

Cooperative Extension

Babies are busy building their brains.

Infants are learning from the very first minutes of their lives. Zero to Three <http://www.zerotothree.org/> focuses on how important these early years are:

- By age 3, about 85% of the brain's core structure is formed ("hardwired").
- The process of hardwiring sets the frame for thinking and feeling (including vision, language, hearing, social-emotional development, and movement).
- Children need a warm and loving environment to develop the brain connections and pathways that will help them learn throughout their lives.
- Physical, cognitive, language and social/emotional development are all linked together. **Everything is connected.** Babies are

learning to work their bodies, form strong bonds with caring adults, and learning to talk — everything works together to build babies' brains.

- Your baby learns about himself by the way people treat him. When babies can trust caring adults, they have the courage to reach out, explore and learn.
- When you spend time enjoying and playing together, Baby learns how to love and relate to others.

Parents are the best and first teachers that babies have.

- Good parent-child relationships are the



foundation for Baby's brain-building. The framework being set now will last forever.

- Early experiences and warm, loving relationships form "both the foundation and the scaffold on which cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and moral development unfold." (Zero to Three)

Month 4

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Do yourself (and crying baby) a favor...

Researchers have found that when a parent responds to a baby's cries **more quickly** at age 4 months, the baby cries less and calms easier by 8 months.

This surprises many people. They think responding quickly to a cry will spoil the baby. But babies aren't like that. You can spoil a child, but you can't spoil a baby.

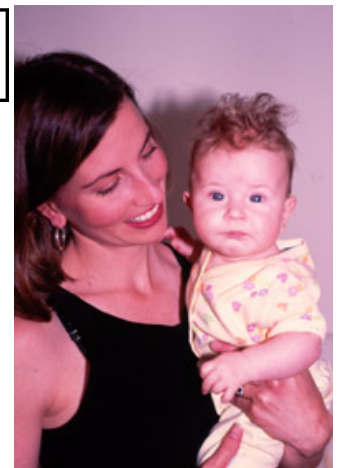
Your baby needs you to meet her needs.

A quick response teaches your baby to trust you.

- Baby learns to give a small cry instead of a big one, because you will come help. Because Baby is getting the help she needs, she needs to cry less.

Ignoring your baby's needs may teach her that the world is not to be trusted.

- Trust is the foundation for discipline and self-discipline. It's necessary for her growth into a well-adjusted, caring and responsible person.



What's It Like To Be Four Months Old?

How I Grow

- I turn my head in all directions.
- I lift my head forward when I'm on my back, and grab my feet with my hands.
- I sit up with my head and back



straight if you support my body.

- I prefer sitting, instead of lying down. It's more interesting!
- I roll from side to side, and might even be able to go from my tummy to my back. Watch out! I could roll off a counter, changing table or bed.
- My reaching and grasping skills are getting better. At first, I had to look from my hand to the toy. As I get better, I grab for the toy without looking at my hands first.
- I try to move a toy from one hand to the other.
- I put things in my mouth.
- I splash and kick with my hands and feet in my bath.

How I Talk

- I babble and imitate sounds — like coughing and clicking my tongue. Make the same sounds back to me.

- I coo, grin or squeal with joy when you talk to me.

How I Understand

- My hands are so cool! I really like looking at them.
- I like some people, and am shy or scared of others.
- I can remember where an object was hidden for about 5 seconds.
- I'm starting to learn that things go together. When I hear the water running, I look forward to splashing in my bathtub.
- I remember important people (like mom and dad) from night to morning or even longer. I may



have a favorite toy or blanket.

- I know if something is near or far. I'm aware of depth and distance.

How I Feel

- I get excited when I have fun. Everything is a game to me.
- I may cry and get mad when you stop paying attention to me or take a toy away.
- I love it when you play music and dance with me.
- When you hug, kiss and hold me, I feel loved!

How you can help me learn

- Put me on my tummy and hold up a toy for me to follow. This helps me learn to roll over.
- Blow soap bubbles for me to follow with my eyes.
- Read nursery rhymes to me. I like to listen to your voice.
- I like looking at myself in the mirror. Give me a kiss while both of us are looking in the mirror. Move me close to the mirror, then away. Let me touch

Each child develops at his or her own pace.

- Look back at last month's list. Am I doing anything now that I wasn't then?
- Look for my growth in each area, and gently help me to learn new things.
- If I was born pre-term, use my due date (rather than my birth date) for keeping track of how I am developing.

the mirror.

