if he is having tummy troubles.)
- **Roll With It.** Lay your baby on her back and hold an interesting toy (a rattle or baby-safe mirror) in front of her. Let her reach for it and grasp it. Then hold it in front of her again and, as she reaches, slowly move it to one side so that she is reaching across her body. Give her lots of encouragement for working so hard. Eventually your baby will be able to roll over in order to reach the toy. 🌀



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 5

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional..

### Development from 3 to 6 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am learning to control my body.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I push myself up to see the people I love and the things that interest me.</li> <li>• I roll to try to get closer to you or to an interesting toy or object.</li> <li>• I can sit with help and hold my head steady.</li> <li>• I may rock back and forth on my hands and knees to get ready to move and explore.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Place your baby in different positions</b> to help her develop new skills like rolling, creeping and crawling.</li> <li>• <b>Make sure she gets time to play on both her back and stomach.</b></li> <li>• <b>Help her sit with support.</b> This allows her to explore in new ways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I use my hands and fingers to explore.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I reach for and grasp objects and toys. I explore them with my fingers, hands, and mouth to figure out what they can do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Offer your baby toys to explore that have different shapes, sizes, textures, and sounds.</b> Show him ways to use these objects by shaking, banging, pushing, and dropping them.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I communicate by using sounds, actions, and facial expressions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you shake my rattle, I may smile and move my arms and legs to let you know I want to keep playing.</li> <li>• I can make a few different sounds in response to your sounds—babbling, coos and gurgles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch and respond to your baby's signals.</b> You are smiling—I think you like looking in the mirror. Do you want to look at yourself again?</li> <li>• <b>Have back-and-forth “conversations” with your baby.</b> When you reply to her babbles, she knows you care about what she is saying. This helps her learn to talk.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am ready for books.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even though I'm so young and don't use words yet, I love to look at books.</li> <li>• I like to grab, touch, and mouth my books. It is fun to play with them! Even though I'm not reading, I'm still developing a love of books.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Share books with your baby:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors.</li> <li>• Try stiff cardboard, “chunky” books or cloth and soft vinyl books that can go in the bath or get washed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am getting used to the world around me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may start to eat and sleep on a more regular schedule.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create a bedtime routine for your baby</b>—for example, bath, stories, milk, and lullaby. This helps him learn when it is time to go to sleep.</li> </ul>





# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 5

## What It's Like for Baby

*I see it—it's bright yellow with an orange beak! Mommy squeezes it and WOW! It goes squeak, squeak as loud as can be! I have got to have that toy. But how can I get it? First, I reach across my blanket but it's a little too far away. I make a noise to get my mom's attention, but she's looking at a book. Better try again. I reach and reach but just cannot get that duck! So I make another noise—but this time I use my frustrated voice. Mommy looks up and sees me. You're working hard to get your toy, aren't you, little guy? Try again... She's moving the duck a little closer! I reach my arm and wiggle my body as hard as I can and I get my hand around it. I did it! I got it! I can't wait to see if I can squeak it myself!*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- The sound of words and rhythm of language as his dad talks with him.
- The "rules" of communication as he and his dad take turns talking (or cooing) with each other.
- To use her voice and actions to communicate and connect with her mother
- To solve the problem of reaching the toy
- To problem-solve as she seeks her mother's help

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- To trust that her mother will respond to help her
- Persistence when she tries again and again to reach the toy and to get her mom's attention
- Confidence in her own abilities

### Physical Skills:

- Hand-eye coordination when she reaches for the toy
- How to move her body to get to something she wants
- How to repeat movements that are helping her reach her goal

## Did You Know...

**Yes—your baby actually is imitating what you say!** In one research study, 3- to 5-month-old babies watched and listened to films of an adult making vowel sounds (ah, ee, oo, etc.). After only 15 minutes of experience with these sounds (over 3 days, 5 minutes at a time), even some of the youngest babies tried to imitate the adults talking. Often they were successful at making similar, if not perfect, copies of the sounds they heard.

*Reference:* Kuhl, P. K., & Meltzoff, A. N. (1996). Infant vocalizations in response to speech: Vocal imitation and developmental change. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 100(4), 2425-2438.



*Routines help babies begin to understand that the world is a sensible and organized place.*

## What the Research Means For You

Even though your baby doesn't understand words yet, it's important to talk with him throughout the day. This helps him learn language and to eventually put the words he's hearing together with the ideas they stand for—for example, that mama and dada are names for you! Remember that babies who are talked to the most have the biggest vocabularies later on.

## Spotlight on: Creating Routines With Your Baby

For grown-ups, routines are not necessarily our idea of fun, like mowing the lawn or going grocery shopping. But routines can also be comforting, like sipping a coffee each morning or reading a book before bed. For babies and toddlers, there's no such thing as a boring routine.

For babies and toddlers, daily routines are events—like mealtime, naptime, drop-off/pick-up at child care, bath time, and bedtime—that happen at about the same time and in the same way each day. For example, a bedtime routine might include a bath, then stories, then a lullaby, and finally bed. Routines help babies begin to understand that the world is a sensible and organized place. And they help children learn what will happen next. This makes them feel safe and secure. Routines can also help babies cope during difficult times. Routines provide a sense of “sameness” when there has been a recent change in your baby's world, such as a new babysitter, a new bed, a new sibling, or a new house.

Here are some ways you can begin using daily routines to support your child's healthy development:


- **To support your child's growing social skills.** As babies grow, they come into contact with more people and begin to learn the role that routines play in building relationships with others. Hellos and good-byes, playtime, and mealtime are three routine interactions that teach important social skills like talking, taking turns, sharing, learning to wait, and helping others.
- **To soothe your baby.** For example, having a relaxing naptime routine can help babies calm down after active playtime, making it easier for them to fall asleep. You might give your baby a brief massage with lotion, and then read a book and/or sing a lullaby to help her make the shift to dreamland.
- **To support the development of self-control. Routines can be helpful for teaching children to wait.** For example, if every time your baby is hungry, you sing out to him, Milk is coming, Milk is coming, he learns that these words mean that you are soon coming with a yummy snack. This helps to calm him and may lead to less crying and fussing because he trusts that you'll meet his needs. This is the very beginning of learning self-control, a process that will take the next few years to fully develop.
- **To nurture yourself.** Becoming a parent has its stressful moments. Finding a way to continue a routine from your pre-kid life (like an evening out or an activity you enjoy) can help keep you and your partner close. In addition, beginning a special routine with your child (such as preparing a special breakfast on Saturdays) can bridge your transition to being a family.



*Being flexible is also a good thing. Even though routines are important, don't be a slave to them.*

Keep in mind that there will be times when your baby's routines will be "off," like during trips to the grandparents' house. Plan ahead. If you can help your baby experience some "sameness" it will make routines like mealtimes and bedtimes go easier. For example, you can bring a familiar bib, spoon, and bowl for eating, and a favorite stuffed animal, book, and crib sheet for bedtime. Being flexible is also a good thing. Even though routines are important, don't be a slave to them. If there is a beautiful sunset one summer evening, go ahead and take your baby out for a walk even if it's right before bed. These out-of-the-ordinary "treats" (for you and your child) are what memories are made of.

### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Row, Row, Row Your Boat.** Sit on the floor, with your baby facing you on your lap. Rock side to side, holding baby securely, while you sing Row, Row, Row Your boat, Gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream! At the end of the song, lift baby up in the air and bring her toward you for a big kiss.
- **Bucket of Balls.** Select three or four different baby-safe balls, in different colors and textures. Put these in a plastic bucket and take them out one by one. Show each to your child and give him the chance to touch and mouth them. Then put them back in the bucket and offer him the bucket. What does he do? 



