

Cooperative Extension

This is the age of curiosity!

Imagine that you are 8 months old.

You try to talk, but no one seems to understand your language. You try to walk, but you're not quite sure how to do it yet. You reach out to touch things that are shiny, soft, hard, smooth, or sticky, but everyone tells you, **NO, DON'T TOUCH.**

How would you feel?

A little frustrated, you can bet! Well, that's how your baby feels at this age. She is very curious and wants to find out about all the fascinating things that are around her.

When you find yourself wanting to say, **No!**, give your baby a 1 or 2 word reason.

This helps her learn why she cannot behave in certain ways. Tell Baby what you want her to do instead. Research shows that this really helps. If you only say, *No*, to Baby, the word "no" will have so many different meanings that it will confuse Baby.

If you see Baby crawling toward your slippers — and you know they'll go into his mouth — say, "Yucky" or "Tastes bad," and give him something else to play with.

If your baby tries to touch the hot oven, say "Hot," and move him away.

As your baby gets older, you can make explanations a little longer — three or four words instead of one or two.

Easy to Say	Better to Say
<i>No, don't touch.</i>	<i>Hands off. Just look.</i>
<i>No, don't go there.</i>	<i>Play here, please.</i>
<i>No, don't do that.</i>	<i>Out of your mouth. This will be safer for you.</i>

Baby's memory is not as good as yours.

Remember how many tries it took him to learn pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo? You will have to tell Baby again and again how to behave and handle situations the way you want.

No, is a word that is easy for Baby to say.

The more Baby hears it, the sooner she will be saying it to you. Hearing Baby saying it to you may add to your frustration at the moment.

Show the world to her, lovingly and safely.

Be Baby's guide while she examines, explores, and satisfies her curiosity.

Month 8

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How Baby is Changing

When you say, "Look at the kitty," he listens, then looks around until he finds it.

- Your baby is beginning to grasp whole ideas, and is linking his eyesight and hearing together.

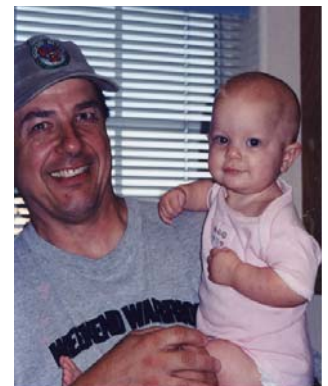
Is your child crawling? If not, he probably will soon.

- Your baby must learn to trust herself and her body before she takes the risks to learn to crawl or stand.
- Some babies never crawl. They scoot on their bottoms or roll. Then they walk when they're ready.

You may have noticed that your baby goes through periods when she learns

very quickly. At other times, there seems to be no progress at all.

- The slow periods are practice times. Your baby is taking time out from new development. She is practicing and perfecting her skills.
- When a feeling of accomplishment and security arrives, Baby will try



What's It Like To Be 8 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I crawl backwards and forward on my stomach.
- I pull myself up by holding onto furniture, but I have trouble getting back down.
- I stand up if I lean against something.
- I sit without any support for several minutes. My neck and back are getting stronger — so I can sit up straighter now.
- I hold onto a toy, like a rattle, for several minutes.
- I reach for things and hold them with my thumb and first and second fingers.
- I pick up small things, like pieces of string.



How I Talk

- I let you know if I am happy, sad, or scared by the sounds that I make.
- I still babble a lot and shout to get your attention. I am now an “advanced” babbler — which means I’m making sounds in my family’s language. Spanish babies “speak” Spanish; Russian babies “babble” in Russian.
- I may recognize some words
- I say two syllable sounds like choo-choo, da-da-, and ma-ma.
- I watch and try to copy your mouth movements.



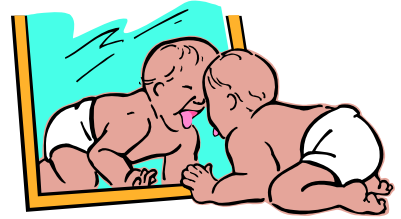
How I Understand

- I am very curious and want to explore everything. I empty drawers, tear magazines and turn things topsy-turvy. Be sure everything that can harm me is out of reach.
- I know how to solve simple problems, such as making a toy bell ring.
- I understand more of what you say. I know the meaning of “in” and “out.”
- I remember events that just happened.
- I like to look at pictures and have you name them.



