3 to 6 Months

Your Baby's Development

This time is all about parents and babies falling in love. Most babies are eating and sleeping more regularly. They are also responding more actively to parents and caregivers. Over the next few months, you will begin learning about your baby's preferences—what he likes and dislikes, how she prefers to sleep, eat and play. ***What are you learning about your little one?***

What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do
I am learning to control my body. • I push myself up to see the people I love and the things that interest me. I roll to try to get closer to you or to an interesting toy or object. • I can sit with help and hold my head steady. • I may start to rock back and forth on my hands and knees to get ready to crawl so I can get moving and explore.	**Place your baby in different positions to help her develop new skills like rolling, creeping, and crawling.** • Make sure she gets time to play on both her back and stomach. • Help her sit with support. This allows her to explore in new ways. • Be sure she is always put to sleep on her back.
I use my hands and fingers to explore. • I reach for and grasp objects and toys. I explore them with my fingers, hands, and mouth to figure out what they can do.	**Offer your baby toys to explore** that have different shapes, sizes, textures, and sounds. Show him ways to use these objects by shaking, banging, pushing, and dropping.
I communicate by using sounds, actions, and facial expressions. • When you shake my rattle, I may smile and move my arms and legs to let you know I want to keep playing. • I can make a few different sounds in response to your sounds—babbles, coos, and gurgles.	**Watch and respond to your baby's signals.** *You are smiling—I think you like looking in the mirror. Do you want to look at yourself again?* **Have back-and-forth "conversations" with your baby.** When you reply to her babbles, she knows you care about what she is saying. This helps her learn to talk.
I am getting used to the world around me. • I may be starting to develop a more regular eating and sleeping schedule. • I am beginning to notice daily routines. When you turn the lights down, I am learning it is time for sleep.	**Create routines for your baby.** • Help him learn it's time for sleep by doing the same things in the same order each night, such as bath, books, feeding, and then a lullaby. • Make up a song that you sing as you are getting ready to feed your baby. Each time he hears it, he'll know milk is coming. This may calm him and also help him learn to wait.

ZERO TO THREE
National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families

As you use this resource, remember that your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated here and still be growing just fine. Talk with your child's health care provider or other trusted professional if you have questions.

Your family's cultural beliefs and values are also important factors that shape your child's development.

For more information on parenting and child development, go to: **www.zerotothree.org**.

Spotlight on Language Learning

Babies are not just listeners—they are talkers, too. Beginning at about 2-3 months, they use their voices to coo, laugh, and squeal. And even young babies are learning the "rules" of conversation. As early as 3-4 months, babies will stay quiet while someone else is talking. They wait for silence, then babble, then wait for your response.[1]

By about 6 months, babies begin to repeat certain sounds like *ma-ma-ma* or *da-da-da*. Around 1 year, they make the connection in their minds between a sound they make—*baba*—and the object it stands for—a bottle. After they make this link, your baby's use of words really starts to grow!

What's on Your Mind

My 5-month-old hasn't rolled over yet but my sister's 4-month-old has. Should I worry?

There is a wide range of what is considered the "normal" time for learning new skills in the first 3 years. One baby may roll over at 3 months while another rolls at 6. If your child is making forward progress—working on moving her body in new ways—she is probably doing just fine. If you have any concerns, talk with your child's health care provider. In the meantime, lots of playtime on her back and belly will help her get ready to roll.

What You Can Do

Talk with your baby. Babies learn language when adults talk with them and respond to their babbles. Research shows that children who are talked to the most have the largest vocabularies later on.[2]

Respond to your baby's sounds. When she babbles, take a moment to reply: *Do you like splashing in the tub? It's a lot of fun, isn't it!*

Watch your baby. Babies tell us what they are thinking and feeling through facial expressions and body movements. When you see your baby reach for something, put his action into words: *You see me eating—you want to grab my spoon!*

Sing to your baby. Singing lets children hear and, later, repeat words and phrases. It's also a great way to have fun and bond with your baby.

Read to your baby. Reading together at this age builds a love of books.

Tell stories to your baby. Ask grandparents and other family members to share stories as a way to build family connections.

Did You Know…

When parents and caregivers notice and respond sensitively to their babies' signals, they are helping their children develop stronger thinking and social-emotional skills.[3]

What It Means for You:

Responding to your baby's cries and meeting his needs is not spoiling him—it's being a great parent. The following three steps can help you understand what your baby is telling you before he can talk:

1. Watch and Listen: Look for patterns in his cries, sounds, facial expressions, and body movements. For example, does your baby suck her fingers when she's hungry?

2. Understand: Use your child's signals to figure out what he needs or wants. For example, your baby may rub his eyes when he is sleepy.

3. Respond: You might take a break from playing when she arches her back and looks away. Keep in mind that you may have to try several different responses before you figure out exactly what he needs or is trying to communicate.

What are some of the patterns you have noticed in your baby's behavior? How has this helped you understand him?

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