

## Infancy Visit #7

- 2 Month Growth and Development
- Postpartum Body Image/Exercise
  - Thinking About My Life
  - PIPE: Small Talk



## Topics for Next Visit:

- PIPE: Patterns & Expectations
- PIPE: Love & Limits 0-6 Months
  - ASQ Activities: 2-4 Months

# Your baby at 2 months

Baby's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Baby's Age \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Milestones matter! How your baby plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your baby has reached by 2 months. Take this with you and talk with your baby's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your baby has reached and what to expect next.



## What most babies do by this age:

### Social/Emotional Milestones

- ☐ Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- ☐ Looks at your face
- ☐ Seems happy to see you when you walk up to her
- ☐ Smiles when you talk to or smile at her

### Language/Communication Milestones

- ☐ Makes sounds other than crying
- ☐ Reacts to loud sounds

### Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ☐ Watches you as you move
- ☐ Looks at a toy for several seconds

### Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- ☐ Holds head up when on tummy
- ☐ Moves both arms and both legs
- ☐ Opens hands briefly

## Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your baby do together?
- What are some things your baby likes to do?
- Is there anything your baby does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your baby lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your baby have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

**You know your baby best.** Don't wait. If your baby is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your baby's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your baby more; and
2. Call your state or territory's early intervention program to find out if your baby can get services to help. Learn more and find the number at [cdc.gov/FindEI](https://www.cdc.gov/FindEI).

For more on how to help your baby, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](https://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.  
Acting early can make  
a real difference!**



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## Month 2: What's Next?

### At two months I might:

- Hold my head up while lying on my tummy
- Bring my hands toward my mouth
- Watch faces
- Imitate faces and movements

### You can help me learn!

- Put a blanket on the floor and let me wiggle.
- Put me on my tummy in a safe place. Place something interesting above my head. I can practice lifting my head to see.
- Place a non-breakable mirror near me. Let me watch my own face.
- Put your face about 12 inches from mine. Look into my eyes. Stick your tongue out. Maybe I will copy your face!

## SAFETY CHECK

Doctor's name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Poison Center \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

### Signs that I am sick:

- Fever
- Change in eating
- Change in bowel movements
- Rash
- Vomiting
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Sunken or bulging soft spot

## Month 2: What's New?

Things I did this month:

### Learning about me...

I like to look at bright colors.  
My favorite things to look at are:

---

The shape I look at most is:

---

When you make funny faces, I:

---

I really like to be held when I eat.  
This is what I do when I am held:

---

This is how you show me you  
enjoy feeding me:

---

### Learning about you...

How many times did you get  
out of the house this week?

---

How many times would you like to  
get out next week?

---

What things worried you this week?

---

Who can you call when you worry?

---

What new things have you learned  
since I was born?

---

How are you stronger now?

---



## Dad's Days: 2 Months



### SAFETY ZONE

Think about playing games as a kid. Was there a safety zone where others couldn't tag you? Babies need a safety zone, to feel comfortable and develop trust.

### You can be baby's safety zone!

- Let baby tell you, "I need something." Baby might fuss, reach, or wiggle.
- Help baby get what he/she needs.
- Share in baby's contentment at getting it.
- Meet baby's needs again and again.

*My baby shows hunger by:*

*My baby shows discomfort by:*

*My baby shows interest by:*

*I know my baby is lonely when:*

*I know my baby is tired when:*

*My baby knows he/she can feel safe with me because:*



# Help your baby learn and grow

As your baby's first teacher, you can help his or her learning and brain development. Try these simple tips and activities in a safe way. Talk with your baby's doctor and teachers if you have questions or for more ideas on how to help your baby's development.



- Respond positively to your baby. Act excited, smile, and talk to him when he makes sounds. This teaches him to take turns “talking” back and forth in conversation.
- Talk, read, and sing to your baby to help her develop and understand language.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby. This will help him feel safe and cared for. You will not spoil your baby by holding or responding to him.
- Being responsive to your baby helps him learn and grow. Limiting your screen time when you are with your baby helps you be responsive.
- Take care of yourself. Parenting can be hard work! It's easier to enjoy your new baby when you feel good yourself.
- Learn to notice and respond to your baby's signals to know what she's feeling and needs. You will feel good and your baby will feel safe and loved. For example, is she trying to “play” with you by making sounds and looking at you, or is she turning her head away, yawning, or becoming fussy because she needs a break?
- Lay your baby on his tummy when he is awake and put toys at eye level in front of him. This will help him practice lifting his head up. Do not leave your baby alone. If he seems sleepy, place him on his back in a safe sleep area (firm mattress with no blankets, pillows, bumper pads, or toys).
- Feed only breast milk or formula to your baby. Babies are not ready for other foods, water or other drinks for about the first 6 months of life.
- Learn when your baby is hungry by looking for signs. Watch for signs of hunger, such as putting hands to mouth, turning head toward breast/bottle, or smacking/licking lips.
- Look for signs your baby is full, such as closing her mouth or turning her head away from the breast/bottle. If your baby is not hungry, it's ok to stop feeding.
- Do not shake your baby or allow anyone else to—ever! You can damage his brain or even cause his death. Put your baby in a safe place and walk away if you're getting upset when he is crying. Check on him every 5–10 minutes. Infant crying is often worse in the first few months of life, but it gets better!
- Have routines for sleeping and feeding. This will help your baby begin to learn what to expect.