How I Respond

- I like to pat and kiss my reflection in the mirror.
- I turn and listen when I hear familiar sounds like the telephone or my name.
- I love to imitate people I know.



How I Feel

- I am frightened by new experiences and new people.
- I am upset when you leave me, even if it's for a short time.
- I feel so relieved when you return.
- I'm upset when people make a lot of fuss over me.
- I get frustrated or lose my temper when I can't find something.



One Thing At A Time

Some children prefer talking to walking.

Any time they are awake, they are making noises. Some of the noises are squeals and self-invented words.

Other children creep before they talk.

It seems that every child creeps in a different way. Some do it backwards. Some go forwards, even sideways. Some creep on hands and knees, on toes and knees, on one knee and one hand. Some children rock back and forth without moving an inch.

Learning to walk and talk takes time and effort.

During your play time with your baby, spend some time practicing the skills Baby doesn't do on his own. If your baby is a crawler and mover, practice making sounds. If your baby is a talker, practice moving.

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.

Play with me: It helps me learn.

Watching and learning

Babies learn by imitation – copying what they see other people doing. You will see more and more of this in the months to come.

How big is baby? “So big!”

- At first you might need to gently show your baby how to raise her arms up over her head while you say, “So big!”

Hide and seek

- Big brother or sister can hide nearby. You can say, “Where is ____? Baby

can help you try to find the missing person.

Hiding things

- Let your baby watch you as you



hide a small toy under a cloth or cup (or in your pocket).

- Does she try to find it? If not, try covering only part of the toy.

Music fun

- Baby will enjoy listening to many kinds of music with you.
- Show Baby how to clap and move her body to the music. As Baby can stand and walk, those movements will turn into dancing.

Toes are tasty!

Your baby is becoming more aware of her body, from head to toe.

It is fun to watch her amazement as she discovers each body part. Most babies who discover their toes spend time sucking them. When they chew on their toes they get two sensations – one from their mouth and another from their toes.

A mirror will help your child study her face!

(Be sure the edges aren't sharp and that it won't break if dropped.) Your child will notice many details. Point out Baby's eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. Ask her to point to her own facial features.

Help Baby understand her body parts.

Name each of the body parts as she "discovers" them. When Baby knows where her hands and feet are, add the fingers and toes, then the arms and legs.

Baby will be interested in your body parts, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Baby will pull and tug on your hair and nose. This may hurt you sometimes. Patiently teach her how to touch so that it does not hurt you.

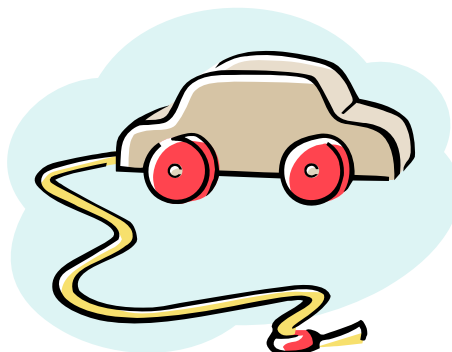
If Baby continues to pull and touch you in a way that hurts, use a firm voice and tell her that you will not let her hurt you.



Help Baby Learn to Problem Solve

Safety note: remove the strings or ribbons from the toys when you and Baby finish your play session.

- Tie string or ribbon, no longer than 6 inches, around some favorite toys. Place the toys out of reach and the string close to Baby. Pull the string to get the toy. Talk about what you did. *I pulled the string to get the keys.* Put the keys back and see if your baby can pull the string to get the keys. This is a good high chair game if you tape the string to the high chair.



- Tie strings, no longer than 6 inches, around other objects that are large, small, heavy, or light. Let Baby try to pull each one.
- Place toys on a towel so Baby has to pull the towel to get the toys.
- Put toys in a box. Turn the box over. Does Baby lift the box off the toys?
- Create simple "problems" for Baby to solve. Tell your baby how wonderful she is for solving the problem.

