

# Infancy

(0–11 Months)

## The Future Starts Here

In your baby's life, infancy is a time of exciting physical and emotional growth. Your baby will triple in weight, grow many inches, and learn how to sit up and stand.



He may even take his first steps. Emotionally, he will develop bonds of love and trust with the people around him. The ways you nurture him now lay the foundation for him to grow into a self-confident, active toddler.

### Parents and Health Professionals: Partners for a Healthy Baby

Health professionals like your baby's doctors and nurses are your partners in keeping your infant healthy. Each of you brings something special to the effort. Health professionals know about child health care, growth, and development. You have the day-to-day experience that makes you an expert on your baby. You are also the best person to make sure your baby gets the kinds of care she needs. This tip sheet will help you think about some of the most important health issues during infancy.



### Health Professional Visits During Infancy

Because your baby is changing so fast, your health professional will want to see her at the following ages for regular checkups:

- Newborn
- Within the first week
- 1 month
- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 9 months

These visits are important. They give your health professional a chance to make sure your baby is healthy and growing well. They are also a time for

you to ask any questions or discuss concerns. At these visits, your baby will get a physical exam. Your health professional may check her hearing and vision or do other screening tests. Your baby may also be immunized against some of these diseases:

- Hepatitis B
- Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTaP)
- H. *influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Polio (IPV)
- Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV)

## Social Development

During early infancy, you and your baby are developing a strong, loving bond. By 2 months, your baby knows your voice and shows he enjoys your attention. You will also begin to see his unique personality. Make sure that the way you deal with him fits with his personality. For example, an active baby may want lots of active playtime. A calm baby may prefer quiet cuddling. The way you cuddle and play together is the basis for his future social development. It helps him learn what to expect and how to act with other people. Here are some ways to be sure he learns to feel good about himself and other people:

### **Encourage Your Baby to Feel Good About Himself**

- Praise your baby and give him lots of loving attention.
- Spend time together, holding, cuddling, and rocking him gently.
- Talk, sing, and read with him every day. Even though he can't talk yet, your baby learns by listening to you.
- Notice the way your baby moves, cries, and smiles. Your loving response helps him know that he is well cared for.

### **Encourage Good Feelings Within the Family**

- Do things together as a family.
- Encourage older brothers and sisters to spend time with the baby.
- Encourage family members to show affection for the baby and each other.

### **Encourage Your Baby to Enjoy Other People**

- Find safe, fun ways for your baby to spend time with other adults and children.
- Think about joining a parent-baby play group.
- Around 7–9 months of age, your baby may seem afraid of strangers or get upset whenever you leave. It's a natural step in his development. It shows that he is learning to know the difference between family members and other people.

## My Baby Is Changing!

- Responds to sounds
- Responds to parents' faces and voices
- Moves arms and legs
- Sees color and has fully developed hearing

1 Week



1 Month

- Responds to parents' faces and voices
- Can lift head briefly when lying down
- Can sleep 3–4 hours at a time; stays awake 1 hour or more
- Can be comforted by being held or talked to

2 Months

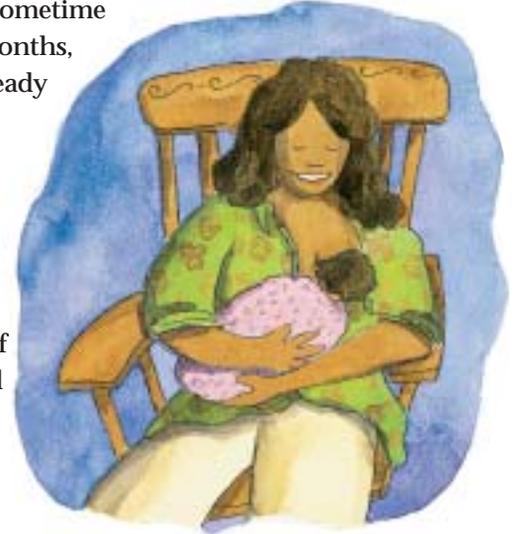
- Coos and "talks" back
- Pays attention to voices and sounds
- Smiles in response to attention
- Can lift head, neck, and upper chest

## Things to Discuss with Your Health Professional

- Ways to help older brothers and sisters play safely with the baby.
- Concerns about the way your baby acts around you or others.