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 6

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Development from 6 to 9 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am learning to think and solve problems.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a toy drops to the floor, I look to see where it went.</li> <li>• I figure out how things work by copying what I see you and others do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comment on what your baby does to make things happen.</b> <i>You used your voice to let me know you wanted that toy.</i></li> <li>• <b>Let your baby explore interesting objects</b>—like toys with buttons to push. At this age, bath time can be a great opportunity for exploration with containers, rubber toys, plastic books, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Play copycat games.</b> Show your baby how to dump objects from a container, then encourage him to try it. This teaches him <i>cause-and-effect</i> and that he can make things happen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I can control my body.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can hold small objects using my thumb and other fingers.</li> <li>• I can sit on my own, which helps me explore in new ways.</li> <li>• I may crawl or scoot to get around. I might even pull up on furniture to stand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Begin letting your child practice picking up baby-safe foods</b>, like cereal or small pieces of banana, if you'd like your child learn to feed himself.</li> <li>• <b>Play back-and-forth games.</b> Babies love to hand objects to you and then have you hand them back. This is a great way to learn about give-and-take.</li> <li>• <b>Give your baby the chance to move around on his own.</b> This builds muscle strength and coordination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When I'm closer to 9 months, I start to understand that people and things are still there even when I can't see them.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I might call out for you when you leave the room, especially when you put me to sleep, because I know you're still out there and I want you to come back!</li> <li>• You will see me look for a ball that rolls under the chair or for a toy that's hidden.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Play peek-a-boo.</b> This teaches your child that things that go away come back. It is also good practice for dealing with hellos and goodbyes.</li> <li>• <b>Play disappearing and reappearing games</b>, like "find the missing toy" (that you hide under a cloth, table, etc.) Or drop an object and encourage your baby to look for it.</li> </ul>

*Chart continued on next page*



*Copy your baby's sounds and actions. If she waves, wave back and say, Hello!*

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am working hard to communicate with you.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I babble a lot. When someone talks to me, I make sounds back.</li> <li>• I use my voice to express feelings, like joy and anger.</li> <li>• I copy actions you make, like waving “bye-bye” and shaking my head “no-no.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use words to describe your baby's feelings:</b> <i>You are mad that Daddy took away the crayon. You can chew on this rattle instead.</i></li> <li>• <b>If your baby is looking at something, point at it and explain:</b> <i>That's a radio. It plays music.</i></li> <li>• <b>Copy your baby's sounds and actions.</b> If she waves, wave back and say, <i>Hello!</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>I may start to be afraid of people I don't know.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may become quiet or even distressed when meeting someone new.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduce your baby to new people from the safety of your arms.</b> Ask the new person to approach your child slowly. Give him or her one of your baby's favorite toys or books to help them connect.</li> <li>• <b>Prepare your extended family and friends for your baby's response</b> to help them understand it is not personal.</li> </ul>
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# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 6

## What It's Like for Baby

*I love this warm, giant puddle that Nana is letting me play in. She keeps calling it the "bath". It is so fun to be center stage with my grandma with nobody to interrupt us! She always laughs when I splash my boat. And I love when she sings to me as I'm playing. I drop my fish into the water and love seeing it go under. When Nana washes me with a soapy cloth, she tells me all about my body: My belly, my feet, my hands, my head, ears and nose. When we're all done, she wraps me in my warm, fuzzy towel and cuddles me close. She tells me how much she loves me and kisses me right on the nose. Hmmm, I must be somebody pretty special!*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- The pleasure of spending time with adults other than his parents. This lets him know that he is part of a larger loving community that includes grandparents and others.
- Confidence and positive self-esteem when his Nana kisses him and tells him she loves him
- Relationship-building skills when he interacts with his Nana in such positive and loving ways
- Self-regulation as he manages his excitement during this playtime with Nana

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- Language, when he hears his grandmother sing and talk with him
- Words for parts of the body when his grandmother labels these as she washes him
- Rules of social interaction—that conversation is a "back-and-forth" process in which each person has a turn to talk and interact
- Sensory information, like wet/dry, heavy/light, or slippery/rough
- Visual observations, like noting which toy sinks and which toy floats
- Spatial relations—or where his body is in space and in relation to other people and objects.

### Physical Skills:

- Body awareness—understanding that his body is his and separate from others.
- Coordination, as he puts together several actions—leaning, reaching and grasping—in order to get an object.

## Did You Know...

**That your 6-month-old knows who's nice and who's naughty?** In a small study of 12 six-month-olds, babies sat on their parents' laps and watched a puppet show where one wooden toy was trying to climb a hill. This toy was either pushed down the hill by an unhelpful character (a second toy) or pushed up the hill by a helpful character (a third toy). After the show, babies were presented with the helpful toy and unhelpful toy and asked to pick one. All 12 babies chose the helpful toy.

*Reference:* Briggs, H. (21 November 2007). Babies show 'social intelligence.' BBC News Online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7103804.stm>



*Soothing your baby is a trial-and-error process. If one strategy doesn't work, try another.*

## What the Research Means to You

Your baby is already watching the world around her carefully and trying to make sense of what she sees. She can even tell the difference between positive and negative interactions. That's pretty amazing. So fill her world with a community of positive and loving adult caregivers. And, as she grows, find regular opportunities for her to spend time and build healthy relationships with peers. This will nurture the strong social skills she'll need to establish lifelong friendships.

## Spotlight on: Getting Baby to Sleep

Most healthy 6-month-olds are capable of sleeping through the night. They are able to take in enough milk and other food during the day that they do not need to eat during the night. However, many babies are still waking up because they are used to falling asleep while being fed, rocked, or comforted in some other way. When they wake up—which we all do several times a night—they don't know how to get themselves back to sleep on their own. If you'd like to learn more about helping your baby learn to sleep through the night, check out the tips below.

**Keep it routine.** Bedtime routines help babies learn when it's time to go to sleep. They prepare children, physically and emotionally, to settle down. Having a bedtime routine means doing the same thing—as much as possible—every time you put your baby down to sleep. Families will have different routines to calm and soothe babies before bedtime based on their culture and the needs of their individual child. For example, you might give your baby a bath, then read a story, then put the baby in the crib. Making the shift from awake-and-active to relaxed-and-asleep actually takes a fair bit of effort on your baby's part. This is why bedtime routines are helpful. It doesn't really matter what your bedtime routine is, as long as it helps your baby slow down.

**Turn off the TV.** Watching television together doesn't generally work well as a bedtime routine. The goal of the bedtime routine is to help children relax and get ready for bed. Television shows are often noisy and stimulating and may even make children feel more awake.

**Read the signs.** Watch for the ways your baby lets you know he is tired. Yawning is the most obvious hint, but there are others, too. Your baby may have a certain sleepy cry, or he may pull on his ear, rub his eyes, or be fussy. When you see these signs, don't wait—slow things down and start your bedtime routine. (After babies get a second wind, it can be even harder for them to go to sleep because they are overstimulated.) When your baby is overtired, he will need more help from you than usual to calm down and fall asleep.

**Choose bedtime practices that support your sleep goals.** Families have different goals when it comes to their babies and sleep. For example, parents who want their children to sleep through the night often put their babies down while they are sleepy but still awake, so they learn how to fall asleep on their own. Other families may rock or stroke their baby's head until she drops off to dreamland. It's important to keep in mind that when you feed, rock, or rub your baby's back until she falls asleep, she learns to rely on you to help her get to sleep, be it at bedtime or in the middle of the night. When you put your baby down while she's still awake, she learns to soothe herself and put herself to sleep. There's no right or wrong way to put your baby to sleep. Your bedtime approach depends on your beliefs, values, and goals around sleep.

**Temperament influences bedtime.** Your baby's intensity—whether he is easygoing or, on the other hand, has a very strong reaction to things—plays a part in how easily he is able to learn to fall asleep on her own. Babies with different temperaments develop “self-soothing” skills at different rates.



The more reactive your baby is, the more challenging it may be for him to soothe himself. He does not have the same ability to manage strong feelings and sensations, as compared to less reactive babies. These babies often need more help to be calmed. Babies who have developed effective ways of coping with relatively minor stresses are often better able to fall asleep on their own. If your baby is still struggling with these skills, you are not alone! Learning self-control and self-soothing skills is no small task and takes time.

**Plan for protests.** As your child learns to fall asleep on her own, she may cry or protest. This is extremely common, since it is a big change for her. So it's important to have a plan for how to respond when she cries out for you (which naturally can be very distressing). For example, you might want to peek your head in every few minutes to assure her you are still there. Or you may decide not to go in at all after you put her down (unless, of course, you think something is wrong). Some parents choose this approach because going in and out can excite the baby and even increase her protests. Thinking through these issues before they happen, talking about them with your partner, and deciding together how you want to respond can help you feel more prepared and better able to follow through on your plan.

**Patience, patience.** Even though it may seem overwhelming at times, your baby will learn to adapt to whatever sleep approach you've decided is right for your family. However, it takes time, patience, and consistency. Time and patience are needed if you are teaching your baby how to soothe himself and fall asleep without support from you. Consistency is important because it helps children learn what to expect. If you change your response from night to night, it is confusing and makes it harder for your baby to adapt.

