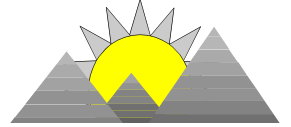


GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



5 MONTHS

Dear Parents,

Your baby is a bundle of energy! No longer content to just sit quietly and look around, she wants to move all the time and in all directions.

Babies at this age often demand a lot of time and attention. Try to keep your sense of humor and patience. You will enjoy each other more if you can laugh together!

Does it seem as if your baby wants something in his mouth all the time? Many five-month-olds really like the old “reach, grasp, and put-in-the-mouth” game. This can be frustrating for parents, but it's an important skill that Baby is learning. You can help him practice this skill with many different objects. Just be sure that everything you give him is safe, because it's definitely bound for the mouth!

Toys Are for Learning

From this age on, your baby will be very interested in toys that can be touched, examined, chewed, and sucked, such as rubber teethers, plastic discs and rubber beads.

Your baby learns from play and likes to explore each toy to get the feel of it. She likes to take a toy and twist, shake, suck, move it from hand to hand, and bang it on other objects.

She is learning about nearness and distance, inside and outside, and position and placement of objects. She is discovering the world of objects, and developing a sense of space, form and texture.

What's It Like to Be 5 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I rock, roll, and twist my body.
- I kick my feet and suck my toes.
- I keep my head and back straight when I sit, if you support my body.
- I stand up (if you hold me under my arms), jump up and down, and stamp my feet.
- I have pretty good aim when I grab something.

How I Talk

- I watch your mouth and try to imitate you when you talk to me.
- I make sounds like “ee, ah, ooh, da-da, bye-bye, ma-ma.”

- I babble to myself, to my toys, and to people—I get attention that way!

How I Respond

- I may cry when I see strangers.
- I smile at familiar faces and voices.
- I look around when I hear sounds.
- I make sounds and interrupt your conversations because I want attention.
- I want to touch, hold, turn, shake, and taste everything.
- I put a lot of energy into everything I do.

How I Understand

- I recognize my name.
- I can tell the difference between myself and others in the mirror.
- I am beginning to learn about my feelings.
- I look for something if I drop it.
- I remember what I just did.

How I Feel

- I cling to you when you hold me.
- I stop crying when you talk to me.
- I show fear, anger and disgust.

How You Help Me Learn

- Talk to me in complete sentences about what you are doing.
- Face me so I can watch your lips when you talk. I will try to imitate you.
- Play peek-a-boo games with me.
- Let me listen to the radio for short periods of time. Allow me quiet times, too.

Soon you will find Baby...

- Really enjoying different facial expressions.
- Imitating your sounds and actions.
- Rolling from back to stomach.
- Transferring objects from one hand to the other.

Pacifiers

There will probably always be a controversy over whether or not pacifiers are good for babies. Here are several points to consider.

When Baby is fussing, she probably doesn't need to be “pacified.” Find out what the fuss is all about. She may need to be held, talked to or walked around.

Research has suggested that children are more alert and aware of their surroundings when they are not sucking on a pacifier. This may be because healthy babies go through a stage where they put **everything** in their mouth. “Pacified” babies may be missing out on this opportunity to investigate their environment with many different objects.

If you've considered the first two points, and feel your baby still needs a pacifier, you're in good company. Dr. Julie Boozer, chair of the Department of Nursing at Wesley College, says, “After all, some babies just need a lot of sucking.”

It's Baby-Proofing Time!

Your whole house is ready for baby-proofing. There are many reasons for baby-proofing your home:

- It protects your child from accidents.
- It gives your baby a large environment that is safe and free to explore.
- It keeps you from having to say “no” all the time.
- It protects your treasured possessions from harm.

Cover all electrical outlets, move all cleaners to high shelves and rid the house of small items, such as matches, nails and tiny beads.

If you don't want to move dangerous chemicals—prescription drugs, bug killers, etc.—to high shelves, install child-proof locks on those cabinets.

One way to spot potential dangers in your home is to get down on your hands and knees and crawl

around. What mischievous things can you find to get into?

Until the baby-proofing job is accomplished, you may want to borrow a playpen or gate with a spring lock to limit your child to safe territory. Playpens work well with some babies, and others cry the minute they're put into one. If you do use a playpen, be sure there are no hinges or joints that can pinch tiny fingers. Old-fashioned accordion gates are dangerous because babies can become entrapped.

Discipline: It Starts Early

When you baby-proof your house and distract your baby from doing something harmful or annoying, you are starting the beginning stages of discipline. Discipline also means guiding a child's actions to make him acceptable to others and to himself.

Babies under a year old are too young to understand the reasons for stopping something they are doing. For example, your baby may love to throw toys on the floor. He likes to hear the noise, watch the toys bounce, and thinks it's a great game! It doesn't occur to him that the noise is bothering you. You may even think that he is being defiant, but he only thinks that toy-throwing is fun. How to get the baby to stop? Remove the toys and distract him with something else he can do. Give him a hug, too.

If you can strike a balance between providing necessary controls, a sense of humor and loving care, your baby will learn how to think and act responsibly.

Feeding Your Baby

The time in a baby's life between five and seven months is called the "transitional period." About this time, several things begin to happen...

- Your baby's growth rate will begin to slow down.
- She will become more active and need more calories.
- She will be able to handle some solid foods.

Infants are not ready for solid foods at the same time. Here are some signs that may give you clues that your baby is getting ready for solid foods.

- He will begin to sit when propped up.
- He will open his mouth for a spoon and close over the spoon.
- His head will be steady when sitting.
- He will swallow normally.
- He will turn aside when he is *full* or satisfied.

Caution: Never feed cereal from a bottle. The use of food pumps or infant feeders fashioned like a syringe with a nipple on the end, are all very dangerous. Choking can occur with any of these methods. Always feed with a spoon.