## Eating

Your baby will learn a lot about eating and drinking in her first year. Breastfeeding or drinking from a bottle comes first. Then, sometime between 4 and 6 months, your baby will be ready to start eating solid foods. She'll learn how to chew and swallow, drink from a cup, and feed herself. A whole new world of tastes, textures, and skills will open up. You can do a lot to help her eat well.

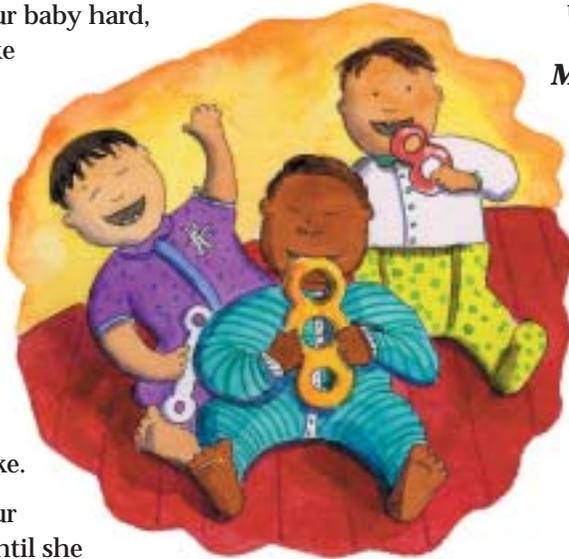


### **Start Out Well**

- Breastmilk is best for your new baby. Breastmilk is easy to digest and has just the right nutrients. It can also help prevent some infections. A nurse, doctor, or breastfeeding consultant can answer your questions and help you get started.
- If you choose to bottlefeed your baby, be sure to feed her formula that is iron fortified. When you feed her, hold her so that she is partly sitting.
- Do not warm breastmilk, formula, or baby foods in a microwave oven. The milk or food may overheat and burn your baby's mouth.
- Stop feeding your baby when she seems full. You'll know she's had enough when she turns her head away from the nipple, closes her mouth, or seems to lose interest in sucking.

**Introduce Solid Foods When Your Baby Is Ready**

- When your baby has good control of her head and neck and can sit up with support, she is ready to try solid foods. This happens around 4–6 months.
- Start out with iron-fortified rice cereal. If your baby has no problems with this, then slowly add other foods.
- After introducing a new food, wait a week before you add the next one. This gives you a chance to see whether your baby has a problem with the food. Make sure that all foods are soft or puréed.
- Don't give your baby hard, small foods like peanuts or whole grapes, or large chunks of meat or vegetables. Such foods can get stuck in your baby's tiny throat and make her choke.
- Don't give your baby honey until she is a year old. It can cause food poisoning in infants.
- Keep giving your baby breastmilk or iron-fortified formula for the first year. This milk is still her major source of nutrition.



**Things to Discuss with Your Health Professional**

- Concerns about your baby's weight.
- What to do if your baby has colic, seems allergic, or has problems with any solid foods.
- What to do if you have any difficulties with breast-feeding or bottlefeeding.
- Whether to give your baby vitamin D supplements if you're breastfeeding.

It's never too soon to start taking care of your baby's gums and teeth. With regular cleaning, your baby will have a beautiful and healthy smile right from the start.

**Take Care of Gums and Teeth**

- Even before your baby's first tooth appears, you can clean his gums. Gently wipe them after each feeding with a clean, damp washcloth.
- After teeth appear, clean them gently with a soft infant toothbrush. Use just water—not toothpaste!

