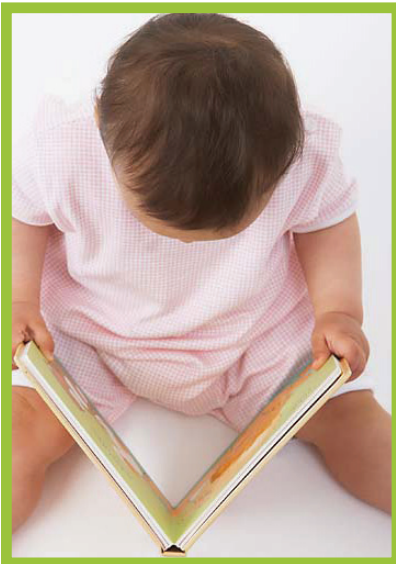


6-12 Months



**Live**

**Love**

**Grow**

**Learn**

Give Your Baby Love and Attention  
Your baby is halfway through her first year.  
You will notice how fast she changes.

- **Play with your baby. She loves games like peek-a-boo.**
- **Read books together — *daily*. Cuddle. Let him touch the book.**
- **Continue tummy-time on the floor to develop muscle strength.**

# Parents help babies develop and reach full potential. Your curious baby learns and develops by doing things together – *with you.*

## Meals

**Doctors tell parents to wait until around 6 months of age to start solid foods. Make these first foods healthy and easy to digest.**

- Feed your baby in a high chair with a safety harness, or an infant seat.
- Use a small, smooth baby spoon.
- Start with one food at a time.
- Name the food as your baby eats.
- Let your baby pick up small bites of foods like bananas and O-shaped cereal as he gets older.
- Be patient as your baby starts to eat solid food. This should be a fun time *for you both.*
- Be prepared to pick up the food your baby drops. She is learning where items go when they fall – cause and effect.



## Play Time

**Babies love to play with their parents and are interested in everything. Provide a safe place to explore and play – *together.***

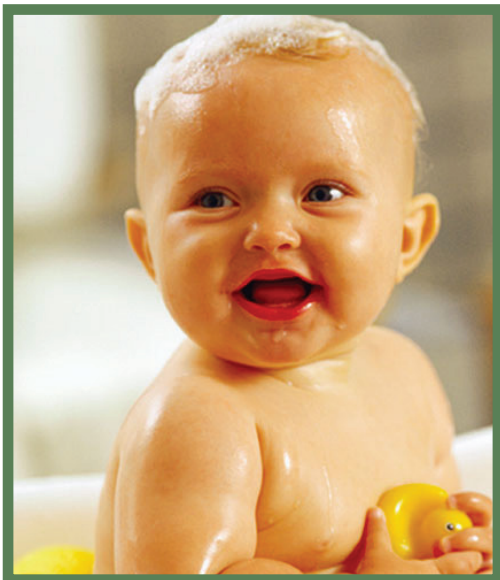
- Place baby on his stomach with a toy, just out of reach. He will try to crawl to get it.
- Sing action songs like “*The Itsy Bitsy Spider*”.
- Help your baby learn about size and shape. Let her hold different sized toys and objects.
- Stack light weight boxes or blocks. Watch his excitement as he knocks them down. He loves getting a reaction from something he has done.
- Roll a ball to your baby. Help her learn to roll it back.
- Let your baby explore. He loves crawling over you.
- Make bath time fun. Name and point to body parts – *fingers, toes, knees, elbow, nose.*
- Support your baby as she tries to stand.



## Feelings and Moods

**Babies naturally have many moods. They display a wide variety of emotions. Your baby will look to you and others to know how to feel and what to do.**

- Learn your baby's moods. She may prefer to be quiet and alone. Other times she will want to be active and play.
- Show and talk about feelings. "*Hooray – we are so happy that daddy is home!*" Show excitement, smile and clap your hands.
- Keep and create new daily routines – bed, bath, morning, goodbye times.
- Say goodbye when you leave your baby. Do not sneak away. He may be upset and experience separation anxiety. A loving and supportive caregiver will ease his fear.
- Strike a balance between "no" and "yes." Your baby needs to know what is and is not allowed. Be consistent.
- Use creative ways to discourage undesirable behavior. Frown. Small statements like, "dirty," "icky" while shaking your head.
- Talk about what will happen next. "*After your bath we will read a story.*"



## Speech and Language Development

**Babies' cooing and babbling are really the beginning of speech and meaningful communication. Your baby reacts to different sounds and begins to understand names of common objects.**

- Use baby sign language to help your baby express wants and needs while learning to talk. Start with signs for *more, milk, eat, and done.*
- *Read to your baby every day.* Be excited. Make it fun.
- Talk and sing to your baby *often* during the day. Use hand and facial gestures – shaking your head "no", waving goodbye, covering your face while playing peek-a-boo.
- Face baby when you speak. Let her see your lips. Be expressive. Show emotions like happy, sad, surprised.
- Listen to different kinds of music. Find music your baby likes – children's songs, lullabies.
- Teach your baby to make music – *a spoon and a bowl for a drum, baby music toys, rattles.*

## Physical Development

**Babies are active explorers. You will want your baby to be free to safely sit, crawl, stand and explore.**

- *Never leave your baby unattended – anywhere.*
- Keep your baby's space safe. Secure furniture that could tip onto your baby as he pulls on it to stand. Cover sharp corners. Secure dangling cords. Put plants up off the floor.
- Help her crawl up steps. Do not let her climb up or down alone.

# More Ideas to Raise a Happy Healthy Baby

## Create a Goodbye Ritual

**Rituals make goodbyes easier and help babies who feel separation anxiety.**

- Make the ritual simple and loving. Create a special sign, give a hug and a kiss. Teach him to wave and say goodbye.
- Be consistent. Always use the ritual when leaving your child.
- Stay calm. Smile. Do not get emotional.
- Allow her to keep something familiar with her – a blanket, toy or other special item.
- Leave as soon as you say goodbye.

Use the same caregiver as much as possible.

## Provide Love and Attention

**Your words and actions teach your baby how to interact with others.**

- Love, cuddle and play with your baby *often*.
- Use a calm voice as you talk and play.
- Clap your hands and give praise as she accomplishes tasks.
- Distract him when he gets unruly.
- Create quiet time when she is tired and fussy.

## Help Your Baby During Teething

**Most babies start teething around 6 months of age. It can be an uncomfortable and difficult time for you and your baby.**

- Give your baby something cool to chew on – teething ring, wash cloth, teething biscuits, chilled piece of food like a cucumber. *Never use frozen food or items.* Stay with baby while he is chewing so he does not choke.
- Provide a teething bib to keep your baby's clothes dry as she drools.
- Protect your baby's chin by using a little petroleum jelly.
- *Contact your doctor for advice before using over-the-counter remedies.*
- Be patient and loving when your baby is cranky.
- Use distraction during fussy times– play a game, go for a walk, read a book.

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

**Find new ideas that 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 success.
- Discover other 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

