

Ages & Stages for Caregivers

1-4 months

As the caregiver of a newborn, you will want to know as much as you can about how babies grow and develop. *This Ages and Stages for Caregivers* will give you an idea of the developmental milestones that you can expect to see in a baby's first four months, suggestions for easy ways to encourage baby's development, and other caregiving ideas that will help to make this brief time memorable.

Authors

Kathy L. Reschke
State Specialist, Early Childhood

Mary F. Longo
Family & Consumer Sciences Agent
Marion County

Cheryl Barber
Family & Consumer Sciences Agent
Fulton County



SIGNS OF DEVELOPMENT —by 4 months

(individual development varies)

Developing Body

- Weighs 10-18 pounds
- Measures 23-27 inches long
- Needs 13-16 hours of sleep a day
- Holds head up when held upright
- Lifts up on arms when lying on tummy
- Rolls from side to back
- Reaches for and grasps objects
- Sits when supported
- Has a well-developed sense of smell, taste, and hearing
- Visual focus is adult-like

Developing Mind

- Explores objects with mouth
- Distinguishes familiar faces
- Distinguishes between colors across the spectrum
- Prefers complex visual and sound patterns
- Fascinated by moving objects
- Responds best to moderate amount of visual stimulation

Developing Communication

- Responds to familiar voice
- Follows face with eyes
- Imitates facial expressions
- Communicates needs primarily through crying (crying is most frequent in first 3 months)

Developing Self

- Responds to gentle touches
- Discovers that his fingers and toes are extensions of himself
- Returns a smile
- Recognizes faces, voices, and smells of familiar people

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Encourage baby's muscle development.

Put the baby on her stomach. Dangle a bright or noisy toy in front of her or capture her attention with your voice so she will lift her head.

This will also:

- Help develop a warm relationship between the two of you.
- Help in the development of her visual abilities.

Build on baby's curiosity and drive to understand his world.

Place the baby in new places and new positions so he can see people and things from different angles.

This will also:

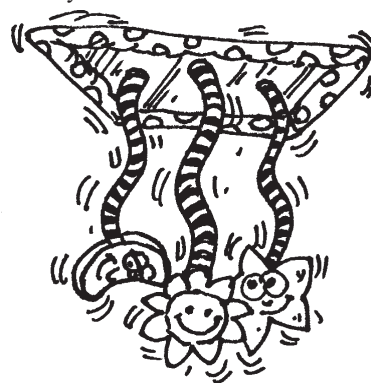
- Encourage other children to accept her as a new member of your caregiving family.
- Help strengthen her neck muscles as she follows moving sights and sounds around her.

Strengthen her sense of security and self-worth.

Respond to the newborn's cries with warmth and consistency.

This will also:

- Provide a model for the other children of the best way to interact with a very young baby.
- Allow you to more quickly begin to identify his different cries.





A Great Place to Grow

Toys and Materials

- Bright colored toys that baby can grasp and that can be disinfected in the dishwasher
- Toys that make different sounds

Safety Tips

- Anything smaller around than an empty toilet paper roll is small enough to choke a small baby.
- Always fasten the safety belt when you place the baby in an infant seat.
- When changing the baby's diaper, be sure to keep one hand on her tummy at all times. Keep all the changing items within arms' reach.

HELP!

I have a 3-month-old in my care who seems to cry all the time. It doesn't seem to matter when he last ate or slept. It's really getting old, both for me and the other kids.

The demands of a 3-month-old can be stressful in a group caregiving situation. Unfortunately, crying is the only way he can let you know when he needs something. Babies cry most during the first three months. Experts believe that they are more distressed during these months because they are readjusting their sleep-waking cycles. Knowing that he will cry less as his body develops a rhythm of sleeping and waking and as he learns to soothe himself may help you to endure for the moment.

In the meantime, once you have made sure he is not hungry, wet, tired, in pain, or feverish, try one or more of these strategies: gently massage his body; play soothing, rhythmic music; carry him in a baby carrier or sling where he can be close to your body, yet your arms are free to do other tasks; wrap his body snugly in a light blanket so he will feel secure. As you try a new strategy, give him time to realize that something is different and to react to the change.

Working with Parents

Working with parents of newborns will take an extra measure of patience on your part. They may be dealing with conflicting feelings about having their baby in child care, going back to work, and being a good parent. Patiently reassure them that they will still have a very special place in their baby's life and that her attachment to you will not have a negative affect on her attachment to them.

During the earliest months, you can help them adjust to their new circumstances by having an open door policy where they are always welcome to come by, by encouraging them to call during the day for a brief update, and by giving them a daily report sheet that lets them know about their baby's feeding, sleeping, and bowel movements, as well as tidbits that will give them a peek into her day.

What to do if you are concerned about a child's development

Child care providers are often in a position to be the first to notice when a young child has a developmental delay, chronic illness, or disability. If you suspect a child's behavior is indicating a problem:

- Talk with parents in a calm way, being careful to say that there probably isn't a problem, but that it would be worth checking out further.
- Work **with** parents, comparing what you have seen in child care with what they have seen at home and talking together about what to do next.
- Suggest resources, community professionals, articles to read, etc.
- Be a compassionate listener; hearing that there may be something wrong with your baby is very tough.

Copyright © 2002, Ohio State University Extension

All educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, age, disability or Vietnam-era veteran status.

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Adm. and Director, OSU Extension

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

Reference: Berk, L. (2000). *Child Development* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.