**To see more tips and activities download CDC's Milestone Tracker app.**

This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool. These developmental milestones show what most children (75% or more) can do by each age. Subject matter experts selected these milestones based on available data and expert consensus.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



Download CDC's  
free Milestone  
Tracker app



**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**



# Activities



## HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

### ☐ Tummy Time

Place your baby on their tummy with head to one side, on a blanket/towel on carpeted floor. Lie next to them to provide encouragement. Until they have the strength, have them spend equal time facing left and right. Make “tummy time” a little longer each day. Closely watch your baby in case they rest their face on the floor, which could restrict breathing. As their strength grows, they will be able to lift their head and push up on their arms, leading to rolling and crawling.

**Developmental Areas:** Gross Motor

**Materials Needed:** Blanket or towel

### ☐ Around the Body

Lay your baby on their back and touch their arms and legs in different places. Make a “whooping” sound with each touch. Your baby may smile and anticipate the next touch by watching your hand. When you make each sound, you can also name the part of the body you touch.

**Developmental Areas:** Communication, Problem Solving

**Materials Needed:** None



**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Activities



## HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

### ☐ Imitation Game

Hold your baby closely, or lay them down on a soft, flat surface. Be close enough (8"–12") so that they can see you. Face to face, start with small movements (stick out your tongue, open your mouth with a wide grin). If you are patient, your baby may try to imitate you. As they get older, you can try larger body movements with your head, hands, and arms. You can also try to imitate your baby.

**Developmental Areas: Personal-social**

**Materials Needed: None**

### ☐ Nature Walk

In nice weather, take your baby on a nature walk through a park or neighborhood. Talk about everything you see. Even though they might not understand everything, they will like being outside and hearing your voice.

**Developmental Areas: Communication, Personal-Social**

**Materials Needed: None**



Want to learn about developmental milestones for your 2-month-old?

Visit <https://pub.fyi/CDC2month>



## HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child’s social-emotional development.

### ☐ Baby Talk

Learn your baby’s special language. They will “talk” to you with sounds and gestures and let you know when they’re happy, uncomfortable, hungry, or lonely.

**Materials Needed:** None

### ☐ Peekaboo

You can begin to play simple games with your baby such as Peekaboo. Put a cloth over your head and peek out. Say, “*There you are!*”

**Materials Needed:** Cloth or blanket

### ☐ New Sights and Sounds

Make life interesting for your baby. Go for a walk. Introduce new sounds and places to them from the safety of your arms.

**Materials Needed:** None



**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-month-old—a great way to have fun together and support your child's social-emotional development.

### ☐ Infant Massage

Give your baby a little massage after a bath or diaper change. Rub their tummy very gently. Talk to them. Say, *"Rub-a-dub, I'm rubbing your tummy. Do you like how that feels?"*

**Materials Needed:** None

### ☐ Story Time

It is never too early to start reading books with your baby. Choose simple board books at first and talk about the pictures you see together. Cuddle up close.

**Materials Needed:** Board books

### ☐ Baby's View

Let your baby lie on a blanket on the floor and get down on the floor with them. See the world from their point of view. Talk to them about what they're seeing. Say, *"There is the light."*

**Materials Needed:** Blanket



Want to learn about developmental milestones for your 2-month-old?

Visit <https://bpub.fyi/CDC2month>

# Postpartum Body Image

There are many physical changes that come with pregnancy and delivery. The uterus alone takes about 6 weeks to return to its pre-pregnancy size! It's common to feel a little uncomfortable in your own skin after giving birth to a

baby. Here are some tips to encourage a healthy relationship with your postpartum body.



## Eat well and find movement you enjoy

- Drink plenty of water and remember the food you eat fuels your energy level.
- Keep snacks as nutritious as possible.
- Go on a walk while you push baby in a stroller. Do a workout video while baby naps. Or turn on some music and dance around the room with them!