**Babies are people, too.** There are situations and events that can impact a baby or child's sleep pattern, such as starting child care, etc. Life events like these can create or make sleep problems worse. If your child was sleeping just fine and then started having problems, think about what has been going on in his life recently. Sleep disruptions can be a symptom of something that is causing your child stress or worry, or may even signal a new developmental stage, like teething or crawling.

## Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Popsicle Stick Puppets.** Cut photos of babies, dogs, cats, and other animals from magazines or catalogs. Glue each photo to sturdy cardstock or cardboard, and glue a popsicle stick to the back of each photo. Hold these "puppets" up to show your baby, make them move and dance as you tell stories or sing. (For example, match animal puppets with a few rounds of *Old MacDonald*.) Is your baby interested in holding one of the stick puppets?
- **"Teeny Tug-of-War."** Prop your baby, with a bolster or pillow, into a sitting up position. Sitting up builds muscle strength in your baby's back and trunk that will help him learn to crawl and walk later on. As your baby sits, hand him the end of a washcloth to hold. You hold the other end. Swing the washcloth or gently pull on it as you sing (to Row row row your boat): *Tug, Tug, Tug the rope, Swing it back and forth, Together we will tug so hard, and then we'll play some more!* 🌀



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 7

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Development from 6 to 9 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I am learning to think and solve problems.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a toy drops to the floor, I look to see where it went.</li> <li>• I figure out how things work by copying what I see you and others do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comment on what your baby does to make things happen.</b> You used your voice to let me know you wanted that toy.</li> <li>• <b>Let your baby explore interesting objects—like toys with buttons to push.</b> At this age, bath time can be a great opportunity for exploration with containers, rubber toys, plastic books, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Play copycat games.</b> Show your baby how to dump objects from a container, then encourage him to try it. This teaches him cause and effect and that he can make things happen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I can control my body.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can hold small objects using my thumb and other fingers.</li> <li>• I can sit on my own, which helps me explore in new ways.</li> <li>• I may crawl or scoot to get around. I might even pull up on furniture to stand.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Begin letting your child practice picking up baby-safe foods,</b> like cereal or small pieces of banana, if you'd like your child to learn to feed herself.</li> <li>• <b>Play back-and-forth games.</b> Babies love to hand objects to you and then have you hand them back. This is a great way to learn about give-and-take.</li> <li>• <b>Give your baby the chance to move around on her own.</b> This builds muscle strength and coordination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When I'm closer to 9 months, I start to understand that people and things are still there even when I can't see them.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I might call out for you when you leave the room, especially when you put me to sleep, because I know you're still out there and I want you to come back!</li> <li>• You will see me look for a ball that rolls under the chair or for a toy that's hidden.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Play peek-a-boo.</b> This teaches your child that things that go away come back. It is also good practice for dealing with hellos and good-byes.</li> <li>• <b>Play disappearing and reappearing games,</b> like "find the missing toy" (that you hide under a cloth, table, etc.). Or drop an object and encourage your baby to look for it.</li> </ul>

*Chart continued on next page*



## *Introduce your baby to new people from the safety of your arms.*

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
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# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 7

## What It's Like for Baby

*My babysitter, Dawn, brought me somewhere new today. It had all kinds of bright colors and there were lots of other babies sitting with their grown-ups. Dawn called it a "gym" and there were lots of toys and things to crawl on. It looked interesting, but I was a little scared. I didn't want to leave Dawn's arms. She held me tight and told me, I'll hold you 'til you are ready to explore. All of a sudden, everybody started singing and shaking these noisy little instruments!*

*It was too loud! I got scared and started to cry, so Dawn took me to another room where it was quiet. She told me, I know you don't like it when it's so loud. We'll stay here until you're ready to join the group. She held me and sang my favorite song. Then she took me back into the room. Everyone was in a circle making noises with their instruments. We stayed in the back where it wasn't so loud.*

*I noticed the shakers they were holding. I pointed at them and made some sounds. Dawn looked over: They're shakers, honey. They make music. She reached over to pick one up and showed it to me. It looked interesting. I made my happy sounds to tell her I liked the shape and colors. I reached for it, and Dawn handed it to me. I shook it and started making my own music! It was great. I may want to come back to this place.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- To build a loving and trusting relationship with adults outside the family
- To accept comfort from someone he is attached to, his babysitter Dawn
- That he is an important person whose feelings matter, building his self-esteem
- That he can overcome his fears, building his confidence

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- That he is a good communicator when Dawn reads and responds to his signals
- How to use language (sounds) and body movements (reaching) to show Dawn he is interested in the shaker. This is an important milestone that happens around 7 months—the ability to coordinate actions to communicate a need or desire. This back-and-forth interaction helps babies learn the function and process of using language.
- New words for his feelings and experiences when Dawn talks with him about his fears
- *Cause-and-effect* as he learns that shaking the instrument makes a sound

## Did You Know...

**That your baby can already show you the difference between feeling a little annoyed and being really angry?** Babies show feelings like happiness and anger as early as 4 months. But by 7 months, they are becoming more specific when it comes to sharing their feelings. For example, they now direct anger at certain people and their anger can range from mild to intense. So your baby's annoyance when he drops a favorite toy might not be as strong as when his older sister takes his favorite stuffed animal and dangles it just out of his reach. That's when you'll *really* hear him scream!

*Reference: Berger, K. S. (2001). The Developing person through the lifespan. New York: Worth Publishers.*



*For now, your baby might just want to gum and mouth the book. That's okay. Let her chew on chunky board books or soft fabric or rubber books to her heart's content.*

## What the Research Means for You

As your baby grows, his signals—sounds, facial expressions and actions—grow and change too. When you respond to your baby's feelings (of anger, fear, shyness, etc.) with acceptance and respect (*It's okay to feel angry at me, but I do need to change this yucky diaper*), your child learns to express and deal with intense feelings in a healthy way. Your baby is also watching you to learn how to show anger, happiness, love, frustration, etc. So when you are able to share your own feelings in a healthy and constructive way, your baby is learning an important skill.

## Spotlight on: Reading With Your Baby

Now that your baby is more interested in the world around him, it is the perfect time to make books a regular part of your day together. The first—and best—tip for sharing books with babies is to have fun together. When book reading is a positive experience, it makes children want to keep exploring books as they grow.

Here are ideas for reading with your baby:

### **A Few Minutes at a Time is OK. And don't worry if you don't finish the story.**

Babies and even toddlers may only sit for a few minutes for a story. As they grow, they will be able to sit and listen longer. Let your child decide how much (or how little) time you spend reading. If your child starts to wiggle or fuss, it may be that she is ready to take a break. Or, you may find that your child has a favorite page or even a favorite picture. She may want to linger there for a while and then switch books or activities.

**Get Mouthy.** For now, your baby might just want to gum and mouth the book. That's okay. Let her chew on chunky board books or soft fabric or rubber books to her heart's content. When you let your child explore books in the ways that interest her, you make reading a positive experience.

**Talk or Sing About the Pictures.** You don't have to read the words to tell a story. Just tell your own story using the pictures. Hearing you talk helps your baby learn words.

**Let Children Turn the Pages.** Babies can't yet turn pages on their own, but they might like to grab and swat at them. That's okay—your baby is figuring out how a book “works.”

**Make the Story Come Alive.** Create different voices for the characters in the story. Act out the story, too. If you are reading about a train chugging down the track, move your knees up and down so your baby feels the “clickety clack” movement.

**Make It Personal.** Talk about your own family, pets, or community when you are reading a story. After you read *Wheels on the Bus*, you can show your baby the city bus as it zooms by.

**Talk Together About the Story.** Use the story to have a back-and-forth conversation with your child. Even for babies who aren't yet talking, you can ask: Where is the moon? Do you see it up there in the sky? Then you can point to the moon in the picture. Through interactions like these, babies learn new words and ideas.

**Make Your Own Books.** Make photo books of family members. Cut pictures from magazines or catalogs to make word books.



*Rubber bath time books are great fun and may help a fussy baby enjoy the tub a little more.*

**Use Books in Your Daily Routines.** When books are part of your everyday lives, your baby will see reading as a pleasure and a gift. Try reading together during:

- **Meal Times**

Sing or read a story as you nurse your baby. Or gather all the kids, from babies on up, to enjoy a story around the breakfast table.