**Make Teething Easier**

- Teething begins anytime between 6 and 12 months. During teething, babies drool a lot and want to chew on things. Sometimes they fuss or cry if it hurts. They may even have a fever.
- To ease the pain, try giving him a cold teething ring to chew on.

**Prevent Tooth Decay**

- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle of milk or juice. The sugar in these drinks stays in his mouth and can lead to tooth decay. At about 6 months, begin encouraging your baby to drink from a cup rather than a bottle.
- Your own saliva can pass bacteria from your mouth to your baby's, so make sure you brush and floss regularly. Don't put your baby's pacifier in your mouth before you give it to him. Don't eat out of a common dish with your baby or use the same spoon or fork.

**Things to Discuss with Your Dentist or Health Professional**

- How to relieve teething symptoms.
- Whether your baby needs fluoride supplements.
- When and how to help your baby stop sucking his thumb or using a pacifier.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Babbles and coos</li> <li>■ Rolls over from front to back</li> <li>■ Controls head well</li> <li>■ Reaches for and bats at objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Says "dada"</li> <li>■ Sits with support</li> <li>■ Is interested in toys</li> <li>■ Smiles, laughs, squeals</li> <li>■ May have first tooth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Responds to own name</li> <li>■ Crawls and stands with help</li> <li>■ Understands a few words</li> <li>■ Shows anxiety with strangers</li> <li>■ Plays peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake</li> </ul>
4 Months	6 Months	9 Months

## Safety

Now that you have a baby, look around your house with new eyes. Ask yourself what you need to do to make your home a safe place to raise a child. Think about your daily routines, like changing diapers, cooking, and driving, and consider ways to make them safer, too.

### Plan Ahead

- Know when to go to the emergency room. Know where the closest one is and how to get there quickly.
- Keep the number of a poison control center near the phone.
- Remove guns from the home or keep them unloaded and locked up.

- Find out which hospitals are covered by your insurance. Ask about financial assistance if needed.
- Take a first-aid and infant CPR course.

### Things to Discuss with Your Health Professional

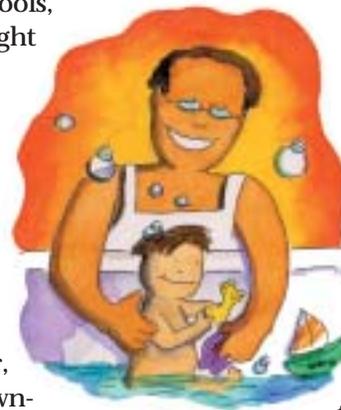
- A plan for dealing with medical emergencies, injuries, or poisonings.
- Guidelines for knowing when to go to the emergency room.
- The hospitals and clinics your health professional works with.
- Ways to get in touch with your health professional after office hours.

## Making Sure Your Child Is Safe

### Prevent Injuries

- ✓ Use a car safety seat in the back seat every time your child rides in the car. Carefully attach the car seat to the back seat according to the manufacturer's directions.
- ✓ Never place your baby's safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag. The back seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride.
- ✓ Always put your baby to sleep on her back to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Think "back to sleep" to help you remember.
- ✓ Do not put blankets, comforters, pillows, or toys in the crib. They could cover her face if she rolls over. Keep her room temperature comfortable but not too warm.
- ✓ Check that the bars of her crib are less than 2 3/8 inches (about the width of a playing card) apart. The space between the mattress and the crib frame should be less than two fingers wide. When your baby is in the crib, always keep the sides of the crib all the way up.
- ✓ Never leave your baby unattended when she is awake.

- ✓ Put a safety gate at the top of stairs. Close the latches on all windows.
- ✓ Keep sharp objects like scissors, letter openers, pens, and knitting needles in a safe place.
- ✓ Keep medications, household cleaners, and poisons locked up.
- ✓ Make sure your baby can't get at electrical wires, outlets, or appliances.
- ✓ Practice water safety. Put a fence around any pools. Empty buckets, baby pools, and bathtubs right after use.
- ✓ Never place your baby in a walker. It won't help her learn to walk and it can be unsafe because she can tip over, fall out, fall down-stairs, or get to dangerous places.