Feeding Your Baby

Your baby will probably be eating:

- Breast milk and/or formula: when Baby is hungry — about 30 ounces a day
- Infant cereal mixed with liquid: 2-3 tablespoons twice a day.
- Vegetables, pureed: 6-8 tbsp. daily (include green and yellow)
- Fruits, pureed: 2-4 tbsp. daily

With patience, you can help your baby learn to like a wide variety of tastes and textures.

- Baby may have some teeth and

may be ready to try fork-mashed vegetables and fruits. Mash a favorite vegetable thoroughly with a fork. You could also use a potato masher (or blender or food processor) to mash ripe bananas, cooked apples, winter squash, sweet potatoes or carrots.

- Make sure Baby's food contains no lumps, pieces of skin, strings or seeds. The food can be a little thicker than pureed food.
- Cooked foods may be strained through a fine mesh sieve or strainer. A sieve can also be used to steam-cook small amounts of food



for your baby. Press the food through the sieve or strainer. This turns the food into a very soft consistency. Be sure that all food particles are removed when you wash the strainer.

Help your Baby have safe, healthy food.

- Do not add salt, sugar, or seasonings to Baby's foods. Foods that taste bland to an adult are a new taste experience to an infant. Some sodium is necessary for good health, but there is enough natural sodium in foods. Added salt will provide too much sodium for a small baby and can even be **harmful**.
- **Do not feed honey to your baby** during his first year. Honey may carry botulism spores that can harm him.
- Do not use "leftovers" to make baby foods. Leftover foods are likely to have more bacteria than freshly prepared foods. This could cause



your baby to get food poisoning. Use fresh, frozen or canned food. If you use frozen food, buy the form

with the least amount of added sugar, salt and fancy sauces — which are not good for Baby.

- Do not feed your baby raw eggs or raw milk. These raw foods may be sources of infections that can be dangerous for him.

- Do not feed Baby chunky foods such as corn, nuts, popcorn, and seeds, or coarse textured foods (such as cookies) that crumble easily. Such foods are difficult for your baby to eat. He could choke on them.
- Home prepared beets, spinach, turnips and collard greens contain too many nitrates for Baby.
- Do not get Baby's food too hot. Baby's mouth could be burned by hot food. Most babies will accept cold food. If you want to warm your baby's food, do it just before serving.
- Never leave Baby alone while eating.

Keep those teeth healthy!

Is Baby teething yet? In about 2 years, she will have all 20 teeth.

- If any of those teeth are decayed, your child may have what dentists call "nursing bottle mouth." Bacteria in Baby's mouth react with sugar to make acid.
- When she is awake, swallowing helps wash acid away. When your baby sleeps, more acid stays on her teeth to cause cavities. So don't put

your baby to bed with a bottle or allow any food at bedtime.

- Even though your child will lose her baby teeth, it's important to keep these teeth healthy. Baby teeth help keep space open in the mouth so adult teeth aren't crowded.

You can care for Baby's teeth by:

- Providing a healthy, balanced diet.
- Wiping her teeth after meals with a

clean cloth or gauze pad.

- Having fluoride in the water — which helps teeth grow strong. If your water comes from a well, your doctor may suggest testing it, and adding fluoride, if needed.



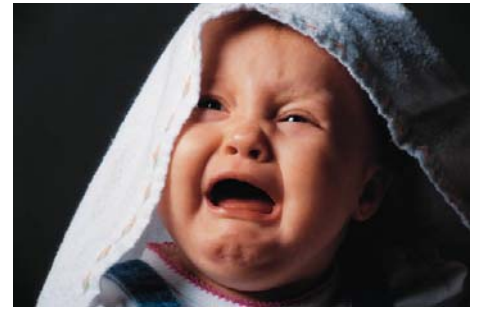
Fear of separation

Around 8 months — or maybe earlier — Baby begins to move around, and sometimes gets separated from you. This can be scary, so your baby may cling to you more than before.

- This is natural. Accept his fear as real, and keep him close when you can. When he feels more secure, he will want to explore more.
- Baby's dependence on you can be very draining now. Know that this is

a healthy phase she needs to go through.

- Research shows that babies who feel the **most secure and protected** now will become the least “clingy” children later.
- Baby may need more comforting while away from you — especially when he is tired or bored. A pacifier or thumb, blanket or stuffed toy may help him feel more secure.



