

Baby and You:

From Birth to Age 1



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During their first year of life, babies learn an incredible amount about the world they live in. The suggestions that follow are just some of the things that you can do to help make your baby's first year as meaningful as possible.

If you have questions or would like more information about what you read here, feel free to contact our office.

- Arrange a "pot and pan" cupboard within your baby's reach. Put tissue paper, cellophane, clean rags, and a two or four cup percolator with the pans. All these objects provide visual experiences which let her learn about tops and bottoms, insides and outsides, smooth and rough, soft and hard, big and little, light and heavy, and many other visual aspects of the things her world contains.

VI. By the time children are one year old, they should be able to crawl, wiggle, roll and creep.

- Getting stuck in various places—under a desk or coffee table—is good for your child. It helps her learn how to maneuver her body. When she gets stuck, show her how to back up or turn around so she can solve the problem on her own next time.
- Stairs help babies learn to see that up is different from down and that steps are different from floors. Let your baby explore steps. Protect her from severe falls, but little bumps will help her learn how to avoid big bumps.
- Creeping is an important stage that helps develop bilateral (two-sided) abilities, so do not be in too big a hurry to help her walk.



Adapted from "Mommy and Daddy—You Can Help Me Learn to See" by G. N. Getman, O.D. and J.W. Streff, O.D., copyright 1992, American Foundation for Vision Awareness.

as fast as their development allows. As the baby sees other children at play, they too will use these visual clues to go into movement. She will watch others move toward and away from her, thus gaining early experiences in visual size and distances.

- V. The growing child reaches a stage where she begins to push and throw objects off her high chair tray. This helps her to learn that there is a "down". It also teaches how to release objects from the hands, which is just as important as knowing how to hold on to objects.
- Place objects on the high chair tray that can be pushed off or thrown to the floor. Take a little time each day to play this game.
 - Of course, certain objects like the food dish needs to be fastened to the tray. The child must also learn to recognize which things are for pushing and tossing.
 - Use all the words that go with this game, such as "There it goes", "all gone", and "here it is", as well as "no-no" in the case of the food dish. These are visual words which describe the action she sees while playing this game.
 - Use many simple words with your baby. Talk to her frequently about each experience. Talking helps her associate word sounds with what she sees and feels. Assist her in associating speech sounds with what she sees and feels by imitating her expressive noises.
 - She should have the freedom to roam the house and investigate her surroundings. Many things should be made available for her to examine, but dangerous objects should be placed out of reach.
 - Yarn or pom-poms make wonderful balls which can be thrown or chased. They also provide a texture different from the usual rubber balls.

I. From birth on, infants are attracted to areas of light. By looking at bright spots and shadows, they are working to develop their earliest visual skills. To guide this development properly:

- Keep a dim light on in the baby's room during hours of darkness so she will have something to look at whenever they awaken.
- Move her crib to various positions at regular intervals so that light will stimulate each eye and each side.
- Change the baby's position in the crib at regular intervals so that light will stimulate each eye and each side.
- When the baby is awake, talk to her from different places in the room. This will give her a familiar moving target to watch and follow. This will teach her to associate distances and directions both in sight and in hearing.
- Hang a nursery-type mobile about six to eight feet from the crib, at the level of the crib rails, so that it will be in line with the child's gaze as she looks through the crib. The slow movements of these brightly colored objects will assist her in learning what movements are and how to keep her eyes directed toward these objects.
- Arrange for the baby to be in other rooms of the house while she is awake. This provides many more bright areas and objects to watch while she is learning to control her eye movements in these important early weeks.
- Change and feed the baby from alternate sides. This gives the baby basic and important seeing experiences from different positions.



II. The earliest form of hand-eye coordination starts when the baby gains awareness of the movements of her own hands. This sets the stage for exploring objects within her reach. To enhance this development:

- Help the baby move her hands in front of her own face so she can see these movements.
- Place a rattle first in alternating hands and help her shake it. She may not hold it for very long, but give her a chance to feel, see, and hear it.
- Play "peek" by holding the baby's hands in front of her own eyes so she can start to learn the difference between having her eyes closed and having her view blocked.

III. At about 16 weeks of age, she will discover that she has two hands and that she can watch them as they change position in space. At this stage, it is time to:

- Play "patty cake". Make a big game of it with your baby. Say all the words to her as you "pat 'em, roll 'em, and toss 'em". Each movement of the hands helps her learn the many directions of movement which hands and eyes can take.
- Provide plastic or wooden blocks that she can hold in her hand. Help her put these blocks together so that they click and bang as she watches.
- If she is a bottle baby, have her help you hold the bottle during feeding time. Place her two hands on the bottle as it approaches her mouth, so she can see and feel the nearness of it as the nipple enters her mouth.
- Arrange for several clean, smooth objects that she can put into her mouth. The sequence of looking at a rattle, taking it in the hand, and putting it to the mouth is a very important



experience in learning about the many things in the surrounding world. In fact, this is practice for feeding herself and gives the eye-hand control necessary for the use of a spoon.

- Move the mobile closer to the baby. She will enjoy the opportunity to hit it so that it swings and bounces.
- Play "Please" and "Thank You." Place a toy in the baby's hand and say "Thank You". Gently remove it and say "Please". Wave the toy so she looks at it when you place it in her hand. This helps her learn to visually grasp and release objects as well as to develop finger flexibility and dexterity.
- Tie bells on the baby's booties and help her learn to see her feet by hearing them too. Help her learn to kick the mobile to make it move.

IV. At about six to seven months, babies need play time on the floor. Their rolling and wriggling movements will bring their entire muscular system into action. Therefore, provide your child with opportunities to reach, touch, and feel as many things as possible.

- Provide large plastic or rubber balls so she may reach for them every time she see them.
- Vary the toys and objects to provide her with different textures and surfaces to explore.
- Arrange room and floor temperature whenever possible so the child can be on a large crib sheet in her "birthday suit". The bulk of tightly pinned diapers can hinder leg and body movements. All babies should have some time without these hindrances to gain freedom of the movements of their entire bodies.
- Whenever possible, have other children play in the same room with your baby. All babies start to imitate others just