### Prevent Burns

- ✓ Keep your baby away from hot stoves, fireplaces, grills, heaters, irons, and hair dryers. Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

- ✓ Keep cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays, and matches out of sight and out of reach.
- ✓ Set the temperature of your household water heater below 120°F.
- ✓ Before you put your baby in the bath, put your wrist in the water to make sure it's not too hot.
- ✓ When you take your baby outside, keep her out of direct sunlight. Don't use sunscreen until she's 6 months old. But put a brimmed hat on her head. Put a hood on the stroller or use an umbrella to shade her from the sun.
- ✓ Install smoke alarms in your home. Check them regularly to make sure they work.

### Prevent Choking

- ✓ Do not allow your baby to play with things that can cover his nose and face. Plastic bags and balloons can be very dangerous!
- ✓ Keep objects that your baby could swallow, like buttons, coins, and marbles, out of reach.
- ✓ Cut food into small pieces.

## Physical Activity

During infancy, your baby develops many new physical skills. As she learns to control her body movements, she becomes stronger and more active. Before long, she will be able to hold up her head, sit up, roll over, crawl, stand, and even take a few steps. She'll also be able to point, hold a toy, and feed herself. Your baby needs lots of opportunities to play with you, with food, and with toys to help her develop these important skills.

### **Help Your Baby Be Active**

- Play with your baby. Find ways to rock, bounce, and sway her gently. This will help her learn to control her head and body and build her strength. Never shake your baby. Shaking your baby can cause serious injury or death.
- Help her play with toys. Give her a rattle to shake, blocks to stack or knock over, a stuffed animal to reach for. These games help your baby develop muscle control.
- Find games that encourage her to move rather than to sit and watch.

### **Watch Your Baby Learn to Crawl and Walk**

- Your baby may begin to crawl between 7 and 10 months. Make the area safe, then encourage her to explore. It will help her strengthen her muscles.
- When your baby can stand and move around the room by holding onto furniture, she's almost ready to walk. She'll soon be walking without help.

### **Things to Discuss with Your Health Professional**

- Questions or concerns about your baby's development.
- Any problems your baby has with physical activities.

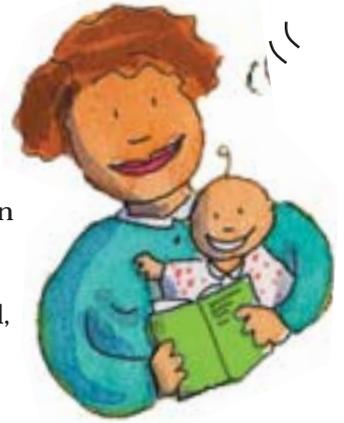


## Child Care and Learning

Whether you are going to work or school, or just going to the store, there will be times when you need someone to watch your baby. It is important to find someone that both you and your baby like. Finding the right babysitter, child caregiver, or child care center can take time, but it's worth it to know your child is in good hands.

### **Choose Child Care Carefully**

- Plan ahead. Have a caregiver or child care center lined up before you actually need it.
- Choose a caregiver or child care center that can give your baby the loving attention he needs and wants.
- Pick babysitters you trust. Make sure they are old enough to care for a baby. Tell your sitter how to reach you. Give her clear instructions on what to do in case of an emergency. Write these instructions and post them someplace easy to find, like the refrigerator.



### **Help Your Baby Adjust to Child Care**

- Spend a few minutes with your baby at the child care center or caregiver's home. Help him settle in before you leave.
- Build a friendly and trusting relationship with the caregiver. This will make it easier for you to discuss any problems or concerns about your baby. It will help your baby feel more comfortable, too.

