



# Development Handouts

# 7

## Secrets of Baby Behavior

*Babies' behaviors can be confusing. Here are some tips to help you understand what your baby is trying to tell you.*

1

Your baby can tell you what he needs before he learns to talk.



Your baby can communicate with you from the moment he is born. When your baby wants to be near you, he will stare at your face or follow your voice. When your baby needs something to be different, he will turn or look away, or have a glazed, tired expression.

2

Babies cry for many reasons, not only because they are hungry.



Your baby cries for lots of reasons. Your baby might cry because she is tired, has a dirty diaper, or needs a break from what is going on around her. You can tell what your baby needs by looking for other signals besides crying, like wiggling, turning away, or a sleepy face. Learning your baby's cues can help you make your baby more comfortable before she starts crying. If you need more information about how to tell if your baby is hungry, talk to your lactation consultant or doctor.

3

The easiest way to soothe your crying baby is to do the same thing over and over.



When your baby keeps crying even after everything has been checked, she needs your help to calm down. She needs you to use the same soothing movements or sounds over and over when she is upset. This means holding her close and softly singing the same song, or rocking, swaying, or bouncing her gently over and over. You may have to do these calming things for a few minutes or longer to give your baby time to calm down.

4

When young babies first fall asleep, they can wake up easily.



Have you ever rocked your baby to sleep and then quietly tried to lay him down only to have him wake up the moment his little body hits the bed? Unlike adults, young babies dream when they first fall asleep and when babies dream they wake up easily. After about 20-30 minutes babies will sleep more deeply and will be harder to wake up. By waiting 20-30 minutes to put your baby down, he will be less likely to wake up right away because he will be in a deeper sleep.

5

Waking up at night is healthy for your baby.



It is normal for babies to wake up at night. Babies sleep lightly and dream more than adults and dreaming helps their brains grow and develop. Young babies need to wake to eat, to have their diapers changed, and to stay warm. As babies get older they fall asleep more deeply and sleep longer and longer at night. This is good news for tired parents!

6

More play time during the day usually means more sleep for you and your baby at night!



Your baby needs exercise just like you! Physical activity will help your baby build strong muscles and learn to sit up and crawl. Newborns get exercise by being able to move their arms and legs freely in a safe place. Older babies love to move and play with you. Find fun activities that you can do with your baby right from the start. Developmentally, your baby will need to wake up at night for several months, but being active during the day may help you both sleep better at night!

7

After the first 6 to 8 weeks of caring for your newborn, things will get a lot easier.

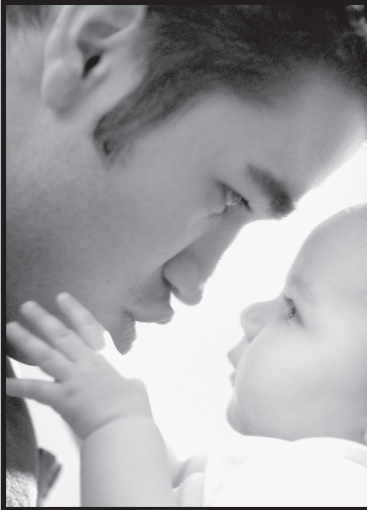


Taking care of a newborn baby is not easy. Your baby will probably wake up every 1-2 hours in the first 6 to 8 weeks, and it can be hard to understand what he needs. This can be very demanding on you as a parent! Fortunately, your baby will change fast! By 2 1/2 to 3 months of age, your baby will sleep for longer periods of time and it will be much easier for you to understand what he needs.

# Healthy Minds: Nurturing Your Child's Development from **0 to 2 Months**

What do we really know about how a young child develops? What can parents do to best support their child's healthy development and growing brain? Some of the answers are in this series of *Healthy Minds* handouts. Each handout is based on findings from a report\* from the National Academy of Sciences that examined the research on child and brain development to establish what is known about the early years. The information we offer is age-specific, summarizes key findings from the report and suggests how you might be able to use these key findings to nurture your own child's healthy development.

These handouts are brought to you by ZERO TO THREE, the nation's leading resource on the first 3 years of life, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, dedicated to the health of all children.



## ► **Key findings** from the report include:

- Your relationship with your child is the foundation of his or her healthy development.
- Your child's development depends on both the traits he or she was born with (nature), and what he or she experiences (nurture).
- All areas of development (social/emotional/intellectual/language/motor) are linked. Each depends on, and influences, the others.
- What children experience, including how their parents respond to them, shapes their development as they adapt to the world.

