



YOUR BABY

Growth & development in
the first year

A guide to your baby's growth and development within the first year

The information in this booklet is a guide to your baby's development. It is important to remember that each baby will develop at their own rate. Your baby will follow a general trend of development and will reach their milestones at their own pace and not at a fixed time. Do not push these developmental tasks ahead or too quickly, each phase is important for overall development.

Babies and children learn through play. The movement and interaction provided during play provide foundations for development of motor, sensory, perceptual, cognitive, language and social skills.

We have included some ideas of what you can do with your baby when they are awake. Initially this will be for short periods of time but as they get older this time extends. Be careful not to over stimulate your baby when awake and make sure to look out for their tiredness cues. All babies have ways to communicate - you just need to listen and learn.



We have developed a series of educational videos to help you in becoming a parent. When you see the video icon throughout this booklet, click on it to watch our video containing more information on that topic.

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Milestones in the first year

0-3 months

In the first few weeks your baby may not seem to do a lot, but at this stage they are still adapting to the outside world. It is your job to help them.

Motor skills

Your baby will initially start to learn to turn their head side to side, lift their head while lying on their tummy and start opening and closing their fists.

By 6 - 8 weeks your baby will become more active and awake. As they get stronger they will start lifting their head more and will start to bring their hands to their mouth.

By 3 months your baby's head control will have improved in all positions (lying, sitting and on their tummy) and your baby may start to grasp at items close to them (bibs, your top, your hair!).

Communication

Be alert to sounds: Your baby will cry for basic needs (hunger/ nappy change/ physical contact).

By 6 - 8 weeks your baby may start to smile, they will become more aware of their surroundings and may start to track objects and people.

By 3 months you may start to hear a chuckle when tickled, mimicking of sounds and they will cry when they are unhappy - but you may be able to tell the difference between the cries (hunger versus pain).



Awake time activities 0 - 3 months

Tummy time

Helps develop your baby's head and neck control and shoulder stability for crawling. Place your baby on a firm flat surface and encourage them to lift their head.

Face to face

Your baby loves nothing more than to stare and touch your face. Talk and sing to your baby and allow them time to respond.

Vision

Your baby can see approximately 30cm and can see patterns and black and white. Hold patterned toys and books about 30cm from your baby's face and allow them time to explore them.

Toys

Use toys that will promote reaching, grasping, eye hand coordination and hand to mouth contact with your baby such as rattles and rings.

Avoid containment

Babies need to move and change position during the day - avoid bouncers, swings and car seats for longer than 15 - 30 minutes.

Try different holds

Over your shoulder, across your lap, superman and face out. Remember the importance of skin to skin.

REMEMBER: Back to sleep, tummy to play

3-6 months

During these next few months your baby will learn so much about their movements and surroundings.

Motor skills

Your baby may start reaching and grasping for toys, they may start to stare intensely at toys and examine them; they may transfer toys from one hand to another. Babies usually start to roll from their back to their side or from their tummy onto their back. By the end of this stage some babies may be able to sit with a little support by leaning on their arms.

Communication

Your baby will start to laugh out loud, you will hear more sounds (goo, ah, gaga, ba) your baby may try and converse with you and will respond when you stop talking (although none of it will make sense). Your baby will start to recognise you and will look for you in a room. They may start to look for a dropped toy.

Awake time activities 3 - 6 months



Tummy time

Your baby may start to roll from front to back when placed on their tummy by the end of this stage.

Sing

Singing to your baby helps develop social interaction and helps language development.

Toys

Use toys such as balls, rings, blocks and soft texture textbooks, to help develop focus, use both hands, reaching, grasping, holding, releasing and passing between hands. Bubbles also encourage focus, reaching and following. Mirrors encourage visual attention and recognition.

Avoid screen time

Even if your baby isn't watching TV they can be distracted by the sound and by the picture.

You may try to encourage sitting by supporting your baby on your lap or sit on the floor with baby in between your legs.

Remember the importance of:

Using a variety of facial expressions: It grabs your baby's attention and promotes interaction.

Rhymes and songs: Use hand motions to increase attention e.g. Pat - a - Cake, Itsy Bitsy Spider, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

Social - emotional growth: Engaging in relationships by laughing aloud, recognising faces, mimicking facial expressions, and enjoying play with other people.

