



Things  
To Know  
Before You  
Go

## MUSCLE DEVELOPMENT AND MUSCULAR CONTROL

### *What activities can I do to help normal development of muscle control in my baby?*

Listed below are things you can do with your baby at different ages. Age is determined by correcting for the weeks of prematurity. For example, if your baby was born two months early, activities listed at two months would be expected at four months. Another way to adjust is by using your baby's due date, not the actual date of birth.

- Age 0-2 MONTHS

To help develop head control, hold your baby at your shoulder.

- Hold your baby high enough so that the baby can look around.
- Let your baby raise his head, but keep a hand near to support if necessary.

When baby is awake, give him tummy time. This helps strengthen neck and shoulder muscles. This should be done on a flat surface such as the floor or a mattress.

- Place baby on tummy with the arms forward and elbows in line with the shoulders.
- Place a toy 6-8 inches in front of the baby, or place your baby in front of a mirror.
- At first your baby will tire easily; gradually increase tummy time.
- Hold your baby on his tummy while on your lap.

- Age 1-4 MONTHS

Bring your baby's hands together near the face and chest. This helps prepare your baby for reaching and exploring his hands.

- Position your baby with the arms forward when cradled or when in an infant seat.
- Place your finger in each of his hands when playing.
- Encourage your baby to bring his hands together to explore a toy, bottle, or your face.
- Put a toy with texture on your baby's chest.
- Provide some side-lying with your baby's hands together.

At first your baby will close a hand. As this reflex goes away, your baby will reach to grab things. Encourage your baby to grasp toys and other objects.

- Hold out things such as fingers, rattles, teething toys.
- Give your baby a toy during diaper changes.
- Help your baby practice holding on to things one hand at a time. At first, your baby will drop toys even if he/she is still interested in them.
- If your baby has trouble letting go, gently stroke the back of the hand from wrist to fingers, or bend the wrist forward a little to encourage letting go.

Help your baby learn to roll from tummy to back. With your baby laying on his stomach, get his attention by holding a toy in front of him/her. Slowly move the toy toward the side and back. As your baby moves to see the toy, he will start to roll. (continued)

- Age 4-6 MONTHS

Help your baby explore his feet.

- Play with your baby's feet, kiss them, move them, and play games with them.
- Encourage your baby to find his feet with his hands.
- Help your baby explore his toes with his lips and mouth..

***What things should I avoid during early development?***

- Walkers – they are unsafe
- Doing activities too long or when your baby is tired. If your baby arches or fusses, it is time to stop.
- Standing on his legs before he is ready.



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## YOUR BABY'S DIAPERS

- Babies wet their diapers almost hourly. However, most of the time they are changed around feeding times, when they wake in the morning, and when you put them down at night.
- Your baby's diaper should be very wet 6-8 times in 24 hours.
- If the urine is dark and your baby has not wet his diaper 6-8 times a day, he may not be getting enough formula or breast milk. **CALL THE DOCTOR.** Babies become dehydrated (lose water and fluid) quickly. Babies who are sick do not eat well, and do not wet as often.
- Some babies have a bowel movement (BM) with every feeding; others may have a BM every day or two. Do not worry about the time between BMs unless the stool is like small, hard pebbles.
- It is normal for babies to grunt, strain, and turn red when having a BM. This does not mean that he is constipated!
- If your baby does not have a stool very often, but is eating well and does not seem uncomfortable, do not worry.
- If your baby is constipated, the stools will be like little rocks. If the problem continues for several days or if your baby cries for a long time when having a BM, call your doctor.
- **REMEMBER**, check with your baby's doctor before giving your baby any treatment for constipation.



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## VISITORS AFTER YOU TAKE YOUR BABY HOME

Many friends and relatives will want to visit you when your baby is finally home. They will want to see and hold your baby. Your friends and relatives are well-meaning, but they may bombard you and your baby with too much help.

