

Growing & Changing (Children 0–6 months)

This is quick reference guide to the changes that children experience as they grow and develop through the early years.

It is not meant as checklist but, rather, a tool to help you provide activities for your children as they explore and learn. It is also helpful to know what to expect so that you can gather some playthings and perhaps modify the house and yard according to what the little ones will soon be up to.

At birth baby has little strength or muscle control. In the first few weeks, however, baby learns to develop control of muscles around the eye to be able to focus on objects nearby. She will develop strength in neck and shoulders to support and hold up her head, and will begin to move more and kick her legs. By 6 months baby will be managing to support their back and sit with support.

Slowly babies learn to reach out and grasp objects, though it will take a little longer to learn to release that object.

By the time baby can sit up she will have the hand and eye control to grab, wave shake and squeeze objects within their reach. Look out!

During the first three months baby will watch your face and listen to your voice. She will smile when she sees and recognises you, and she will create different cries for different needs. From about three months baby will begin to makes different sounds and coo to herself, and will listen to the patterns of our conversations.

Suggestions

- Offer swiping, batting and grasping practice
- Unwrap babies and give them the freedom to move
- Allow some supervised play on their tummies
- Carry your baby in different ways
- Give babies a massage.

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If you think baby is not as active as you would expect or worried that baby is unusually restless then ask for advice.
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- Talk to baby about what you are doing
- Play funny faces with baby
- Enjoy some body play poems with baby when you change their clothes
- Play some bouncing games on your knee when baby is strong enough to hold their head up and sit with your support
- Provide a musical environment for baby to listen too

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If you think that baby might not be hearing or is just too quiet then ask for advice.
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Emotions

Emotionally babies are getting to know the people in their lives.

If familiar people respond to baby's cries and gurgles in a warm, caring manner then baby will begin to trust others.

If those familiar people respond quickly to baby's crying, baby will also develop a sense of trust in himself by knowing that they can influence others in their world.

However, if people respond inconsistently, abruptly or without warmth then baby will not develop that sense of trust.

Babies need prompt and caring responses, it's best if they are not left to cry, to become more distressed and less trustful.

Babies will not be spoiled by too much attention.

Emotions - Suggestions

- Be sure to spend some quality play time with baby
- Play games with baby for a smile and a giggle
- Sit and have a cuddle with baby in a favourite place where you can relax and enjoy this time together
- Organise time and other family members so that someone can always respond warmly, quickly and calmly to baby's needs

Socially Active

Babies are born with natural reflexes that help them maintain contact with others.

Babies automatically cling with their little fingers. They cry for attention. They gaze into your face in the most endearing way and smile to maintain your attention.

These natural reflexes help build a bond with familiar carers. We can help strengthen that bond by giving baby lots of cuddles and caring attention, holding and stroking those little hands as well as gazing and smiling back when baby gazes at us. With consistent caring responses baby will develop a bond and special attachment to the special people in his or her life.

Socially Active - Suggestions

- Use lullabies to sooth baby and help you to both to relax together
- Give baby a massage so you can spend some special time together
- Give baby a warm bath
- Have lots of cuddles to build that bond and attachment
- Use play / talking / music cards for suggestions on games you can play together

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If you think baby cries too often or is not settling then ask for advice or see your local Doctor
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Development is the term used to describe the changes in your child's physical growth, as well as his ability to learn the social, emotional, behaviour, thinking, and communication skills he needs for life. All of these areas are linked, and each depends on and influences the others.

Thinking

A very young baby begins to learn about the world with their senses.

In other words, babies begin to understand the world through things such as: smell to find mothers milk, by looking and gazing at objects and faces and learning to recognise familiar things and people, by listening and becoming aware of regular sounds, and through touch and learning what is warm, what is cool, or what is a different texture or weight.

In the first few months baby is exploring and getting to know her own body, it's movement and control. Baby also repeats and practises to control her movements, for example, she will develop different sucking movements to suck for food or to suck for comfort.

Similarly, baby will repeat actions to gain a familiar positive reaction, for example, a smile for a smile. Her memory is slowly developing, as you will notice when she settle more quickly or responds more freely with a familiar person than with a stranger.

Thinking - Suggestions

- Offer baby some visual adventures, mobiles, visual tracking games and photo galleries
- Find some interesting sound makers for baby e.g. chimes, music, instruments
- Take baby outdoors to hear the sounds of nature
- Have conversations with baby
- Provide some interesting objects for baby to grasp or bat and swipe
- Play some body play games when changing baby

If you think baby is not responding or as alert as you would expect, ask for advice.

Want more information?

GreatStart

Department for Education and Child Development website with lots of ideas and activities to do with children to make the most of everyday learning opportunities
www.greatstart.edu.au

The Little Big Book Club

Provides free packs of books for babies and toddlers – available from libraries and the Child and Family Health Service. The website has free Activity Time and Learning Time sheets to complement books and e-books to read on-line
www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au

Dads' Read

Information for dads about reading with children
www.dadsread.org.au

Let's Read

Supports families to share words, rhymes, songs, books and stories with children
www.letsread.com.au

Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52
For advice on child health and parenting
www.parentline.org.au

Families NSW

Various resources to help parents at any stage in life.
www.families.nsw.gov.au

Raising Children

The Australian Parenting website. For information on raising children, including information for grandparents raising grandchildren.
<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Local Services

YWCA-NSW - Kids for Life playgroup

Fun and friendly playgroup with a target age from 0-5yrs.

Lismore Toy Library

Low cost access to variety of toys
Phone 02 6622 3424

Story time and Baby Bounce

Lismore and Goonellabah Library
Phone 02 6625 5100

Brighter Futures

Support services for improving emotional, social, health and education development outcomes for families and their children.
Phone 02 6682 4334

Refer to Service Listing - Baby and Child Services for more information on Playgroups and Activities