

WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 9 Months

Dear Parents,

What a lot of fun it can be to have a nine month old baby; or are you saying, what a lot of work! Can you believe how much attention your baby likes from you? And why not, you are the most wonderful person in your baby's life! If your baby has learned to **clap her hands** you've probably noticed how pleased she is when she does something, you clap, she claps, you clap, she claps. She wants to please you with her accomplishments. There's lots of smiling at nine months. (Some mothers say this is the baby they imagined during pregnancy.)

Bringing hands together is a wonderful skill. After you finish singing him a song, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star", for example, smile and clap your hands and you'll see how your baby watches you. You'll see that he wants to learn how to copy you. This is a wonderful age for singing songs like "The Itsy, Bitsy Spider" with the hand gestures. Actually, you can make up hand and finger motions for the nursery rhyme songs you sing, just try to be consistent so your baby can anticipate your actions. When he can predict what is coming on the next page, so to speak, he'll feel so clever. Sing songs often throughout the day, especially if you need to distract him from something.

Baby's hands now are really her tools, she wants to get into everything. She has probably mastered the pincer grasp and now - with her increased mobility: scooting, creeping or crawling - can find the tiniest speck of something on the floor and get it into her mouth before you can cross the room. This is a time when you might feel you have to say "No!" all the time, and you may have discovered that "no" doesn't work. What is that all about?
CAUSE & EFFECT and the word, "NO!"

This is the time babies are learning about - and really *practicing* - **cause and effect**. We talked a little about it in the sixth month letter, but now the stakes are higher! Your baby can move around and know exactly how to get your attention! Some babies this age are actually walking or cruising around the furniture. So why doesn't he get it when you say, "NO!"? For the simple reason that **your "no" has become part of his "cause and effect"**.

*Remember, right now your baby is **listening like crazy** to you talk and he's trying to figure out how to make sounds into words, so he is very interested in the sounds you make and the word "no" is just a sound to him -- connected to his other big learning event: "cause and effect".*

For example, if I'm your little baby and I pull on an electrical cord and you say, "no," **the word "no" is very exciting because it is so important to you**. *I am still your baby, so I'll pull on the cord again to see what happens?* What happens? You say "NO" again. *Very interesting, my smart baby brain says; I'll try that again.* This time when I pull on the cord, you say, "NO! NO! NO!" *Wow, I think, this is getting better. Now I'll really give it a yank and see what happens.* You, my beautiful mother whom I adore, come running across the room, "No, no no no no NO!" And now my smart baby brain says, **"I am so smart, look what I made you do."** And I am so smart, I can make Daddy do this, too, and grandma and grandpa.

There was once a little fellow who liked to get up on the coffee table and while he was climbing up said, "No, no, no," and then he danced on the table, singing his favorite song, "No, no, no, no, no."

DISTRACTING and REDIRECTING and SAYING "YES" MORE OFTEN

If a baby this age is intent on getting something you don't want him to have, there are things you can do:

First:

*Make sure you've **child-proofed** his play and living space.*

Keep electrical cords and dangerous things like cleaning fluids & window blind cords out of his reach.

Make sure he has a place to move around and have fun; his body needs to move around and explore.

Then:

*Practice **distracting and re-directing** -- it is easier than you think - and you'll get more exercise!*

Rather than saying "no" right away, distract him with something: a toy, a song, a book, a truck going by.

Re-direct him to a different activity. Simply pick him up and move him and say, “Look at this,” with some enthusiasm in your voice, (trying not to use the word, no.)

This is where actions do speak louder than words.

Babies this age might already show you how unhappy they are if you take something away, but usually they are content to change direction if they think it will make you happy.

Sometimes it helps to say “yes” while you are re-directing her. “Yes, I know you want to pull the kitty’s tail, but we pat her gently. There, that is so gentle.” **Your baby learns the most from your example.** When you say “yes” to her and acknowledge that she wants something – even something you don’t want her to have – she knows you care about her and her feelings, and want what is best for her.

Setting limits for babies and young children while caring about their feelings at the same time is one of the biggest challenges of parenting.

