

Baby's First Wish

Cooperative Extension Service
New Mexico State University

A h a p p y & h e a l t h y l i f e

Dear
Parents:

4 Months Old

Your baby is beginning to explore his world!

Have you noticed how your baby responds to you with smiles and thinks that everything is a game? How he sometimes seems shy or afraid? From now on, you'll find that your baby uses his senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch—to learn about the world around him.

You can help him explore his world by playing, holding, talking, singing, and spending time with him. What could be more exciting and rewarding than watching your baby develop a personality all his own?



What's It Like To Be



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 for about 15 minutes 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 my back to my side, but sometimes I get my hand caught under my stomach.
- I stretch my legs out straight

when I'm on my back or my stomach.

- I 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 the bath.

How I Talk

- I babble and imitate sounds like coughing and clicking my tongue for long periods of time.
- I coo, grin, or squeal with joy when you talk to me.



How I Respond

- I love to see myself in the mirror.
- I'm fascinated by my hands.
- I like some people and am shy or scared of others.
- I may have one favorite toy or blanket.

4 Months Old?

How I Understand

- I can remember things for about 5 seconds. I know if something is near or far.
- I'm aware of depth and distance.

How I Feel

- I get excited when I'm having fun—everything is a game to me.
- I cry and get mad when you stop paying attention to me or take a toy away.



Questions

Q. “Whenever my baby cries, I pick him up. My friend says I’m spoiling him. Is she right?”

A. Most child specialists agree that you are not spoiling your baby when you react promptly to his crying. A baby’s needs are usually immediate. If he is hungry, he wants to be fed. If he is uncomfortable or scared, he wants to be held.

You don’t have to worry about spoiling him. Answering his needs makes him feel safe, loved, and worthwhile.

Not answering his needs and ignoring him may teach him that the world is not to be trusted. The basic need for trust is the foundation for self-discipline. It’s necessary for his growth into a well-adjusted, caring human being.

A Special Word For Fathers...

Today, with more and more mothers working, more and more fathers are becoming involved in the care of their babies. In some one-parent families, the father is the main caretaker for his child.

There’s no question that fathers can form close relationships with their babies. Fathers can love, guide, teach and nurture their babies. So how much should you, the father, be a part of your baby’s life? As much as you can!

Feeding Your Baby

After 4 to 6 months, your baby will be ready to eat solid foods, in addition to breast milk or formula.

When To Feed

More and more pediatricians recommend that babies not be given solid foods until at least 4 months of age, and preferably that parents wait until 5 or 6 months to begin feeding cereals and other solid foods. The reason: before 4 months, babies do not have full mouth and tongue control and will usually push solids out with their tongues. Therefore, semi-liquid, mushy foods should not be given to your baby before she can sit up with support, or has some head and neck control. *Check with your doctor, nurse or staff before beginning solid foods.*



What To Feed

After 4 to 6 months, your baby will be ready for other foods in addition to breast milk or formula. Usually an iron-fortified infant cereal is first. Choose a single-ingredient infant cereal like rice, oatmeal, or barley. Soon your baby will be ready for a few teaspoons of pureed vegetables and fruits.

How To Feed

Put a teaspoon of infant cereal in a dish (not in the bottle) and mix it with formula or breast milk. Don't add sugar, salt, or any seasonings.

For the first few weeks, offer the cereal once or twice a day after breast or bottle feeding. Use a

baby-sized spoon to feed your baby. Give her just a small taste at first. 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 then try again.

Don't force your baby to eat. She will accept solids when she is ready.

Try only one new food at a time. For example, if you start with a few teaspoons of infant rice cereal, continue for several days before introducing infant oatmeal or infant barley.

The first feeding will probably be messy. Don't forget, your baby has only been used to sucking up to now. But she will soon learn how to swallow solids. With a little patience, you can help your baby learn to eat and to like different foods. Try to make mealtime a pleasant time for both of you!

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.

