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1 Month

Julie Boozer

Vivian Halverson

Dorothea Cudaback

Shirley O'Brien

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children

1 MONTH

Dear Parents,

What a month! Both you and your baby have spent a lot of time getting to know each other. While your baby was spending most of his/her time sleeping, crying or eating, you were probably spending most of your time figuring out the best way to meet your baby's needs. Here are some clues to help you understand what it's like to be one-month old.

What's It Like to Be 1 Month Old?

How I Grow

- I wobble my head if you don't hold it for me.
- I turn my head sideways when I'm on my stomach.
- I roll part-way from my back to my side.

How I Talk

- I'm beginning to make some throaty sounds.
- I cry when I'm hungry, wet, tired or when I want to be held.

How I Respond

- I make eye contact with you.
- I don't show much expression on my face, but I will soon!
- I may smile when I see or hear you.

How I Feel

- I feel comforted when you hold me close, smile and talk gently to me. Don't be afraid of spoiling me.

Help Me Learn

- Help me learn to use my magnificent ears. Sing softly to me, play a music box or radio, or have a ticking clock or metronome nearby.

Talk to Your Baby

Don't forget to tell your baby how special he is to you. Talk to him and hold him as much as you want. You can't spoil a baby by holding him too much. In fact, babies need to be held, kissed and cuddled so they can grow up happy and normal.

Touching Experiences

Touch is an important sense to babies and they are very sensitive to different textures. When you play with your baby, let her feel various objects, such as soft cotton, and bumpy material.

Motion often has a calming effect on babies. Babies enjoy rocking in a cradle, swing or in your arms. And they usually love being taken for a ride in a stroller or carriage. Babies prefer that their new experiences be introduced to them in a gentle and slowly changing way. As they get older, they'll become more tolerant and interested in surprises.

A Special Note to Fathers

If you haven't tried giving your baby a bath yet, now is a good time to start. You can use bath time for sharing giggles, for being close and for giving your undivided attention to your little one. Babies love to coo, splash and play games with water toys while fathers observe, hum and carry on a conversation with them. Babies feel especially loved and loving when they are swept up in a big fluffy towel, with a cuddle thrown in, before the dressing game starts.

Cold Feet

Hands and feet of babies are usually cool to the touch because there's less circulation there. To tell if your baby is warm, touch his tummy or back. If you're comfortable in a room, then the baby probably is too. During the summer, when the temperature reaches 80°, you need not worry about your baby being cold. A diaper and light shirt will be just fine—but remember to cover baby when you go into an air-conditioned room.

Mittens are sometimes put on babies because parents worry that a baby will scratch himself. It's better to trim baby's nails carefully and leave those fingers free to learn by grasping and touching.

Why Does Baby Spit Up So Much?

Babies swallow a lot of air when they eat. This is why they burp. Sometimes babies only swallow small amounts of air, not enough to make them burp. It takes time for those little bubbles to amount to something large enough to burp up. When that happens, any milk sitting on top of that big bubble comes up too, and baby spits up.

We have a muscle that keeps food from coming back up out of the stomach. In some infants, this muscle is poorly developed. These babies may be frequent vomiters until they begin walking and gravity keeps food in the stomach. Since these babies generally have good appetites, the amount they vomit is annoying to parents, but may be no real problem to the infants.

Recent studies suggest that laying your baby on his tummy after a feeding, rather than placing him in an infant seat, may reduce the spitting. “Spitters” need just as much cuddling and holding as other babies.

When you feed baby, make it a pleasurable experience for you both. Let baby be the one who decides when he is full. This will help build a lifetime of sensible eating habits. It's not important to finish the milk in the bottle. It is important for baby to learn when enough is enough!

Colic

Many babies develop colic between the second and fourth week. This can last through baby's third month. Colic causes cramps in the intestine. Attacks of colic occur most frequently in the evening when both you and baby are tired. The attacks can last from a few minutes to several hours. To help lessen the pain, you might try lying your baby on her stomach across your knees and rubbing her back. If the discomfort seems extreme, call your doctor.

