

Communication

Activities to Help Your Baby Grow and Learn



0-2 months

Your newborn is already a communicator. He frets and cries if he needs you, and he may gurgle and coo when he's calm. Even wiggles and squirms are part of his communication. Your baby communicates with his eyes as he looks for yours. He seems to be saying, "You are my most important person." Soon your baby will capture your heart with a real smile!

Humming and Holding

Hold your baby close to the skin of your chest or neck. She loves the feel and smell of that wonderful body. As you walk or rock or simply rest, hum a little tune or lullaby. Baby will hear and feel your soft song.

Squirmy Wiggles

Sometimes your baby will frown, squint his little eyes, and tighten up his little tummy. Ask about that as you hold him to your shoulder and gently stroke his body: "Is air in there? Do you need a little burp?"

Happy Talk

When baby seems to be smiling, have a happy talk about it and smile right back: "Look at that smile!" Soon you'll know when your baby is really smiling at you! It's a magic time for both of you.

"Ooo" to You

While baby is rested, relaxed, and looking at your face, softly say a long "oooooo" sound. Watch how she reacts. When baby is a few weeks old, she may think your "oooo" face is very interesting and try to make one, too. Soon baby will try to say "oooooo" back. What a conversation!

Calling, Calling You!

When you are out of sight and baby starts to cry, tell baby that you hear him and that help is on the way: "I hear you, little one, and I'm coming to you." Your baby will learn that your voice is like a promise and that your face will soon appear. How wonderful!

Talking and Teaching

When your baby is awake and relaxed, take a walk around the room or step outside if the weather is nice. Tell her about the people and things in his world: "This is your window. This is your sofa. This is your sister. Look, this is your flower. These are just for you."

Notes:



Don't Forget! Activities should be supervised at all times by an adult. Any material, food, or toy given to a young child should be reviewed for safety.

Gross Motor

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Your amazing new baby will grow rapidly during these first weeks. Her limbs are held close to her body and her fists are tightly closed. Although her neck is not yet very strong, she will soon want to lift her head, especially while on her tummy. (Your careful supervision is important anytime baby lies on her tummy.) Within a few weeks, she will be able to hold her head up for a few seconds while you hold her up to your shoulder. Her knees are usually pulled up toward her tummy, but soon she will relax and practice kicking.

Open Wide!

After bath time when your baby is feeling relaxed and awake, hold baby's fists close to her chest, then gently pull them apart to an open position, then pull them closed again. Make a little song about it: "Close the baby. Now open up the baby. Now close the baby. Now kiss the baby!" Baby will have fun playing and watching your happy face.

Baby Tummy Time

While baby is on his tummy, lie beside him with your face by his. Hold his fingers and meet his eyes. Talk a bit and sing. Smile and let him know how wonderful he is. What a happy way to visit! Next time place yourself on baby's other side.

Tickle Toes

While your baby is on her back, help her learn about her feet by playing games with her feet and toes. Put her feet together and kiss the bottoms: "Yum yum, what tasty little feet you have!" Nibble her little toes and blow little buzzing sounds into her toes. Be sure to watch baby's face to make sure she's having fun.

Things Are Looking Up!

While baby is on his tummy, watch for signs that his head and neck are getting stronger. When baby begins to lift his head, place an interesting toy or a shiny spoon in front of his gaze, and encourage him to raise his head to get a better look. Talk about how strong he is when he lifts his head.

Hide the Mommy (or Daddy)

While baby is lying on her back, place yourself on one side with your face at about her level. Talk to her and call her name: "Hi, little baby. Where's your mommy?" When baby turns her head to your voice, be sure to smile and show a happy face: "You found me!" Now play the game from the other side.

Beautiful Bath Time

While bathing baby, take a little time to give him some extra massage. Talk to him while you gently rub his "special little neck," "rumply little tummy," or "strong back and beautiful bottom." You might also talk as you pat baby dry after the bath. Your hands on these body parts will teach baby about his body, and he will hear the love in your voice.

Notes:



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Fine Motor

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Your new baby's hands are usually closed in little fists. If you place your finger in her little hand, you will be surprised at the strength of her grip. If you place a small toy in her hand, that grip will help her hold on to it, although it may be only for a very short time. As she grows, her hands will begin to relax. She will find textures and surfaces interesting, so she may move her fingers against cloth or your face or may grasp your hair, even though she has no knowledge that it is attached to you!

Tiny Tugging

While your baby is relaxed and rested, place your finger in baby's fist. Feel baby's grip on your finger. Now slowly tug baby's hand just a bit. If she holds on, relax and tug once more. Tell baby how strong she is. Switch hands and tug again. Make up a little tugging song to sing as you gently tug and relax.

