

# WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 12 Months



Dear Parents,



Happy Birthday! Can you believe a whole year has passed since your baby was born? Don't be surprised if your baby doesn't like the cake and watch out for the candle! In some families candles and frosting are unfamiliar for the baby and what we want as the "perfect photographic moment" becomes one of tears. One mother said, "Oh, my baby loved the cake, it was all over the place." Another said it frightened her daughter and then the candle made her cry.

Plan your celebration when you know your baby will be rested and watch him for signs that he's feeling overwhelmed, even the most outgoing baby needs lots of reassurance especially in a group of people.

Birthday parties for babies are usually more for parents and family than baby. So congratulate yourselves! This is a milestone in your lives, think what you've learned! You are well on your way to becoming a full-fledged a multi-tasker! In the parenthood arena, it is called "monkey tasking" because here you are: making animal sounds, cleaning peas from the floor, talking on the phone, smiling at guests, trying to get a meal together and cuddling your baby all at once. As one new parent said, it is as though you've entered a sub-culture. People talk to you in the grocery store who never would have before – and if they don't, your baby may even flag them down with his smile and bright-eyed greeting.

You know your baby best; is she outgoing and eager to try new things? Is she quiet, cautious, shy, or slow to warm up? One of the mysteries about 12 month old babies is that they can be all of these: adventurous, hesitant, independent and clingy. What's going on here?

## EMOTIONS and WALKING

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton tells us in his book, Touchpoints: The Essential Reference, (Perseus Books, Reading, MA, 1992) that there is a close relationship between motor development and emotional development. In other words, learning the complex task of **walking**, which can take months, is not only a **physical challenge**, but also an **emotional struggle**. Dr. Brazelton says learning to walk takes all the family's energy and is such a big event in your baby's life that he practices it even in his sleep. Have you found your baby standing in his crib in the night? Mealtimes, too, can be disturbed because suddenly your baby wants to stand up in his highchair, get out and get those legs moving. Being in the grocery cart or car seat can instantly seem too confining. Your beloved baby is screaming, do you worry that you are doing something wrong?

Take a few deep breaths, whether your baby is first walking at nine months or 16 months, it is a big deal and there are lots of bumps along the way. It is important to remember that a one year old baby who screeches in frustration is not necessarily spoiled, but trying to work on two concepts: first, how to "Do it myself," and second, "Are you there to help me?" This struggle between **independence and dependence** goes on for much of childhood and becomes intense again at adolescence. The practice of helping a baby succeed, be safe and confident while at the same time setting clear limits and structure is an emotional struggle for parents as well.

**Any temper tantrums yet?** Your baby is trying to do everything at once: **walk, talk, be independent and keep you close**. Reassure him with gentle words, make sure he is safe, step away and let him work it out. Remember, he doesn't have the language skills to tell you how hard he is working at his own version of "monkey tasking."

## SETTING LIMITS

If our goal as parents is to help our child eventually learn self-control, it is important that we both model and exercise "discipline," a word from the Latin meaning "teach". Learning to walk is a discipline, your baby is practicing, just as you did once upon a time. Keeping your child safe is a discipline, you practice many times a day! There are so many frustrations and temptations – for both of you:



the stairs, the television, the stove, the dog dish, the electrical outlet, the phone. Setting clear limits, what is OK, what is not OK, can make things smoother for both of you. When you **set limits that are clear and firm**, your baby may be frustrated and howling, but he is learning the rules and what to expect. Clear limits help him develop confidence.

A one year old baby's memory is still short and you will need to repeat things again and again. Try to be consistent – and patient. Predictable limits, routines and schedules help your baby to feel successful. Here are a few tips:

**Prevention: always a good plan.** Keep baby's play areas trouble free and open. Set up sturdy gates and put delicate and dangerous things out of reach. Watch those stairs! Your baby may be able to climb, but still doesn't understand the difficulties of getting down or the danger of falling.

**Get moving:** actions speak louder than words. If your baby is intent on getting to the dirt in a flower pot, distract him quickly; if that doesn't work, redirect him to something else right away. Pick him up, saying, "No plant" and move him to something he can do, "Here's your ball." He still wants to please you so your tone of voice is important, too.

**Create play space:** everything does not need to be available to him, but a drawer in the kitchen with unbreakable pans, cups and utensils can be a favorite place to play while you are washing up or cooking. Having a safe corner where he can play undisturbed in rooms where you are together can give you a measure of time to just "let him be."

