



# Parenting the First Year

MONTH

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## What is baby like?

If your baby doesn't have much hair, has short arms and legs, and has a head that looks too big, your baby looks pretty normal! Baby might not be what you expected, though.

Maybe you didn't get the boy or girl you wanted, or maybe the baby just doesn't fit the picture of the "dream baby" you thought about during pregnancy or saw in magazines and on television.

It can take time to get used to your baby. Some parents love their new arrival right away; others have to get to know the baby better. That's normal.

It may be a little bit scary at first to care for a tiny infant. But you'll gain confidence with time.



## Do yourself a favor...

Becoming a parent is an exciting change, but it will take time to feel comfortable in your new roles. Parents and babies learn together. Don't expect to know how to do everything overnight.

During the first weeks after your baby is born, you may be surprised by your strong feelings. You may feel down or on the verge of tears for seemingly no reason. For mothers, these feelings may come from the changes your body undergoes to return to normal. You may also feel thrilled and proud.

For the time being, keep your days as simple as possible. When you are having a rough time, talk with someone close to you.

## Baby's states

Every 3 to 4 hours baby may move between these six states:

- ♥ **deep sleep** — breathing is deep and regular
- ♥ **light sleep** — baby's eyelids flutter, breathing is shallower, baby may startle or move
- ♥ **drowsiness** — baby may fuss, eyes sleepily open, may wake more fully or fall back to sleep

- ♥ **awake alert** — baby is most responsive, body and eyes seem more focused
- ♥ **fussy alert** — baby seems overstimulated, fusses, turns away, thrashes
- ♥ **crying** — baby cries, gets parents' attention, with soothing may sleep or return to alert state

Watch how your baby moves from one state to another. This will help you learn your baby's unique behavior.

## Your baby wants you to know:

- ♥ I like to look at your face the most, but also like bright colors, mirrors, and patterns.
- ♥ I feel comforted when you hold me and talk to me.
- ♥ I stare at things, but I don't grab for them yet.
- ♥ Loud noise, bright light, and rough handling scare me. Handle me gently.
- ♥ I may quiet when someone picks me up and cuddles me.
- ♥ Please change my position sometimes so I can look at different things.
- ♥ When you move me, I like your hand behind my neck, so my head doesn't flop over.

### He or she, him or her?

This series gives equal time to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." Keep in mind that we are talking about all children when we use "he" or "she."

## Every baby is different.

The relationship between parents and their babies depends on both. Busy, active parents may understand a fast-moving, active baby better than a very sleepy, quiet one. Calm, mellow parents may understand a happy, alert baby better than an active, jumpy one.

Every baby is born with their own unique style of behavior or temperament. If your baby acts the way you expect, parenting may come a little easier. But if you didn't get the type of baby you expected, don't despair! It may take a little more work, but getting to know your baby is worth it.

Watch your baby closely, and see how she reacts. Your baby can give you clues about the way she likes to be handled.

## Where and how will baby sleep?

In the United States most babies sleep in their own beds. In many parts of the world, babies sleep in their parents' beds. Some American parents have adopted co-sleeping, since it is convenient for nursing mothers and babies may feel comforted being close to parents.

With co-sleeping, there is a real danger of suffocation or strangulation, as shown by several recent studies. Baby may have trouble breathing if caught in soft pillows or blankets, or if parents roll over on baby. Babies also can slip down between the mattress and the wall or another object, or fall off the bed. Adult beds are not designed with infant safety in mind. Some evidence shows that babies who co-sleep frequently have more disrupted sleep, which may be stressful for them.

The best idea is to move baby's crib into your room. Researchers find nothing wrong with baby sleeping in your room. This helps baby feel secure and form a strong bond with parents. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) now recommends that infants not sleep in the parents' bed, but **sleep in a crib placed in the parents' bedroom** since this reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Baby should never sleep on sofas, any furniture with soft cushions, or waterbeds.

### Sleep position

Doctors now believe that baby should **sleep on his back**, not on his stomach. This reduces the risk of SIDS. The AAP also recommends giving baby a pacifier at nap time or bedtime during the first year. This also lowers the risk of SIDS.

## Crib safety

Make sure that your baby's crib is safe. Crib accidents have seriously injured or even killed babies.

- ♥ Slats should be no more than  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches apart, so baby can't wiggle through, become trapped, and strangle.
- ♥ If the crib is old, its paint may contain lead that can poison baby. Cribs made after 1977 are not painted with lead. If you repaint an old crib, use caution. For advice, call **(800) LEAD-FYI**.
- ♥ Be sure there are no sharp metal edges or splinters.
- ♥ Crib sides should be high enough so baby can't fall or roll out, even when the sides are down.
- ♥ Baby doesn't need a pillow; it can cause suffocation.
- ♥ Make sure your baby sleeps on a firm mattress that fits snugly in the crib with no gaps. Don't use fluffy comforters, blankets, or sheepskin under baby.
- ♥ Don't buy a used crib with decorative cutouts in the ends. Remove corner posts that stick up more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch above the sides. A baby can get his neck or clothing caught and strangle.

