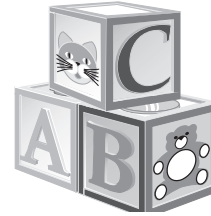


You and Your Baby

Month 3



Baby's Safety & Health

By month 3, your baby should have had his first vaccinations/shots to prevent disease. Keep your medical records up-to-date and make a doctor or clinic appointment for next month.

Your baby may enjoy the change of view that an infant seat provides. It can also make it easier to include him in your daily activities. Choose one that is sturdy and doesn't have fluffy padding. Be careful to prevent falls—never put the carrier on a counter or table! Do not overuse the infant seat. Babies also need to be held and carried in your loving arms.

Bath time is becoming fun with your baby as she learns to splash and enjoy the feeling of warm water. Use special gentle soaps to wash your baby so that her eyes won't be irritated. This is a good time to check the temperature on your water heater. Make sure it stays below 120 °F to prevent burns in infants and children. Don't rely on your less-sensitive skin to determine if the water is too hot. Serious burns can occur!

Fresh air and a small amount of sunshine are good for you and your baby, especially if you are breastfeeding. Five to 10 minutes of exposure to early-morning or afternoon sun several times each week will produce enough Vitamin D to build strong bones. Doctors often recommend the same mild exposure to sunshine to the diaper area for treatment of diaper rash. Prevent longer exposures of baby skin to direct sunlight!

Anything that goes in an infant's mouth—and so much does—needs to be clean. Bottles, toys, your hands, food preparation utensils, and pacifiers can carry tummy-upsetting bacteria if not kept clean.

If you are bottle feeding, don't prop the bottle and leave your baby alone or put her to bed with a bottle. There is a small opening, or tube, between your baby's throat and her ear. If your baby is lying down and sucking on her bottle, a small amount of formula can travel from the throat to the ear and cause infection. Also, the formula in her mouth when she falls asleep with a bottle can cause tooth decay.

At 3 months, many parents are interested in feeding baby something besides formula or breast milk. Resist hurrying your baby into foods; his digestive tract is just not ready yet. Allergies to basic foods such

as vegetables, fruits, and cereals can develop when the immature intestine leaks these food proteins into the baby's bloodstream. Your baby needs easily digested breast milk or formula meals right now. Solid foods can wait for several more months. **CAUTION: Never feed honey or cow's milk to an infant less than 1 year old!**

Food is just one of the physical comforts. Your baby also needs to be clean, dry, and pain-free. Just as important are the emotional and social comforts, which include cuddling, hearing a soothing voice, and experiencing interesting things. Make every time your baby cries an opportunity to meet some of these needs before you offer food. Even if your baby is hungry, she will be more likely to eat well and nap after you've paid attention to her other needs.

Family Focus

All babies grow and develop at different rates. In your quiet time, you may want to read Dr. T. Brazelton's book *Infants and Mothers: Differences in Development*. It is a sensitive portrayal of the first year of life. He describes an "average" baby, a "quiet" baby, and an "active" baby in each month's development. It is available in paperback.

Your 3-month-old will spend less time crying and sleeping as she continues to grow. This leaves babies time to find out about themselves and the world. This is the perfect chance for you to spend more active time with your child. Babies are particularly fascinated by their own hands and feet.

Propping baby up in your lap gives him a whole new perspective. This allows him to respond more actively to people who care. The more you respond, the more your baby will vocalize and smile. Watch out! Those chuckles can captivate you. Your baby is beginning to realize that his actions get results and you can be counted on for comfort and for fun.

You are one of the main influences in your child's life. As you begin to raise your family, give some thought about what you really want your family to be like. It may be easier now to establish some patterns of family life than to try to change them as you and your children grow older.



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Baby's Development

Physical

Your baby can—

- hold her head and back pretty straight when you support her body.
- lift her head, lean on her elbows, arch her back, and rock when she is on her stomach.
- move her legs and arms a lot.
- push with her arms and legs when she is held.
- touch her face with her hands.
- grab at objects but sometimes miss them.
- coo simple sounds, like ooh, ah, ae.
- answer sounds she hears by gurgling, cooing, and squealing.
- go for longer periods of time without crying.
- follow sounds.

Mental

Your baby's eyes are busy learning and taking in information. Also, her eye color is becoming more permanent this month. Play some games with your baby and find out how she is learning to pay attention to life around her.

Place holding. While you are nursing or bottle feeding, put an object close to your baby to look at. Then, slowly move it away. The movement is likely to make your child stop sucking and "place hold" until you put it back. This "place-holding" during feeding lets your baby learn something about the object she finds so fascinating. She takes in information from the object and then uses her will to determine the appropriate time to go back to nursing.

Stimulate. Put up pictures of your family or magazine pictures for your baby to see. Tape them securely in places she is likely to look often, such as near her crib or changing table. Keep several on hand so you can change them when she seems to lose interest in them. Remember, bright colors, contrasts, and human faces are big favorites with babies.

One of the first ways your baby learns is by looking. At first, she stares at objects. If the object is just 7 or 8 inches away, she can focus on it pretty well. Later, she begins to watch and follow objects with her eyes and can "concentrate" on some things—your face is one of them. She will spend a lot of time watching your face, especially when you talk, sing, make happy faces, blink your eyes, or make funny sounds.

Since she learns by looking, give her something to see! Hang a mobile over the crib. If necessary, raise the mobile so your baby will not be able to chew on or break off any parts. If you place the mobile near the window, she can watch the mobile move when there is a breeze. Babies also like to look at brightly colored crib toys and sheets.

Babies also like to look at themselves. Hold him up to a mirror. Help him learn who he is by pointing out his ears, nose, mouth, fingers, and toes. You might like a safe mirror made just for babies to hold. Some toys have mirrors on them.

Babies like to look at other people, especially their faces. Provide opportunities for your baby to see other babies and young children.

A change of scenery helps prevent boredom. Let her see new places by moving her crib around in the room or by carrying her from room to room as you work.

Social/Emotional

By this time, your 3-month-old responds socially and emotionally in several ways. She—

- reacts with her whole body to familiar faces.
- gets excited when she sees people or objects she recognizes.
- likes listening—talk to her in simple sentences.
- loves being cuddled and held.
- doesn't care about being left alone.
- may be able to laugh and can probably respond to your laugh.
- says "thank you" by smiling and wriggling all over.



*This information sheet is one in a series called **You and Your Baby**. Contact your county Extension office or visit www.childcaremississippi.org for more information on you and your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics also provides educational reading materials at www.healthychildren.org.*



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