- **Child Care Drop-Off**

Calm a crying child with a favorite story or lullaby. Leave a photo book with pictures of loved ones at child care so your child can flip through it when she is missing you.

- **Grocery Shopping**

Clip a cloth or rubber book to the shopping cart so your baby can look at it or mouth it while you shop. When your baby is older, make a “shopping list book” with pictures of common foods (milk, eggs, orange juice, apples, etc.) that you buy.

- **Nap Time and Bedtime**

Familiar routines always help babies calm down. Use books and stories to quietly ease your baby to sleep.

- **Bath Time**

Rubber bath time books are great fun and may help a fussy baby enjoy the tub a little more. There are even bath time books that play a song when you press a button.

## Let's Play: That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Finger Fun.** Slip finger puppets onto two of your fingers. (They can be store bought or homemade with newborn-sized socks.) Make the puppets sing and dance or talk with your baby. How does he respond? Does he reach out to touch them, or interact with them? Follow his lead. Let him touch the puppets, or slip one over a few of his fingers. (Supervise closely. If baby seems upset by this activity, put the puppets away and try a different toy.)
- **Peek-a-Boo Peeking Through.** Gather together several different pieces of fabric in different textures, such as lace, gauzey polyester, and felt. Hold the first piece over your face, and say, *Where am I?* Then drop the fabric and say, *Here I am!* Offer your baby the chance to touch the fabric, if she'd like. 🌸



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 8

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

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*Your baby is working hard to communicate with you.*

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# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 8

## What It's Like for Baby

*My mommy is feeding me some cereal. I look at the spoon. I try to grab it. Mommy notices what I'm doing and she gives me the spoon to hold. I try to put it in my mouth. Oops! Oatmeal all over my pajamas! Mommy reaches over to take the spoon from me, but then stops and smiles. You are trying so hard to feed yourself. It's not easy to get the spoon right into your mouth. I keep lifting the spoon up to my face, and trying to get it in my mouth. Mommy helps me get the spoon closer. Then she has a great idea—she gets another spoon out of the drawer and says, Keep at it, kiddo. You are doing a pretty good job with that spoon. But how 'bout if I feed you some oatmeal on my spoon too? We can work together. Yum, it's fun eating and talking with Mommy.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- Confidence that he is skilled and capable of doing things for himself
- Self-esteem as he experiences that he is a fun person to be with and that his mother believes in his abilities
- Persistence to keep working at a challenge
- To accept help

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- That he can communicate using his body and gestures
- How a spoon “works” how to hold it, what it does, and where it goes

### Physical Skills:

- How to use the muscles in his hands and fingers to lift and get the spoon to his mouth. These small muscles will help him learn to write later on.

## Did You Know...

**That “baby talk” can help your little one learn language?** One research study found that 8-month-old babies learned words faster when they were pronounced using the high-pitched pronunciation we often describe as “baby talk.” When adults spoke in monotones, babies didn't learn as well.

*Reference:* Carnegie Mellon University (2005, March 31). Carnegie Mellon Study: Adults' baby talk helps infants learn to speak. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved February 11, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/03/050329143741.htm>

## What the Research Means For You

Talking to babies helps them learn new words. It also makes them feel loved and comforted when they hear the voices of the people who care for them. So it's no surprise that you may find yourself talking slower and in a higher voice than usual, or if you seem to use shorter, simpler sentences when you are with your baby. Adults often do this automatically and, based on the research, it seems to help babies learn.





*Lay interesting toys at just a short distance from your almost-crawler. See if he is able to move himself toward these objects.*

## Spotlight on: Creeping and Crawling

By 8 months, most babies are really starting to move. At first your little one might get up on all fours and rock back and forth — like a rocket at countdown, waiting to take off. But unlike a rocket ship, little ones might stay in “countdown” mode for a few weeks until they are ready to start moving. The process of learning to crawl is actually pretty complex. Babies need to coordinate the movement and develop the muscle strength in their arms, legs, and shoulders to support their weight.

### Steps Toward Crawling

Your baby’s first jump forward might actually be a scoot backward. As babies figure out how to do that arm-leg-arm-leg crawling movement, they sometimes go backward first, and then learn how to crawl forward. So, for a while, your baby might cry in frustration as she somehow finds herself scooting away from the very object or person she is so determined to reach.

Crawling is how your baby begins to move “to” and “through” the world. The process of learning to crawl may look different for different babies as they work out a way to move that is unique to them. That said, there are four main styles of crawling that you might see your child use:

- **“I’ll Have the Usual”:** This is the classic crawling style — alternating hand on one side and knee on the other to go, go, go.
- **“Crab”:** Just like at the beach, the “crab” bends one knee and extends the opposite leg to scoot forward.
- **“Commando”** — Look out, this crawler lies flat on her belly and drags herself forward using her arms.
- **“Rolling Thunder”** — Who needs to crawl when rolling gets him where he needs to go?
- **“Take It in Stride”** — Some children skip crawling and go right to walking. Watch out, world, here she comes!

### How to Support Your Baby’s Crawling Skills

- Give your baby plenty of tummy time starting from birth. By playing on their bellies, babies develop the muscle strength in their shoulders, arms, back and trunk (torso) that helps them learn to crawl.
- Encourage your baby to reach for and move toward the toys and objects he is interested in. Lay interesting toys at just a short distance from your almost-crawler. See if he is able to move himself toward these objects. If toys are always brought to babies, there may not be much motivation to move.
- Make sure your baby has space to explore that is safe and supervised.
- Place the palms of your hands behind your child’s feet when he is on all fours. This stabilizes him and gives him something to “push off” from when he is just learning to crawl.

### What to Avoid

- Baby walkers. Not only are they potentially dangerous, but they limit baby’s practice time on the floor for learning to crawl.
- Spending lots of time in baby seats and baby carriers. Babies learn how to crawl, and later pull up and walk, when they have plenty of time each day to play, move, and explore.



*Even though babies are moving around fairly well on their own, they still aren't able to control themselves or follow rules about what to touch or not to touch.*

- Baby jumpers or other baby equipment. This type of equipment doesn't help your baby develop the trunk, shoulder, and arm strength needed to crawl. They also don't allow your baby to practice the left-right body coordination used in crawling.
- Pushing your child to learn to crawl. Pushing a child to develop a skill he isn't ready for can actually slow the learning process.

### **Crawling Means Child-Proofing**

Now that your baby is crawling, she will soon be pulling up as she prepares to walk. This means she will be able to get her hands on objects that had previously been unreachable and are potentially dangerous.

And remember, even though babies are moving around fairly well on their own, they still aren't able to control themselves or follow rules about what to touch or not to touch. This means it is critical to make sure your home is child-proofed so that your baby has a safe place to play and explore.

### **When Should I Worry?**

As with most developmental milestones, it is "normal" for crawling to happen at any point across a fairly wide span of time — anywhere from 6 to 10 months of age is pretty typical. (Remember, some children skip crawling altogether.) Also, if your child is a bit bigger or heavier than is typical for his age, he may crawl later. This is because it is more challenging for babies to push up onto all fours and move their extra body weight.

In most cases, there is nothing physically wrong with babies who are slow to crawl. They may just be busy working on other skills that are more interesting to them, like learning to use their hands to figure out how objects work. Remember, babies, like adults, have different preferences and interests.

It is a good idea to contact your child's health care provider if:

- You notice that your child is using only one side of his body to crawl (he pushes off with only one arm or drags one side of his body as he scoots across the floor); or
- Your baby is not making forward progress in using his body to get around.

