



# FIRST CONNECTIONS With Families

Birth  
to  
18 Months

## Growing and Learning

**A**lthough development follows a general pattern, all babies grow and develop at different rates. Some will be learning and doing things at different times than other babies, even their own brothers and sisters. Some babies do not develop typically or have been diagnosed with a health condition that may result in a developmental delay. If you have concerns about your baby's ability to hear, see, move, talk, eat or play, call the **Early Development Network at 1-888-806-6287**. Don't hurry your baby along. She needs to practice what she has learned before moving to the next skill.



## Supporting Growing & Learning

Here are some things your baby will typically learn to do.

### Birth - 4 Months:

- ★ Vary cries to tell you what she needs
- ★ Coo back and forth in conversation with you
- ★ Roll from side to back
- ★ Hold and swipe at objects
- ★ Smile and laugh when you play
- ★ Know and prefer your voice

### 4 - 8 Months:

- ★ Touch you and her toys to signal for more
- ★ Recognize names of familiar people, daily routines
- ★ Roll over in both directions
- ★ Pick up toys of all sizes
- ★ Move objects from hand to hand
- ★ Explore toys
- ★ Turn and look toward sounds
- ★ Sit without support

### 8 - 12 Months:

- ★ Combine many different sounds
- ★ Move forward to explore the environment
- ★ Stand with support
- ★ Place toys in containers and take them out again
- ★ Cry and fuss when separating from you

### 12 - 18 Months:

- ★ Use a few words to tell you what she wants
- ★ Make simple choices
- ★ Walk independently
- ★ Learn how to make simple things work
- ★ Place pegs or forms into boards or shape boxes
- ★ Express many types of emotion with more intensity

**A**t birth, your baby's brain is not yet fully developed. Babies are born with over 100 billion brain cells. Some of these cells are connected, but most are not. During the first five years of life (and after that at a slower rate), your child's brain is hard at work connecting these brain cells.

Each time your baby uses one of her senses - seeing, tasting, touching, hearing, and smelling - a connection is made. When different kinds of experiences are repeated over and over again, the connections in your baby's brain become stronger. These connections shape the way she thinks, feels, behaves, and learns.

It is important for babies to "attach" or connect strongly with a small, consistent group of people to build secure, meaningful relationships.

- ★ To develop trust, your baby needs to know that her needs will be met.
- ★ Respond to your baby's cries- it is her form of communication.
- ★ Hold and cuddle your baby; you won't spoil her.
- ★ Use a soft tone of voice; smile and express positive emotions with your baby.
- ★ Be reassuring when your baby starts to notice the difference between friends and strangers.

Birth to 18 Months



## Supporting Growing & Learning

**P**arents are their child's first and most important teachers. Nurturing your baby actually assists in brain development. If your baby was born too early or with a disability, it is especially important to provide experiences that "feed" the brain.

Here are some things you can do to help your baby grow and learn.

- ★ Protect your baby from being over stimulated. You'll learn to read his signals that he's ready to play (smiling, cooing or looking) or that he needs a change of activity (looking away, yawning or fussing).
- ★ Pace your timing when you play with your baby. When you talk to him... pause...and wait for him to talk back to you.
- ★ When he is awake, time on his tummy helps your baby strengthen his neck, legs and upper body.
- ★ Help your baby learn to communicate by reading his expressions, body movements and sounds. When he smiles, smile back, and when he is upset, comfort him. As he gets older, name things in his world, like rattle, book or bath.
- ★ Look directly at your baby when you talk and play together.
- ★ Play games with your baby. He especially likes those he can join, like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.
- ★ Give your baby safe opportunities to move and explore. He loves "floor time" where he can reach, roll and crawl.
- ★ Babies have very short memories, so you will need to repeat things many times before he understands and learns what you are saying.
- ★ As your baby gets older, help him learn to stop when you say "no" by leading him to a more appropriate activity.
- ★ Tiny babies like toys with bright colors or contrasting patterns. Small, soft rattles that are easy to hold are fun.
- ★ As your baby becomes more active, he will like toys that make music, pop-up, roll, or make other sounds.
- ★ As he becomes more mobile, your baby will like push-and-pull toys, stacking and nesting toys, balls, dolls and stuffed animals, and large building blocks.

*Parents are their child's first and most important teachers.*



## Sharing Books With Your Baby

**I**t is never too early to introduce books to your baby. He will enjoy being held and playing with the book as he listens to the sounds of the words. Your baby will learn that looking at books is enjoyable and special.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you share books with your baby.