- Play "This little piggy..." with my toes or fingers.
- If I seem strong enough, encourage me to get on my hands and knees and rock my body. Show me what to do.
- Set me on the floor and hold me up. Let me try to sit alone and balance myself.
- Place toys out of my reach and ask me to get them. Watch me roll or scoot!

Games Babies Play

I can move to keep things in sight: an eyes and body game



Purpose of the game: to teach Baby to use his body and lift his head and part of his upper body when watching a moving object.

How to play

- Put your baby on his stomach and sit facing him.
- Use a ring of keys, or a toy that makes noises.
- Dangle the noise-making object in front of your baby's face and say, "Look at the keys."

- Raise the object slowly in the air to encourage him to lift his head and push up with his hands.
- Say something like, "Follow the keys" or "Keep your eyes on the keys."
- Watch your baby and see if he can lift his chest off the floor.

Another Eyes and Body Game

- Move objects slowly behind your baby's head.
- See if he will move around to find the object.

Encourage Baby to use both eyes and both sides of his body when he is playing.

- For example, if you give him a toy for his right hand, try giving it to him in his left hand the next time.

A Special Word for Fathers

Dads make a definite difference! Fathers are getting more involved in the care of their babies.

- Fathers love, guide, teach and nurture their babies.
- Some fathers are the main care-takers for their children.

How much should fathers be involved with their babies? As much as they can!

- Children who have dads who regularly get involved in physical

play are more likely to be socially popular with their peers than school-age children whose fathers do not engage in this type of play.

- Fathers play an important role in helping give children a "kick start to fitness."
- Dads (and Moms!) can be good role models for exercising and keeping their bodies in good shape.

You can help set the foundation for

healthy weight by helping your baby learn to

- eat the right amount (just the amount your baby wants) of healthy foods

and

- enjoy moving his body and keeping active.

Give your baby a kick start to healthy eating and fitness.

More doctors are recommending that babies not start cereals or other solid foods until they are 6 months of age.

- The reason: Before 4 months, babies do not have full mouth and tongue control and will usually push solids out with their tongues.
- Semi-liquid and solid foods should not be given to Baby before she can sit up with support and has head and neck control.
- Check with your doctor or nurse before starting solid foods.

Fat babies are not healthy babies.
Don't feed Baby too much!

- Researchers believe that babies who gain too much weight in these early months may have more problems with obesity as they grow older.
- If you think Baby is gaining too much



— or not enough — weight, talk with your doctor.

Pay attention to Baby's cues. She will know when she has just the right amount. **Never** put a baby on a diet!

When Baby is hungry, she may:

- Wave her arms and legs
- Open her mouth or reach for the food.
- Fuss and look around.

When Baby is full, she may

- Push away or play with the bottle
- Hold her mouth tightly shut.

Don't force your baby to eat more than she wants. She will know when she has had enough.

Breast and formula are the top choices for now.

What to feed

- For now, breast is best! OR the fortified formula your doctor has recommended.
- Babies don't usually need extra water. They get all they need in breast milk or formula — unless it is hot or they have a fever.
- **When the doctor says to start**

solids, iron-fortified infant cereal is usually the first food.

- Choose a single-ingredient infant cereal (like rice, oatmeal or barley).
- The next foods after cereals will probably be a few teaspoons of pureed vegetables or fruits. But, wait until your doctor tells you to try these.

- Try only one new food at a time. If you start with a few teaspoons of infant rice cereal, continue for several days before trying infant oatmeal or infant barley.
- Sometimes a new food can cause diarrhea, a skin rash, or even a runny nose. If you think your baby has an allergy problem, check with your doctor, nurse or clinic.

When the doctor says it is time to start solids ...

Choose your moment. Try this when Baby is rested (hungry, but not "starved") and you are relaxed.

- Put a teaspoon of infant cereal in a dish (**not** in a bottle) and mix it with formula or breast milk.
- Don't add sugar, salt or any seasonings to Baby's food.
- Use a small, narrow spoon. Put a small amount toward the middle of Baby's

tongue.

- If she seems interested, give her a few more tastes with the spoon. If she doesn't like it, or pushes the spoon away, wait a few weeks and try again.
- The first feedings will be messy. Your baby has been used to sucking liquids. Now, she has to learn how to swallow solids. The tongue thrust that makes food

come back out is a natural reaction. Baby has to learn to swallow rather than thrust.