### **Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning**

- **Rake It In!** Give your baby a small sandbox rake and show her how to use it (she'll imitate your movements). Then put a rattle on the floor and show your child how she can use the rake to pull the toy toward her. Put the rattle on the floor again and give her the rake... what does your baby do next?
- **Texture Treasure.** Get five shoeboxes and put an interesting texture in each one — a big fluffy pompom, a piece of sandpaper, a ball of aluminum foil. Now that your baby really enjoys *peek-a-boo*, open each box and as you do, say peek-a-boo, and let him grab and touch what's inside (supervise carefully so he doesn't put the item in his mouth). Talk with him about how each item feels and looks. See which one he likes best and give him a chance to open the box, if he wants to give it a try. 🌀



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 9

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Development from 9 to 12 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I can understand more words than I can say.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am starting to understand what you say to me. I can even follow simple directions like, <i>Go get the ball</i>. I tell you what I want with my sounds and my gestures.</li><li>• I am starting to use my first words.</li><li>• I might not be able to say, <i>I want milk</i> yet. But I may say something like <i>Muh</i> to let you know I want some milk. These sounds are my first words.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Tell your baby what is happening and what you will do next:</b> <i>After your milk, it's time for a nap.</i> This helps her learn language. Routines also let her know what to expect.</li><li>• <b>Put your baby's sounds and actions into words.</b> <i>You are pushing your food away. I think you are telling me you are all done.</i></li><li>• <b>Name things your baby looks at or points to:</b> <i>That's the moon. The moon comes out at night.</i></li><li>• <b>Help your child show you what he wants.</b> Offer him two different books to look at and ask which he wants as you hold out one then the other. Encourage him to respond by pointing or reaching. If he looks at one more than the other, give him that one and say, <i>You want this one!</i></li><li>• <b>Respond to your baby's babbles and facial expressions.</b> This lets him know that language really works, and motivates him to keep trying to communicate with you.</li></ul>
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Chart continued on next page



*Talk to your child when you move out of his sight. This helps him learn you are still there even though he can't see you.*

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# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 9

## What It's Like for Baby

*I just finished my bath. Daddy has rubbed that good-smelling lotion on and he's fastening my diaper. Next, he will put on my pajamas. Then I bet he will brush my teeth. I don't like that part. I keep trying to tell him to stop...I move my head back and forth so he can't get the toothbrush in, and I try to keep my mouth closed. But he keeps saying, We have to brush teeth to keep them healthy and strong.*

*Then comes my favorite part. Mommy and Daddy cuddle with me and read me stories. And sometimes I clap while Mommy and Daddy sing together. If they forget, I start clapping. They laugh and say, Is it time to sing? And they choose my favorite song: Over in the meadow... Then comes the part I don't like. Daddy says, Time for bed, kiddo! And he lifts me up and puts me in my crib. I stand right up so he knows I don't want to go to bed. I babble and babble to try to tell him not to go. I want to stay and cuddle with them longer. But they say, Night-night. I know what that means — playtime is over. Guess I better lie down and go to sleep.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- Self-esteem — as she senses that she is fun to be with
- Relationship-building that connecting with others is a source of love and nurturing
- Security as the bedtime routine makes her feel that the world is a safe and predictable place
- Trust — that her parents may leave but they always come back
- Coping with limits as she learns how to handle her feelings when she has to do something she doesn't want to, like tooth-brushing.

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- That she can communicate using her body and gestures
- The meaning of words, like "sing," "toothbrush," and "night-night"
- *Object permanence* — that even though she can't see her parents any more, they are still there somewhere
- Figuring out what things are and what they do, for example when she recognizes the toothbrush, understands its purpose, and "gets" how it is used...then promptly clamps her mouth shut!

### Physical Skills:

- How to clap
- How to use her body to "get away" from the toothbrush
- How to pull up, balance, and stand up in the crib



*Even though babies this age are not yet using many (if any) words, pointing is a very powerful and effective communication.*

### Did You Know...

**By 9 months, babies seek out interaction with their mothers by smiling at them to get their attention?** This shows that babies are developing social skills — as they make efforts to engage others — and an understanding of the “back and forth” of relationships.

*Reference:* Cohn, J., & Tronick, E. Z. (1987). Mother-infant face-to-face interaction: The sequencing of dyadic states at 3, 6, and 9 months. *Developmental Psychology*, 23, 68-77.

### What the Research Means For You

Your baby is learning so much from you. He has been watching you make all sorts of efforts to engage him all these months and now he is using those same tactics to initiate interaction with you and others. This is a very powerful role you play — supreme role-model. When you comfort your baby when he falls, he is learning to accept love and caring from others, and how to soothe himself. When you laugh together at the sound your baby’s rattle makes, he learns how good it feels to share discoveries with someone else. By spending time and having fun together, you tell your child just how special he is.

### Spotlight on: Clapping, Waving, and Pointing

#### Put Your Hands Together

By 9 months, many babies are big into clapping. They may clap to show excitement, happiness, or to get your attention. They may also clap because they see you clapping, or because they have learned that when they clap, you smile and focus your attention on them. Clapping — like most body movements babies make — is a way that your baby is communicating and connecting with you.

#### Do the Wave

Babies are making lots of progress in the way they use their hands and fingers. Very soon now your baby will start to wave — and most likely she will do it for the first time when someone is leaving or arriving. Think about what an amazing milestone this is: By watching the people all around her, she has figured out that waving is what you do when someone is coming or going. If, while you wave, you also say *Hi* or *Bye-bye*, you help your baby connect the situation, the gesture, and the meaning of the words.

#### Point It Out

Another exciting new “trick” that you may see this month (or in the coming months) is pointing — a major milestone. Even though babies this age are not yet using many (if any) words, pointing is a very powerful and effective communication. In this small gesture, a baby is “saying”: *Look at what I see. I want you to look at it too. Or, See that train up on the shelf; can you get it down for me? I want to play with it.*

Pointing helps babies get your attention and connect with you. It also helps build language skills. Your baby points at the mirror. You say, *That’s the mirror. Who is that cute baby in the mirror? It’s you!* She points at the squirrel outside. You say, *See the squirrel? He is jumping on the fence. Squirrels like to eat nuts. That squirrel is probably trying to find a nut.* Your baby starts to learn about new words, objects, and ideas just by pointing. So when your baby points it out, take some time to talk it out!





### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Fill 'er Up.** Tape the top of an empty, clear plastic container (like a tennis ball can) to ensure there are no sharp edges. Gather together some small blocks (or other toys) and show your child how to drop the blocks into the canister. See if he'd like a try. When the canister is full, show your child how he can knock or dump it over and empty it out.
- **Humpty Dumpty.** Hold your child securely on top of a beach ball or exercise ball. Say, *Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall* (bounce your child gently), *Humpty Dumpty had a great fall* (holding her carefully, slide her off the ball). *All the king's horses and all the king's men, lifted Humpty back up again* (put her back on the ball, bouncing gently). End with a kiss for your good little egg! 🌻



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 10

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

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# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 10

## What It's Like for Baby

*Mommy gives me my usual today — baby food on a spoon. But I don't want that stuff. I want those little cereal pieces shaped like O's that I can feed myself! So I push away the spoon and I close my mouth. I am trying to tell my mom: No more baby food. I want to feed myself! I want to nibble on cereal or hold my own bagel or chomp on a piece of bread like my big brother does. So I start to bang the high chair with my hand and wave off the spoon again.*

*Ahhh, finally...Mommy is putting down the spoon and going to the cabinet. She says, You are getting so frustrated. I wonder — why don't we try these? And she gives me my cereal! I pick one up and put it in my mouth. I wish I could say, Thanks for the cereal. Now look at me, Mommy! Look what I can do! But for now, I just give her a big smile. She smiles back and says, Okay, I guess that's what you wanted. But how about I give you some sweet potatoes to go with your cereal? She dips the spoon in the orange stuff. I think I can go along with that.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- Confidence that he can feed himself
- Relationship-building that he can count on his mom to read his signals
- Security that he knows he can express difficult emotions (like anger or frustration) and his mom will respond sensitively
- Managing strong feelings — as he accepts help in the feeding process from his mother despite his having a strong desire to do it himself

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- That he can effectively communicate using his sounds and actions
- The meaning of words to describe feelings, like “frustrated”

### Physical Skills:

- How to pick up small objects with his thumb and pointer finger. Hand-eye coordination as he swipes the spoon away from his mouth

## Did You Know...

**By 10 months, babies have a firmer understanding of object permanence** — the fact that an object continues to exist even when they can't see it. A research study compared babies who were almost 9 months old with 10-month-olds to see how easily they could find hidden objects. First, the hidden object was only half-covered and both groups of babies found it easily. Next, the object was covered completely but made a noise to clue babies in to where it was. Only the 10-month-old babies found this object. In their minds, 10-month-old babies connected the object with the sound it made, and were able to use the sound to find it.

*Reference:* Moore, M. K., & Meltzoff, A. N. (In Press). Factors affecting infants' manual search for occluded objects and the genesis of object permanence. *Infant Behavior and Development*, Available online 26 November 2007 from [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com).



