

WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 3 Months

Dear Parents,

Happy three months! You are probably seeing a lot of changes in your baby. This third month of baby's life is so interesting; this month you will most likely begin to see big changes in how your baby relates to you and to the people around her. If your baby was born early, remember, there may still be a few weeks to go before your baby is ready to be more social. Some babies this age begin to reach out with a smile, but others are still working on getting organized and changes of place, schedule and caretakers are not very smooth.

But you may want to get out and socialize, meet with friends and take a walk. Fresh air, even gentle rainy air, can perk you – and baby – up; and the nice part, make you sleepy later. Days can seem long with a baby who sleeps a lot, or doesn't, and you wish he did! Three-months-old is a transition time and your baby may not be on much of a nap schedule. Keep watching for his "sleepy" cues during the day and then look at the clock and see what time it is. Then the next day, you can try to have him down for a nap right at that time. If babies can be put to bed at their normal sleepy times, it is easier for them to fall asleep than if they stay up too long and get fussy.

You may have found the same pattern with yourself, staying up late to visit or get things done only to have trouble falling asleep later. Lots of sleep is good for us, and good for babies (between 12-16 hours a day), it actually makes us all smarter. Sleep restores our batteries and lets us relax emotionally.

When baby sleeps it is common to want to zip around and get a lot done, and then it feels frustrating when your baby wakes again after only fifteen minutes or so. Does this mean that you should pick her up right away? Sometimes babies wake and may want to look around and stare at things or listen. Then they may fuss a little, but be able to settle down again and go back to sleep, much as we do sometimes in the night. Be assured, your baby will let you know when she really needs you!

Your
much



baby probably spends a lot of time staring at things, how can she see?



VISION

Although infants are born capable of seeing objects at any distance, they may not focus accurately. Sometimes it's difficult to tell if your baby is really looking at you or staring into space, but when you talk to her your baby will look at you with bright eyes. She may be able to watch you for quite a few minutes before she looks away. Sometimes babies look away to "take a little break". Give your baby some gentle time to rest, then speak her name and she'll look for you again. Babies this age often reflect their parent's expression. When you smile, your baby smiles. Older siblings and grandparents can find great delight in making baby smile.

Your infant will pay close attention to a mobile overhead, or bright lights in the room. If your child's eyes cannot follow a toy passed in front of him, slowly, from side to side, please see your pediatrician.

In the past few years more attention has been paid to the importance of early vision screening for infants. Doctors have special tests for infants and toddlers that help them discover what is going on with your infant's vision. Treating vision conditions early can help prevent more serious or even permanent problems.

Your baby is working on his hand-eye coordination skills; this important skill begins early. When you hold a rattle or a small toy in front of him he'll begin to bat at it and try to grasp it. In addition, your baby may brighten and notice when someone comes into the room and speaks or sings. Speak to your baby and try to see if he can find you across the room. Sing a little song, do a little dance for him, he'll watch you intently.

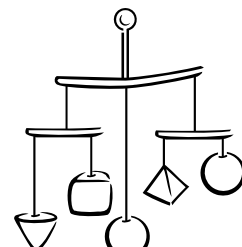
The American Optometric Association recommends you schedule routine eye exams for your child at six months, again at three years and before he or she enters school.

Here are some websites for more information about your baby's vision.

www.aoa.org/x4738.xml

www.allaboutvision.com/parents/infants.htm

www.optometrists.org/optometrists



NO-COST VISION ASSESSMENTS FOR INFANTS

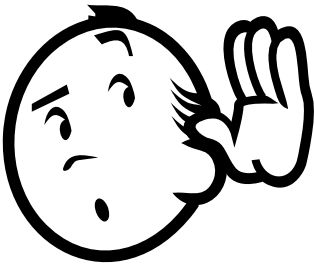
In June 2005 a program called InfantSEE was launched; it provides a no-cost comprehensive eye assessment to infants in their first year of life. This program is supported by the American Optometric Association; the Vision Care Institute of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care; and former President Jimmy Carter. InfantSEE was created to encourage parents to have their baby's eyes checked early and to prevent vision problems from interfering with baby's development. The website is www.infantsee.org/

TELEVISION and VIDEOS

Why talk about television just now? Because your baby will probably like watching television. Does that mean watching T.V. and videos is good for your tiny baby? Definitely not! Even though your baby will stare intently at the screen, it doesn't mean it is good for him. In the first months of life babies are learning so many new skills. Learning to see and focus his eyes is an enormous skill. Staring into your face or watching his own hands – is stimulating enough for a baby. When your baby is staring intently at the wall or a shadow, or at his mobile overhead, he is doing his work. He's learning about himself and how his vision works.

We hear so much about how smart babies are and how much their brains are growing, but this doesn't mean we are supposed to hurry the process along and flash bright pictures and lights at baby in hopes that she'll be smarter. I heard recently that the American Academy of Pediatrics has changed their recommendation that children have no television or videos until the age of three. Please talk with your family and caregivers about this. Honoring the natural learning that your baby is doing is so important.