## **How it looks in everyday family life:**

When 2-month-old Benjamin cries and cries each evening and kicks his arms and legs wildly, his parents try everything they can think of to comfort him. They rock, walk and swaddle him, massage his tummy in case he has gas and sing lullabies, all to calm him down. Sometimes it takes 20 minutes; sometimes it takes 2 hours.

Benjamin's crying, and his parents' response to it, shows how all areas of his development are linked, and how his parents help to encourage his development. Benjamin cries because he has come to expect that his parents will respond. When mom and dad don't give up trying to comfort Benjamin no matter

how frustrating it can be, they are nurturing his **social and emotional development** because it makes him feel important and he learns to trust that his parents will care for him. This gives him the confidence to trust others, which will help him form healthy relationships as he grows. In addition, being soothed by his parents in these early months will help him learn to soothe himself as he gets older, a very important skill throughout life. Using his voice and body to communicate is part of Benjamin's early **language and motor development**. When his parents answer his cries, he learns that his efforts at communicating are successful, which encourages him to communicate more, first through gestures and sounds, and later through words.

Relationships are the foundation of a child's healthy development.



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# Charting Your Child's Healthy Development: 0 to 2 months

The following chart describes many of the things your baby is learning between 0 and 2 months and what you can do to support your child in all areas of his development. As you read, remember that children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Understanding who your child is, what his strengths are and where he needs more support, is essential for promoting his healthy development. If you have questions regarding your child's development, ask your pediatrician

What's going on:	What you can do:	Questions to ask yourself:
<p>One of the most important tasks of the first 2 months is to help newborns feel comfortable in their new world. They are learning to regulate their eating and sleeping patterns and their emotions, which help them feel content, safe and secure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observe carefully. This will help you figure out what your baby's cries are telling you.</li> <li>● Soothe your baby. When you respond to your baby's cries and meet his needs, you let him know he is loved. You can't spoil a baby. In fact, by responding lovingly to his needs, you are helping him learn skills now that allow him eventually to soothe himself. You are also promoting a strong bond and healthy brain development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What soothes your baby? How do you know?</li> <li>● What most distresses him?</li> </ul>
<p>Newborns use their gestures (body movements), sounds and facial expressions to communicate their feelings and needs from day 1. They use different cries to let you know they are hungry, tired or bored. They ask for a break by looking away, arching their backs, frowning or crying. They socialize with you by watching your face and exchanging looks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Figure out what your baby is trying to tell you. Responding makes him feel important and tells him he is a good communicator. This builds a positive sense of self and a desire to communicate more.</li> <li>● Talk and sing to your baby. Tell him about everything that's going on around him. Pay attention to the sights and sounds he likes. Find toys and everyday objects with different colors and textures and see which he likes best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How does your baby communicate with you?</li> <li>● What kinds of interactions does he like best? How do you know?</li> <li>● How does he let you know when he has had enough?</li> </ul>
<p>Even as newborns, babies can play in many ways. They can connect sounds with their sources, and love when you talk and sing to them. Play helps babies learn about the world around them. It is also an important way they connect with you, helping them to develop a strong attachment and promoting healthy social development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer your baby lots of different objects for him to look at, touch and even grip in his palms. He can focus best on things that are 8 to 12 inches away.</li> <li>● Play "tracking" games by moving yourself and interesting objects back and forth. First he will use his eyes to follow. Eventually he will move his head from side to side. This helps strengthen his neck muscles as well as exercise his visual abilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What experiences does your baby seem to like best? (For example, talking with him; looking at toys or other objects; hearing the cat "meow.")</li> <li>● What kind of toys grab your baby's attention? How does he let you know what he's interested in?</li> <li>● What kind of play do you enjoy most with your baby?</li> </ul>

*\*The report, From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, was a 2½-year effort by a group of 17 leading professionals with backgrounds in neuroscience, psychology, child development, economics, education, pediatrics, psychiatry and public policy. They reviewed what was known about the nature of early child development and the influence of early experiences on children's health and well-being. The study was sponsored by a number of federal agencies and private foundations.*

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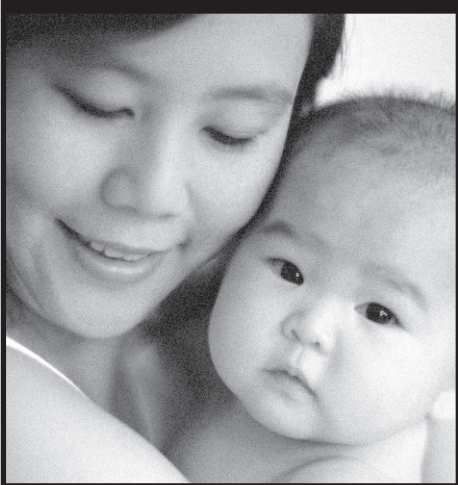
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# Healthy Minds: Nurturing Your Child's Development from **2 to 6 Months**

What do we really know about how a young child develops? What can parents do to best support their child's healthy development and growing brain? Some of the answers are in this series of *Healthy Minds* handouts. Each handout is based on findings from a report\* from the National Academy of Sciences that examined the research on child and brain development to establish what is known about the early years. The information we offer is age-specific, summarizes key findings from the report and suggests how you might be able to use these key findings to nurture your own child's healthy development.