*Learning to use hands and fingers is a big milestone because it means babies can explore small objects. The upside: Your baby can start feeding herself, if this is a skill you want her to learn.*

## What the Research Means for You

Babies are becoming better and better problem-solvers. They are eager to figure out how the world works and use all sorts of clues — including the sound a toy or object makes — to problem-solve. This new understanding of *object permanence* is a great problem-solving tool as it helps babies make sense of separations and look for and find objects. They even begin to predict events — like when a toy car rolls under a chair, they know it should come out the other side. So now is a great time to play peek-a-boo and hide-the-toy games, which babies love and also help them practice the concepts they are learning about.

## Spotlight on: Fine Motor Skills — How Your Baby Is Using Her Hands and Fingers

Between 9 and 10 months, babies start to develop some new skills by using their fingers and hands, such as using their pointer finger and thumb to pick up — and release — objects. If you watch your baby as she is beginning to master the physical skills involved with eating a cereal “O,” you’ll see that she is probably pretty good at picking it up.

But when it gets close to her open mouth, you might discover that she isn’t able to effectively release it. There is a short period when babies don’t quite get the “idea” of releasing something and are quite surprised to close their mouths and find nothing there. If you watch your baby’s expression, you might see her look rather surprised because she really believes the “O” *should* be there. As she masters the skill of pick-up-and-release, you will see how your baby is learning to plan and act on a series of complex physical acts in order to accomplish her goal — getting that “O” into her mouth!

### New Skills, New Cautions

Learning to use hands and fingers is a big milestone because it means babies can explore small objects. The upside: Your baby can start feeding herself, if this is a skill you want her to learn. The downside: She is not very choosy about what she’ll put into her mouth. Babies may pick up any old thing that looks interesting to them and give it a taste. They are also using their fingers to explore (hello, outlet covers!). This is why choking and other hazards should be at the top of your mind as you scan the house to make sure your rooms are ready for your baby’s curious hands and fingers. Child-proofing takes on new meaning once you have a baby who is on the move!

### Fun with Fingers

Give your baby a chance to flex her new finger skills by playing some of the “hands-on” games below. These activities help babies develop and coordinate the small muscles in their hands and fingers. Both skills — muscle strength and coordination — help children learn to grasp a pencil and write later on.

As you play together, talk about what your baby is doing and discovering. This is how she learns language. And, most importantly, keep a close eye on her to make sure nothing goes in her mouth that doesn’t belong there.

- **Play “sticky ball.”** Roll up a wad of masking tape that your child can grasp. See how she likes touching this “sticky ball” and moving it from one hand to another.
- **Crumple and crinkle.** Give your baby a paper lunch bag to crinkle between his hands. See how he likes the sound it makes when his hands crunch the paper.



*Food — in all its shapes, sizes, colors, and textures — can provide some of the best props for exploration.*

- **Muffin tin mix-it-up.** Place some interesting toys or objects in each of the cups of a muffin tin. For example, you might put a baby washcloth in one, some crushed ice in another, an egg shaker in another, etc. Your baby will need to control her fingers and hands in order to reach in, grab, and explore each object.
- **Play box-top peek-a-boo.** Take a shoebox and put one of your child's favorite toys inside. Then ask him, "Where did your [teddy bear] go?" Watch him as he tries to open the box (he may need a little help from you). Another option is to lay a piece of paper or cardboard over the box (instead of putting the top on) to make it easier for your baby to discover the toy. Celebrate his success: *There it is! You found it!*
- **Try some new textures.** Offer your baby a rubbery jar opener to touch, pick up, and handle. When she shows you she is tired of that, give her a piece of lace or some soft fake fur. Each time she becomes bored, offer her a new texture to explore. Which seems to be her favorite? How does she let you know what she likes and doesn't like?
- **Explore different foods.** Food — in all its shapes, sizes, colors, and textures — can provide some of the best props for exploration. Some families are understandably not comfortable with the idea of playing with food for a number of reasons. If the idea of pushing peas around is okay with you, then offer your baby some finger-friendly foods like a pile of mashed potatoes, cereal o's, a squirt of yogurt, bite-size pieces of fruit, or pieces of bagel or bread. Let your baby pick up, smush, roll around, and explore these foods with his hands and fingers. (If you are worried about allergies, talk with your doctor before beginning this activity or choose foods your child already has tried.) Exploration of food in this way can also encourage picky eaters to try new foods.

### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Tissue for You!** Show your baby how the magical tissue box works—when you pull one out, another takes its place. See if your baby is able to use her thumb and forefinger to grab a tissue herself.
- **Soccer for Crawlers.** Get down on all fours with your baby. Roll a soft ball and crawl toward it, encouraging your baby to follow. See if your baby is interested in touching or grabbing the ball. When he's done exploring it, roll it again and keep crawling. Continue until your baby loses interest. 🌀





# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 11

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you review the chart, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Development from 9 to 12 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I can understand more words than I can say.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am starting to understand what you say to me. I can even follow simple directions like, <i>Go get the ball</i>. I tell you what I want with my sounds and my gestures.</li><li>• I am starting to use my first words.</li><li>• I might not be able to say, <i>I want milk yet</i>. But I may say something like <i>Muh</i> to let you know I want some milk. These sounds are my first words.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Tell your baby what is happening and what you will do next:</b> <i>After your milk, it's time for a nap</i>. This helps her learn language. Routines also let her know what to expect.</li><li>• <b>Put your baby's sounds and actions into words.</b> <i>You are pushing your food away. I think you are telling me you are all done.</i></li><li>• <b>Name things your baby looks at or points to:</b> <i>That's the moon. The moon comes out at night.</i></li><li>• <b>Help your child show you what he wants.</b> Offer him two different books to look at and ask which he wants as you hold out one then the other. Encourage him to respond by pointing or reaching. If he looks at one more than the other, give him that one and say, <i>You want this one!</i></li><li>• <b>Respond to your baby's babbles and facial expressions.</b> This lets him know that language really works, and motivates him to keep trying to communicate with you.</li></ul>
<p><b>I may become more choosy about the foods I'll eat.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I know what I like and don't like. I show you how I feel with my sounds and actions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Offer your baby choices.</b> Yesterday's favorite food may be rejected tomorrow. Be patient and offer 3-4 foods at each mealtime to see what she likes.</li><li>• <b>Let your baby practice using a spoon and sippy cup, if you want her to learn to feed herself.</b> Of course she will still need your help for many months.</li></ul>

Chart continued on next page



*Doing things over and over helps  
build your baby's memory.*

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<p><b>I can creep and crawl.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have found my own way of crawling — on my hands or knees, on my stomach, “crab crawling” by moving backwards and sideways, or even scooting on my bottom!</li> <li>• I walk while holding onto furniture or your hand. I may even start walking on my own.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Give your baby lots of time and a safe place to practice new skills</b> like crawling and walking.</li> <li>• <b>Make a “trail of toys” in a child-safe place in your house.</b> Line up several interesting objects (a wooden spoon, a plastic bowl a brightly colored dishcloth) that your child can crawl to and explore.</li> <li>• <b>Avoid walkers.</b> They can be dangerous and can interfere with muscle and joint development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I know that things still exist even though I can't see them — especially you!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may cry when you leave because I know you are still out there somewhere and I want you to come back!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Play hide-and-seek games with toys and interesting objects.</b> This helps your baby learn that things that disappear also reappear.</li> <li>• <b>Talk to your child when you move out of his sight.</b> This helps him learn you are still there even though he can't see you. It can also help him learn to wait as he is calmed by hearing your voice and knows you will come soon.</li> <li>• <b>Be sure to say a real good-bye to your baby.</b> Avoid sneaking out. This builds his trust in you.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I love to do things over and over again.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is how I practice and figure out how things work.</li> <li>• Repetition also helps build my memory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Watch as your child explores, then help her take the next step.</b> If she is banging two blocks together, see if she'd like to try stacking them.</li> <li>• <b>Offer your child a ball to toss, a rattle to shake, or a scarf to swing.</b> These activities help children learn how things work. They also build the muscles in their hands that will help them eventually learn to write.</li> </ul>



# from Baby to BIG Kid

Month 11

## What It's Like for Baby

*I love playing in the bathtub. Daddy gives me little cups and I fill them up with water and then I dump them out. I like when they make a big splash. Daddy says, That cup looks full! What are you going to do now? And then I pour it out and he says, That cup looks empty. What are you going to do now? One time I poured my cup of water outside the tub. Daddy's face did not look happy — where did his smile go? He said in a deep, strong voice — not the one I like — No water outside the tub. I poured another cup of water out of the tub. I wanted to see if that's what he meant. He looked surprised and not happy at all! He said loudly: No water outside the tub! Then he took out a pail and showed me how to pour the water from my cup into the pail—and then dump out the water back into the tub. It was so much fun — I did it over and over. And the best part is, Daddy started to smile again!*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- Relationship-building as he joyfully connects with his Dad during bathtime.
- Curiosity as he experiments with filling and dumping, and his Dad shares in the excitement of his discoveries.
- Self-control as his Dad sets limits on behavior he finds unacceptable and helps him find other ways to explore.