- For the first few weeks, offer the cereal once or twice a day after breast or bottle feeding.
- You can help your baby learn to eat healthy foods. Try to make eating a pleasant time.

Some babies begin to teethe about now.

First teeth often come in about 6 months, but some babies get them as early as 3 months.

- Some babies won't get any teeth until after a year! The age doesn't matter. Once she starts, your baby will teethe off and on for months.

Here are some signs to look for:

- **Baby will want to chew on everything.**
- She will probably drool more than usual and may be fussy and cranky.

As teeth push through the gums, Baby will feel some soreness.

- Chill a clean teething ring in the refrigerator, and then give it to Baby to chew on.

If Baby has a fever, vomiting, diarrhea or other signs of illness while teething, call your doctor.

The American Dental Association encourages parents to:

- Begin brushing Baby's teeth with a little water as soon as the first tooth appears.

- Take your child to a "well baby dental checkup" by her first birthday.

Don't use toothpaste until Baby is at least 2 years old.



Invisible invader: Lead

Clean Baby's hands, toys and your home often.

- Wash Baby's hands before and after eating and sleeping.
- Every day: Wash anything (like pacifiers, chew toys) Baby puts in his mouth.
- Each week: wash stuffed toys.
- If your home was built before 1978, use soap and water to clean up lead dust with a mop or sponge. Use that mop or sponge **only** for lead cleaning.

- Do not let anyone who is pregnant clean up lead dust.

Lead dust can be on your baby's hands or things that your baby may put in his mouth.

- Old lead paint — in homes built before 1978 — can break down into dust.
- The lead dust clings to toys, fingers, and other things that children put into their mouths.
- Children can be lead poisoned

when lead dust is the size of 3 grains of sugar, and gets into your child every day for just 30 days.

- For more information,
 - call the Delaware Help Line at 1-800-464-4357. Ask to be connected to the Office of Lead Poisoning Prevention.
 - Click on <http://www.epa.gov/>



How much does Baby understand?

Can your baby obey you?

It's important for a child to obey her parents, but a 4-month old does not understand what you say to her.

- She hears your tone of voice, and may sense that you are angry.

A baby this young is not able to control her actions long enough to do what you tell her. And Baby won't be able to for some time.

- Spanking or slapping her hand will only confuse her, and won't help at all.
- Being kind and gentle with your baby will help more than anything else.
- Baby doesn't do things on purpose yet — and she surely doesn't do things to bother you.



Stranger Shyness

Around 4 months, many babies start to respond differently to the people they know and the people they don't.

- Baby will talk, coo, and laugh with the people he sees every day.
- But when a stranger (perhaps even Grandmother!) picks up Baby, he may be quiet — or even scream.



This is normal. It's a sign that Baby is picking up the differences in people.

- Baby is learning that not everyone is the same.
- He is likely to accept new people after he has spent some time with them and knows he can trust them.

Out of sight, out of mind.

Next time your baby is playing with something, watch and see if she looks for it when it is taken away.

- Probably not. At this age, if she can't see it, she doesn't know that it exists. For Baby, "out of sight" is "out of mind."

When Baby has something you want to take away from her, give

her another toy and take away the first one. Put it out of her sight.

- This is an easy way to change her attention. If she can't see it, she very quickly forgets it.

Turn this into a game of peek-a-boo.

- Cover your face with your

hands. Say, *Where's Mommy?* Remove your hands from your face. Say, *Here I am!*

- Cover your face with a piece of paper. Say, *I can't see _____* and name the baby. Look over the paper sometimes, look under the paper, and out either side of the paper. Say, *I see Baby.* Watch to see if Baby looks for your face.

Baby Exercises

Pull to sitting

- Lay Baby on her back on a blanket or rug, and hold both her hands. Place your hands under your baby's arms. Slowly pull Baby up until she is sitting. To encourage her, say things like *Up we go!*
- At first, you may do more of the work. But Baby will get the idea, and may soon work hard to help herself up.

Rolling over

- Lay Baby on her back on a blanket and sit behind her head, holding a noisy or squeaky toy. Hold the toy where Baby can see it. Slowly move it so Baby has to turn her head to follow it.
- Praise Baby if she arches her back and starts to turn. If she turns with her shoulders,

but her legs aren't following, gently push on her bottom to help her over. Save this game for later if Baby doesn't try at all.