### **Help Your Baby Learn**

- Every day, take advantage of learning opportunities. Talk, read, and play together.
- Take short trips and outings around the neighborhood. Celebrate special occasions. These will help prepare your baby for future learning.



### **Things to Discuss with Your Health Professional**

- How to know if your baby is happy or unhappy in his child care program.
- Whether there are any hearing or vision problems that might keep him from learning.

# Choosing the Right Child Care

## Step 1: Interview caregivers.

### Call and ask about:

- ✓ cost and financial assistance
- ✓ how many children are cared for
- ✓ size of the adult staff
- ✓ meals and food they provide
- ✓ their license, accreditation, and certification

### Visit and look for:

- ✓ a good relationship between staff and children
- ✓ happy, active children
- ✓ a clean, safe center, inside and out
- ✓ a variety of toys and learning materials

### Ask them:

- ✓ Are parents allowed to visit their child during the day?
- ✓ How do they discipline young children in their care?



- ✓ How do they handle children's emergencies and illnesses?

## Step 2: Check references.

### Talk with other parents who use the center and ask:

- ✓ Is the caregiver always reliable?
- ✓ Is their child happy there?
- ✓ Does the caregiver seem to respect their values and culture?
- ✓ Would they recommend the caregiver?

## Step 3: Make the decision.

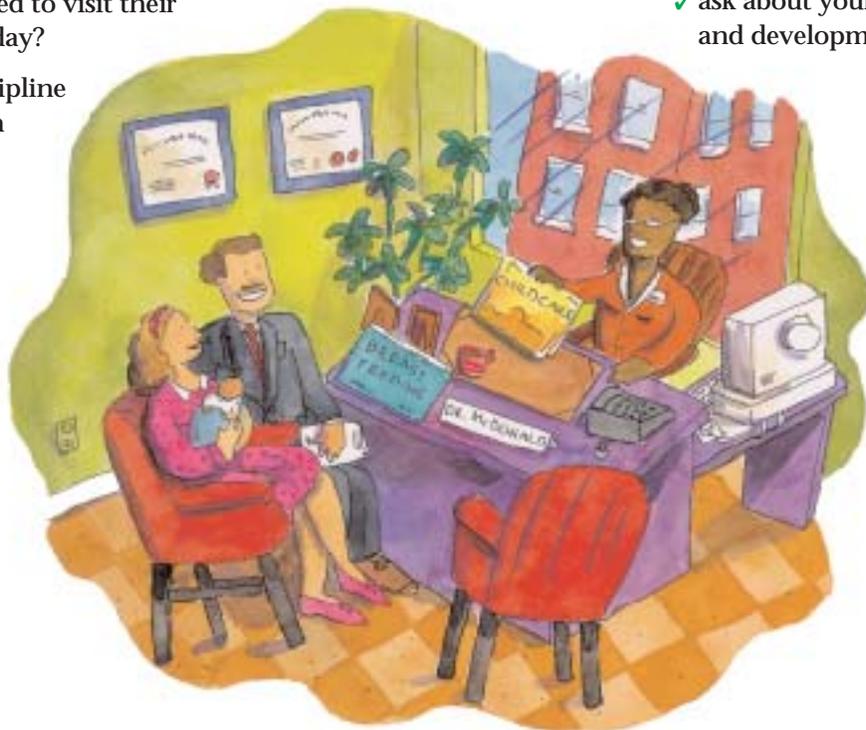
### Ask yourself:

- ✓ Will my child be happy and secure?
- ✓ Can the caregiver meet my child's needs?
- ✓ Do the caregiver's values agree with mine?
- ✓ Is this child care suitable and affordable?
- ✓ Do I feel good about choosing this caregiver?

## Step 4: Stay involved.

### Be sure to:

- ✓ make time to talk with your caregiver every day
- ✓ talk with your caregiver about issues and concerns
- ✓ ask about your child's growth and development



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau. *Four Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider*. Administration for Children and Families Web site. Available at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/faq/4steps.htm>. Accessed April 22, 1999.