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- That he can communicate using his gestures.
- The meaning of words as his father talks with him as they play.
- Important concepts like *empty and full* and *cause and effect* when he discovers that when a cup gets very full, the only way to make it empty again is to dump it.

### Physical Skills:

- How to hold and fill a cup with water.
- How to pour water from a cup (good practice for pouring milk into a cereal bowl when he is a little bigger!).

## Did You Know...

**That 11-month-olds are learning to predict *cause and effect*?** In one research study, 11-month-olds watched a plastic bug on wheels get bumped by a large cylinder rolling down a track. Then the toy bug got bumped again by a small cylinder. Researchers watched how babies responded to these “collisions.” What they discovered was that babies understood the idea of cause and effect. Babies expected the toy bug to roll farther when bumped by the large cylinder, and not as far when bumped by the smaller one.

*Reference:* Kotovsky, L., & Baillargeon, R. (1994, February). Calibration-based reasoning about collision events in 11-month-old infants. *Cognition*, 51(2), 107-129.



*By listening, babies are soaking up grammar rules as well as lots of new vocabulary. This is why it is so crucial to talk with babies from birth.*

## What the Research Means for You

Your baby is very interested in figuring out how things work. She is learning by watching you and the world around her, and through her own play and exploration. Your baby is also beginning to make predictions about what is likely to happen based on what she has seen before. For example, if she sees you packing her diaper bag, she might point at the door or say, *Out?* She knows that the diaper bag means the two of you are going out. You help your baby learn about *cause and effect* when you play games that involve her making something happen. For example, let her roll toy balls down the hill at the park and then along a flat sidewalk. Watch and talk about which balls go farther. Or, give her a toy piano or empty shoe box to bang on, or a bell or maraca to shake. These are fun ways to practice the concept of *cause and effect* and have some fun together making music.

## Spotlight on: Listening Skills

Your baby may not be using words yet (also known as *expressive language*). But her *receptive language* — her ability to understand what she hears — is developing more quickly. So when she hears you say, *Look, Grandma is here!*, she smiles and starts for the back door, since she has learned that the word *Grandma* means a certain special person who loves her (and usually brings cookies). Receptive language skills are important because they help children understand what others are communicating.

Listening and understanding what she hears is also very important for your child's ability to learn and speak words. By listening, babies are soaking up grammar rules as well as lots of new vocabulary. This is why it is so crucial to talk with babies from birth. Receptive language skills start growing from the moment you welcome your newborn into the world.

Spoken language skills also start developing at birth. Just think of your baby's cries — they communicate a range of feelings from hunger to discomfort to boredom. While babies use their voices from day one, most don't say their first words until about 12 months (though it is very normal for babies to start talking earlier or later). It can take many months, even years, before a child's speaking skills are developed as well as his listening skills. So for a long while, children understand far more than they can say.

It's also important to remember that even though children may understand your words, they don't always have the self-control to follow your instructions. For example, if you say, *Don't touch the remote control*, your baby will probably grab for it anyway. Self-control is a complex skill that your child has not yet mastered. (You'll have to wait a few years for that.)

Listed below are the different types of information your child is likely to understand from 9 months to 1 year.

- **9 months:** May be able to follow simple directions (*Give me your teddy bear*), paired with gestures, like pointing to her bear and extending your hand while saying, "Can I have the bear?"
- **10 months:** Recognizes the names of familiar people and objects, like *Mama*, *Dada*, *bottle*, etc.
- **11 months:** May show understanding of simple questions: *Do you want milk?*
- **12 months:** Your baby is able to understand new words each day. He may be able to point to pictures in books when prompted by you: *Where is the bunny rabbit?*



*As babies are able to move their hands and bodies along with the song, they are also developing muscle strength and coordination.*

If you have questions or concerns about your child's listening, understanding, or speaking skills, talk to your child's health care provider or request a developmental assessment from your school district's Part C program.

Try the ideas below to help your child develop strong language skills:

- **Make language part of your daily routines.** The more you talk about what you are doing — whether it be taking a walk or a bath, visiting Grandma, or playing with bubbles — the more words your baby will learn. Tell your child what he is about to do and repeat these words during the activity. For example: *It's time for lunch. We are having pasta for lunch. Let's have pasta for lunch.* Children learn new words and ideas through repetition.
- **Sing together.** Songs like *Old MacDonald Had a Farm*, *Eensy Weensy Spider*, *Wheels on the Bus*, *If You're Happy and You Know It* all help children learn new words and new ideas. Many of these songs also have hand motions or body movements that go with them. As babies are able to move their hands and bodies along with the song, they are also developing muscle strength and coordination.
- **Talk to your baby about his experiences.** Use language to describe what your baby is doing, what he wants, or what he is discovering: *You just pulled up on the table — look at all you can see from there!* This helps your baby understand how words give meaning to his experiences.
- **Expand on your baby's sounds.** If your baby says *buh* when she sees a bird at the bird feeder, you can build on her attempt to say the word *bird* by responding: *Yes, that's a bird. The bird is eating some food. The bird must be hungry.* This helps your child learn new words. It also shows her that you think what she has to say is important.

## Let's Play: That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Shovel It.** Give your child a toy shovel and supervise him carefully as you let him dig in the sandbox. Or, let him "shovel" water while in the tub. Watch how he scoops and slaps as he learns what a shovel does and how it can be used.
- **Get Up, Stand Up.** You're probably finding that your baby is beginning to pull up on furniture. Give him a reason to get up to the standing position. Hang an interesting picture, child-safe mirror, or a piece of fun, textured fabric on the wall at his eye-level. Hold his hands so that he can balance, stand, and look at it. 🌀



# from Baby to BIG Kid

## Month 12

### What to Expect From Your Baby's Development

As you read the chart below, keep in mind that development is not a race and that every child grows at her own pace and in her own way. Your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated below and still be on track. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional.

### Your Baby's Development from 12 to 15 Months

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do to Connect With Your Baby
<b>I'm moving!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can walk on my own by holding your hand.</li> <li>• I am learning to crawl up stairs but can't come down yet.</li> <li>• I can throw a ball and turn pages in books.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Give your child just enough help to reach his goal.</b> If he wants to stand, let him hold your fingers for balance.</p> <p><b>Encourage your child to turn the pages</b> when you read together.</p> <p><b>Support your child as he practices new skills</b> like stair-climbing. Children need time to work on these new skills...safely!</p>
<b>I'm starting to talk and understand so much more.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I may use some words like "dudu" for "dog."</li> <li>• I can show you what I want through my actions. I may bang my high chair when I want more food.</li> <li>• If you ask me to, I can point to a body part or a picture in a book.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Choose books about things that interest your child.</b> Children often like books about kids their age doing things they like to do.</p> <p><b>Build your child's vocabulary.</b> If she points to or says "bus," you can say: <i>The school bus is driving down the street.</i></p> <p><b>Name the people, places, and things that your child sees each day:</b> <i>That's a garbage truck taking our trash.</i></p> <p><b>Play games that involve following directions:</b> <i>Throw the ball to me.</i></p>
<b>I want to do more for myself.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I say "no" or show you in other ways that I have my own ideas and want to do things on my own.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Involve your child in self-help tasks</b> like washing his hands.</p> <p><b>Follow your child's lead.</b> Let him choose what toys or games to play.</p>
<b>I love to imitate.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I copy actions I've seen other people do, like stir a pot or talk on the phone.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Join in your child's play.</b> If you see her putting a blanket on her toy bear, you might ask: <i>Does Teddy need a bottle before bed?</i></p> <p><b>Give her objects that she sees in "real life,"</b> like plastic dishes, a toy telephone, a small dust broom.</p>



# from Baby to BIG Kid



## What It's Like for Baby

*I love that television remote control! It is so great... it has buttons I can press. I loooove touching buttons. And I can hold the remote just like Mommy and Daddy do. It's so much fun to play with their toys. But... Mommy and Daddy don't like it when I touch their remote control toy. They say, No touching the remote!, and then put it on a high shelf that I can't reach. So I point at it and use a very loud voice and even cry to show them how much I want to hold it. I say Dat! Dat! to tell them what I want. But they still don't let me have it. Instead they say, You are really angry that we put the remote away. But it is not for you to play with. They give me something else and say, How about we press the buttons on this toy instead? If you press the button, the door opens and a little animal pops up. Let's see if we can make it work. Hmmm. That is a pretty cool toy, too. I think I'll keep trying for the remote, but may play with this new toy if the remote is really out.*

## What Your Baby Is Learning

### Social-Emotional Skills:

- To cope with frustration and disappointment when she is not allowed to play with the television remote
- To recognize, understand, and name her feelings when her parents acknowledge her emotional state
- To accept a substitute toy when her parents set the limit of "no touching the remote"

### Language and Thinking Skills:

- Words to describe both rules and feelings when her parents explain about not touching the remote
- The ability to communicate through sounds (cries), words (Dat! dat!), and gestures (pointing and reaching).