- Ask friends and relatives with any signs of illness or with any illness in their families not to visit.
- All visitors should wash their hands.
- Ask visitors to look, but not touch, wake, or handle your sleeping baby.
- Only the parents and immediate family (or very close friends) should handle your baby for the first few weeks at home.
- Being handled by a lot of people may upset your baby's feeding and sleeping schedule—especially after everyone has gone home. Your baby may become fussy after being handled a lot or passed between different people.
- Use the statement “The doctors said that only a few people should handle my baby for the first month at home”. By using this statement, you will not look over-protective or feel like the “bad guy” for trying to protect your baby's health.



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## TRANSITION TO THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

### *How do I know if my baby is getting enough sleep?*

Premature babies may seem to sleep a great deal at first. Your baby should be waking on a regular basis for feeding. By the time your baby goes home from the hospital, he has developed a routine for sleeping.

### *How can I help my baby learn to sleep more at night?*

If your baby has his/her days and nights mixed up, it is best to minimize the activity (stimulation) during the night feeding time. Some ways to do this are:

- Use only a nightlight when getting up to feed the baby.
- Change the baby before feeding.
- Talk very little and softly during the time you are up with the baby.
- If you normally rock the baby after a feeding, do so for only a short time. The baby will begin to learn to settle himself/herself.

### *How can I help my baby adjust to being at home?*

The adjustment to the home environment from the noisy nursery is difficult for some babies. Some suggestions to help your baby make this transition are:

- Keep the light dimmed.
- Swaddle your baby by wrapping his/her arms and legs snugly in a blanket.
- Play soft, low music, or keep the television on during the day.



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## SIGNS OF ILLNESS IN THE INFANT

All babies get ill. This does not mean that you did something wrong! Be aware of signs that your baby is sick. Some signs that may indicate illness include:

- Your baby does not feed as well as normal. The baby may not seem hungry and may not take as much of the feeding as usual.
  - Your baby vomits, with force, all or most of the feeding.
  - Your baby has frequent, loose stools (more stools than usual, and watery).
  - Your baby does not pass as much urine as usual (fewer wet diapers).
  - Your baby cries more than usual or appears more irritable. The baby may not be calmed and comforted easily by your usual means. Your baby may refuse to sleep.
  - Your baby does not seem as active as usual. He may sleep more or may be more difficult to waken.
  - Your baby may have trouble breathing (breathes faster and harder, or may draw in the chest muscles with each breath, or may have noisy breathing).
  - Your baby may have a fever. Contact the doctor if your baby's temperature is 100 degrees or higher, or if his temperature is less than 97 degrees.
  - Your baby's skin color may appear pale, bluish, or marbled looking.
  - Your baby's skin and the whites of his eyes may appear yellow.
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- **CALL THE DOCTOR IF** your baby appears sick or starts to act differently to you. It is best to have your baby checked or to receive the advice of the doctor.
  - **HAVE EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS** available.



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## MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

### *How can I help the mental development of my baby?*

Mental development is helped by:

- Providing an interesting environment and toys. Let your baby explore them safely.
- Talking to your baby often. Use a lot of facial expressions
- Singing to your baby.
- Reading to your child. Start this habit at a few months of age, and continue it daily until your child reads well.

### *What do babies of different ages like to do?*

- Age DUE DATE to 1 MONTH

Baby is able to:

- Respond to sounds by blinking, crying, or startling
- Lift head for a short time when on his stomach
- Be comforted most of the time by being held or spoken to
- Follow with eyes and can see best at a distance of 8-12 inches
- Move his arms and legs
- Cry (a lot). It is the only way of telling you what he wants.

Offer your baby:

- Bright colors, contrast patterns, and shiny object
- Lots of cuddling and holding
- A change of position so that he can look at different things
- Talking and singing in a soft voice
- Gentle motion, like rocking and swaying

- Age 2-3 MONTHS

Baby is able to:

- Coo and make sounds
- Hold on to others' fingers
- Smile when spoken to
- Show some head control when held upright
- Open his hands most of the time
- Show interest in seeing different things and hearing different sounds
- May begin sleeping 5-6 hours during the night and take several naps during the day

Offer your baby:

- A pacifier to help meet the need to suck
- A massage after bath time; the baby likes your touch (continued)
- The feel of soft fabric and textures on his skin
- Repetition of the sounds your baby makes

- Funny faces, or just the chance to watch you open and close your mouth and eyes
- Musical toys
- Time to play on his tummy

