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4 Months

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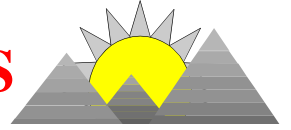
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G R E A T B E G I N N I N G S

A Series for Parents of Young Children



4 MONTHS

Communicating with Baby

Your baby learns about himself through the ways people react to him. Words are important, but your actions, facial expressions and tone of voice also give your child messages about himself.

Here are some nonverbal ways to tell your baby you love him and that he is important to you.

- Touch is the most important love message! Hold your baby in a gentle, secure way, giving tender caresses and affectionate hugs. Tell him you love him by letting your body express all the love you feel for him.
- Use your eyes to tell your baby you love him. Look at him eye-to-eye and smile.
- Hum, whistle, or sing to your baby. If your voice is low, gentle, soothing and full of joy and love, he will feel it.
- Rock your baby. Find an old-fashioned rocker and use it while you're giving the "love messages."

Reach, Grab & Put in the Mouth

Your baby's favorite game is probably putting **everything** in her mouth. Since tiny objects can easily become lodged in a child's throat and cause choking, get in the habit of banning small objects from Baby's territory. Be alert to those objects that Baby might dislodge with occasionally strong

movements. Also, be sure that paint on toys is lead-free and non-toxic.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Did you know that your baby doesn't know that things exist when he can't see them? Next time Baby is playing with something, watch and see if he looks for it when it is taken away. You'll probably find that "out of sight" is really "out of mind." This is one reason it is fairly easy to divert his attention when he gets angry, and it's also why he enjoys playing peek-a-boo so much.

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Baby will think it's a real treat to watch himself in the mirror. He'll especially enjoy watching "the baby" move.

No Longer a Featherweight

As Baby grows heavier, you may want to consider buying or borrowing a stroller. They can make shopping easier, and even trips to museums are possible with strollers.

When choosing a stroller, be sure it has a firm backrest (which is vertical or nearly so), and a canopy or umbrella which is high enough to accommodate a 3-year-old. (You may want to use it

occasionally when your child gets older.) Other safety features include secure, comfortable seat belts; brakes that can be locked; a special latch to prevent accidental folding; and a wide enough base to prevent tipping.

Stranger Shyness

At around the age of 4 months, many babies start showing preference for certain people. With members of their immediate family, babies will talk, coo and laugh. But when a stranger (yes, even Grandma!) picks up baby, he may scream and wail. This is normal behavior—and a mark of Baby's intelligence. He's learning that not all people are the same, and he probably just wants to associate with those who he's tested out and found trustworthy.

Time to See the Doctor Again

Can you believe that it's already time for Baby's second DPT and Polio shots? Even though it takes time and energy to get the immunizations, they are an invaluable gift in health protection to your baby.

What's It Like to Be 4 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I turn my head in all directions.
- I lift my head when I'm on my back and grab my feet with my hands.
- I prefer sitting to lying down—it's more interesting.
- I stretch my legs out straight when I'm on my back or stomach.
- I can hold small objects in my hands.
- I put things in my mouth.
- I splash and kick with my hands and feet when I'm in the bathtub.

How I Talk

- I babble and imitate sounds like coughing and clicking my tongue for long periods of time.
- I coo, grin or squeal with joy when you talk to me.

How I Respond

- I love to see myself in the mirror.
- I like some people and am shy or scared of others.
- I'm still fascinated by my hands.

How I Understand

- I can remember things for about five seconds.
- I know if something is near or far.
- I'm aware of depth and distance.

How I Feel

- I get excited when I'm having fun—everything is a game to me.
- I may cry when you stop paying attention to me or take a toy away.

How You Help Me Learn

- Let me reach for hanging toys and cradle gyms while lying on my back.
- Encourage me in play activities that use both eyes and both sides of my body.
- Play with me in front of a mirror.
- Encourage my babbling, but don't try to “correct” the sounds.
- When I figure out how to click my tongue, click your tongue back. I think that's a great game!

Feeding Your Baby: Introducing Solid Foods

“Babies used to be given solids before they were a month old,” says Dr. Sue Snider, University of Delaware Extension food and nutrition specialist. “But we now know that this frequently causes allergic reactions. In addition, an infant's suck-and-swallow reflex makes it difficult to actually eat much solid food at an early age.”

Between four and six months, most infants are able to sit up alone. By then they usually have developed control of their neck muscles. Being able to do this

indicates a readiness to eat from a spoon, and solids can be introduced. This is an important time to talk with your doctor about infant feeding.

Consider these suggestions when your baby is ready for solids:

- Iron-fortified cereals are the first solid foods introduced in the diet because a baby's increasing need for iron can't be met by milk. Dr. Snider says these cereals are usually non-wheat to guard against possible allergic reactions.
- Gradually add other cereals, then vegetables and fruits. Strained vegetables or fruit juices are often added when Baby is about 6 or 7 months old. Strained fruits and strained meats are usually included at about 8 or 9 months.
- Start with small amounts—one teaspoon per day—and only one new food a week. Watch for signs of allergy, such as rash, diarrhea, or vomiting. Temporarily discontinue that food if any of these signs appear. If there are allergies in your family, your doctor may suggest delaying the introduction of wheat, eggs and dairy products.
- The first feedings will probably be messy. Don't forget, your baby has only been used to sucking up to now. But she will soon learn to swallow solids. With a little patience, you can help your baby learn to eat and to like different foods.
- Don't feed your infant honey, even on a pacifier, until he is at least a year old. Bacterial spores found in honey can grow in an infant's gastro-intestinal tract and cause botulism—an illness that has been associated with sudden infant death syndrome. When babies grow older, they produce enough stomach acid to destroy the spores of this organism.
- Pediatricians differ in their opinions as to when fruit juices should be added to infant's diets. They generally agree, however, that to prevent tooth decay, fruit juices should not be given from a nursing bottle.
- To make swallowing easier, place food well

inside your baby's mouth. Food placed in the front of the mouth will be pushed out by the tongue before it can be swallowed.

