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1-1-2003

8 Months

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Recommended Citation
Cudaback, Dorothea, "8 Months" (2003). *All Archived Publications.* Paper 466.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/466

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children

8 MONTHS

Dear Parents,

This is the age of curiosity! Imagine that you are 8 months old. You try to talk but no one seems to understand your language. You try to walk but you're not quite sure how to do it yet. You reach out to touch things that are shiny, soft, hard, smooth, or sticky but everyone tells you "NO-NO—DON'T TOUCH." How would you feel? A little frustrated, you can bet! Well, that's how your baby feels at this age. He is very curious and wants to find out about all the fascinating things that surround him. Open up the world to him, lovingly and safely. Guide him while he examines, explores and satisfies his curiosity.

Disappearing Games

Between 8 and 10 months, your child will often search for an object that disappears from view. For example, if a piece of macaroni falls off the high chair while the 8-month old is looking at it, she may lean toward the floor to see where it went. This is a sign that growth is taking place.

A younger child will usually just stare at the spot where something disappeared, rather than try to see where it went.

Your child may only follow a disappearing object falling. If you cover the macaroni with a napkin, the child may not try to pick up the cover—even when she is physically able to do so.

This is one of the reasons your baby enjoys "hide and seek" games like Jack-in-the-box. It is also the reason she gets so upset when you leave her for even a short while. To your child, out of sight means gone forever!

Help your child discover the existence of out-of-sight objects by hiding toys and encouraging her to search for them.

What's It Like to Be 8 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I crawl backwards and forwards on my stomach.
- I pull myself up by holding onto furniture, but I have difficulty getting back down.
- I stand up if I lean against something.
- I sit without any support for several minutes.
- I reach for things and hold them with my thumb and first and second fingers.
- I hold onto a toy, like a rattle, for several minutes.
- I pick up small things like pieces of strings.

How I Talk

- I let you know if I am happy, sad, or scared by the sounds that I make.
- I still babble a lot and shout to get attention.

- I say two syllable sounds like choo-choo, da-da, and ma-ma.
- I recognize some words.
- I watch and try to imitate your mouth movements.

How I Respond

- I like to pat and kiss my reflection in the mirror.
- I turn and listen when I hear familiar sounds like the telephone or my name.
- I love to imitate people I know.

How I Understand

- I am very curious and want to explore everything.
- I know how to solve simple problems, such as making a toy bell ring.
- I understand the meaning of *in* and *out*.
- I remember events that just happened.

How I Feel

- I am frightened by new experiences and new people.
- I'm upset when you leave me, even if it's for a short time.
- I feel so relieved when you return.
- I'm upset when people make a lot of fuss over me.
- I get frustrated or lose my temper when I can't find something.

Imitation

Babies learn by imitation, and you will see more and more of this in the months to come. When your baby babbles, imitate him—but use a different inflection than he did. Soon your baby will repeat what you said, using the inflection that you did. If you continue this game, you are both likely to have a lot of fun.

One Thing at a Time

Some children prefer talking to walking and any time they're awake they're making noises. Some of the noises are merely squeals and self-invented words, but others are the old “mama” and “dada” standbys.

Other children begin to creep before talking and their language development falls behind. It seems that every child creeps in a different way. Some do it backwards, some forwards, even sideways, some creep on hands and knees, on toes and knees, on one knee and one hand, some children rock back and forth without moving an inch—each child does this differently.

Walking and talking take a lot of time and effort. Remember—each child is different and has a unique growth pattern. So, give your child the freedom and encouragement to develop at her/his own rate.

Those Tasty Toes

Your baby is becoming more aware of her body, from top to toe. It is fun to watch her amazement as she discovers each body part. Most babies who discover their toes spend long periods sucking on them. When they chew on their toes they get two sensations: one from their mouth and another from their toes.

Help your child to understand her body parts by naming them as they are “discovered.” Soon she will be able to point or lift up her foot when you ask, “Where is your foot?”

A mirror will help your child study his/her face! (Be sure the edges aren't sharp and that it won't break if dropped.) Your child will notice many details. Point out your 8-month-old's eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Ask your child to point out his/her own facial features.

One word of caution. Don't expect too much understanding of distance or depth perception yet. In fact, your child may pull the mirror right up to his/her face and try to eat it! This is all part of the child's mouth and eye development.

Games Babies Play

Little Piggy: A Communication Game

Purpose of game: Teaches your baby to learn about his body; helps your baby to become interested in playing games with others.

How to play:

1. Your baby can be sitting and facing you, lying on his back, or sitting on your lap.
2. Hold your baby's big toe between your thumb and index finger and say, “This little piggy went to the market.”
3. Hold the second toe and say, “This little piggy stayed home.”
4. Hold the next toe and say, “This little piggy had roast beef.”
5. Hold the next toe and say, “This little piggy had none.”
6. Hold the little toe and say, “And this little piggy cried wee, wee, wee, all the way home.”

Here are some other games your baby may enjoy:

Hiding and Chasing: Big brother and sister can do the hiding and chasing. You can say, “Where is _____?” and baby can try to help find the missing sibling.

