



## Activities for your baby's first year

Your baby is going home from the hospital. Here are some fun activities you can do to help your baby grow and develop both physically and socially.

We have given you ideas for activities that are appropriate at various ages. If your baby was born early, you should expect him to be doing activities according to his due date, not his birth date. For example, if your baby was born 3 months early and he is now 6 months old, he will probably be doing the activities in the 0-3 month category. At nine months, he will be working on activities in the 3-6 month group. This is to be expected. Please talk to your baby's doctor if you have any concerns about his development.

### 0-3 Months

Your baby is learning to adjust to her new environment. She is learning to focus her eyes on you and her surroundings. The muscles in her neck are getting stronger allowing her to hold her head up on her own. She is also learning to bring her hands together and socialize with caregivers.

#### What can you do to help?

- Avoid over-stimulating your baby. For example, avoid loud noises and lots of activity near your baby.
- Be sensitive to your baby's stress signals and recognize what your baby is telling you.
- Place objects that she likes to look at – such as your face or colorful toys – about 8-12 inches from her face.
- Provide tummy time on a clean, flat surface when your baby is awake, supervised, and happy! Remember; if she falls asleep turn her onto her back. If your baby dislikes tummy time, ask your pediatric care provider for creative suggestions.
- Play with her on her side (this helps hand-eye coordination).
- Gently put her hands together and to her mouth to explore (this helps with self-calming).
- Infant massage (great for bonding): Do this under the guidance of a developmental specialist or refer to a book that teaches infant massage.
- Place her in a supported sitting position with a rounded back (helps develop the muscles needed for sitting).
- Let her experience different textures and touches. Let her feel your hair, touch your face, or touch “bumpy” toys.

### **3-6 Months**

Your baby is now learning how to roll, shift his weight from side to side, and clasp his hands together. The muscles closest to the center of his body are getting stronger and will help get him ready for crawling and walking. He is also learning how to hold a toy and to bring his hands together and to his mouth to explore!!

#### **What can you do to help?**

- Tummy time (again and again) when he is awake, supervised, and happy!
- Play with him on his side (encourages hand-eye coordination).
- Play “patty cake.”
- Play with rattles and toys with bright colors and fun textures.
- Respond to your baby with words and facial expressions.
- Read to him.
- Copy his sounds.
- Play music (your baby will like soft soothing rhythms).
- When your baby is lying on his back, grasp his hands and gently pull him into a sitting position. This will strengthen belly muscles. Make sure you support his head if he needs it.
- Talk to your baby about everything that you are doing. (This will help language development later on).

### **6-9 Months**

Your baby is now learning how to sit, bring her feet to her mouth, and transfer objects from hand to hand. She may start banging objects together (get ready for noise!) and learn how to move her fingers one at a time. She may also start to crawl or pull to the standing position.

#### **What can you do to help?**

- Place your baby in a sitting position with support from your body or a C-shaped pillow.
- Bring her feet to her mouth when you change her diaper.
- Place an object in her hand and show her how to move it to the other hand.
- Place her on her hands and knees; support her at her hips if needed.
- Place her close to sturdy furniture – such as a couch or chair – so she can pull herself up. (Watch out for sharp edges on furniture.)
- Show her how to bang objects together.
- Encourage fingers to explore different textures.
- Ankle rattles are fun too!

## **9-12 Months**

Get ready to move!! Once your baby becomes more mobile, he will enjoy his new freedom. He may start with some “cruising” (walking while holding onto someone or something). He may also be able to use his hands more efficiently and be able to hold a spoon, throw objects, or use his thumb and index finger to pick up objects. Be aware, your baby can choke on objects he picks up. Remember to baby-proof your home and other places where your baby spends time.

### **What can you do to help?**

- Encourage playtime.
- Introduce the use of a spoon for play.
- If your baby is crawling well and has been standing or cruising for a while, walk with him, holding his hands. Walk in front of him, not behind.
- Place pillows and cushions on the floor to encourage your baby to crawl over them. This improves strength and coordination.
- Avoid walkers (safety hazard).
- Limit time in exersaucers.