- Some pediatricians advise that strained meats be added to the diets of breast-fed infants at about six months of age. This is because the protein content of mother's milk gradually decreases.
- Babies have a keen sense of taste and some show very definite, but changeable, food preferences. Present each food with a positive attitude. If something you've prepared is rejected, don't take it personally. Serve it again a few weeks later, and he may like it. Relax—let your baby develop his food preferences based on many experiences with nourishing, simply-prepared foods.

Meal Times Are Important

As your baby begins to be able to hold her own bottle, it's tempting to tuck her in bed, prop her bottle, and go about your chores while she drops off to sleep. This pattern deprives your bottle-fed infant of the cuddling that makes meal time so special.

Arrange your schedule so Baby's meal can be a time for loving and learning as well as eating. Talk or sing to Baby as you feed her. Don't push her to empty her bottle. What your baby eats is your responsibility, but how much she eats is something she can best determine.

Questions

- Q.** “I think my son is teething. He wants to chew on everything. He is cranky and drools a lot. What can I do to make him feel more comfortable?”
- A.** As teeth push through the gums, your baby may feel some soreness and become cranky and irritable. If you put an ice cube in a clean cloth and rub it over his gums for a few minutes, it will ease the soreness. Letting him chew on a plastic or rubber teething ring that has been chilled in the refrigerator also may help.

The first teeth usually appear at six months, but some babies get them much earlier. Others don't get any teeth until they are a year or older. When teeth do come in, your baby may feel miserable.

His drooling is normal. Don't blame fever, vomiting, diarrhea or other signs of illness on teething. If your baby shows any of these signs, have him checked by your doctor.

Games Babies Play

I-Can-Move-to-Keep-Things-in-Sight: An Eyes-and-Body Game

Purpose of Game:

Teaches your baby to use his body, and to lift his head and part of his upper body when watching a moving object.

How to Play:

1. Put your baby on his stomach and sit facing him.
2. Use a ring of keys, or a box or can filled with buttons or rocks.
3. Dangle the noise-making object in front of your baby's face and say, "Look at the keys."
4. Raise the object slowly in the air to encourage him to lift his head and push up with his hands.
5. Say something like "Follow the keys," or "Keep your eyes on the keys."
6. Watch your baby and see if he can lift his chest off the floor.

Another Eyes-and-Body Game

Move object slowly behind your baby's head. See if he will move around to find the object.

Make Sure All Toys or Objects Given To Your Baby Are Safe

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind when considering toys for your baby. The National Safety Council recommends that toys should be:

- Washable
- Large enough so that they won't fit in your baby's mouth, ears or nose
- Light enough so they won't cause injury if your baby drops them on himself
- Made of non-brittle material (NEVER GLASS)

Here are some suggestions for safety in toys:

- Avoid toys with spikes or wires in them.
- Make sure toys do not have parts that can catch fingers.
- Remove any loose metal squeakers from squeaky toys.
- Remove the eyes on stuffed animals if they are loose or pinned on; add your own touch by embroidering eyes on the animal.
- Avoid hanging pacifiers or toys from long strings above your baby's bed. They can come loose and get tangled around your baby's neck. Don't hang them around his neck either.
- **DON'T GIVE PLASTIC BAGS TO YOUR BABY AS PLAYTHINGS!**

Appreciation & Thanks to the Original Authors

This series has been adapted from **Parent Express** by Dr. Dorothea Cudaback, Cooperative Extension, University of California, and her colleagues throughout the national Cooperative Extension System.

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Suggestions for the Introduction of Solid Food

From **Feeding Your Baby**, a Cooperative Extension Food and Nutrition Facts Sheet, prepared by Kathleen Nordin, Leta Aljadir and Dr. Sue Snider. These guidelines are only suggestions. It is always wise to check with your pediatrician because babies of the same age vary in growth, development and readiness for various foods.

Age	Breast Milk or Formula	Cereals	Vegetables	Fruits	Meats
0-1 month	24 fl. oz.	none	none	none	none
2-4 months	32 fl. oz.	none	none	none	none
4-6 months	32 fl. oz.	8 tablespoons	none	none	none
6-7 months	32 fl. oz.	6 tablespoons	5 tablespoons strained vegetables	4 fl. oz. fruit juice	none
8-9 months	32 fl. oz.	6 tablespoons	7 tablespoons finely chopped or mashed vegetables	6 tablespoons strained or mashed fruits	3 tablespoons strained meats
10-11 months	32 fl. oz.	8 tablespoons	8 tablespoons finely chopped or mashed vegetables	8 tablespoons strained or mashed fruits & 4 fl. oz. juice	1 oz. strained or finely chopped meats
12 months	32 fl. oz.	8 tablespoons	10 tablespoons finely chopped or mashed vegetables	8 tablespoons strained or mashed fruits & 6 fl. oz. juice	2 oz. strained or finely chopped meats
12-24 months	32 fl. oz. (whole milk from cup)	Table food chopped up to prevent choking	Table food chopped up to prevent choking	Table food chopped up to prevent choking	Table food chopped up to prevent choking