- ★ Choose sturdy books with simple, bright, uncluttered pictures against solid backgrounds.
- ★ As he learns to grasp things, pick light, washable, nontoxic cloth or soft vinyl books.
- ★ Hold your baby in your lap and circle your arms gently around him as you read or point to and talk about the pictures in the book.
- ★ Choose books with rhythm, rhyme and repetition.
- ★ Choose books with large pictures that look like the real thing.

## Keeping Your Baby Healthy

Parents can help their children develop many healthy practices/habits.



Here are some things you can do to make sure your baby stays healthy.

- ★ Keep the environment smoke-free to reduce the chance of respiratory illness, ear infection, and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- ★ Keep your baby at a safe temperature that is not too hot or too cold.
- ★ Wash your hands and your baby's hands often to prevent the spread of germs.
- ★ Keep up with your baby's well-baby visits to the doctor.
- ★ If your baby's eyes were not examined for signs of eye health and congenital eye problems before you left the hospital, ask your doctor to check when you go for a well-baby check.
- ★ If your baby's hearing was not screened before you left the hospital, ask your doctor to check when you go for a well-baby check.

Immunizations are important to protect your baby from diseases. It is very important to keep a copy of your baby's immunization record among your important papers. Your baby will need this record throughout her life to prove she has had immunizations. If your baby attends a licensed child care program, you will be required to provide a record of her current immunizations. In Nebraska it is recommended that your baby have these shots:

At Birth	Hep-B				
1 -2 Months	Hep-B				
2 Months	DTaP	Hib	Polio	PCV7	
4 Months	DTaP	Hib	Polio	PCV7	
6 Months	DTaP	Hib	Polio	PCV7	Hep-B
12 Months	MMR	Hib	Chickenpox	PCV7	
15 Months	DTaP				

Hep-B = Hepatitis B  
 DTaP = Diphtheria, Tetanus & Acellular Pertussis  
 Hib = Haemophilus Influenzae Type B  
 PCV7 = Pneumonccocal Disease  
 MMR = Measles, Mumps & Rubella  
 Polio = Polio  
 Chickenpox = Chickenpox or Varicella

For information about each of these immunizations and possible reactions, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.

## Keeping Your Baby Healthy

- ★ Breast milk is the most complete form of nutrition for your baby and provides all of the nutrition he needs for the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding helps your baby resist colds, ear infections, diarrhea, allergies and other illnesses.
- ★ When your baby can sit with support and has good head and neck control, solid foods can be introduced. It is recommended that solid foods be introduced in this order: iron fortified infant cereal, vegetables and fruits, and then meats.
- ★ Begin to wean your baby gradually at about 9 - 10 months. By 12 - 14 months most babies can drink from a cup.
- ★ After your baby is 1 year old, you can offer small portions of what the rest of the family is eating. Bread, pasta or rice, fruits and vegetables, cheese or yogurt and cooked lean meat, poultry, or eggs are all good choices. Make sure the pieces are small enough so he will not choke.
- ★ Mouth care begins at birth. Clean his mouth with a soft damp washcloth.
- ★ First teeth appear at about 6 months of age. Clean his teeth gently with a soft-bristled toothbrush. (No toothpaste is needed until age 2, unless your dentist recommends it.)
- ★ Dentists recommend that if your baby takes a bottle before bedtime, you should give only water to prevent tooth decay.
- ★ Your baby's first dental visit should be by age one.



- ★ New parents often wonder when it is appropriate to call the doctor. Over time you will learn what is normal for your baby. If you think your baby might be sick, take his temperature, then call your health care provider. Call the doctor if he has any of these symptoms:
  - diarrhea or very small, hard stools
  - vomiting for more than 12 hours
  - cries more than normal and is hard to comfort in the usual ways
  - skin is yellow, bluish or pale
  - does not wake up on his own for feedings or seems too tired to eat
  - eyes are pink, bloodshot, have a sticky, yellow discharge or the eye lashes stick together
  - ears have drainage or he is pulling/tugging at his ears

## Keeping Your Baby Safe



### NEVER SHAKE YOUR BABY!

It won't stop her from crying, and she could suffer permanent brain damage or even death.



Here are some things you can do to make sure your baby stays safe.