Your Baby May Be Ready to Eat Some New Foods

One New Food at a Time

Try one new food at a time and feed it every day for several days. Start with a single ingredient rather than mixed foods—for example, rice cereal instead of mixed cereal, or applesauce instead of mixed-fruit dessert.

Once in a while, a new food causes vomiting, diarrhea, or a skin rash. By starting only one new food and by using a simple food, you will know what is to blame should a problem arise.

Vegetables and Fruits

You can start with a half teaspoon of a yellow vegetable, one to two times a day. For example, give the baby strained carrots for a few days before introducing another vegetable, such as squash.

After a few weeks of yellow vegetables, you can offer strained or pureed green vegetables, such as spinach, peas, or green beans. Gradually increase the amount to 2 teaspoons.

Some babies love fruit. Others have a hard time digesting it. Pureed fruits, like applesauce or mashed ripe bananas, can be introduced after the baby is accustomed to eating vegetables. Again, start with a half teaspoon and work up to 2 teaspoons one to two times a day.

Commercially Prepared Baby Foods

You can buy jars of commercial baby food that are specially designed for infants. Remember to get only single-ingredient vegetables and fruits.

Avoid using regular commercially canned foods for making baby food. Regular canned foods (that are not specially made for babies) have variable salt and lead contents. Although these foods may be used safely for adults and older children, they may not be as good for infants.

Check the “circle of safety” on the baby food jar lid to be certain the vacuum seal has not been broken. Listen for the *pop* sound when you open the jar. Carefully check the ingredient label to be certain you know what you are feeding your baby. Don't feed your baby directly from a jar of commercial food until he is eating the entire contents at a single meal. Saliva can spoil baby food quickly even when refrigerated.

Heat only the amount that you think your baby will consume. The rest should be refrigerated immediately in its original container and used within three days. Uneaten food in Baby's dish should be discarded, since it will be contaminated with bacteria or saliva from Baby's mouth.

Games Babies Play

Language games are very important at this stage of your infant's development. Repeat the sounds your child makes so she can hear them twice. As you say these sounds back to your child, you are giving important feedback on how her new language sounds.

Difficult-Sounds: A Communication Game

Purpose of game:

Encourage your baby to imitate sounds and words.

How to play:

- Hold your baby in your arms and first let her relax.
- Make sounds like “brr-own,” “grr-ate,” “buzz-y,” “uh-oh,” “aaa-all gone.”
- Face her so she can watch your lips.
- Nuzzle or cuddle her after you make the sounds.
- Laugh, smile, or hug her gently when she makes the sounds.

Other Communication Games

Use your imagination to make sound or word imitation games you play while facing your baby.

Watch Out! High Chairs Can Be Dangerous

Nearly 7,000 children are injured each year in high chairs. Here are some rules for high chair safety:

- Be sure tray is securely locked in place.
- Be sure your baby's hands are out of the way when you lock the tray.
- Be sure there are no sharp edges or hardware to cut her or you.
- Don't let your baby stand in the chair.
- Don't leave the chair too close to a table or counter. She can push against it and overturn the chair.
- Don't leave her alone in the chair.
- Don't let other children climb on the chair.

If you are thinking of buying or borrowing a high chair, look for these safety features:

- Well built, sturdy construction.
- Wide at base so it won't tip over easily.
- Seat belt that fastens across waist to hold Baby in chair.

- Crotch strap that runs between legs to keep her from sliding out of chair.
- Tray that locks securely on each side.
- Belt buckles and tray locks that are handy for you to use, but which your baby can't work.
- Nonslippery seat. If seat seems very slippery, attach rough-surfaced adhesive strips to it.

When deciding between wood, plastic and the chrome and vinyl combinations, consider the ease of cleaning since high chairs quickly become caked with messy baby food. An easy method of cleaning, if the finish will allow this treatment, is to place the high chair in the shower stall to soak and steam it clean.

Questions

Q: “Ever since we had the baby, there's been a lot of strain between my partner and me. We never seem to have time to just sit and talk anymore. I can't seem to tell him how I feel. Things really seem to be piling up between us. Do you have any suggestions?”

A: Many new parents feel just as you do. Their lives are so busy with all the added demands a new baby brings, that it's hard to find the time to work things out.

As difficult as it may be, it's important to make the time and openly talk about what's bothering you. Chances are your partner has been storing up some gripes, too.

Here are some ways to make it easier for both of you:

Set up a *date*. Reserve a special time (or times) each week when you can be together to talk without distractions.

Use *I* messages. Tell him how you are feeling without blaming him. Make sure you put **YOURSELF** in your communication. Instead of saying “You always put me down,” say “I feel put down when you tell me....” By using *I* messages, your partner will not feel blamed or accused, and

probably will be more interested in addressing the problem.

Be direct. Say what you mean, rather than hoping she will guess or know what you mean. Instead of saying, “The living room has been looking messy lately,” say, “I get upset when you leave the newspapers all over the living room and expect me to pick them up.”

Avoid the question trap. Asking questions is often a poor substitute for direct communication. Instead of “Why didn't you call to tell me you'd be late?” say, “I was worried that something had happened to you when you didn't come home at the usual time. Next time call me, so I won't worry.” **TIP:** When you feel you are about to ask a question, stop and listen to yourself. Try to identify your real feelings and then say them in a statement instead of a question.

Be sure to listen. Give him a chance to air his feelings and gripes. Don't interrupt, jump to conclusions, preach, or quickly offer advice. Check back with him to see if you really understood him; for example, say “Let me see if I understand. Are you saying that...?”

It's normal for new parents to have many mixed feelings. If you use these important communication skills, you may be able to find solutions to problems before they get out of hand.

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