## Surround yourself with support

Consider how the images and posts you see online affect how you feel about yourself. If you find you're constantly comparing yourself to others or feel unhappy after scrolling, it might be time to unfollow. Meet with a supportive friend instead!

## Talk kindly to yourself

Use affirmations to appreciate your body instead of criticize it. Try putting a note on your mirror and saying it to yourself each day. A few ideas are:

I am strong and my body is healing.

My body can do awesome things!

I am proud of my beautiful body.



Be gentle with yourself. Your body may not be the same as it was before you had your baby and that's okay because your life is different too. Love your body for all that it is and all it has created!

## Body Image After Pregnancy

***How I feel about my body:***



**After your baby is born, your body has to adjust.  
It takes time to get back to normal.**

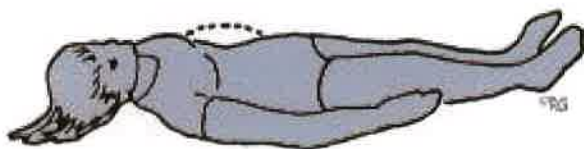
- Take it easy at first. Your body has been through a lot. It had to grow and change to carry baby. It had to give birth to your baby. Your body needs time to recover.
- Your uterus needs time to shrink. You won't have a flat belly as soon as baby is born.
- Ask for help with the baby. Find time to rest and take care of yourself.
- Exercise. This will help you get back to your pre-pregnant body. You could join a gym that offers childcare. Experiment with different forms of exercise to find one that you like. You can also try to exercise to a video or DVD. Try putting the baby in a stroller or carrier and go for a walk.



## Exercises After Pregnancy

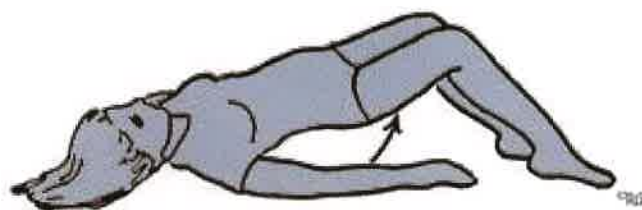
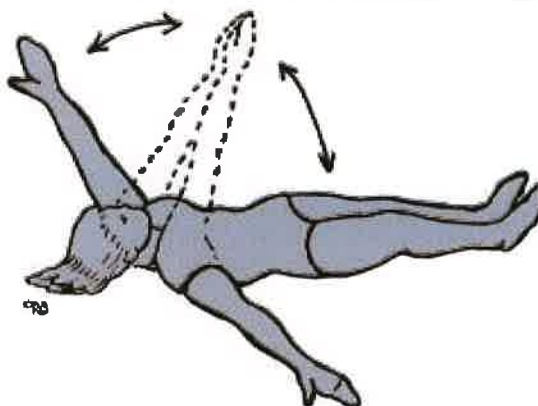
**After baby is born, you can do these gentle exercises.**

Start with the first exercise. Add a new exercise each day. Repeat each exercise four times. Do this twice a day. After 6 weeks, return to your normal exercise routine.



**Day 1:** Breathe deeply. Expand your belly. Hiss as you slowly exhale and suck in your belly.

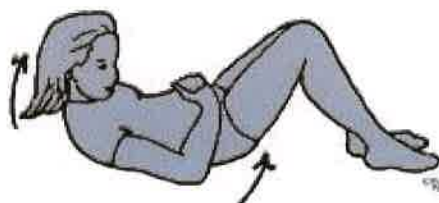
**Day 2:** Lie on your back. Leave your legs slightly parted. Place your arms straight out from your body. Slowly raise your straight arms. Let your hands touch. Slowly lower your arms to the floor.



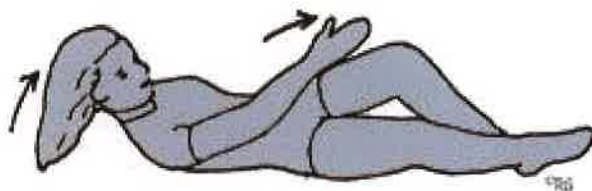
**Day 3:** Lie on your back. Put your arms at your sides. Draw your knees up slightly. Arch your back.

**Day 4:** Lie on your back. Your knees and hips should be flexed. Do a gentle crunch:

- Tilt your pelvis inward.
- Tightly contract your buttocks.
- Lift your head.