- ★ Nebraska law requires that children up to 6 years of age be in restraints when riding in a vehicle. From birth to at least one year old and at least 20 pounds, your baby should be in a rear-facing infant or convertible seat in the back seat of the car.
- ★ Make sure you have a federally approved car seat that is installed correctly. To be sure that the seat is installed correctly you can contact a Child Passenger Safety Technician. Call **1-800-745-9311** to find one in your area.
- ★ Make sure the crib is safe. The mattress should be firm, have a fitted sheet and fits snugly so you can get no more than the width of your two fingers between the mattress and crib. A soda can should not fit through the railings. Fluffy blankets, comforters, stuffed animals, and bumper pads pose a real danger of suffocation and should not be in the crib. Make sure your baby's face remains uncovered during sleep.
- ★ Keep the sleeping room at a temperature comfortable for a lightly clothed adult. Your baby can wear a one-piece sleeper with nothing over her. If it's cold, layer her clothing.
- ★ Make sure your baby is never left alone on any surface from which she can fall, such as the changing table, couch or the bed.
- ★ Remember to strap your baby into the swing, stroller and highchair.
- ★ Use a stationary activity center rather than a baby walker. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends not using walkers because they can tip over easily and allow your baby to get into dangerous places that she otherwise would not be able to reach.
- ★ As your baby becomes more active and can move around on her own, watch out for poisonous plants, dangling cords, open stairways, electric outlets, pieces of plastic or a balloon, poisons or medicine, sharp edges, and small objects on the floor. Use baby gates and outlet covers to keep her safe.
- ★ Avoid foods that can cause choking, such as popcorn, pretzels, chips, hot dogs, spoonfuls of peanut butter, raw carrots, celery, mini-marshmallows, raisins and other dried fruits, and whole grapes.
- ★ If your house was built before 1978, check that all the paint in your home is lead free and non-toxic.
- ★ Learn infant/toddler CPR and first aid.
- ★ Never leave your baby unattended in the bathtub or around any water. Empty all containers with water immediately after use. Babies can drown in as little as 1" of water.
- ★ Babies under the age of 1 should stay out of the direct sunlight.
- ★ Apply a generous amount of sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15, or higher, 15-30 minutes before going outside. Sunscreen should not be used on babies under 6 months.

**Always** place your baby on her back when putting her to sleep, unless your doctor directs you otherwise. Also remember, parents and babies should be close, but adult beds were not made with infant safety in mind.

## Choosing Quality Child Care

**F**inding the "right place" for your baby is an important decision for a family. You can choose a child care center or you might prefer a smaller family child care home. The names of licensed caregivers in your area can be obtained from the Nebraska Health and Human Services System at **1-800-600-1289**.

Here are some things to look for when selecting child care for your baby.

- ★ A state child care license
- ★ Strict health and sanitation policies
- ★ An emergency plan, including staff trained in pediatric first aid and infant CPR
- ★ A handbook or written policies for parents
- ★ A good adult-baby ratio (1 adult for every 3-4 babies is ideal)
- ★ A good group size (no more than 12 is ideal)
- ★ Staff who have training in early childhood education, child development, or other specialized training
- ★ Staff who have experience working with babies
- ★ Staff who are warm and responsive
- ★ Happy, alert and clean babies
- ★ Toys that are safe and age appropriate
- ★ A philosophy of child rearing similar to yours
- ★ Accommodations for breastfeeding mothers

## Supporting Families

**W**ho would ever believe that a baby would make such a difference in your family! Many of your relationships are changing. Your new responsibilities and interests may lead to changes in the way you relate to friends and family. When a baby comes into your lives, it's important for parents to find time for themselves and for their special others.

Don't be surprised if things are harder than you thought. Make sure you are eating well, sleeping whenever you can and keeping yourself physically active. Many new moms have feelings of sadness, mood changes or lack of appetite. These "post-partum blues" are common and should go away in a few weeks. If they last longer or get worse, tell your doctor or other health care provider.

If you are working, you may be very tired when you pick up your baby from child care. He may demand your attention because he missed you. This may be the hardest part of your day. Spend a few minutes with him when you first get home. Help him establish a routine. He may like playing with his sister or playing with toys in the kitchen drawer while you fix supper. This may help him learn other ways to play until you can take time to play together.

Older children may be resentful or jealous of a new baby. They may start doing things you don't like to get your attention. Take time to be with them - your new baby will be just fine. Point out to your other children that the baby really likes them. Older children can be good helpers, but remember they need a special time with you, too. Accept their offers of help. As your baby gets older and becomes mobile, brothers and sisters need room to play away from the baby.