



# Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your wonderful new person communicates with her whole body. Her gaze at you tells you that you are the most important person in the world. She communicates with body movements, noises, and her own special cry when she needs something. Your baby's favorite music is your gentle voice. Even though she enjoys the sounds of a busy household, some quiet time is important so baby can hear family voices.

**Song and Rhyme** Introduce your baby to the chant, rhyme, and rhythm of your favorite songs and nursery rhymes. Change the words of a familiar tune. Add baby's name now and then ("Twinkle, twinkle, little Andy. How I love my little Andy").

**Sing and Talk as You Take Care** As you bathe, feed, exercise, or change your baby, sing any song. Make up your own songs. Let your baby watch your face while you talk and sing. Encourage other family members to do this. Baby knows how important she is.

**Funny Baby** During quiet, happy times encourage your baby to smile. Make funny (not scary) faces that baby likes. When baby smiles, be sure to make that face again. Tell baby how funny he is!

**Picture Books** With baby cuddled on your lap, hold a book with simple, clear, colorful pictures so that both of you can see. Talk softly about what you see as you point to the pictures. Baby will learn that reading time is very special.

**Special Talking Time** When your baby is awake, cuddle her and hold her so she can see your face. Talk for a little while. Look at her face as she looks at yours. Encourage her to make different sounds, coos, and squeals. Have a conversation.

**Words for Baby's Cry** As you comfort baby when he cries, talk about why he is crying. Try to figure out what's wrong, and tell him about it as you take care of his needs.

**Noticing Sounds** When sounds happen around the house, help baby notice by talking about them ("I hear the telephone ringing," "I hear your brother calling").

**Telephone Time** When you are on the phone, hold your baby close and look at her. Baby will enjoy watching and listening to you. She'll think your conversation is just for her!



1-4 months



# Gross Motor

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Baby is gaining strength right from the beginning. He practices lifting and controlling his head. He moves his arms and legs. Soon he will be able to roll to his side from his back. He likes being held so that his feet gently touch a surface. He likes to be held in a sitting position so that he can strengthen his back and tummy muscles and see what's going on.

**Position Changes** When baby is awake, place baby in a different position, on her stomach or side. This will allow baby to move her arms and legs in different ways or directions. Always watch baby when she's on her stomach.

**Kicking Practice** Place baby on his back on a firm surface. As you talk quietly to baby, encourage him to move his legs. Hold a foot in each hand and gently move them back and forth.

**Heads Up** Put baby on her stomach. Dangle a bright toy in front of her, or make faces and sounds to encourage your baby to lift her head.

**Bath Time** One special way to bathe baby is in the tub with you. Enjoy gently massaging his legs, arms, tummy, and back. Allow baby to kick and splash as you hold him safely and talk and sing a little bathtub song.

**Balancing Act** (about 3–4 months) Stand baby on your knees and gently hold her in a standing position. Let her support as much of her own weight as she can to help her strengthen her legs and gain balance.

**Roll Over** Encourage baby to roll from his stomach to his back by holding a bright toy in front of him and slowly moving it over to the side. You may help him roll over until he can do it himself.

**Pretty Pull-Ups** (about 3–4 months) With baby on your lap, pull baby up slowly by her arms. Then, gently lower her in an up-and-down game. Talk to her as she moves up and down. This will help to strengthen stomach muscles and let baby see the world and your smiling face from a different point of view.

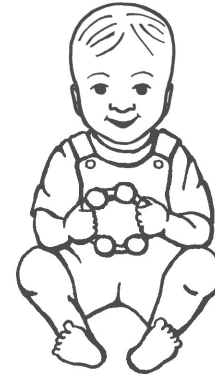


1–4 months



# Fine Motor

## Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby is gaining control of her gaze and can focus on a nearby object for a few seconds. Soon she'll be able to follow you with her eyes while you move around. Her fist will grasp your finger and hold on tightly. She will show excitement by waving her arms. It is a wonderful time of beginning to notice what's going on in the world!