### Physical Skills:

- Coordination and strength in her hands and fingers from pressing buttons. These muscles help children learn to write later on.

## Did You Know...

**That the ability to point is a major milestone?** Why? Because it is a very powerful and effective form of communication. A recent study found that 1-year-old babies use pointing as a way to engage and connect with adults. In the study, after a baby pointed, the adult paid attention and showed a lot of interest in the baby's pointing. For example, the adult looked at the baby and where the baby was pointing, and talked about what the baby was pointing at. Babies loved this—they would point more frequently and pointed longer each time in order to keep the positive interaction going.

*Reference:* Liszkowski, U., Carpenter, M., Henning, A., Striano, T., & Tomasello, M. (2004). Twelve-month-olds point to share attention and interest. *Developmental Science*, 7(3), 297-307



*Like most skills children develop in the first 3 years, the “normal” time to begin walking can vary widely depending on the child.*

## What the Research Means for You

Before babies can use words, pointing is one of the most powerful ways they connect and communicate with you. When you share your baby’s interest and excitement about his discoveries, you send the message that he is loved and important. Your baby also learns that he is a good communicator and that others care about his thoughts and feelings. So next time your baby points something out, take the time to stop, look, and talk with him about what he’s interested in and wanting to share with you. Moments like these build your baby’s language and thinking skills, his self-esteem and confidence, and his relationship with you.

## Spotlight on: Steps to Walking

Over the next 6 months, you will see your baby begin to move more than ever before. Most of these new physical skills are leading up to the Big One — learning to walk. Learn more below about how your child develops the ability to walk and what you can do to help your child start to put one foot in front of the other.

### When Do Children Learn to Walk

Like most skills children develop in the first 3 years, the “normal” time to begin walking can vary widely depending on the child. On average, children take their first step sometime between 11 and 14 months, but anytime between 9 and 18 months is still within the norm.

There are many factors that influence when children learn to walk, from the physical — such as a child’s muscle tone, balance, and coordination — to temperament, as some children are more driven to explore using their bodies than others. There is also an important cultural influence. Some cultures value keeping young children close and thus tend to hold and carry them more. While this may lead to children learning to walk later than “average,” once they start, their physical development progresses normally.

## Learn more about the skills that lead to walking below:

### Pulling Up

Soon you will see your baby use the strong arm, back, and shoulder muscles she has developed from crawling to pull herself up to standing position while holding on to something (usually you or the furniture) for balance. When your child gets to this new vertical position, her reward will be seeing the world from a new perspective — and smiles will abound. However, she might not be quite as skilled at getting down as she was at getting up. She might need a hand in learning how to safely return to a sitting position.

### Cruising

Now your baby is an expert at getting up and down. He can balance on two feet and has gotten the hang of holding on to the couch with one hand while waving his favorite toy around with the other. Now — baby’s gotta move! Cruising describes the way babies take wobbly steps while hanging on to something — usually a piece of furniture — for balance. Cruising gives babies a chance to practice walking with a “safety net” while developing muscle strength, coordination, and balance.

### Balancing

You may notice that your child will occasionally let go of the couch and balance for a moment, before reaching for support again or plopping into the sitting position. Over time, though, she will grow confident enough to take her first, independent steps. These



*Learning to hold a toy in one hand while cruising with the other is a new skill and supports the development of balance.*

first steps will likely be wide-legged with arms out to balance herself. While she may begin with just one or two steps before sitting or reaching for support, soon (about a month from her first steps) your child will be toddling across the room to meet your big smile and open arms.

### **A Note About Safety**

As your rookie walker begins to toddle around, you will want to get down to her level to do one more round of child-proofing. Watch out especially for hazards to toddlers who are on the move, including:

- Sharp corners on tables
- Heavy or fragile objects within baby's reach or that can be knocked down when baby reaches out to balance herself
- Wobbly tables that won't withstand the grasp of a baby who needs to balance
- Slippery area rugs (use non-skid pads to minimize accidents)
- Electrical cords or drapery cords that baby might trip on
- Open stairways or other places where new walkers could fall

Also, keep an eagle eye on your baby in the bathtub. Now that she can pull-up and cruise, the bathtub becomes a place for her to explore, not to sit in (how boring!).

### **When to Worry**

As mentioned earlier, there is a wide range — between 9 and 18 months — during which children may begin to walk and still be considered within the norm. Some children develop certain skills faster than others. One may be quick to talk and slow to walk, another may be climbing before he says more than a few words. However, if your child doesn't seem to be showing forward progress in his physical skills, talk to your health care provider or request a developmental assessment from your community's Part C program.

Keep in mind that children may learn to walk later if they:

- Are heavier than average.
- Were born prematurely.
- Were later in learning how to roll over and/or crawl.
- Have a disability that affects their physical development.

What about toe-walking? You might see your new walker occasionally walking on tiptoes. While most toddlers toe-walk once in a while, if your child toe-walks *most or all* of the time, do talk to your health care provider. There could be a physical problem that prevents your child from putting her feet flat on the floor.

### **What You Can Do to Nurture Walking Skills**

Walking is a skill that is dependent, in large part, on your baby's desire to walk and his physical development (muscle strength, balance, and coordination). Babies don't need to be taught to walk. Learning to walk is a process that will happen on your child's own timeline. Here are some ideas for ways to support your child's growing physical skills:

- **Provide motivation.** Lay a line of interesting toys along the couch or coffee table for your baby to pick up, hold, and explore. Learning to hold a toy in one hand while cruising with the other is a new skill and supports the development of balance.



*The best way to help your baby learn to walk is to give him lots of time to play, crawl, and cruise on the floor.*

- **Offer your baby a push-toy.** Stable push-toys, ones that don't go too fast, are useful for babies since they help them stand and balance in order to practice walking. Stay close by when your baby is using a push-toy. Occasionally the toy gets rolling faster than your baby can walk and he may need a hand with slowing down.
- **Take walks with your baby.** Give your baby the experience of walking (with your assistance, if needed) on different surfaces — carpet, hardwood floors, sand, grass, etc.
- **Go barefoot.** Letting your child go barefoot as much as possible while she is learning to walk helps her develop balance and coordination.
- **Avoid walkers.** Some research has also shown that walkers may actually *slow* the process of learning to walk. And walkers may be dangerous if babies can roll over stairwells. The best way to help your baby learn to walk is to give him lots of time to play, crawl, and cruise on the floor.
- **Limit the use of exersaucer-type toys.** In order to learn how to walk, babies need to be able to see their feet. Exersaucer-type toys block babies' view of their own feet. Once again, playtime on the floor is the best way to develop the skills for walking.

### Let's Play: Activities That Nurture Bonding and Learning

- **Pass It.** Sit facing your child. Pass her a soft ball. See if she will hand it back to you. After you have passed the ball back and forth, switch it up and pass your child a small car or another toy. She will likely want to stop and examine this new object. Then start the passing game again. Activities like this develop hand-eye coordination, as well as sharing skills.
- **Shake, Shake, Shake.** Fill a small, covered plastic food container with some dry beans or dry rice. Show your baby what happens when you shake it. Is he interested in shaking it himself? You can add a musical component by singing along as you shake together. 