#### Age 4, 5, and 6 MONTHS

Baby is able to:

- Smile, laugh, and squeal
- Roll over from stomach to back
- Reach for and bat at objects
- Pass a toy from hand to hand
- Show signs of fear of strangers
- Recognize his own name
- Stand up if held under his arms
- Bring a toy to his mouth
- Make single sounds
- Hold his head erect, raise body on hands, arch back, and rock when on his tummy

Offer your baby:

- Your response when your baby “talks” to you
- Safe squeaky toys and rattles for him to grab or kick
- A game of pat-a-cake
- A mirror to look at himself
- “Tummy time” when awake to strengthen legs, back, and arms
- Different places to play during the day; the baby likes to see new places and things
- Toys to teethe on

#### Age 7, 8, and 9 MONTHS

Baby is able to:

- Sit up alone
- Babble a lot
- Roll around
- Scoot or crawl on his tummy
- Put his toes in his mouth
- Learn to use his fingers
- Solve simple problems, such as making a bell ring
- Look at and study things for a long time

Offer your baby:

- The sounds of toys when they are dropped
- A container to put things into
- A chance to explore; the baby is curious
- Read books and point out pictures of things they see every day
- Hide a toy under a cup or cloth for the baby to find.

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## DIAPER RASH

Urine and stool will irritate your baby's skin if it stays on the skin. You can help prevent diaper rash if you:

- Change the diaper often
- Wash the diaper area with clean water
- Wash and pat dry the area between skin folds

If your baby gets a diaper rash, you can help by:

- Changing the diaper more often to keep the baby drier
- Avoiding plastic pants and disposable diapers with plastic liners until the rash is better
- Leaving the diaper off after each diaper change for 15-30 minutes to let the baby's bottom air dry

Your baby's doctor may suggest a special ointment or cream. Apply a thin coat to the diaper area. This may give the rash a chance to heal.

If the rash does not go away in a few days, if it spreads, becomes very red or bumpy, call your baby's doctor.



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## CRYING AND YOUR BABY

### *Why do babies cry?*

Crying tells you what your baby needs. Your baby has different cries for different needs. Frequent causes of crying are:

- Hunger, especially if it has been over 2 hours since the baby last ate.
- Discomfort, such as a wet or dirty diaper, too tight clothing, too hot or too cold.
- Need for a position change
- Stuffy nose, preventing breathing
- A form of tension release
- Overstimulation: Some premature babies are highly irritable. They may not like a lot of activity around them or too much contact with visitors.
- Illness: If your baby's cry is suddenly stronger or seems abnormal, talk to your doctor.

Your baby will develop a trust that you will be there when he cries if you respond to all crying. This sense of trust is a necessary step in your baby's development.

### *What can I do if my baby cries frequently?*

Many premature babies will have days of frequent crying.

- Be sure your baby is not wet, hungry, or uncomfortable.
- Burp your baby every five minutes while feeding.
- Be sure your infant is not ill (fever, diarrhea, poor color).
- Swaddle your baby by wrapping his arms and legs snugly in a blanket.
- Rock your baby or place him/her securely in an infant swing.
- Hold your baby skin-to-skin on your chest.
- Walk with your baby or take him for a car ride. Make sure baby is in a car seat.
- Keep your baby's head higher than the rest of the body while feeding.
- Place a warmed rolled towel on baby's stomach or give your baby a warm bath.

Many parents find it is difficult to stay in control during a long crying episode. Try to remain calm. Call for help, especially if you fear that you might hurt the baby. It is always okay to check with your doctor with any concerns you may have.



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## CRIB SAFETY

- Place your baby on his “Back to Sleep” unless instructed to do otherwise by your doctor.
- Avoid thick, heavy blankets in the crib.
- The mattress should be the same size as the crib so there are no gaps to catch arms and legs.
- Use bumper pads around the entire crib until the baby begins to stand; then remove the pads.
- No pillows or toys should be left in the crib while the baby is sleeping until the baby is older than 6 months adjusted age.
- Never leave crib rails down when the baby is in the crib.
- Begin to lower the crib mattress before the baby can sit unassisted. Have the crib at it’s lowest point before the baby can stand.