These are some other things you can try if gas is the cause of your baby's colic: (1) Feed your baby in an upright position whether he is being breast-fed or bottle-fed. (2) Ten-minute feeding periods followed by five minutes of burping may help. (3) A warm bath may help. When you first put baby into the water, he may cry even louder until the warm water relaxes the rectal muscle and allows him to pass the trapped gas.

It is not your fault your baby has colic, but it's not her fault either. Hang in there!

The Baby Blues

As a new mother, you may be going through what is known as the “baby-blues,” or the post-partum blues. The baby-blues come from the many changes your body goes through after your baby is born. You may be discouraged, tense, or feel like crying. Many new mothers feel this way. Don't worry—these feelings are perfectly normal.

Some mothers worry that they look as if they are still pregnant. Don't be upset. Remember, it takes at least 6 weeks for the uterus (womb) to shrink back to normal size.

There are no strict rules about being a parent. If you are uncertain about what to do, trust your “gut” feelings or instincts.

There are some ways to help you through these “blue” days:

- Talk to your partner, a family member, or a good friend about your feelings. It helps to talk with someone who is close to you.
- Find out if there are any parent groups in your community where parents get together to talk and work out solutions to common problems.
- Call the Mental Health Association (listed in the white pages of your phone book), the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at the nearest school, the local School District, or religious groups in your community for names of groups or for help in solving problems.
- Call the Health Department (listed in the white pages of the phone book under your city or county) and ask about the Public Health Nurse Visiting Service. In many cases, this service is free.
- Ask a good friend or a relative to help you out once a month. She or he might be able to come in for a few hours to watch your baby while you take the time to relax, go out, or just have some time for yourself.

Choosing Child Care

If both parents must work (and that is true for most families today), you will be thinking about child care options. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Find out what is offered in your area. What can you afford? What do you feel will be best for your baby and your family?
- Avoid, if possible, child care arrangements where you have to travel a long way, or have to rush from work or school to pick up your child.
- Many parents find babysitters by talking with friends or relatives who have been in a similar situation.
- Parents have found that the best way to find someone they can trust is to visit the homes of potential babysitters, talk with them, and get a feeling for the home and the person.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions to put your mind at ease. Ask questions like “What would you do in an emergency? What will you do if my baby cries a lot? What do I do if my baby is sick?” Make sure you feel comfortable with the child care center or sitter you choose.
- A fact list, Choosing Child Care for Infants, is included below. It gives ideas for helping you find quality child care. Take it with you as you check out the various child care options available to you.

Selecting a sitter about whom you have a good feeling will help your peace of mind when you return to work. The process of finding a sitter can take a very long time, so start looking now. Good l uck!

A Parent's Guide to Choosing Day Care For Infants & Toddlers

Quality day care is loving care in a friendly and warm environment that provides the necessary ingredients for a child's healthy growth and development—intellectual, physical, social and emotional.

Good day care is based on the mutual respect of parents and care providers, open communication, and a shared commitment to the well-being of the children. If you, like many other parents, are looking for a quality day care setting, the following list of what to look for and points to discuss with caregivers may guide you in your decision.

Do the caregivers...

- Appear to be warm, friendly, and flexible?
- Treat each child as a special person?
- Cheerfully care for the babies' physical needs, such as feeding and diapering?
- Seem to be someone your child will enjoy being with?
- Accept and respect your personal and cultural values?
- Have childrearing values similar to your own?
- Spend time holding, playing with, and talking to the babies?
- Provide stimulation by pointing out things to look at, touch and listen to?
- "Child-proof" the setting so toddlers can crawl or walk safely and freely?
- Recognize that toddlers want to do some things for themselves, helping toddlers learn to feed and dress themselves, go to the bathroom and pick up their toys. Appreciate and praise each child's special efforts.
- Seem to have a sense of humor?
- Save previous training and experience working with children?
- Express pride in the job of caring for children?