6-9 months

During the next few months you might discover your baby is on the move.

Motor skills

Your baby may be sitting independently by the end of this stage and may be happy to sit and play with some support. Their rolling skills will have advanced and may be able to move front to back and vice versa. When on their tummy they may start to pivot around to find toys, they may start commando crawling (backwards or frontwards). Your baby will start to grasp smaller objects and may use their thumb and index finger.

Communication

Your baby may start to understand words such as bye bye, clap hands and may follow out the actions for the word. They will start to enjoy games such as peekaboo and nursery rhymes. They will become more vocal and you may start to use words with meaning (Mama, Dada) but expect a lot of nonsensical babble during this time. During this stage your baby may start to show separation anxiety – this can be distressing for both baby and parents. It is your baby's way of showing they care. Their growing awareness of the world around them can also make them feel unsafe or upset in new situations or with new people. It is important to try and help your baby during this time by reassuring, being consistent, leaving an item of clothing that smells of you to comfort them. Be assured, being separated from your baby will not cause them any harm.

Awake time activities 6 - 9 months



Tummy time

It is still important to allow your baby time to play in this position, keep toys slightly out of reach to encourage your baby to move and reach. This will encourage gross motor skills development.

Water play

This can be in a bath, pool or with a small bowl, it promotes sensory play.

Social

Signing, using household objects such as pots and pans to create music - rice or pasta in a food container and shake, nursery rhymes with hand actions - Wheels on the Bus, Itsy Bitsy Spider. Playing peekaboo develops gross motor skills, visual tracking and social development and your baby will love it.

Books

Naming objects and reading - increases language development.

9-12 months

Your baby's personality really starts to shine during this stage.

Motor skills

Crawling, pull to stand and stepping are 3 key skills that babies can develop during this stage. Most babies may not walk until they are 18 months. Babies are not born with safety awareness so it is important to provide a safe environment during this time of exploration.

Communication

Your baby may understand the word NO and may use Mama/Dada appropriately. They may join in with clapping a lot more and they may start to copy simple words and may start to associate words with objects (moo, cow). They will develop a sense of self and an understanding of who they are. They will point at objects they want.

Awake time activities 9-12 months

Pull to standing

Place toys on an elevated surface such as a sofa and support your baby to pull into standing.

Social

Encourage waving, clapping, name objects, use words and gestures such as yes and no while shaking your head, take turns when playing, an example roll a ball to your baby and then encourage them to roll to you.

Toys

Pop up toys help to develop concept of cause and effect; shape sorters and stacking blocks encourage the concept of how things go together.

Use household items such as boxes/ pots/ phones to encourage pretend play.

Continue to talk and read to your baby to help develop vocabulary, language and social skills.

What to watch out for

As mentioned your baby will develop at their own rate but there are a few key milestones to watch out for. If you notice any of the following or have any concerns regarding your baby's development please link in with your public health nurse, your GP or your local Community Paediatric Physiotherapist.

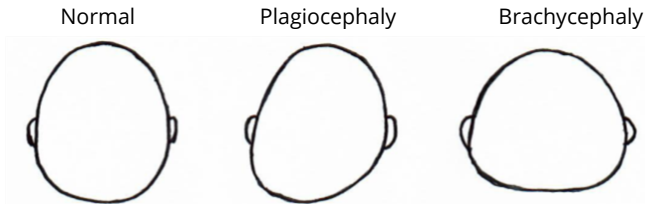
- Not responding to loud noises by 6 weeks.
- Not following objects by 2 months.
- Not noticing hands or bringing hands to mouth by 2-3 months.
- Poor head control by 3 months.
- Not smiling at main caregiver by 8 - 12 weeks.
- Not reaching and grasping at objects by 4 months.
- Not attempting to roll by 7 months.
- Not attempting to sit using arms for support by 7 months.
- Not weight bearing when supported by 8 months.

Common Infant Issues



Plagiocephaly/ Brachecephaly

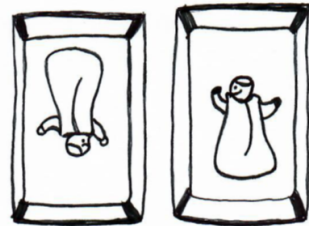
Also referred to as **flat head** is flattening that occurs on the side or back of a baby's head. It is caused by pressure on the bones of skull while a baby is lying on its back or if they are constantly favouring one side over the other. If the flattening is on the back of the head it's known as Brachycephaly and if it's on the side, it's known as Plagiocephaly.



