

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Being a new parent is exciting. It is also hard. In the first three months you will grow and learn along with your baby. Nothing is more important for your baby than spending time with you. When you feed, cuddle, talk and play with your baby, you help him build confidence, curiosity and communication skills. You also let him know that he is loved, worthy and safe in the big world around him.

If Babies Could Talk

I cry because I am hungry, cold, wet or I want to see you. At the beginning, you need to come to me every time. I also communicate by making sucking noises, which means I want to be entertained or fed. I may turn away when I am tired or full.

I need at least one consistent, caring person in my life, but my whole family is important to me.

I like to be with grandparents, caregivers and others who love me. They help me learn how to get along with people later in life.

You'll be changing my diaper often (about 7,000 times in total) so let's have some fun while you are doing it. I love to listen to you sing and get my tummy tickled. If I am a boy, I tend to spray when you take off the old diaper, so be prepared to duck!

I like to coo and baby talk with you, but I like it best when you talk to me like an adult. This helps me understand sounds and language.

HELP YOUR BABY SUCCEED

STEPS FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT (0 to 3 months)

SAFETY



- Always put your baby to sleep on her back. This reduces the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- Use a Canadian Standards approved car safety seat (infant or convertible) in the rear-facing position, every time you travel in a vehicle.
- Never leave your baby alone. Not even for a second.

SECURITY



- Hold your baby as often as possible, especially when feeding him.
- Talk quietly to her as she eats.

HEALTH



- Breast-feed your baby if you can. Breast milk provides natural protection against allergies and diseases. Talk to a nurse, doctor, a Healthy Babies, Healthy Children worker or contact your nearest Ontario Early Years Centre for tips.
- Take your infant for regular checkups and make sure he gets the immunizations he needs in the first three months.

LEARNING



- Move a toy slowly back and forth within baby's sight range so that she moves her eyes and eventually her head from side to side.
- Help your baby develop language skills by talking and singing to him often.

ADJUSTING



- Pick up your baby when she cries and comfort her.
- Try soothing your baby by rocking, cuddling, feeding or walking him.

What to Expect *Remember:* Every baby develops at his or her own pace. These are guidelines only. If you are concerned about your baby's development, talk with your doctor, a public health nurse or another trusted health professional.

- New babies sleep from 14–18 hours a day.
- New babies can see a distance of about 20 to 30 cm (8 to 12 inches), so hold her close to your face when you talk and sing to her.
- At four weeks, your baby knows where some sounds come from. His favourite sound is your voice!
- Newborns have large heads with two soft spots and weak necks. Carefully support their heads and necks when you lift or carry them.
- Between six and eight weeks, babies may cry an average of three hours a day.
- Some babies spit up as a reflex action or when they are overfed. Don't worry about this. Vomiting is different. If your baby vomits with a force that causes milk to fly across the room, call your doctor.

Take Care of You

If you have adopted a baby, you will likely feel very emotional and tired in the first few months. If you have given birth, you may also experience soreness and hormonal changes that can cause strong emotions. Some women feel blue after birth. This usually passes. But if you feel very sad for more than two weeks, call your doctor. Post-partum depression is a serious problem that sometimes happens. It is not your fault and help is available.

New dads also feel strong emotions, such as a great sense of tenderness and responsibility. Try to take paternity leave or some time off work. The best way to get to know your baby is to spend time caring for her.