## Exercises After Pregnancy

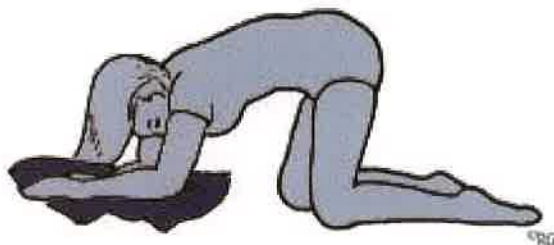
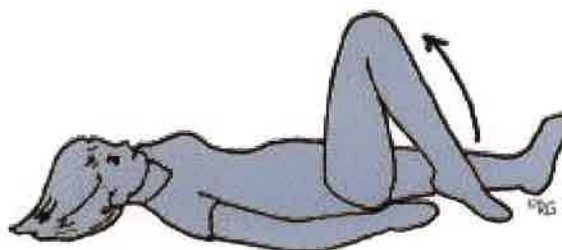


**Day 5:** Lie on your back. Raise your head and left knee slightly. Reach for your left knee with your right hand. (Don't touch the knee.)

Repeat using your right knee and left hand.

**Day 6:** Lie on your back. Slowly bend one knee. Then lift the knee toward your belly. Lower your foot back to the ground. Then straighten your leg.

Repeat using the other leg.



**Day 7:** Lean on your elbows and knees. Keep your forearms together. Keep your lower legs together. Round your back upward. Strongly contract your buttocks. Suck in your belly. Then relax and breathe deeply.

**Listen to your body! As you feel stronger, you can repeat each exercise more times. If you feel pain, exercise less. If vaginal bleeding increases, exercise less.**

\*If you had a C-section or complications during birth, ask your doctor before you begin exercising.

## Finding More Energy



*What are some stressful things that take away your energy?*


### When You Run Out of Energy

Circle the things that happen when you are stressed.

- |                    |                       |                     |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Heart speeds up    | Aches and pains       | Dizziness           |
| Can't concentrate  | Can't remember things | Feel tired          |
| Can't sleep        | Sleep too much        | Drink too much      |
| Get angry and yell | Smoke                 | Hurt someone        |
| Pick a fight       | Withdraw              | Shortness of breath |
| Eat too much       | Break something       | Worry a lot         |
| Cry                | Kick my pet           | Other: _____        |

### Ways to Find More Energy

Circle the things you already do. Put a star by things you might like to try.

- |                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Take a walk        | Watch a "feel good" movie           |
| Write in a journal | Breathe slowly and deeply           |
| Talk to a friend   | Imagine a calm, beautiful place     |
| Take a bubble bath | Give yourself a palm massage        |
| Listen to music    | Paint your nails; get a manicure    |
| Sing               | Try a new hairstyle (just for fun!) |
| Meditate or pray   | Walk at the mall with a friend      |
| Dance              | Color or draw – be creative!        |



*What can you add to the list?*

# Losing the Baby Weight



You may be worried about losing the baby weight. Here are a few tips that can help!

**Eat smart.** Cook at home instead of eating out. You can cook food that is healthier. Watch your snacks. Choose snacks that are good for you.



**Get some exercise.** You can join a gym. You can work out to a video or DVD at home. Or make up your own exercise routine.

Exercise with baby. You can go for a walk together. You could dance around the room with baby. Playing with baby can be great exercise.

**Be patient.** It took nine months to gain the baby weight. It may take just as long to lose the baby weight. Keep working at your weight-loss plan. You can do it!

*My plans for losing the baby weight:*



## Thinking About My Life

*How life has changed since baby was born:*

*Things I like about the changes:*

*Changes that are not so good:*

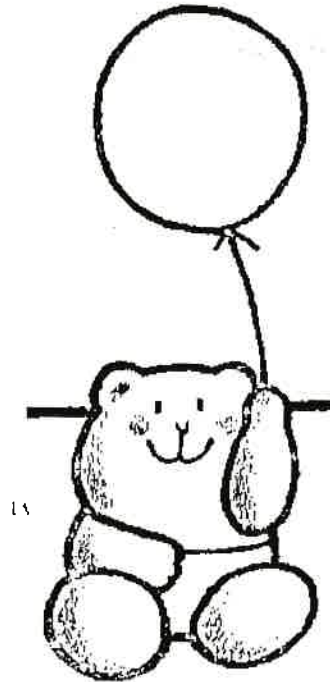
*Things I can do to  
make life even better:*

*How the changes affect others in my life:*

# Small Talk

How you and your baby communicate!

**Edward Tronick, Ph.D. -**  
**Chief, Child Development Unit,**  
**Children's Hospital, Boston, MA**



It is with great pleasure that we are able to use excerpts from this valuable pamphlet as a teaching guide for our parents. Our parent educators have praised its clarity and loving tone. It was the one tool that they requested be included with our curricula - but it is out of print.

