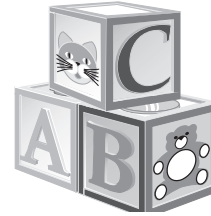


You and Your Baby

Month 4



Baby's Safety & Health

- Be sure you have made an appointment for your baby's next set of vaccinations/shots.
- Be sure objects small enough to swallow are out of reach. Toys should be too big to fit the whole thing in your baby's mouth. Use the end of an empty paper towel tube as a measurement. Any toy smaller than that is too small for your baby!
- Do not leave your baby alone in the house or in the car or on anything from which he can fall.
- Be sure your baby is in a car safety seat while riding in a vehicle. Make certain your car safety seat is less than 10 years old (preferably less than 5 years old). These meet current federal safety standards. You should be able to see a sticker on the back of the seat that gives the date of manufacture. If there is no sticker, do not use the seat.
- There are several different styles to choose from. Refer to the instructions that come with the seat even if you think you know how to use it. If you have a newer vehicle, refer to the owner's manual on using the safety seats and belts. Avoid airbags!
- Three basic types of seats are widely available: rear-facing infant, rear-facing convertible, forward-facing with full harness, and booster. It is best for children to ride rear-facing as long as possible, to the highest weight and height allowed by the manufacturer of the convertible seat. When your child has outgrown her rear-facing seat (at a minimum age 1 and at least 20 pounds), she should use a forward-facing seat with a full harness until she reaches the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).
- The safest place for your baby to ride in a car is in the center position of the back seat.
- Your child must never ride in the cargo area of a station wagon, utility vehicle, or truck.

For more information on selecting and using child safety seats, check with your health department, NHTSA Vehicle Safety Hotline (1-888-327-4236), American Academy of Pediatrics (1-847-434-4000), or the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (1-800-638-2772).

Family Focus

Children need to be raised in a nurturing environment. There are several ways to encourage nurturing attitudes within your family and home.

Your attitude toward mothering and fathering probably reflects characteristics of your relationship with your own parents. Think about what has influenced the way you feel about being a parent. What attitudes do you want to continue? Are there some you'd like to work at changing?

The relationships within the family are important for healthy and happy children. Family members should love one another. The result is a climate that fosters healthy, happy parent-child relationships. Ask yourself these questions:

- Does it feel good to live in your family right now?
- Do you feel you are living with friends? People you like and trust? People who like and trust you?
- Do you enjoy being a member of your family?

If you answer "no" to some of the questions, think about how you can improve as a family.

Today we believe that loving and nurturing cannot spoil a baby. If babies' needs, such as diapering or feeding, are met right away and if they are loved and cuddled whenever they want to be, they will feel safe and secure. Feeling safe and secure leads to trust. This is one of the most important things your infant can learn in this stage.

These simple acts of loving help your baby develop positive self-esteem. Simple acts of cuddling, talking in a soothing voice, and singing also encourage healthy brain development.



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Baby's Development

Physical

Your baby should weigh between 10–18 pounds and be 23–27 inches long. He is probably sleeping about 6 hours before waking in the night and averages 14–17 hours of sleep daily. Your baby can—

- lift his head and chest when lying on his stomach.
- hold both of his eyes in a fixed position.
- follow a moving object or person with his eyes.
- grasp a rattle or your finger.
- wriggle his arms and kick his legs.
- roll over (stomach to back).
- sit with support.
- develop a new tooth.

Remember that new baby teeth can decay easily. Infants who are put to sleep with a bottle of sweetened liquid or milk can develop severely decayed teeth. If your baby has to have a bottle to sleep, fill it with plain water and do not add any sweetener.

Mental

Your baby is learning by touching, looking, tasting, and hearing. Therefore, she is busy—

- exploring objects with her mouth.
- playing with her fingers, hands, and toes.
- reacting to sounds of voices, rattles, and bells.

Your baby can turn her head toward bright colors and lights and can also recognize the bottle or breast.

Social and Emotional

Your baby communicates with you by crying. Sometimes the cries communicate pain, fear, discomfort, or loneliness. He is busy babbling or cooing and loves to be touched and held close. Your baby can—

- respond to a shaking rattle or bell.
- return a smile.
- respond to peek-a-boo games.

Give your baby as much safe freedom as possible for activities and experiences for growing and learning.



*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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