

0-6 Months



**Live**

**Love**

**Grow**

**Learn**

Learning begins at birth.

**You want your baby to grow and develop — to be happy and healthy.**

- Hold her skin-to-skin. This promotes sleep, weight gain and calmness.
- Spend face-to-face time with him. Smile and make direct eye contact. He sees you best from about 8-12 inches away.
- Talk softly but with feeling. Tell her what you see and do throughout the day.

# Parents help babies develop and reach full potential. Focus your attention on your baby during feedings, changings and play time.

## Bonding

**An attachment bond is crucial for a baby to develop and grow in a healthy way. This strong tie between a parent and baby has a lifelong effect on a child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.**

You and your baby form this special bond as you meet your baby's needs and provide daily care.

- Hold your baby skin-to-skin. Both mom and dad should provide this daily care.
- Learn what she needs. Her cries and body movements give you clues.
- Comfort him when he cries.
- Play, feed and talk with her.
- Kiss, cuddle and hold him often.

## Feeding

**Feeding time is a great time to bond with your baby. Many doctors recommend breastfeeding. However, how you feed your baby is your decision.**

- Choose a comfortable place to feed your baby.
- Make feeding time loving and special.
- Talk softly. He loves to hear your voice.
- Make eye contact with her as she feeds.

If bottle feeding, alternate sides. Hold her with your right arm, then switch to your left arm. This helps develop neck muscles.

## Playtime

**Babies learn during play. Play when you bathe, diaper and dress your baby. Play when your baby is awake.**

- Place toys and mobiles 8 – 12 inches from her face so she can see them easily.
- Use brightly colored rattles and toys to get her attention. As she watches, move the toys slowly from left to right. She will start to follow the toys with her eyes.
- Play games like *Peekaboo* and *So Big*.
- Hold him in front of a mirror.
- Point to body parts and say "*fingers, toes, nose.*"

## Tummy Time

**Being in different positions helps your baby's muscles develop. Since you will *always* put her to sleep on her back, she will need some awake time on her stomach.**

- Start by laying your awake baby on her tummy, on your lap 2 – 3 times a day for a few minutes.
- Place him on the floor, on his stomach, as he grows stronger. Put safe baby toys within his reach. ***Never leave your baby alone during tummy time.***





## Reading

**Reading to your baby is fun and helps develop needed language skills. Children whose parents read to them hear 32 million more words by age 4 than a child without parent/child reading time.**

As you and your baby read together, you connect and bond.

- Read together for a few minutes at a time for a total of at least 20 minutes a day. Start at birth.
- Make eye contact as you read.
- Read with feeling. Exaggerate sounds.
- Point to pictures.
- Let her touch the book.

## Talking

**Talking to your baby makes her smarter.**

- Use baby talk – talk in a high pitched sound. Draw out vowel sounds. Say mommy, “*mommy – m ah ah ah me ee ee.*”
- Point to objects, and name them. “*Umbrella - um breell laaaa, it keeps us dry from the rain.*”

## Calm, Safe, Loving Home

**The environment affects a child’s mood and behavior. Make your home peaceful and nurturing.**

- Play music. Soft music soothes your baby. Children’s songs are fun and cheerful.
- Avoid TV and screen time for your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages TV for kids under 18 months and younger.
- Avoid yelling and arguing.
- Keep your home smoke free.

## Sleeping

**Newborns sleep 10 – 20 hours a day. Make your baby’s sleep space safe.**

- *Always put your baby to sleep on her back.* Doctors know it is a safe position.
- Do not co-sleep with your baby in bed, in a chair or on a sofa.
- Use a new crib with federal crib standards.
- Keep all toys, soft objects, sheepskins and bumpers out of baby’s crib.

## Car Safety

**Car crashes hurt and kill thousands of children.**

- *Always secure your baby in a federally approved child safety car seat while riding in cars.*
- Check with experts to make sure baby’s seat is installed properly.



# More Ideas to Make Your Baby's First Year – *The Best*

## Establish Routines

**Routines make a parent's life easier and give babies a sense of safety and security.**

- Create routines *for your baby* when he is around 3 – 4 months of age. Start with feeding, bath time and bed time. Perform the same tasks with each routine. Schedule bed and bath times at about the same time each day.
- Create *your own* routines — laundry, cleaning and grocery shopping. Simplify mornings with work and daycare routines.
- Be flexible. While routines help keep your family in control, be confident that a break from these routines will not be harmful.

## Choose Safe Toys and Objects

**Babies use their mouth to explore.**

- Check toys for small parts and sharp edges.
- Avoid giving your baby objects that can fit through the opening of a toilet paper roll. They are too small and might cause your baby to choke.
- Clean toys often.

## Vary the Way You Hold Your Baby

**A variety of holds allows a baby to look around while developing neck muscles.**

- Carry your baby with her head resting on your shoulder. Support her head. Alternate shoulders.
- Hold and carry your baby facing away from you.
- Use a sling, front pack or back pack.
- Avoid keeping baby in a car safety seat *outside of the car*.

## Create a Baby Friendly Home

**Babies love to explore their world. Soon your baby will be rolling, sitting and crawling. Make your home safe.**

- Keep cleaning materials up and out of reach. Install cupboard locks that baby cannot open.
- Put plants up off the floor. Some plants are harmful if eaten or placed in baby's mouth.
- Cover electrical outlets.
- Move electrical cords, window cords and heaters out of reach.
- Block or gate stairs.
- Remove tablecloths.

**Keep your NICU Developmental Follow-up Clinic appointment if you have one.**

Visit Parent Help Line [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org).

**Find new ideas to help you keep your family safe, healthy and happy.**

- Search for tips on parenting babies, toddlers, school age children and teens.
- Find information on early learning and school readiness. Read the *Live Love Grow Learn* booklets and *Ready In Stages* checklists to promote your baby's healthy growth and development.
- Learn how to teach your child skills that help with school and life success.
- Discover helpful Internet sites.



Support • New Ideas • Referrals

Call Parent Help Line at 217-544-5808 or  
1-888-727-5889 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week.

Visit our website at [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org) and our  
Facebook page: Parent Help Line at St. John's Children's Hospital