We wish to thank Dr. Tronick and Proctor and Gamble for giving us permission to continue to teach from *Small Talk*. To meet our teaching goals the original order of the pamphlet's pages has been rearranged within this supplement.

-How to Read Your Baby

Throughout *Small Talk* the pronouns "he" and "she" have been used interchangeably when referring to baby.

*Small Talk* is a resource booklet for parents. If there is a question regarding baby's health, well-being or development, parents should consult a pediatrician.

# Small talk takes shape

Your baby is born with at least five primary messages that “talk” about basic needs, wants, and feelings. Your baby sends those messages to you through a combination of signals: facial expressions, body language and sounds (see Small Talk Glossary — pgs. 9-11). The messages tell you when your baby wants something, is having trouble doing something, needs a “time out,” is giving up or is succeeding. Communicated clearly by three months, these messages may even be seen in your newborn. They will stay with your baby all his life. And you, as an adult, use them much the same way your baby does!

Conversations with your baby start taking shape from the time he’s born. Your infant can tell the difference between people and things, making it clear with his face, eyes and hands that he prefers people — particularly you!

At three months, he can understand what you’re “saying” and feeling. If you signal him by raising your eyebrows, nodding your head and gesturing, using a “question” tone in your voice, he will take his turn answering you with sounds and a smile. When you’re talking, he will pause to let you take your turn, too.

By the time he’s six months old, studies show he can distinguish between your “angry” and your “happy” face, and he will try to get you to smile with a smile of his own.



# Listen!

## Baby is talking to you

Your baby: a wonder and a mystery that is separate, yet a part of you. She is two bright eyes peering up at you. Tiny hands stretching, curling, closing in a ball. A sound, unsure at first, then stronger, calling you.

People used to think babies couldn't "talk" until they used words; that they could only cry. That they were fragile and helpless and didn't know about you or your family until they were older.

Now we know that your baby is a smarter, stronger little person than people thought. She arrives into the world with goals. She wants to communicate with you. And she can. She wants to be loved, and to love you, to belong to her new family. She wants to know about herself, about other people, and what she can do with them.

She wants to keep herself feeling good. Of course, the world doesn't always make this easy. But she can cope with the everyday stresses herself. And when it all becomes too much for her, she has ways to tell you how you can help, so that you can respond in your own way to keep things going smoothly.

Your baby speaks to you with small talk. When she likes something, she might look right at it, wave her hands, kick her feet and gurgle. When she doesn't like something, she might slump, tuck her chin, turn her head and look away.

As you watch her while you're feeding her, changing her, playing with her, even putting her to bed, you become familiar with her rhythms and communication style. You learn how active she is, how sensitive she is to sights, sounds and touches, how she handles herself with or without you, and how clear her messages are to you. Mothers and fathers almost instinctively respond to their baby's early attempts at communication. You'll experience it the first time she looks into your eyes and something inside you kindles your response.

The way you respond to each other teaches your baby about you, what she can expect from you and from the messages she sends. Through your interaction, a very special relationship forms. That bond, built on love and trust, is like a bridge. It joins you and also gives your baby room to grow, to reach out to new sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures. The bridge carries your child to a path of learning that will enrich the experiences you share.



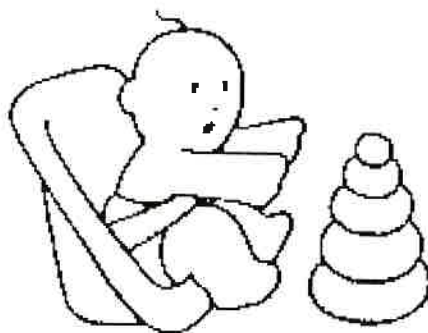
# Baby Can't Reach

Imagine this familiar situation: Your six-month-old baby is in his infant seat and sees a bright, colorful toy. He wants to play with it, but it's out of reach. You may see and hear a whole series of messages while he tries to reach the toy. Being in tune with his small talk helps you come in just at the right time.

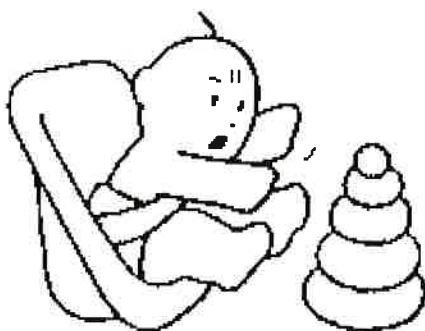
Here's how your baby might fill you in on what's happening:

"I'm really interested in this. I want this."