How Big is Baby? So Big!! In the beginning you might need to show your baby how to raise her hands high over her head when saying, “So Big!” Be careful not to pull up those little arms too hard because babies' bones can be dislocated easily.

Music Fun: Your baby will enjoy listening to many kinds of music with you and trying to dance. Inexpensive music boxes can be very interesting and they have the advantage that baby can start and stop the music all by himself.

Parent-Child Play

Your baby will probably love it when you get down on the floor and play with him. He'll soon become interested in **your** body parts, especially your eyes, nose and mouth.

Sometimes baby will pull and tug on your hair and nose, not realizing that it hurts you. You can patiently teach him that he can touch you, but you won't allow him to hurt you. Tell him with firm words that you don't like what he is doing, and then divert his attention. You might say, “I can't let you pull my hair. It hurts me. Here, you can pull on this toy.”

Feeding Your Baby: Fork-Mashed Foods
In Addition to Pureed Foods

Now that your baby is 8 months old and may have some teeth, you can fork-mash vegetables and fruits, in addition to straining or pureeing them.

Mash a favorite vegetable thoroughly with a fork or you can use a potato masher for mashing foods like ripe bananas and cooked apples, winter squash, white or sweet potatoes, or carrots.

Make sure the food contains no lumps, pieces of skin, strings or seeds. The consistency will be a little thicker than pureed food.

Although meats are good for your baby, do not feed her fried meats. Trim all fat from the meat and mash it thoroughly with a fork.

Cooked foods may be strained through a fine mesh sieve or strained. A sieve is also useful for steam-cooking small amounts of food for your baby. Be sure that all food particles are removed when you wash the strainer.

Food Caution

Do not add salt, sugar, or seasonings to baby foods. Foods that taste bland to an adult are a new taste experience to an infant. Some sodium is necessary for good health, but there is enough natural sodium in foods. Added salt will provide too much sodium for a small baby and can be harmful.

Do not feed honey to your baby during her first year. Honey may carry botulism spores that can harm her.

Do not use **leftovers** to make baby foods. Leftover foods are likely to have higher levels of bacterial contamination than freshly prepared foods.

Do not feed your baby raw eggs or raw milk. These raw foods may be sources of infections that can be dangerous for her.

Do not feed your baby chunky foods such as corn, nuts, popcorn, and seeds, or coarse textured foods, such as cookies that crumble easily. Such foods are difficult for your baby to eat, and they may make her choke. Do not be afraid to serve foods cold. Most babies will accept cold food. If you want to warm your baby's food, do it just before serving.

Finger Foods. Most 8-month-old babies are getting a variety of new foods. If your little one often rejects the new foods, you might try letting him feed himself with finger foods. Even 8-month-olds like to feel grown up and you can help them feel this way by giving them foods like shaped cereals or steamed vegetables which they can eat with their fingers. Don't mind the mess, neatness isn't one of their skills yet. Luckily, babies are very washable!

Remember, with a little patience, you can help your baby appreciate a wide variety of tastes and textures in new foods.

Safety First

This is a good time to examine your baby's toys to make sure they are safe. Can they be pulled, dropped, or chewed on without breaking? Here is a list of **safety rules** that are important. Make sure riding toys have widespread wheels and a low center of gravity to prevent tipping over. Stuffed toys should have sturdy seams. Children can choke on stuffing. Check labels to see that toys are non-allergenic, machine washable, and machine dryable. Metal or plastic toys should have smooth, rolled edges.

Special care must be taken with toys that have trailing loops and cords. A child should be taught never to put these loops or cords around the body in such a way to cause tripping or choking.

Balloons are treacherous for small children. They can be sucked into the windpipe and cause a child to choke to death. Avoid toys with jagged edges where parts are imperfectly fitted together or toys that look as if they might break into sharp, jagged pieces.

Spot-check toys occasionally for minor damage. Often a spot of glue, a tightened bolt, a few drops of oil, or even a bit of adhesive tape will prevent further damage that could lead to an accident.

Select toys that stimulate your child's imagination and help to develop skills.

> Enjoy the fun and the trials of having a healthy 8-month-old in your life. Be sure to plan time for yourself. Remember that swapping babysitting time with friends can be an inexpensive way to engineer those important "get-a-way times."

Touchy, Touchy!

Does your child howl at the sight of strangers and laugh and cry almost at the same time? Does your child enjoy splashing in the bath water and make a fuss when you take her out? When your child gets a minor bump or bruise, does she sometimes laugh and the next time cry? Does your infant want company all the time, crying when you leave the room? If so, your child is growing emotionally. Fortunately, infant emotions come and go quite easily. Big outbursts are quickly forgotten. The important thing is to expect these ups and downs in your child's emotional life and bounce along with them. Controlling emotions is one of the most difficult skills human beings have to learn. You probably know some adults who haven't mastered these skills yet.

Appreciation & Thanks to the Original Authors

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

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Patricia Tanner Nelson, Cooperative Extension, University of Delaware for computerizing this series of "age paced newsletters" and for permission to reprint for parents in Utah.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University. (2-95)