## SMOKING

- **Not smoking** in the house, car, or anywhere around the baby **is best**.
- Never smoke while holding your baby.
- Do not smoke in a closed car with the windows up.
- Do not expose your baby to other types of fumes, such as fireplace smoke or paint fumes.



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# CIRCUMCISION

## Care of the Circumcised Boy

- Rinse the circumcision area at each diaper change by squeezing warm water over the tip of the penis.
- You may use petroleum jelly on the tip of the penis with each diaper change for 24-48 hours after circumcision. This is not necessary, but may prevent the circumcision site from sticking to the diaper.
- There should be no bleeding. The head of the penis may show signs of irritation and appear whitish or yellowish as it heals.
- Call the doctor if the penis becomes red or swollen or if your baby does not pass urine for longer than 8 hours.

## Care of the Uncircumcised Boy

- Wash and rinse your baby's genitals (private parts) daily.
- Do not pull back the foreskin (the skin covering the tip of the penis) in an infant. Forcing the skin back may cause pain, bleeding, and possibly scar tissue. The natural separation of the foreskin from the tip of the penis may take several years. When the boy is older, he can learn to pull back the foreskin and clean under it on a daily basis.



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## CAR SEAT SAFETY

- Never leave your baby unattended in a car safety seat.
- Your infant should face the back of the car until he weighs at least 20 pounds and is older than 1 year adjusted age.
- Never place the car seat in the front passenger seat. The center of the back seat is the safest place for the seat. If possible, an adult should be seated next to the car seat to watch the baby.
- Keep windows closed and doors locked next to your baby while driving.
- Check the upholstery and belt buckles before placing your infant in the car seat. Your baby can be uncomfortable or suffer burns if the car seat has been in the sun or in a hot car for too long.
- Place your baby in the car seat with buttocks and back flat against the back of the car safety seat. Blanket rolls may be placed on each side of the baby to support the head and neck. A small rolled diaper or blanket may be placed between the crotch strap and the infant to reduce slouching.
- Place shoulder straps in the lowest slots until the infant's shoulders are above the slots. The harness must be snug. The car seat's retainer clip should be at the midpoint of the baby's chest—not on the belly or in the neck area.
- If the vehicle seat slopes so that the baby's head flops forward, recline the car seat back at a 45-degree tilt. A firm cloth roll or newspaper can be put under the car seat below the baby's feet to make this angle.
- Limit travel for infants at risk for lung problems. Infants sent home on apnea monitors should have portable monitors during travel, and power should last twice the expected travel time.
- Portable medical equipment such as monitors and oxygen tanks should be secured or wedged in the floor under the seat.



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## **BULB SYRINGE**

A bulb syringe is used to clean your baby's nose and mouth of formula or mucus. You may use it when your baby spits up, has a stuffy nose, or sneezes. We suggest you keep a bulb syringe close to your baby, especially during feedings.

Using the bulb syringe:

- Squeeze the bulb until it is collapsed. Place it in one nostril and quickly release the bulb. This will bring the formula or mucus into the bulb.
- Remove the bulb syringe from the nose and squeeze the bulb quickly into a tissue to get rid of this material. Repeat for the other nostril (and mouth, if necessary)

Cleaning the bulb syringe:

Clean the bulb syringe daily with hot soapy water and rinse in hot water. Clean the inside of the bulb by squeezing the bulb while the tip is in the soapy water. Repeat the procedure with clean hot water.



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## **BATHING THE BABY**

### **When to Bathe the Baby**

- Your baby does not need a bath every day, but you do need to keep the diaper area and skin folds clean. A bath 2-3 times per week should be enough, as a baby's skin can dry out quickly if bathed too often.
- Wash your baby's face every day with a clean wash cloth and warm water. Wash the folds under his chin where milk may collect. Most babies do not like to have their faces washed and will wiggle and squirm. It helps to wash one side of the face at a time, trying not to completely cover the face all at once.
- Your baby may cry and act startled when placed in water for his bath. Premature babies who startle easily seem to fuss more when their clothes are removed and they are placed in water. This will improve as the baby gets older.
- Bathe your baby anytime that is best for you. Before feedings is usually a good time, since most babies fall asleep shortly after eating. If your baby is a poor feeder, you may want to bathe him between his feedings.