Bright-eyed, your baby focuses on the toy. His eyebrows are raised, his mouth is open and relaxed. His chin is up a little and he's sitting up straight. His arms are reaching out.



When baby can't reach the toy, he mutters ...

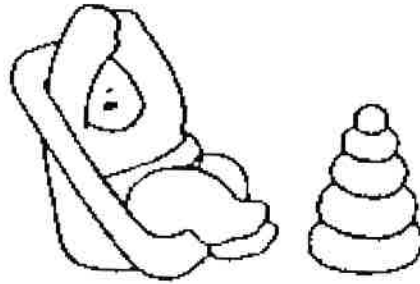


"I don't like what's going on. I'm angry.  
I'm going to keep at it until I get it."

Baby's mouth is square-shaped. His brows are lowered and drawn together, with vertical lines between his brows. His eyes have an intense look, a stare. He's reaching with his arms, pounding with his feet, straining forward. His sounds are forceful and he could be crying. But he still keeps at it.

"This is too much for me. I need a break so I can put myself back together and try again."

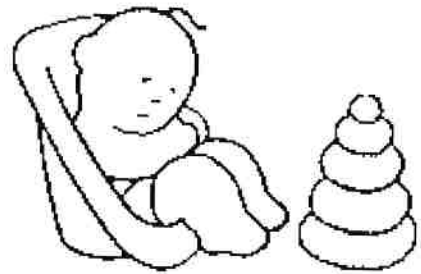
At this point, baby's mouth is closed, and he's moving his tongue in and out over his lips. He looks away, turning his head and body away from the object. His hands are clasped together. He stops crying.



Baby has been able to comfort himself and is ready to try again. He looks interested, but when he still can't reach the toy, he looks away and says ..."

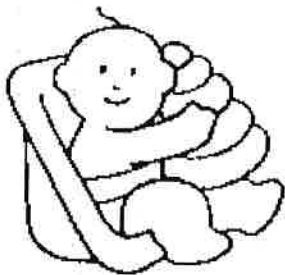
"I'm sad. I just can't do this. I don't know what to do. I'm giving up."

With lips trembling, baby's mouth is in a frown. His eyes are dull and closing. His chin is slightly tucked. His body slumps. His arms could be wrapped around himself or just holding onto the strap of his infant seat. Baby whimpers.



You've been reading your baby's messages and feel the time has come to give baby some help. You push the toy just close enough for him to reach it. He's a determined little person. He tries one more time - and gets it! You both share in his delight when he exclaims ...

"I'm happy! This makes me feel great and I want this feeling to keep going!"

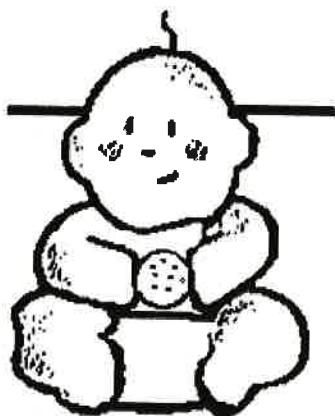


Baby smiles. His eyes shine brightly, and his eyebrows are raised. His chin is up. Baby's hands are grasping and waving the toy in the air. He kicks his feet. He sits up straight. And he gurgles and coos.

You've just shared a short conversation with your baby! The simple messages he's sent have been filled with a whole range of emotions. To learn more about the signals that make up these small talk messages refer to the *Small Talk* glossary section [pgs. 9-11].

## "Watch and try" during special communication times

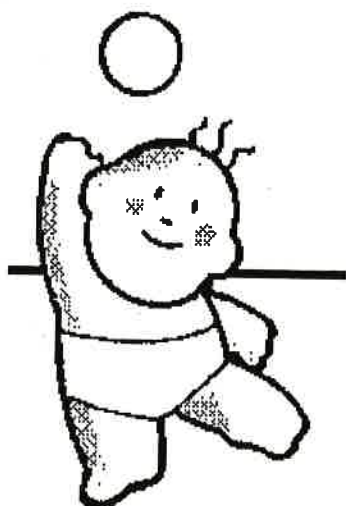
Especially good times to communicate with your baby are when you are very close, sharing and working together. These times help you learn more about each other and strengthen the bond between you.



### Feeding

Your baby knows how to take nourishment from the moment he's born. When he wants to be fed, he tells you with a hunger cry. When he's had enough, he shakes his head or pushes away and then leans forward and reaches out when he wants more. He can be a helpful partner when you feed him, or if he gets over-excited, he can make feeding difficult.

