



Growing & Learning— Your Baby

Birth to six months

Introduction

Your baby is one of a kind with a personal way of living and dealing with the world. The better you understand your baby, the better you will be at caring for and helping your baby develop. Remember that babies have good and bad days, just as we do. As time goes by, it becomes easier to recognize and respond to your baby's range of emotions. From birth to six months, your baby changes a lot. This is a time when babies grow quickly and learn to respond more and more every day.

Enjoy your baby, but do take time for yourself. As the parent of a new baby you have a demanding job! Check out the resources your neighbourhood has for parents and babies. Contact your local Public Health Nurse for help and ideas.

Here are *some* guidelines for what most full term babies learn during this period.

MOVING AND PLAYING

a) Gross motor skills

- Can hold head steady when held or supported in a sitting position by four months



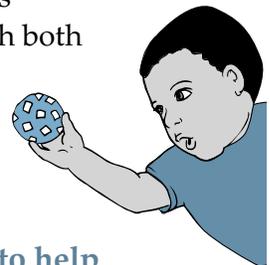
- When lying on back, baby kicks one leg after the other energetically
- Can roll from back to stomach and/or stomach to back by six months
- Will put weight on feet and bounce up and down when held in a standing position on a hard surface by six months

b) Fine motor skills

- Holds an object briefly when it is put in hand by four months
- Passes an object from one hand to another by six months



- Brings hands, feet or toy to mouth by six months
- Plays with hands in mid-line (center of body) by four months
- Reaches for a toy with both hands by four months
- Reaches for and grasps an object with whole hand by six months.



What parents can do to help

- Encourage your baby to lie on tummy when awake.
- Put toys in places that encourage your baby to lift her head and push up on her forearms by four months.
- Encourage your baby to sit up by supporting with pillows by six months.
- Play games with your baby, such as peek-a-boo and blowing kisses.

When to be concerned

- Your baby can not hold head steady by four months.
- Your baby does not reach, pick up or hold a small toy by six months.
- Your baby does not roll over by six months.

FEELINGS

- Stops crying when comforted by you most of the time. Some babies take longer to calm
- Crying in the first 4-5 months of life is normal. Some babies cry as long as five hours a day at this age. When your baby doesn't settle down and his crying upsets you, place your baby safely in his crib and move away.



Never shake a baby.

- Shows enjoyment by smiling, cooing, cuddling with you
- Looks into your face with a contented gaze while feeding or interacting with you
- Is friendly with strangers, but may show some anxiety if parents are out of sight
- Recognizes you as her parent
- Enjoys play such as gentle tickling, laughing, and jiggling
- May turn away from you, if feeling over stimulated

What parents can do to help

- Get to know your baby. Enjoy him. Try to learn how he likes to be handled as you feed, dress and bathe him.
- Show excitement when you make eye contact with your baby. Use your voice and face to show you are paying attention.
- Respond quickly when your baby cries. This is how she learns to trust. Hold her close – you can't spoil her.
- Show that you understand your baby's feelings. Comfort with words and actions.



When to be concerned

Your baby does not make eye contact or smile at you during feeding or play times.

If you are worried about your baby's crying.

Look for help if:

- you feel overwhelmed or unhappy caring for your baby

Other information on parenting is available at your local Community Health Office/Centre or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>

For more information, contact a Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health www.vch.ca or visit the VCH Parenting Website <http://parenting.vch.ca/>

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **GK.300.G76**
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LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Understanding language

- Wakes up or is startled by loud noises during first month
- By four months, smiles when hearing familiar sounds
- By six months, turns head towards a new sound
- Begins to copy your facial gestures
- Begins to understand certain words e.g. "milk", "no" around six months of age



Speaking

- During the first months baby makes sounds like "aw" and "oo"
- Is more aware of own voice and begins to squeal, growl, or yell in a high voice
- By six months, smiles and babbles when an adult pays attention
- Begins to imitate your speech sounds when you talk to him

What parents can do to help

- Talk to your baby about what you are doing. Read to her and talk about the pictures. Sing songs to your baby and say nursery rhymes. Give your baby time to respond to you.
- When your baby tries to get your attention by "babbling" or "crying", try to understand what he means. Imitate his "babbling" playfully.



When to be concerned

- By six months your baby does not babble or respond to sounds, especially a sudden loud noise.