Happy Holder

Give your baby some experience holding different things with different textures. Place different safe items in baby's grip. Let him hold on to a spoon (cool and hard). Later, let baby hold on to the corner of his washcloth (damp and warm). Let him hold on to a toy or a sock. Just letting him hold different things is a way to teach him about the world.

Family Fingers

Let baby play with the members of her family by holding their fingers. Wash hands before playing this game! When Grandma places her finger in baby's hand, she can greet baby and have a little talk: "Hello, beautiful! I'm your grandma, and you are holding on to my finger!" Next, let brother or sister have a turn. Stop when your baby gets tired or starts to fuss.

Happy Hands

After baby's bath, rub some baby oil or lotion on his hands. Gently massage the wrist, palms, and each tiny finger. Tell baby about what you're doing: "I'm rubbing your beautiful little thumb."

Scarf Pull

Place one corner of a smooth scarf or handkerchief in baby's hand. Now pull it through slowly, open it, and let the colors flutter in front of baby's gaze. What a colorful surprise!

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Problem Solving

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Your newborn baby can do amazing things. Your baby can see your face when you hold her close. She can hear your voice. She can hold your finger in her hand. Your baby's brain is growing very fast, and play is very important for her brain development. Right now play is about interacting with you and very simple objects or toys. In the first months, your baby can only see things that are about 8–10 inches away; everything else is fuzzy. Your baby's brain is taking in sounds she hears from the very beginning. Very soon she will begin to understand simple words.

Circles and Waves

You can make a simple picture for your baby to look at. Use a piece of cardboard and nontoxic black or red markers. Draw thick, simple, large lines with curves or circles. To help him focus, bring it close (about 10 inches). Wow. That is cool!

Rattles and Rainbows

When your baby is lying on her back, hold an object about 10 inches above her head. A rattle that makes a little noise will help get her attention. Slowly move the object back and forth in a rainbow arch from side to side. You can also make a rainbow from her belly to above her forehead. Your baby will watch the object with her eyes.

Look at Me!

Hold your baby close to your face. Smile, stick out your tongue, or make a silly face. Do this slowly so baby can take it all in. Watch what he does!

Simple Stories

At quiet times and before sleep, talk to your baby in a soft, gentle voice. Tell her simple stories or talk about the day. She will not understand you at first, but she will very soon. What she will love is being cuddled and looked at and listening to your voice.

Sing to Me

Baby will love to hear your high, sing-songy voice. Talk slowly in a high voice. You do not have to talk "baby talk." You can look at a picture book and talk about the pictures. Or just talk! He will soon begin to make sounds to talk to you.

Lap Time

After a few weeks, your baby can hold her head up while you hold her in your lap. Put new things close to her to look at on the floor or the table. She will enjoy seeing these things up close. Tell your baby what she is seeing: "Cup. That's your cup." "Look, here is your sock."

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Personal-Social

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Your new baby needs you right now. She depends on you to feed her and keep her warm and safe. Your baby interacts by looking at you or using her voice to get your attention. When you respond to her cries, she learns to trust you. She will enjoy being held and talked to by others in the family, but you are the most important person in your baby's world.

Mealtime Moments

As baby nurses or takes a bottle, softly touch her little cheek, forehead, or tiny ears. Look her in the eyes and tell her she is like no other—your own little miracle. Your baby may want to stay right there in your arms, even if she is not eating.

What Did You Say?

As soon as your baby is born, he is trying to tell you something. Babies' first "words" are cries that say, "I want you," "I'm cold," "I'm hungry," or "I'm tired." Listen and learn what each cry means. Talk to him: "Are you hungry?" "Are you tired, little baby?"

Whose Hand Is That?

When your baby is rested and not hungry, place her on her back and sit next to her. Stay close. Tell her you love her. Talk to baby about her body: "Look at your hands! Your fingers!" Everything is new and interesting to her. Even her body parts are amazing!

Smiley Face

Smile at your baby all day, especially when diapering, bathing, or feeding your baby. Give him little nose kisses. In the first few weeks, your baby's smile is mostly a reflex, but soon he will smile back at you. What a wonderful sight!

What's Next?

Talk to your baby about her day and what is going to happen next. She does not know the words yet but will very soon. This will help your baby learn the routine: "It's time for a nap." "It's time to eat."

Give Me a Break!

Your wonderful baby is able to let you know he needs a break. He may do things like look away, yawn, cry, or arch his back. He may need a nap or just a little break. After a rest, he will be ready to enjoy his interesting world again.

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