HEARING



We are very fortunate here in Skagit Valley to have good resources for diagnosing hearing impairments in infants. In all probability your infant's hearing was checked before your newborn left the hospital. If for some reason you have not had your baby's hearing checked, please call the Baby Line at Skagit Valley Hospital and make an appointment to do so 360-428-BABY (2229). If you have concerns about your baby's ability to hear, please see your pediatrician right away.

You probably remember the wonderful joy you felt when your newborn first recognized your voice. By now, you are often thinking that if she could just tell you what's going on it would be a lot simpler than all that crying! Be assured, crying doesn't go on forever and what we do know, is that communication between parents and children is a life long experience. Crying is just the first step. Comforting is the second.

But your baby is listening. It is during the first year of life that your baby is forming the sounds of words in his mind that help him get ready to say words when he is about a year old. Most babies make sounds like "ba" and "da" between six and seven months and others begin to try to say words around eight or nine months. By three months of age your baby may settle down when he hears your voice. While you speak he is hearing the sounds inside of the words. The study of how babies listen to patterns of speech has been researched extensively in Seattle, Washington by Dr. Patricia Kuhl. Her book, **The Scientist in the Crib, Minds, Brains, and How Children Learn**, written in collaboration with Andrew Meltzoff and Alison Gopnik gives a wonderful picture of early learning.

Hearing, language and social development are so closely related that during the first years of life it is almost hard to separate them. The sooner any hearing loss can be detected the better. Research has confirmed that treatment has the best results when infant hearing loss is identified and intervention begins before the child reaches six months of age.

The National Institute of Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Audiology, the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, and the Healthy People 2000 Report all recommend that children with congenital hearing loss be identified before six months of age. A hearing loss that remains undetected will have negative consequences. Even children with a hearing loss in one ear are ten times as likely to be held back by a grade as compared to children with normal hearing in both ears. Infants identified with hearing loss may be fit

with hearing amplification as young as four weeks of age. Appropriate and comprehensive early intervention helps these children develop with better language, cognitive, and social skills.

Your baby should be able to do the following: **Newborn (0 to 4 months):** A newborn usually reacts suddenly to loud sounds through movements such as widening the eyes, jumping or extending the arms and legs. Parents should look for signs of “localization” from their child. Localization is eye movement or turning the head towards the direction of the sound source.

3 to 6 months: A baby of 3 to 6 months of age should turn and search out a different sound. A baby should also be able to respond to the sound of his name. During these months, a baby will play with sounds - by cooing and babbling. A baby should be able to smile or stop crying when either parent speaks to him. In addition, a baby should act differently to the ways a parent talks to him (angry, friendly, loving).

Babies are learning to see– for themselves – the world around them: how the wind moves the trees; the sunlight moves across a wall; a shadow grows and diminishes. Babies are learning to listen – for themselves – to the sounds of a door opening; a dog walking across the floor; to people conversing and expressing their emotions. Our work as parents is to respect our baby’s learning.



<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/Genetics/ehddi/default.htm>

PLAY TIME

Play-time with a three month old baby seems to get better by the day, it is a sweet and gentle time. Talking, singing and making funny faces are the best. You, the parents are the most important toys in the world. Just as television doesn’t do your baby’s vision any good, neither does it improve hearing. Your baby wants to hear you, she wants to listen to the work you are doing, and to the words you are saying.



It might be easy to think that all the baby toys and gadgets that are on the market are somehow going to make your baby smarter. Remember, babies have been just as smart since the beginning of time, long before fancy toys, television or videos. Save your money, read some nursery rhymes and take a nap. Lots of good solid uninterrupted sleep is still the best way to restore your balance. Sleep helps grownups relax and helps babies learn. When your baby wants to play, he’ll coo and smile and make little noises to get your attention. It’s fun to imitate the sounds your baby makes, she’ll begin to make her special noises again and think, “*I’m so smart.*”

Three months old is a lovely time, enjoy it, and sleep, sleep, sleep, little sheep.....

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir,
Three bags full.

One for my master,
And one for my dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.

Please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions about your baby’s development. Part of my work is to help parents find the best resources for their families and children. Our Tuesday, **Mother-Baby Play Time** group (see below) is a wonderful opportunity to ask questions, find support and learn some songs your baby will enjoy. Hope to see you soon!

Meredith Baker ©2006

REFERENCES

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, by Marc Weissbluth, M. D., Fawcett Books, N.Y., 1987, 1999.

The Scientist in the Crib, *Minds, Brains, and How Children Learn*, by Alison Gopnik, Ph.D., Andrew N. Meltzoff, Ph.D., and Patricia K. Kuhl, Ph.D., (William Morrow and Co., New York, 1999)

Please visit our website: www.welcomebabywa.org

For first-time parents, we have a **Mother-Baby Play Time** (Dads are welcome, too!) every Tuesday afternoon from 2:00 – 4:00. This drop-in group meets in the Family Birth Center Waiting Room, Skagit Valley Hospital in Mount Vernon. Please call for more information, **360-419-3324**.

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 4 months old.