- Finger Kiss** When feeding baby, encourage him to touch your lips (if he doesn't do this spontaneously). Kiss his fingertips. Baby will learn the soft, wet sensation of your lips and soon will learn to aim his fingers toward your lips.
- Gotcha** (about 3–4 months) While your baby is lying on a rug or sitting in her infant seat, offer a toy or something to grasp just beyond her reach. When she reaches for it, make sure she gets it. She'll probably taste it, too.
- Finger Grip** Let your baby grab your finger and grip it tightly. Gently tug a little just to let your baby know you're there. "My, you are so strong!"
- Finger and Toe Rub** Rub your baby's fingers and toes one at a time. A little baby lotion makes this especially nice. Your baby will enjoy the sensation. It will increase his body awareness.
- Ribbon Flutter** Hang a long, brightly colored ribbon or scarf loosely around your neck. When you lean over to change baby or pick her up, let her reach out and touch the ribbon. Sit and talk about what she is doing.
- Tug-O-War** Let baby grasp a dishcloth or the corner of a washcloth. Gently tug the other end. Tell him how strong he is. Let go, and let him win!



1–4 months



# Problem Solving

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Your baby already responds to sounds and voices. He's beginning to look for the source of the noise. He also looks at his surroundings and will show an active interest in a person or toy. He likes to study things like his own hands and his favorite face—yours!

**Tracking Fun** Let baby follow a rattle, a shiny spoon, or your face with his eyes. Hold your face or an object 10–12 inches from baby's face and slowly move from left to right. Talk softly as you play. Baby will enjoy being part of the action.

**Light Touch** Stroke your baby gently with a feather, a cotton ball, or the edge of a cloth. Your baby will enjoy the sensation as she learns to isolate different body parts. Talk to baby softly. Describe what she is feeling.

**Cotton Ball Sniff** To help your baby develop his sense of smell, dip cotton balls in different fragrances such as mint or vanilla extract. Gently waft these near baby so he can experience the scent. "Mmm, it smells so good."

**Making Faces** With baby on her back, lean over her and make surprised or happy faces. Encourage her to reach for your nose or lips or mouth. Have a little laugh together.

**Colorful Socks** Put a brightly colored sock on your baby's foot. This will encourage her to look at her feet, then pull at them and catch a foot. This game will help baby discover parts of her own body.

**Silver Spoons** Lie your baby on his back, and dangle a shiny spoon above him so he can reach and bat it. A shiny spoon also makes a nice hanging crib toy to entertain baby as long as it is safely tied out of reach.

**Reaching Practice (about 3–4 months)** With your baby in your lap or the lap of another special person, hold up a safe, interesting toy on a string for him to reach for. Let baby be successful by slowly moving the toy to his fingers.



1–4 months

# \* \* \* Personal-Social

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



Baby will look into your eyes to tell you “I’m yours.” She loves and needs a lot of holding and physical contact. When she needs you, she will fuss or cry. Your response and gentle voice will comfort her. When she is taking in information, she will be calmer. This is often after eating, resting, or having a diaper changed. At about 7 weeks old, she will respond with a beautiful smile!

- Love and Trust Building** Respond right away when baby cries. It’s her way of telling you something important. Carry, hug, smile, sing, and talk to baby often. It’s your way of saying, “I love you and I’ll take care of you.”
- Communicating Through Touch** After his bath, baby may be ready for a massage. Use baby oil and gently massage his arms, hands, legs, feet, back, tummy, and bottom. Continue only as long as your baby is quiet and content. Talk or sing a little song. You can make it up—baby won’t mind.
- Funny Face Play** Make an “oh” face; stick out your tongue or pucker your lips when baby seems to be studying your face. Hold that expression and see if your baby will imitate it. Smile if baby copies you!
- Looking in the Mirror** Hold your baby up in front of a mirror. She may enjoy smiling and making noises at herself. As baby looks in the mirror she is learning about your gentle touch and about the “other” baby she sees.
- Peekaboo** Play Peekaboo with your baby. Place your hands over your eyes then over baby’s eyes. Release your hands and say, “Boo.” Place a blanket over your head and come out saying, “Boo.” Your baby will enjoy many variations of this game for a long time to come.
- Happy Hands** As baby’s fist begins to relax, place a small toy in his hand. He won’t be very good at letting go just yet. Let him grasp your finger while you nurse. Later, guide his hands to hold his bottle. Smile and tell him how strong he is!