Q and A: Fear of Strangers

My baby has suddenly become scared and shy of strangers. She sometimes cries—even when my mother comes to visit. Why does she act this way? What can I do to help her overcome this fear?

A. First of all, don't worry. A fear of strangers at this age is normal.

- Babies are beginning to develop a sense of self and others — an important step in growing up.
- Baby now knows the difference between close family members and strangers.
- Sometimes your baby will just have a serious, watchful stare at new people. Other times, he will look at a new person, then look away a few times before warming up and smiling.

- Some babies howl or whimper with genuine fear. Others cling to their parent and refuse to let go. Some babies — just like adults — develop an instant dislike for a person.

Usually, Baby is afraid of what the stranger **does** rather than who the person **is**. Try to see this from your baby's point of view.

- You don't want a stranger hugging you, and neither does Baby. So, don't just hand him to someone he doesn't know well. Hold him while he gets to know the person. Have the new person smile and talk to him, and perhaps offer a favorite toy.
- Let Baby make new friends at his own pace.

However she reacts, comfort your baby if she is fearful of strangers.

- Hold her close to you and let her know that she is safe.
- Tell friends or relatives not to take it personally that your baby needs time to get used to people. Ask them not to rush up to her or try to pick her up.
- Grandparents or friends may have a hard time understanding why Baby gets upset when they pick him up. Assure them that it will be worth the effort to get acquainted slowly.
- As Baby gets older, she will feel more secure and more comfortable with other people.

Spanking Baby Doesn't Work

- No baby should be spanked or slapped. Spanking a baby is dangerous. Many babies are injured this way.
- Spanking doesn't work. Babies are too young to understand, so they don't learn from spanking. It just makes a baby cry more, and it will make you feel bad.



When Baby does something you don't like, redirect him to something he can do. Show him a better way.

Baby may upset you by waking you up at night, crying a lot, or messing a diaper just as you put it on.

- Remember: Baby doesn't do this on purpose to make you mad. Baby's not smart enough for that yet. She can't help it, so it makes no sense to get angry.

What can you do?

- Call a friend and ask what she would do.
- Get someone to watch your baby while you get some fresh air. You may come back with a new outlook on living with your baby.

Car safety

- If Baby is more than 20 pounds, then you may have moved to a larger child safety seat by now. Be sure it is still a rear-facing car seat, correctly installed in the back seat.
- Many people use a “convertible” child seat at this age. It can face the rear now, and later — after Baby is one year old — can be strapped in facing forward.
- **Never, ever allow an infant in the front seat with an active air bag.**

- The force of the air bag will kill any child. If your child must travel in the front seat, be sure the air bag is turned off.
- Use Baby’s car safety seat for every ride.
 - Everyone else should wear seat belts. Don’t allow yelling, horse-play or other distractions when you drive. If your child needs attention, pull off the road and stop. Never turn around in your seat when you’re driving.

- Never leave Baby alone in the car — even for a few minutes.



Safety first!

Examine your baby’s toys to make sure they are safe.

- Can they be pulled, dropped, or chewed without breaking? Here is a list of safety “rules.”
- **Stuffed toys should have sturdy seams.** Babies can choke on stuffing. Look to see that eyes, nose and clothing are securely attached to the toy. Check labels to see that toys are non-allergenic, machine washable, and machine dryable.



- **Metal or plastic toys should have smooth, rolled edges.**
- **Balloons are very dangerous for infants.** They can be sucked into the windpipe and cause a child to choke to death.

- **Look to see that the pieces of a toy fit together.**

If the pieces are bent out of shape or have a sharp edge, throw the toy away. Do not give your baby toys that look as if they might break into sharp, jagged pieces.

- **Check toys to see if they need repairs.** A drop of glue, a tightened bolt, a few drops of oil, or even a bit of adhesive tape may allow Baby to safely use the toy.

Sleep problems?

Many 8-month-olds have trouble settling down to sleep. They’re so excited about sitting, crawling and exploring that they don’t want to go to bed! Here are some sleepy-time tips:

- Put Baby to bed at about the same time every night.
- Put Baby to bed when he is drowsy, but awake.
- Spend time cuddling, reading, singing or talking to Baby at bedtime. **Routines** — doing the same thing in the same way — help children settle down to sleep.