There are ways you can help prevent this flattening or if it's present prevent it from getting worse.

- Ensure your baby does not have a favourite position; they should spend equal time on both sides. If you notice your baby favouring one side encourage them to turn to the opposite side by using toys placed on that side.

- Change the direction your baby is lying in the crib or moses basket as shown in the picture. Your baby will try and seek you out at night so by changing position your baby should turn their head towards you.



- When holding your baby make sure to alternate sides frequently. If breastfeeding ensure your baby is feeding equally from both sides and if bottle feeding swap the arm you are holding your baby in.
- Talk and interact with your baby on the side you want them to turn to.
- Avoid too much time in car seats and bouncers while awake. Recommended car seat time is max 1 hour.

Poor head control

Most babies are born with poor head control. They have to learn how to use these muscles. A baby should have enough head control by 3 months to turn their head side to side in lying, to look around when held upright, to hold head in middle while lying and to raise their head and upper torso while in tummy time.

Exercises for head control

Tummy Time



This is a vital exercise to help with general motor development and head control. It is important to start tummy time from birth and to practice it several times throughout the day. At first your baby may give out and cry when placed on their tummy so below are a few alternate positions to help get your baby use to lying on their tummy.



Lying with your baby on your chest - this can be done from birth.



Roll up a towel/blanket and place it under your baby's chest with their arms out in front.



Sitting with a cushion on your knee and place your baby across your knee.



Tiger in a Tree Hold - lie your baby along your forearm and support the weight of their body (This can be done from 6 weeks).

Tracking

Babies love to watch and follow, using your face or toy get your babies attention and then move to one side. Allow your baby time to follow and then move to the opposite side. Do this several times to each side. This helps to develop your baby's side to side movements and helps develop a sense of mid line.

Side lying

Side lying is beneficial only when your baby is awake. Lie your baby on their side propped with rolled up blankets or towels. You can lie in front on your baby or you can place some toys in front. It is important to try and encourage both hands to be in front of baby's face. This position helps develop head control and a sense of mid line.



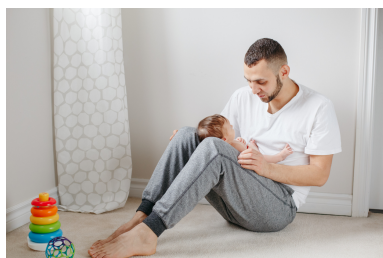
Other positions/holds

Babies like a variety of positions, below are a few other positions that you can use to improve head control.

Holding baby with their head and arms up over your shoulders.



Sitting in a reclined position with your knees bent. Place baby on your lap facing you, you can use a small cushion to support their head.



Equipment

All your baby needs is you. You are the best 'toy' to them.

If using bouncers, swings or seats limit the time your baby spends in them to 15 - 30 minutes per day. Spending too much time in bouncers, swings and seats is not recommended and can delay development.

Slings or carriers

These can be very handy to carry your baby. They can help develop their head control and social skills as baby is close to eye level. When using a sling it is important to remember to keep the hips in a 'M' position to help with hip development.



Pillows

It is not necessary to use pillows to reduce flat head, alternating your baby's head position at night and for nap times and helping them to develop neck strength through tummy time should prevent any flattening of the head.

Bouncers

It is recommended to avoid the use of these. If you choose to use them limit the time your baby spends in them to 15 min. When placed in a bouncer your baby's feet must be flat on the ground, if they are not it means your baby is too small for the bouncer. Bouncers can encourage babies to stand on their tippy toes which can lead to toe walking.

Sit in walker

Are not recommended. Sit in walkers encourage tip toe walking and will not help your baby walk sooner. There is a huge increase in accidents to babies when they use sit in walkers as they have access to surfaces they would normally not be able to reach - i.e. kitchen counter. Research has shown a 40% increase in injuries when babies are placed in sit in walkers.

Push walkers

These can help your baby develop independent stepping and encourage a typical walking pattern.



Avoid these:



Keeping your baby safe

- Avoid sit in walkers
- Avoid moulded seats
- No sleeping on tummy
- Use only approved toys



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