



First Steps

2 Months

Key Thought

You and your baby are establishing routines. These routines help your baby learn trust and to calm herself. Even though a diaper change comes first, she learns she can trust she will be fed next. In the rhythm of day and night she will be learning at night you keep the lights low, you don't play, and you aren't as talkative. She learns night is the time to be quiet and sleep.

Advice to Mom

- Be a student of your baby.
- Talk to your baby as much as possible.
- Life will begin to settle into some routines.
- Enjoy your baby's smile!

What Your Baby is Learning

Physically:

She practices lifting her head and chest off the floor while on her stomach and to hold her head straight forward steadily. She is learning the "Superman" pose (holding her head and legs up when held under her stomach). Her head will still bob when held erect in a sitting position, however.

Both eyes will focus while following an object from side to side, and begin to follow up and down motion too. This is the first step to developing hand-eye coordination.

Your baby can differentiate familiar voices from other sounds. She looks to see where noises are coming from.

The jerky arm and leg movements of the newborn are being replaced with smoother, more circular movements. She will begin to grab objects voluntarily now.

She may start drooling. She is putting everything in her mouth and she is producing more saliva than she can swallow. But this doesn't mean she has started teething yet. Her drool actually coats her toys with disease preventing proteins.

Language:

Your baby will not only coo and gurgle but may begin to babble. Babbling is deliberately practicing sounds that please her. She will repeat the sounds in a regular rhythm or pattern. She is learning that the sounds she hears and the sounds she makes have a relationship. She may watch your mouth while you talk to her. She is becoming fascinated by how it works.

She is learning that certain sounds she makes cause other things to happen. When she cries, you come to meet her needs. When she babbles, you talk back to her and show affection. This is the beginning of her learning about communication and its importance.



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Social:

By distinguishing the sounds around her, your baby is learning which ones are important and which ones are not important. She will recognize her parents' voices.

She will begin to respond differently to mom and dad. Generally she will become calmer when mom is around, knowing she will have physical needs met. She will get more excited when dad is around, as if to say, "There's Dad, it's party time!"

She will lock eyes with you and is learning the relationship between voices and faces.

Her first big, beaming, toothless smiles are a great reward for all the diapering, feeding, bathing, and cuddling you've been doing.

Ways You Can Help

Eye focus practice.

Hold a brightly colored object 8-12 inches (20-30 cm) from your baby's face and move it from side to side and up and down. Pretty store bought rattles are nice, use the ones you were given as baby gifts. But any household object will work just as well! Show your baby, shiny foil or a bright plastic measuring spoon.

Your baby is beginning to enjoy more complex patterns. Last month the face and black and white images fascinated her. This month start showing her polka dots and brightly colored objects. Let her watch and touch a wide variety of objects, like soft balls and plastic cookie cutters.

Make a mobile from natural materials, bright objects, or a collections from the beach. Hang the mobile over your baby's bed for her to look at when in bed, but not asleep.

Spend lots of time engaging your baby in eye contact. She loves to look at your face and especially your eyes. She sees you best about 8-12 inches (20-30 cm) away.

Establish routines.

You don't need to hold to a rigid time schedule, but attend to your baby's needs in a regular pattern. That pattern will help your baby learn to trust that her needs will be met. She doesn't need to continue to scream when she learns you will be feeding her after you change her. She begins to learn to calm herself when she hears your voice.

Reward your baby for any effort. At this early age your baby is learning when she does something you like, you cuddle her and shower her with affection. Your happy tone of voice and pleasant touch encourage her to repeat the effort.



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Safety First.

Your baby is totally dependent on you to protect her. Check the following items:

- Be sure to use a properly installed car seat. If you aren't totally sure yours is safe, in America, your local fire station will check it for you.
- Never leave your baby unattended on a bed or other surface without side rails. One day very soon she will be able to move enough to fall off.
- Never leave your baby alone in a car.
- Don't let your baby play with anything that is small enough to pass through the tube of a toilet paper roll. Anything smaller than that could lodge in your baby's throat.
- Never carry your baby when you are cooking or carrying boiling liquids.
- If you are not sure of your child's safety, let the phone ring. Your friends can leave a message or call back later.

Establish healthy sleep habits.

Your baby will probably be sleeping about 15 hours a day, but rarely longer than four hours at a time. You will probably still need to feed and change your baby at least once in the night for another month or so.

But you should begin to be able to recognize the signs that she is getting tired. When she begins to rub her eyes, pull on her ear, or develop faint dark circles under her eyes, take her to her crib right away. You will begin to know instinctively when it is time for a nap.

Start to teach your baby the difference between night and day. When she is awake and alert during the day, keep the room bright, play with her as much as you can, and don't minimize the household noise. If she falls asleep during a feeding, wake her up to finish. When she wakes at night for a feeding, keep the lights dim, the house as quiet as possible, and don't talk to her much during her feeding, and don't rock her after her feeding. Put her to bed as soon as she is burped.

Begin letting your baby fall asleep on her own. Put her down when she is sleepy but still awake. Don't rock or nurse your baby to sleep. If you rock your baby to sleep every night, why would she expect anything different as she gets older? She should learn that going to sleep alone and in bed is comfortable and pleasant.

What to Expect Next

- Laughs and squeals
- Recognizes parents' voices
- Does mini-pushups
- Turns head toward loud sounds

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for that beautiful smile on my baby's face. I see now why my praise to You pleases You so much. Help me to continue to learn about You as I care for the baby You gave me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sensory Overload

Before birth your baby lived in a watery world of muted sounds and faint color. Now your baby is experiencing bright lights, loud noises, and a wide variety of other sensations. Your baby can receive too much stimulation and “overload” her circuits. She has ways to tell you she has had enough and needs a break.

Symptoms of sensory overload:

Irritability, turns away, tenses up and arches her back, extends her arm and hand as if motioning “stop,” avoids your gaze, intentionally ignores a toy or activity, or closes her eyes or even goes to sleep when she shouldn’t be ready to sleep

What you can do:

You can avoid sensory overload by carefully watching your baby’s reaction during interaction. You will begin to know her preferences and her level of tolerance for certain activities or experiences. Every child is different and may respond differently at various times.

Learn how your baby responds:

To the brightness of the room, new things to look at, and color.

To whether certain pitch or volume sounds calm or excite her.

To what rhythms relax or energize her.

To gentle or firm touch on different parts of her body.

To being held vertically or horizontally, facing up or down.

To gentle rocking or more rapid movements.

To smells in and outdoors.

To different people.

When she is hungry, tired, sick, or happy

Some children seem hypersensitive to their environment. Premature babies are especially vulnerable. If your baby seems to experience sensory overload easily you should expose her to only one kind of stimulus at a time, like a certain sound, an interesting sight, or being held and cuddled. You can gradually build her tolerance by adding more than one type of stimulation at a time. What she doesn’t enjoy today, may be her favorite entertainment in a week or so.

Swaddling your baby when exposing her to a new kind of stimulation may make her feel more secure and less overwhelmed. Encouraging your baby to suck her thumb or use a pacifier or hold a favorite blanket or stuffed toy during times of stress may help her experience less overload.

It is important to respond by calming your baby when she shows signs of overload so that she doesn’t cry excessively, withdraw from contact with people, or attempt to escape into sleep. Don’t fret if you miss the signs from time to time. All parents do. But everyone will be more peaceful when you can predict and prevent sensory overload.