## Buckle up baby, too!

Each year, babies die in car crashes. Don't let this happen to your baby. Laws in most states require children younger than 4 years to ride in a child car safety seat. At all ages, a seat belt is required.

Using a car safety seat is the only way to protect your baby in a moving car. The car seat will hold baby safely in most crashes. If you hold baby on your lap, a crash could rip him from your arms and throw him into the window, or he could be crushed between you and the dashboard.

In a crash, any person or object not strapped down could be thrown into and injure your baby. Tool boxes or other heavy objects become dangerous flying missiles in a crash or a sudden stop. Keep them in the trunk or on the floor of the car.

### To protect your baby, use car safety seats correctly:

1. Put baby in the infant car seat. For small babies, avoid car seats with shields, which can cause injury in a crash.
2. Be sure the straps are snug and over his shoulders. Don't put thick blankets under baby. If it's cold, put blankets over the straps, so the straps stay snug on baby.
3. Place the car seat in the rear seat of the car, **never the front**. Place the seat so it faces the back window. Fasten the car's seat belt through the slots. Put the car seat handles down.
4. Many infant-only car seats come with built-in angle adjusters. If yours doesn't, fix the car seat to tilt backward at about a 45-degree angle. This helps prevent choking and supports baby's head and back. If you need to, put a tightly rolled towel under the car seat below baby's feet to tilt the seat halfway back.
5. Use the car seat every trip. It only protects baby when you use it. You may be a safe and careful driver, but you can't be sure of the other drivers on the road.
6. Some new cars have child seats built in. These are for children who are 1 year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. So you will need a separate infant seat for now.
7. All children's car seats should face the rear until baby is at least 1 year old. Use an infant car seat until baby reaches about 20 pounds. Then you can use a rear-facing convertible safety seat until your child reaches 1 year of age. When your child reaches 40 pounds or outgrows the convertible seat — for example, if his ears are up to the top of the seat — then move to a belt-positioning booster seat. Because air bags can hurt small people, traffic safety experts recommend that all children under age 13 sit in the back seat, wearing seat belts and shoulder harnesses. Check the American Academy of Pediatrics website on car safety seats at [www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm).

### Where to rent a car safety seat for baby

Contact your county or area extension office, county nurse, or the American Red Cross to see if any groups in your area have rental programs. Many hospitals have rental programs.

### Warning: Avoid talcum powder.

It can inflame baby's lungs. If you want to use baby powder, use one based on cornstarch, not talcum.

### Books on feeding

If you have questions about how to feed your infant, contact your baby's doctor, your local health department, the WIC office in your area, or the breastfeeding educator at your local hospital.

*Breastfeeding: A Parent's Guide*, by Amy Spangler, 2000.

*The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, 7th edition, 2004. Available in English or Spanish from LaLeche League International (847-519-7730 or [www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org)).

## Crying is a call for help.

Crying means baby needs your help. During the first few weeks, she can't control when she starts to cry. She cries only when in need. She can't stop until either those needs are met or she's too tired to go on.

Studies show that when mothers respond quickly to baby's cries, baby stops crying sooner.

Many parents wonder if the baby's diet is causing all this crying. But switching to a different type of formula, or changing the nursing mother's diet rarely solves the problem. If your baby has frequent diarrhea or vomiting, if she has breathing problems, or if she's not gaining weight properly, work with your doctor to check for allergies.

### When you've had enough

Sometimes, it may seem baby never stops crying. This can be very stressful and hard to listen to. But don't take your angry feelings out on baby; she can't help it.

**If you've tried everything** — feeding, changing, cuddling — and baby still cries, try this: Call a friend or relative to watch your baby for an hour. Everyone needs a break like this at times.

**As a last resort**, put baby in her crib and shut the door. Take a shower or vacuum. You won't hear her, and the noise might calm your baby. In 15 minutes, try again to comfort her.

**If you think baby is ill**, call your doctor or county nurse.

## Why does baby cry?

**Hungry** — When babies are only a few weeks old, they may need to eat more often than expected. Feed your baby when she shows you that she's hungry ("rooting" or turning her head toward objects that touch her cheek, sucking her fist, acting fussy, etc.). The object is to feed her when she's hungry, but not overly hungry. Some hungry babies get so upset they can't settle down and nurse properly.