Follow your baby's cues. Hold off and just observe baby, for instance when he turns away. When he wants to play with you for a minute, he will let you know with a smile, coo and wave of his hand. After playing for a few moments, he may "break" again. Give him a moment. He'll turn his gaze back to you with his mouth open when he's ready for you to feed him some more.



### Playing

Listening for baby's small talk during a familiar game like "So Big!" makes playtime a wonderful learning experience for both parents and baby. Mom and Dad can start playing this game with baby from a very young age. When baby is just learning the game, you can hold his hands low, then raise them up past his nose and above his head, asking, "How big is baby?" "So-o-o big!" you say. His answer will be in his shining, bright eyes, his gurgles and his smiles.

Baby will learn to answer your question with his arms raised high above his head to tell you he's "so big," laughing and gurgling along with you. As baby grows older, watch for his signal that it's time to start the game. Even before you ask the question, he may reach high in the air with his arms, babbling, inviting you to play. By sharing small talk with one another, you and your baby help each other to start, stop and time "so big" to make the game as much fun as it can be.

## Dressing and diapering

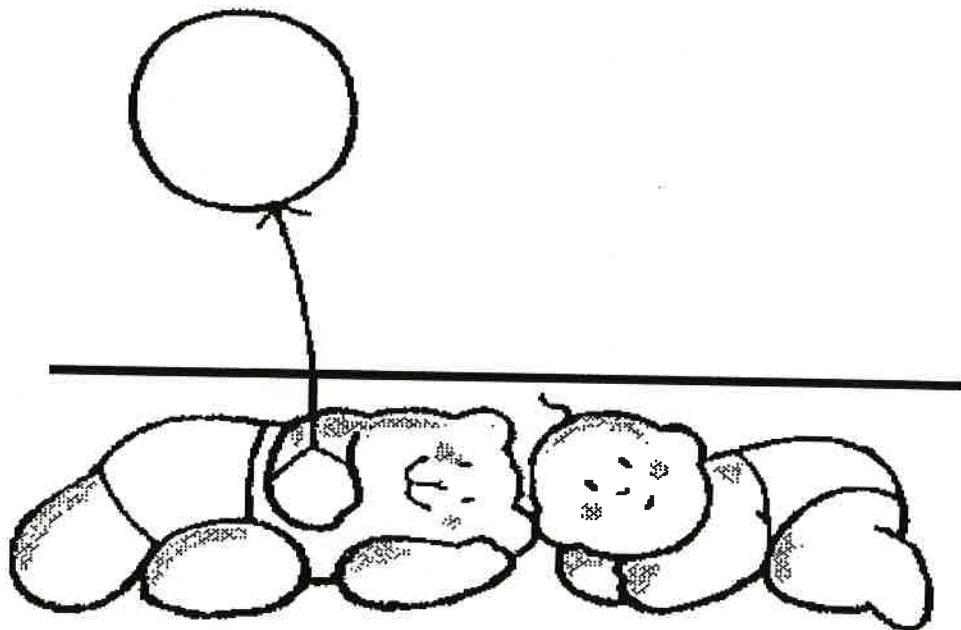
One of your baby's most basic and immediate needs is to stay warm and dry. He soon learns that you will take care of those needs by surrounding him with soft, warm clothes and with diapers that keep him dry and comfortable.

You may see lots of small talk from baby's arms and legs during changing. This might be a good time to try quieting baby, comforting him by gently holding his hands or legs with your hands. You also may see an angry face while he's waiting to be changed to let you know that he's cold or that you're taking too long. But his sucking on his hands tells you he can hold on until you're finished. And his smiles when he's dressed and warm show how good this feels. With your help, baby often will learn his first words — parts of his body and his clothes — during this time.

## Bedtime

As you tuck your baby in under a soft blanket, you may hear a cry of protest. He may reach his arms out to you, "telling" you he still wants to play. But watch baby's eyes. They may appear dull, "saying" he's tired. You know it's not so easy for him to go to sleep, especially if he gets overtired. Something as simple as too many toys in his crib, even a colorful mobile that interests some babies, could be a bit too much and over-stimulate your baby so that he gets stressed.

Bedtime is a good time for you to help him relax, and knowing your baby's small talk will make it easy. If your baby has shown you that he responds well to sounds, try singing to him. Or if your baby likes to look at things, give him a chance to look around the room while he calms down. Try putting his favorite stuffed animal within reach. As he settles to sleep, he'll talk to you with soft gurgles and coos.





# Small talk grows with baby

As your baby develops, her small talk becomes more sophisticated. And, at the same time, your satisfaction grows because you're understanding her language more and more every day. Let's look at how one of the most important messages — "I need a break, this is too much for me" — might "grow" with baby.