### **Things to Remember When Bathing Your Baby**

- Always check the temperature of the water, and use a mild soap.
- Never leave your baby alone to get supplies or to answer the phone or door. Never leave your baby with a young child.
- Babies do not need lotion, oil, cream, or powder on their skin. Often these products can cause rashes. Use only small amounts on problem areas. Avoid powders completely, as they can get into your baby's airways and cause breathing difficulties.
- Some babies have "cradle cap" (flaky scalp, especially over the soft spot on the head). Use a soft toothbrush to clean the scalp. Brush the scalp daily with a baby brush.
- The circumcision should be healed before a tub bath is given.
- Sponge baths should be given until the umbilical cord falls off.
- When sponge bathing, keep the areas of the body not being bathed covered with a towel to prevent heat loss.

## **TUB BATHING**

- Before starting the bath, gather everything you will need.
- The bath can be given in a washbowl, dishpan, kitchen sink, or baby tub placed on a table. It is more comfortable if you and your baby are on the same level.
- Water should be comfortably warm, not too hot or cold. Test the water with your elbow or wrist.
- Put a couple of inches of water in the tub until you get used to handling your baby. A tub is less slippery if you line it with a towel or diaper.
- Hold your baby so that his head is supported on your wrist and the fingers of the same hand hold him in the armpit. (continued)

- First wash the baby's face with a washcloth without soap.
- Soap the baby's body, arms, and legs using the washcloth or your hand.
- Last, wash the baby's head. Rinse the head thoroughly to remove soap, being careful not to get soap in the baby's eyes.
- Rinse all soap off the skin.
- If you are afraid of dropping the baby, soap him on your lap or on the table and then rinse the baby in the tub.
- Use a towel to pat the baby dry.
- Wash only the outer ear. Do not wash the inside of the ear. Wax is formed in the ear to protect and clean it.
- **Do not** clean nostrils or ear canals with cotton tipped swabs.



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## BABY SAFETY: GENERAL

- Do not pour hot liquids when holding the baby or when the baby is close by. Do not cook or stand over a hot stove while holding your baby.
- Do not heat baby bottles in the microwave. The formula may become too hot and burn the baby, even though the bottle feels cool. Also, steam can form inside the bottle and cause it to explode.
- Never prop your baby's bottle due to the danger of choking.
- Use store-bought pacifiers only. Do not make pacifiers from nipples and rings.
- Do not hang pacifiers around your baby's neck.
- Always use safety straps on infant seats, high chairs, strollers, swings, and infant carriers.
- Do not leave your baby unattended on a bed, chair, or counter top.
- Place all curtain cords up out of your baby's reach—especially on windows close to the crib.
- Do not leave your baby in direct sunlight. The use of sunscreens is not recommended for babies less than 6 months of age.
- Do not leave your baby unattended in a parked car for even a brief time.
- Never place your baby on a bean bag or water bed to sleep.
- Be careful when walking with the baby in your arms. Avoid rugs or mats on slippery floors.
- Children under age 13 should not be left alone with the baby.



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## **DRESSING THE BABY**

- Dress the baby to match the way you feel
- Dress your baby with a cap and booties when the air is cool. (Babies lose heat from their heads)
- Keep the baby's hands and feet covered in cool weather
- Clothes that fit close to the skin are more warming than loose clothing
- Do not overdress the baby. In hot weather babies cannot get rid of heat very well
- Do not use clothing that ties around the neck—it can choke the baby
- Look for snaps or zippers on the legs to make diaper-changing easier

## **TEMPERATURE OF THE HOME**

Your baby has been able to stay warm without help from an incubator or special bed for some time. It is not necessary to keep your house as warm as the Intensive Care Nursery.

- Keep the house temperature in the low-to-mid 70's range
- Keep baby out of drafts, and away from windows, fans, and air conditioners
- Look at and touch baby to tell if he/she is hot or cold
- Signs of temperature problems may be: cool hands or feet and pale, mottled-blue color
- Do not leave your baby unprotected in the direct sun

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