**Lonely** — If baby calms and stays calm as soon as you pick him up, he missed you! Baby's need for closeness is very real. You can't spoil a baby by cuddling him when he needs it.

**Cold or hot** — Feel baby's back or tummy to see if he is too cool or too hot. Adjust clothing to make him comfortable. Dress baby like yourself or one layer warmer.

**Over-stimulated** — Lots of people bouncing or talking to baby at once may overdo it. Give baby some calm and quiet. Rocking him in a dimly lit room may help.

**Startled** — Baby may move suddenly, startle, and cry. Wrapping a blanket securely around him and holding him firmly may calm him.

**Wet diapers** — Some babies don't mind; others do.

**Pain** — Baby may be ill or uncomfortable because a pin is pricking him or his clothes have sharp tags or zippers.

**Sleepy** — Some babies need to fuss a bit before sleeping.

**Temperament** — Babies who are more sensitive, more intense, and who take longer to adjust to changes may cry more often and louder.

### Some babies develop colic.

Colicky babies have tummy pains and loud, piercing cries. These cries can last a few minutes or several hours, usually at the same time each day. Colic's cause is unknown. Sometimes a colicky baby won't stop crying even after you've tried the usual things. It's not your or the baby's fault. For a colicky baby, try these ideas:

- ♥ Lay baby across your knees; rub or pat his back.
- ♥ Rock baby at 60 rocks per minute — a slow adult walk, or use an infant swing. Walk with him tucked under your arm, with your hand under his tummy. Or hold baby so he can look around.
- ♥ Hold baby often in your arms or a front pack. Studies show that holding babies for more hours each day causes them to cry less.
- ♥ Give the evening feeding with baby upright, not lying down. Burp him well to get air out of his tummy.
- ♥ Go for a ride in the car, putting him in a car safety seat.
- ♥ Sing to him or play soft music. Sometimes a vacuum cleaner, fan, or radio tuned to static may help calm him.
- ♥ Talk to baby's doctor to see if he or she has other ideas.
- ♥ Take heart, baby's colicky crying peaks at around 6 weeks and begins to taper off during month 3 to 4.

## Make your baby's world more interesting.

Your amazing newborn has all the same senses you do. Even at birth, babies can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.

**Vision** — Babies prefer to look at faces. For the first few weeks of life, they see best at a distance of 8 to 12 inches — about the distance between your face and theirs when you hold them close to feed or to talk to them.

Bright colors, high-contrast patterns and shiny things are more interesting to babies than pale colors. Babies may follow moving objects with their eyes for a few seconds. During the first weeks, their heads turn to the side when they lie down. So hang mobiles from the side of the crib, not from the top.

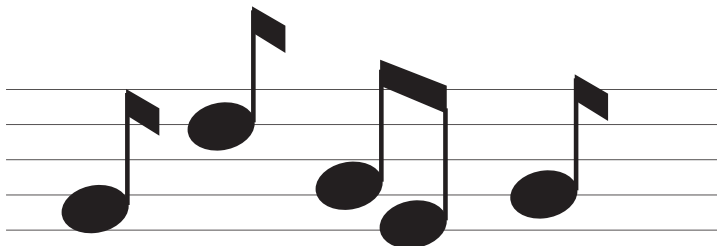
**Hearing** — Infants may turn their heads toward the source of an interesting noise. They prefer gentle voices. From the first days, most babies recognize their mom's and dad's voices. When your baby is upset, soft music may help calm him.

**Smell** — Young babies react to smells. Strong, harsh smells make baby turn his head away and cry. By 1 week of age, babies know the smell of their own mothers.

**Touch** — Touching is very important to babies. Being held close and cuddled helps babies know that their world is a friendly place. Being in your arms and hearing your heartbeat makes baby feel safe. Cuddle and hold your baby whenever you want to. Don't worry about spoiling him. Babies are supposed to be babied!

Studies have shown that infant massage soothes irritable babies, helps them sleep better, and reduces stress hormones. Premature infants who received massages gained more weight and showed greater developmental progress. Your local clinic or hospital may offer classes on infant massage.

Babies can also sense movement from very early on. You can place him on his tummy when awake. "Tummy time," when awake, is good for your baby. This will help him develop his muscles.



## Q and A

### Is it safe to make my baby's formula with well water?

Water from some private wells is not safe for infants. In parts of the Midwest, the water in about 1 in 10 private wells contains bacteria or high levels of nitrate.

Nitrates keep a baby's blood from carrying enough oxygen. This is called "**blue baby**" disease — babies turn a bluish color around the lips, cheeks, fingernails, and toenails.

Boiling water does not get rid of nitrates or other chemicals.