Dad has just come home from work, and he joins Mom, who's playing with baby. Mom and Dad take turns playing a touching or tickling game with baby, who is clearly having lots of fun. Because you're both excited, you may miss baby's small talk, and before you realize it, the game has gone too far. Tickling, for example, often ends in tears because the game becomes over-stimulating and too much of a good thing. While she still wants to play with you, she needs to take a break so she can come back to your game. Here are some of the ways baby might say ...

"Please stop, I need a rest right now."

At three months, baby, who's in her infant seat, looks away after you play "touch your nose" (and toes!) a few times. Her eyes are unfocused and dull. She slumps and lets out a big sigh. She starts sucking on her hand, and might even fuss and cry. While she may glance back at you, she continues to suck on her hand and look away. She's still not ready to start the game again. It's going to take her a while to pull herself back together. Try giving her a chance to do just that. When she's ready, her bright-eyed look and a smile will say "let's go!"



By the time she's nine months old, she could be sitting up when you play a tickling game with her. Now when it becomes too much, she'll glance away, but her face won't change expressions. She will look at her hands for a moment, or pull at her clothes. While some babies "come back" more quickly than others at this age, most babies at nine months will resume playing much faster than they did at three months. A babble or two lets you know your baby is ready to continue playing.



At 15 months, baby has clear ways to let you know she needs a break from your game. Not only will she turn her body away, she might squirm out of your arms and scoot away! She may look for, and find, her blanket or her teddy bear and clasp it close to her. Soon, though, she will catch your eye, set down the bear and with a smile announce, "me!" This *small talk* lets you know in a big way that's she's ready to play.



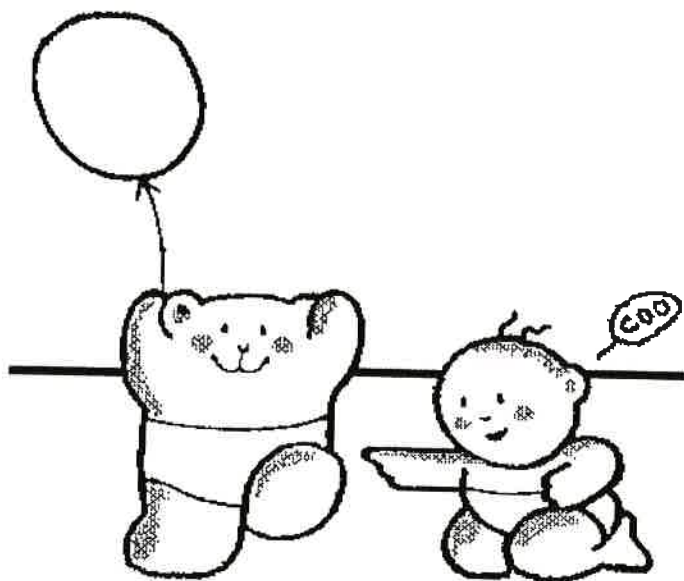
# Your baby can cope: a new perspective

Each day you and your baby grow closer as you communicate and interact with each other. But, as in any relationship, you will experience some frustrations along the way. Sometimes your baby doesn't know exactly what she wants, so she doesn't know what message to send. You or she may be preoccupied. So your messages to each other may be missed or misread. Or they may be mistimed because you're sending new ones too slowly or too quickly. And, as we have seen, it's easy to overstimulate your baby before you and she know it.

The latest studies show that your baby is "stronger" and more able to cope with the ups and downs of your interaction than earlier supposed. What's more, these coping times are actually important growing up times for your baby, who is learning to be a little bit independent and able to rely on herself.

When things aren't quite right for her, she learns there are things she can do to comfort and take care of herself. Sucking on her hand, clothing or another object is one way that your baby maintains control over herself, by herself. When she looks or turns away, or when she starts a new activity, but is not really involved in it, are other ways she deals with stress. An older baby may pull a blanket or teddy bear close to her to find comfort. And all these ways she has for coping communicate to you that she can do it on her own. And when she can't, she'll let you know with other small talk that she needs your help.

Just as babies have different small talk styles, each baby has her own coping style, too. Some babies like to suck on things for comfort. Others like to touch or play with objects. Other babies like to find comfort by listening to sounds, such as soft music and voices. Each baby's capacity to cope differs, as well. Some do very well on their own, while others need more help from Mom and Dad.



You will learn your baby's ways of coping through your experiences together. And times when you can't "be there" — such as those moments you're tired too, and not completely ready to respond to your baby's message — are all part of learning more about each other and giving your baby room to grow.