- To help Baby feel what it's like to roll over, lay him on one side of a quilt. Gently raise the quilt to help Baby roll over. Reward with big smiles and hugs.

Baby walkers: No

Safe strollers: YES

The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that babies NOT use a walker.

- They are considered to be very dangerous. Many infants arrive in emergency rooms after baby walker accidents. These injuries are usually serious — skull fractures and other head injuries.
- Many of the injuries are caused by infants falling down stairs in a walker. The stairs either do not have gates on them or the gates are left open.

Baby walkers do not help most babies learn to walk.

- Some doctors and researchers think that baby walkers do more harm than good for leg muscle development of most babies.

Strollers, on the other hand, can be useful when going out. When buying or borrowing a stroller, look for one that has:

- A firm backrest to help the baby sit up.
- A canopy or covering for the head

high enough that a 3-year-old can sit under it.

- A seat belt that is secure and comfortable.
- Wheels that can be locked.
- A special latch to prevent the folder from accidentally folding.
- A wide base to prevent tipping.

When you use the stroller:

- Never leave the stroller in the driveway or behind a car.
- Keep Baby with you at all times.

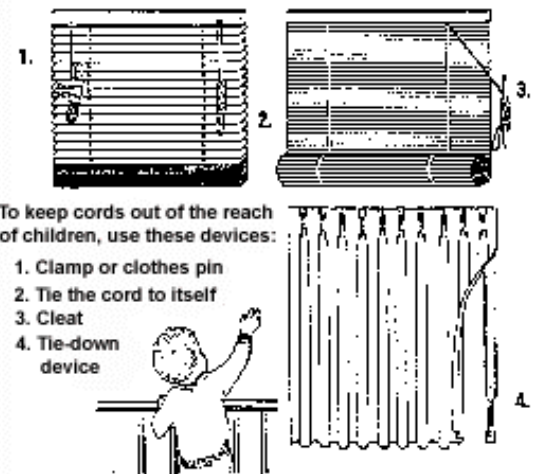
New abilities create safety hazards.

Baby can wiggle out of an infant seat, out of the bathtub, off the changing table, or off the bed.

- Never leave Baby alone in the house or a car — or any place.
- If you need to leave Baby alone for a few minutes, put him in a crib or playpen.

Baby can reach and grab.

- He can grab your coffee cup or stick his hand in your soup. Hot liquids can badly burn an infant. Keep Baby away from hot liquids and foods.
- Children can strangle in window blind or drapery cords.



Taking care of you is one of the best things you can do for Baby.

It's easy to ignore the first signs of stress. But if you tune into your body and your feelings, you can learn to read the warning signals and take action to reduce tension.

- Put Baby down for a nap and forget what you "should" be doing. Use this time to rest and **relax**.
- Set realistic goals. Prioritize. Trying to do everything, plus taking care of your baby will wear you out. Pick out the most important things and don't worry about the rest.



- Eat healthy foods, including veggies, fruits, and whole grains.
- Your sleep is as important as Baby's sleep. You need enough sleep to be healthy.
- Plan time for yourself. Ask a friend to watch Baby while you

exercise or do whatever makes you feel fresh again — reenergized and relaxed.

- When you feel worried or angry, don't bottle it up. Talk with a trusted friend.
- If your feelings seem to be getting out of control, call the Delaware Helpline at 1-800-464-4357 or click on <http://www.delawarehelpline.org/>
- If tension is so high that your partner reacts by harming you, call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), the National Domestic Abuse Hotline.

Time for a Well-Baby Check

At this check-up, Baby will have a set of immunizations.

- The second set of polio, HIB, and DTP immunizations are given at this visit.
- Remind your doctor of any reaction your baby may have had to the first set of immunizations.
- Take a list of questions you want to ask your doctor or health care provider.

Keep a record of Baby's immunizations.

- Use a health journal, a notebook, or form that you are given.
- You will be asked about your child's immunizations when he goes to



school — and many other times.

- Make it easy on yourself by keeping this information in a handy place.

Immunizations protect your child's health.

- Immunizations are available through your doctor, health care provider, or Public Health office.

- For an immunization schedule, click on

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm>

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Great Beginnings _____
A Series for Parents of Infants and Young Children