- Being sure your child gets plenty of cuddle time during the day will probably help him sleep better at night — according to recent studies.
- Help her “slow down” and relax with bath time, gentle massage and book reading.
- Do not put Baby to bed with a bottle — this can cause cavities, or your baby could choke.

If Baby cries for you after you’ve put him to bed, check on him (but keep the lights dim). If he is OK, pat his back for a minute or two, and leave.

- If he continues to cry, check on him every few minutes until he falls to sleep. Slowly increase the time between your checks. Try to be understanding, not angry.
- Show him you are there for him, but that he must fall to sleep on his own. If you are consistent — and if he is not truly afraid of being alone — he will learn to sleep on his own by learning how to comfort and calm himself.



Setting family rules

Parents used to think that the only way children could develop into responsible adults was through the rule that “children should be seen and not heard.”

Even though your baby is only 8 months old, it’s not too early to start setting your family rules. For example, when you say, “Don’t touch the stove – it’s hot,” you are teaching a basic rule of safety.

Now is a good time to decide:

- What your family rules will be
- Who will make the rules
- How your baby will learn them

In teaching your baby about what is allowed in your family, be honest about your feelings and say what you mean.

- For example, if he does something

you don’t like, tell him not to do it any more and explain why.

- You will get your message across by being firm in your voice, in your manner, and in your actions.

As Baby develops, he will learn what the limits are in your home, and it will be easier for all of you!



Take time for yourself!

- There never seems to be enough time to do everything you want – but there probably is time to do everything that’s important.
- Make a “to do” list for each day, and put the most important things at the top.
- Be sure to plan time for yourself. The fun and trials of having a

healthy 8-month-old in your life may cause you to feel tired at times.

- Swapping baby sitting time with friends can be a way to arrange for some important “get-away times” for you.
- Be realistic about what you want to get done each day. It’s easy to

feel defeated when you think you should accomplish super-human goals.

- Don’t skimp on sleep and exercise. It’s part of taking good care of yourself so you feel rested and refreshed.

How are things working out with child care?

Researchers have learned that babies do not bond more closely to their day-time child caregivers than to their biological parents.

- Babies in high quality child care are just as smart as babies whose parents care for them at home. Unfortunately, too many child care providers are not giving babies quality care.
- It’s important for caregivers to like taking care of babies, to smile often, and to talk while dressing and feeding your baby.
- Babies should be kept clean, dry and comfortable. They need to hear gentle voices and cheerful sounds. They need to receive lots of praise.
- Infants should have their own separate space for eating, sleeping and playing. They should be kept in small numbers in a space that is bright and cheerful.

- Cribs, high chairs, play pens and toys should be clean and in uncrowded spaces.
- Good caregivers wash hands carefully each time after diapering, dressing and feeding each baby. They are careful that bottles and cups are not shared among babies.
- Babies are shifted to new positions, new outlooks, new toys – and they also have time for peace and quiet.
- It’s not a good place if babies are kept in cribs or playpens for long stretches with few chances to move around and explore.
- Enough adults should be on hand to cuddle, play with and hold the babies for bottle-feeding – but they should not hold and carry the infants all day.
- If you are not happy with the care your infant is receiving, it may be

time to find another caregiver.

- Variety is the spice of life, but babies need consistency. They like routines – doing the same things every day. If Baby has a bunch of child care providers, it may be hard to form close bonds. Your baby needs someone who responds to him quickly and gently – someone he can learn to trust.



Curl up with a good book.

Research shows that children who use books from a very young age become better readers.

- Choose books with bright, colorful pictures. Books with a few simple pictures and a few simple words on a page are great for Baby now.
- Look for books that can stand up to wear and tear. Choose plastic, cloth, or coated cardboard books.
- At first, Baby may enjoy sitting on your lap and listening to you name the pictures.

Babies learn most from real life.

- Find books that have pictures of

other babies doing everyday activities — eating, sleeping, taking a bath, and playing.

- Find books with simple pictures of things that Baby sees often: things like apples, shoes, keys, cars, dogs. Show Baby the real object and the picture in the book.

Babies like:

- To play with their books. They chew on the books, try to turn the pages, squeal, and slap the pages.
- To hear the same book read to them again and again, and again...

Find time **every day** for sharing books together.



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