**Encourage** your baby with a smile, a pat or a gentle hug when she's playing nicely. Reassure her that you are there, but don't feel the need to constantly intrude. In other words, notice the positive in a quiet, simple way. Your smile and acknowledgement of her self-directed play can be plenty of reward for her.

**Watch your baby,** see what makes him happy or frustrated; when he needs your attention, he'll let you know. Letting young children play quietly on their own is as important for them as is your interaction with them. They are learning how things work: how a ball rolls, what happens when the blocks fall over, how to move the pages in a book. **(Remember, playing alone like this is very different from watching television).**



## MEALTIME

By now your baby is probably showing you clearly her likes and dislikes; she may eat only one thing or enjoy lots of different vegetables and fruits, but mostly she wants to feed herself and be in charge. For the next year or two she may have number of food quirks as she experiments with flavors and issues of control. Who is in charge? This is often new parents' first opportunity to let go and examine their own attitudes to mealtime. Keep offering a variety of nutritious foods and realize that ultimately the choice of your child's likes and dislikes is up to her. Talk to your doctor about introducing new foods or give one of the WIC offices a call (Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program). For a listing, call Public Health, 360-336-9477.

## LANGUAGE

You may have already said to your baby, "Go get your ball," and he shows you that he knows what you mean! Even when your baby has only a few sounds he makes, it is surprising to realize how much he seems to understand. Receptive language seems to grow everyday and some babies will begin to perform: "Can you clap your hands?" It is so exciting, but some babies are not performers, so resist the temptation to compare your baby with others or with siblings. Language, like crawling and walking, takes time to learn. Some babies listen closely and wait. Others try out all sorts of noises. Some seem to have quite a vocabulary, but it all sounds the same: bottle (bub bub), ball (bub), book (bub). Or, the D group: daddy (dub dub), doggie (dub dub), but you know he knows.

Pointing and gesturing is another way to get your attention and try to communicate. Babies learn **nouns** first, so name what he is pointing to. *It's the ball; there's the dog...airplane, flower, cat, book, banana.* A trip to the grocery store can be fun. For example, there's a picture of a banana in a book; there are bananas on the counter in the kitchen, and there in the store, there are BANANAS. Sometimes when we read to babies we say, "What's this?" and expect the baby to say what it is. Speech begins by copying, that's why emphasizing the names of things first seems to work best.

## **PLAYTIME**

Babies this age enjoy being around other babies, but it is important to supervise carefully, a hug can knock a baby over and curiosity between babies can result in hair pulling and tasting (which can look a lot like biting). But **babies like to be with other children**; some sit and watch, clinging closely to parent, while others crawl or toddle across the room to get another's toy and they show no hesitation in just taking it away. Even though we say "share" it is unrealistic to think real sharing is going to happen, but we put those words out there, sort of like planting seeds.

This is still a wonderful age for "**Peek-a-Boo.**" Babies are still working on **object permanence**. It can be fun to put a toy on the floor, cover it with a tea towel and watch what your baby does. Does she lift up the towel to find the toy? Does she wonder where it went?

Songs or rhymes with hand gestures are fun, too.

Open, Shut Them Open, shut them. Open, shut them. Give a little clap, clap, clap.

Open, shut them Open, shut them. Put them in your lap, lap, lap.

Creep them, creep them, Creep them, creep them, Right up to your chin, chin, chin.

Open wide your little mouth, But do not let them in.

Open, shut them. Open, shut them. Give a little clap, clap, clap.

Open, shut them Open, shut them. Put them in your lap, lap, lap.

Wave them, wave them, Wave them, wave them, High up in the sky, sky, sky.

Wave to me, I'll wave to you, Let's all say "Bye, bye."

This is a great time to sing to your baby, because getting her to sit still for a book might be challenging. If you need ideas for songs or books, check out your library or give us a call and we'll send you a little songbook.

**If you have questions about parenting or your child's development, please call 360-419-3324.  
We'll be happy to do some research for you and connect you to any resources that might be helpful.**

**WELCOME BABY! "warm-line" 360-419-3324**

*Meredith Baker © 2005*

WELCOME BABY! is a parent support and education program available to families of **all** children, birth to age, three in Skagit County. WELCOME BABY! is sponsored by Skagit County Public Health, Skagit Valley Hospital, Island Hospital, Kiwanis, Rotary, Friends of Welcome Baby & Baby Talk and United Way of Skagit County.

*Best wishes from Friends of Welcome Baby, watch for another newsletter when your baby is 15 months old.*