Are there opportunities for infants and toddlers to...

- Receive individual attention?
- Crawl and explore safely?
- Play with objects and toys that help infants to develop their senses of touch, sight, and hearing (for example, mobiles, mirrors, cradle gyms, crib toys, rattles, things to squeeze and roll, pots and pans, nesting cups, different sized boxes?
- Take part in a variety of activities that are suited to toddlers' short attention span (for example, puzzles, cars, books, outdoor play equipment for active play; play dough, boxes for creative play)?

Does the day care home or center have...

- An up-to-date license?
- A clean and comfortable look?
- Gates at the top and bottom of stairs?
- Potty chairs or special toilet seats in the bathroom?
- A clean and safe place to change diapers?
- Cribs with firm mattresses covered in heavy plastic?
- Separate crib sheets for each baby in care?
- A safe outdoor play area nearby that is fenced and free of litter?
- Enough adult caregivers for the number of children? Research suggests that below age 3, one adult for every 5 children is satisfactory. Children below the age of 3 seem to get better care when the group size does not exceed 12 children.
- Nutritious meals and snacks made with the kinds of food you want your child to eat and served in a pleasant atmosphere?
- Adequate heat, light, ventilation, and bathroom facilities?
- Locked cabinets for storage of medicine, household cleaners, and dangerous materials?
- A health program and careful medical records for each child?
- Provisions for a sick child?
- Evidence of meeting all applicable building, health, fire and licensing regulations?
- Information about services in the community that might be helpful to your family?

Do you feel that...

- Being in this setting will be a happy experience for your child?
- You can develop a relaxed, sharing relationship with the child care workers?

Be sure to discuss...

- The total fees to be paid and when they are to be paid.
- Addresses and phone numbers where you can be reached at home or at work
- What time your child will arrive and leave the center or home.
- Any special arrangements for transportation.
- Any special arrangements for holidays and vacations.
- Your own attitudes and methods for guiding behavior, and the attitudes and methods used in the center or home.
- Any special characteristics of your child, such

as food preferences, habits, allergies, and special medical needs.

Selecting quality day care is hard work! It's a good idea to visit more than one center or home, although if you live in a small town or rural area, you may not have this option. **When visiting a center, take your child with you, if possible, and go when the center or home is open and full of busy children.**

You Deserve a Break!

You need to renew the specialness of those close relationships that are important to you. It will be easier if you plan ahead. Be sure to look for a babysitter early. Ask around. Other parents will know who is good with young babies.

Sometimes Mom really needs to get away for awhile. If Dad pinch-hits while Mom is gone, it can be a special time for everyone. Dad and Baby can get to know each other better and Mom will be happy and refreshed when she returns.

Don't forget, Mom and Dad, to set aside time for dates between just the two of you. Sometimes parents feel threatened by this newcomer who upsets routines and schedules. Mom often is very busy with Baby, and Dad may feel pushed aside and ignored.

Make an agreement that you will talk with each other—every day, if possible—about your ups and downs and about your many new experiences and feelings. One of the nicest gifts you can give your child is the experience of growing up in a home where Mom and Dad have a healthy and growing relationship.

Share as many parenting activities as possible right from the beginning. Try to agree on who does what in taking care of the baby and household chores. The key word is agree. The more you both can agree on now, the fewer resentments and misunderstandings will pile up later. It will reap dividends for your whole family.

Questions

Q: "Since so many of the childhood diseases have been eliminated, is immunization still necessary?"

A: Yes! Newborns receive protective antibodies from their mothers. Gradually, as infants grow older, the antibodies begin to decrease. The younger a child is when he catches a disease, the more destructive the disease can be.

Immunizations help trigger your child's own protective mechanisms. Invest in the future, and have your child receive all the immunizations recommended by your doctor.

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