#### **You can test your well water.**

Ask your local health department for help (listed under city, county, or tribal government in your phone book). Or contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at (800) 426-4791 from 8-4 CST or [www.epa.gov/safewater](http://www.epa.gov/safewater) to find out how to get your water tested. We also recommend testing for arsenic, pesticides, and lead.

**What can you do** if your well water has high levels of nitrates or other chemicals? You may need to build a new well or use bottled water from a safe source during your baby's first year. For more information, contact your county or area extension office (listed under county government in your phone book).

## Supplements

Vitamins and minerals are important, but all babies' needs are not the same. For example, healthy breastfed babies need extra vitamin D by about 2 months of age, but formula-fed babies already get extra vitamin D from the formula. Getting too much of some vitamins and minerals can be as harmful as not getting enough. That's why it is important to ask your baby's doctor for specific advice on supplements for your baby.



## What to feed baby

In the past, parents tried to start babies on juice or cereal very early. Doctors now say you should wait for several months. Future newsletters will tell you when and how to start baby on new foods.

## Feeding your baby

Hold your baby so she can see your face when you feed her. Feeding is an important learning time for a new baby. Baby learns to know and trust you.

### Schedule or self-demand?

You should feed your baby whenever she is hungry! Watch the clock, but also watch your baby! Babies usually cry when they are hungry.

If fed when hungry, many babies will get on a regular schedule in about a month. If you try to set a rigid feeding schedule, you and your baby may both be frustrated and unhappy. So be flexible these first weeks.

Babies lose interest in feeding when they're feeling full. Your baby may hold her lips together or push the nipple out of her mouth. When she stops drinking, gently burp her by patting or rubbing her back while she rests on your shoulder or lap. If she still is not interested, that's a sign that she is full, at least for now.

### Breastfeeding tip

Breast milk is the very best food for babies. It has all the nutrition babies need, prevents some food allergies, and even protects against some diseases.

It's important to start breastfeeding immediately after baby is born and to give her nothing but breast milk for the first few weeks. Feeding usually lasts about 10 to 20 minutes at each breast. Most new babies want to nurse every 1 to 3 hours. In a few months, your baby will probably go 3 to 4 hours between feedings.

As your baby grows, there will be days when she wants to nurse more often and for longer periods. That will stimulate your breasts to make more milk than before. That's nature's way of assuring an adequate supply of milk. One way to know your baby is getting enough milk is to count wet diapers — there should be at least six a day. After your baby is about 6 weeks old, you may think she is constipated. It is not unusual for breastfed babies to go 2 to 3 days between bowel movements.

During these first few months, babies don't need other types of food or liquid. Even when she's sick, breast milk has enough water to meet her needs. We recommend you continue breastfeeding for 12 months or longer.

Many clinics, hospitals, and WIC offices have lactation consultants or breastfeeding educators who can answer your breastfeeding questions.

### Bottle feeding tip

If your baby is not breast fed, iron-fortified formula is the only acceptable substitute for the whole first year. If you prepare infant formula from concentrate or power, follow directions on the product label and mix the formula with clean, safe water.

Don't heat bottles in a microwave oven. The bottle may feel cool on the outside, but still have hot spots inside that could burn baby's tender mouth. Instead, heat the bottle in a pan of warm water off the burner or hold it under hot tap water for 1 to 2 minutes. Shake the bottle well to mix the formula. Sprinkle some on your hand to make sure it is not too hot.

## If baby is premature

If your baby was born early she will begin to look more like a full-term baby about 40 weeks from the time your pregnancy began (unless baby was born very early). At first, baby's skin will look delicate and change color easily, her muscles may seem floppy, she may have more trouble sucking, and her cry may sound different from a full-term baby. Preemies are more sensitive to noise, touch, and bright lights, so try to arrange a quiet room with soft light and use soft voices. Their immature systems may better handle just one sensory experience — such as being looked at, being picked up, or being talked to — at a time. Studies show that infant massage is helpful for preemies' development. Talk with your baby's doctor or nurse about classes on infant massage.

## For teenage parents

If you are living at home, you may feel your parents give you too much advice or treat you like a child. You may feel your parents are taking over baby's care. Here are some ideas to help you get along:

- ♥ Share your feelings using "I" statements, such as "I feel like I don't have enough say about my baby's care." Avoid using "you" statements, like "You always tell me what to do." Be honest and patient.
- ♥ Listen to their concerns. You don't have to agree but try to understand.
- ♥ Show you are responsible by the way you act.
- ♥ **Listen and talk** until you find solutions acceptable to all.

You may also be concerned about finishing school. Talk with your high school counselor or principal about programs to help you finish your education while caring for your baby.



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