You can get a publication, *Feeding Your Baby: The First Year*, from your county Extension office.

Games Babies Play

I-Can-Move-To-Keep-Things-In-Sight: An Eyes-And-Body Game



Purpose Of Game

- Teaches your baby to use his body and to 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 box or can filled with buttons or rocks.
- 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

Remember:

Baby's First Wish describes a typical child at each age. Each child is special and each child develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than those described in *Baby's First Wish*. If you are concerned about your child's development, see your doctor.

Coping With Daily Stress



Does your stomach feel tense? Do you often get headaches? Do your muscles ache? Do you sometimes feel like hitting someone? Or crying for no reason? These are some of the signs of stress—and you can do something about them.

Everyone goes through stress or strain at one time or another. Stress builds up from daily worries, from crisis, and from life changes—like becoming a new parent, getting divorced, or changing jobs. For some people, it can build up to the point where they can no longer control their emotions, or where they strike out at the world around them.

It's easy to ignore the first signs of stress. But if you listen to your body and to your feelings, you can learn to read the warning signals and take action to reduce tension. Here are some suggestions, stress-

reducing exercises, places you can contact, and other information that can help:

Suggestions

- Put your baby down for a nap and forget what you “should” be doing. Take some time to **relax**.
- Do whatever makes you feel fresh again.
- Don't keep worry and anger bottled up. Talk about these feelings with someone who is close to you.
- Set reasonable goals for yourself. Then decide what first steps you **really** want to take.
- 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 others.

Exercise

- Raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold while counting to 4, then drop your shoulders back to their normal position. Rotate your shoulders back, down, and around, first one way, then the other. Repeat a few times.
- Lie on the floor with your feet up on a chair. Place a cool wash cloth on your face and think of the most peaceful scene you can imagine. Stay there for at least 5 minutes.

Places To Get Help

- If you are worried that your feelings are getting out of hand, call Child Help USA, a national organization for parents and children who are concerned about child abuse. You don't have to give your name. Dial their toll-free number, 1-800-422-4453, to get advice, help, or just to talk to someone. They answer the phone 24 hours a day.
- If tension is so high that your partner reacts by beating you, call the New Mexico Women's Community Association at 1-800-773-3645. They answer the phone 24 hours a day and can direct you to one of 21 sites in New Mexico that help battered women.

Other Information

A good book about stress and families is *Stress and the Healthy Family*, by Dolores Curran and published by Harper and Row in 1993. You can purchase it from a bookstore, online, or look for it in your public library.



Watch Out!

Make sure all toys or objects given to your baby are safe.



Here are some thoughts to keep in mind when considering toys for your baby, as recommended by the National Safety Council.

Toys Should Be:

- Washable.
- Large enough so that they won't fit in your baby's mouth, ear, or nose.
- Light enough so they won't cause injury if your baby drops them on himself.
- Made of nonbrittle material (never glass).
- Avoid toys with spikes or wires in them.
- Make sure toys have no parts that can catch fingers.
- Check to see that toys are labeled nontoxic.
- Remove any loose metal squeakers from squeak toys.
- Remove the eyes on stuffed animals if they are loose or pinned on. Add your own touch by embroidering eyes on the animal.
- Avoid hanging pacifiers or toys from long strings above your baby's bed. They can come loose and get tangled around your baby's neck. Don't hang them around his neck either.

Here are some suggestions for safety in toys:

- Don't give plastic bags to your baby as playthings.

If you have any questions, call your county Extension office. Phone numbers are listed on the last page of this newsletter.



Coming Next:

- Discipline—It Starts Early
- Teething Is The Pits



Baby's First Wish

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Baby's First Wish was adapted from Parent Express, California Cooperative Extension, by Dr. Wendy Hamilton and Dr. Diana DelCampo, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service.



Another 4-H Prevention Program

Order Alert: *Baby's First Wish* is an educational program from NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service. This newsletter series is designed for parents with young children. To order the series, contact your county Extension office. 2002

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4 Months

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