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- All areas of development (social/emotional/intellectual/language/motor) are linked. Each depends on, and influences, the others.
- What children experience, including how their parents respond to them, shapes their development as they adapt to the world.

## **How it looks in everyday family life:**

Five-month-old Tara loves playing peek-a-boo with her mom and dad. When they stop, she squeals and reaches out her arms to let them know she wants more. So they continue. Soon her parents add another twist to the game as they start to hide behind the pillow for a few seconds before they "reappear" to give her time to anticipate what will happen next.

This simple game is more than just fun. It shows how all areas of Tara's development are linked and how her parents help to encourage her healthy development. Tara's interest in playing with her parents is a sign of her **social and emotional development** because she has fun with her parents and can see how much they enjoy being with her. This makes her feel loved and secure, and will

help her develop other positive relationships as she grows. Her desire to play this game with mom and dad leads to the development of new **intellectual abilities** as she learns to anticipate what comes next, an important skill for helping her feel more in control of her world. Knowing what to expect will also help her to more easily deal with being separated from you as she learns that people exist even when she can't see them.

Tara's early **language and motor abilities** emerge as she squeals, makes sounds and moves her arms to let her parents know that she does not want them to stop. When they continue, her parents let her know that she is a good communicator, and each time they reappear, she learns that she can trust them to always come back

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# Charting Your Child's Healthy Development: 2 to 6 months

The following chart describes many of the things your baby is learning between 2 and 6 months and what you can do to support your child in all areas of her development. As you read, remember that children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Understanding who your child is, what her strengths are and where she needs more support, is essential for promoting her healthy development. If you have questions regarding your child's development, ask your pediatrician.

What's going on:	What you can do:	Questions to ask yourself:
<p>Babies are very interactive at this age. They use their new language and communication skills as they smile and coo back and forth, and enjoy babbling, starting with "ohs" and "ahs" and progressing to P's, M's, B's and D's. Your baby may babble and then pause, waiting for you to respond. They also love to imitate, which helps them learn new skills. For example, mom sticks out her tongue, baby imitates and mom does it again. This also teaches them about the back and forth of conversation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When your baby babbles, both talk and babble back, as if you both understand every word. These early conversations will teach her hundreds of words before she can actually speak any of them.</li> <li>● Engage in back-and-forth interactions with gestures. For example, hold out an interesting object, encourage your baby to reach for it and then signal her to give it back. Keep this going as long as your baby seems to enjoy it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How does your baby let you know what she wants and how she's feeling?</li> <li>● How do you and your baby enjoy communicating with each other? What do you say or do that gets the biggest reaction from her?</li> </ul>
<p>Babies this age love to explore. They learn from looking at, holding and putting their mouths on different objects. At about 3 months, babies begin to reach for things and try to hold them. Make sure all objects are safe. A toy or anything else you give her shouldn't fit entirely in her mouth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce one toy at a time so your baby can focus on, and explore, each one. Good choices include a small rattle with a handle, a rubber ring, a soft doll and a board book with pictures.</li> <li>● Lay your baby on her back and hold brightly colored toys over her chest within her reach. She'll love reaching up and pulling them close. You will start to see what most interests her.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What kind of toys or objects does your baby seem most interested in? How do you know?</li> <li>● How do you and your baby most enjoy playing together? Why?</li> </ul>
<p>Babies have greater control over their bodies. By 4 to 6 months, they may be able to roll both ways, become better at reaching and grasping and will begin to sit with assistance. They also begin wanting to explore their food and help feed themselves. Touching and tasting different foods is good for learning and for building self-confidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place your baby in different positions—on her back, stomach, and sitting with support. Each gives her a different view and a chance to move and explore in different ways.</li> <li>● Let your baby play with your fingers and explore the bottle or breast during feedings. As she grows, let her handle finger foods and help hold the spoon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How does your baby use her body to explore? Which positions does she like the best and least?</li> <li>● How would you describe your baby's activity level? Does she like/need to move around a lot or is she more laid-back?</li> </ul>

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