MEALTIME



What about all that food on the floor? By now your baby is probably in the high chair picking up cheerios and peas, pieces of broccoli and baked yam. How much food actually gets in the mouth compared with how much goes on the floor? This is where the messy part of “cause and effect” is really expressed! And what fun to watch the cup, the spoon, the peas and the bowl all fall to the floor, *let’s drop it again!* This may be the part where “the cup ran away with the spoon” just to keep itself from being dropped on the floor one more time. (And the cow jumped over the moon to get out of sweeping that kitchen floor - one more time!)

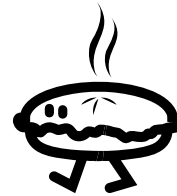
Don’t worry, this doesn’t last forever, but it is important to recognize when mealtime is over and playtime has begun. Get things cleaned up and move on to another project. If you have questions about solid foods, when to start or how much to prepare, your doctor will have lots of information for you. Or, you might wish to call Skagit County Public Health and ask to speak to a nurse or someone in the W.I.C. (Women, Infants and Children nutrition program) 360-336-9477.

PLAYTIME

This is a time of curiosity and exploration, of going after things and trying to see what works and how things happen. Bath play is fun, lots of kicking. Balls are fun, big ones to crawl after, medium sized ones to try to hold, small ones to grasp. Soft small dolls and bears are good for cuddling, you may even see the hugs you give your baby given in turn to dolly or teddy. “Night, night, teddy.” Playtime is learning time and **children repeat the behaviors they see and experience.**

Babies this age need time to play alone and time to play with you. You may still be able to read to your baby, but some babies are so busy and on the move that you can manage only a page or two. This is why songs work well. They attract attention, have melody and rhyme and are short and easy to memorize. They can be sung in the car, in the bath, while waiting for supper and at bedtime.

Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake, Baker’s man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can!
Roll it, and pat it, and mark it with a B
And toss it in the oven for baby and me!



Here’s another one that babies really like, especially when you do the motions: You’ll figure it out.



Way up high in the apple tree,

Two little apples smiled at me.

So I shook that tree as hard as I could

(arms up high)

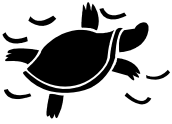
(fingers around your eyes like glasses)

(shake arms in front of you)

And down came the apples,
And mmmmmm, were they good!

(arms from high to low like falling rain)
(fingers to mouth pretending to eat apples)

The Turtle



There was a little turtle and he lived in a box.
He swam in a puddle and he climbed on the rocks.
He snapped at a mosquito and he snapped at a flea,
He snapped at a minnow and he snapped at
He caught the mosquito and he caught the flea,
He caught the minnow, but he didn't catch me.

Babies this age still like to stare at things and watch how things work. Be careful with small toys, everything goes in the mouth! (Hopefully no minnows!)

SLEEPYTIME

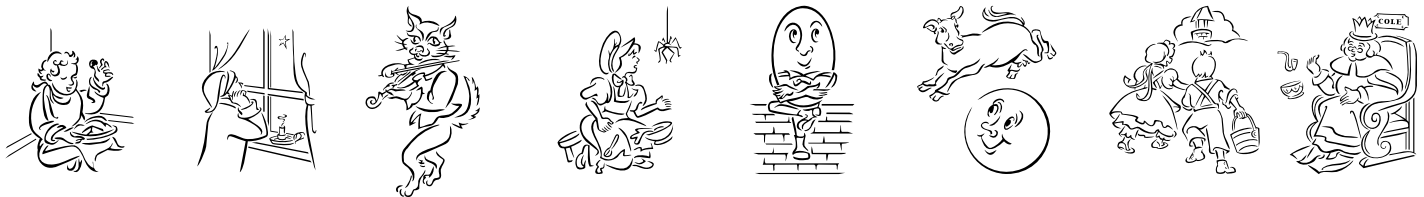
Keeping to a sleep schedule can be a challenge when your baby is learning a new skill. She may wake more in the night and you may find her on her hands and knees in the crib or standing up, not knowing how to get down. Put her down gently and offer soothing words, encouraging her to go back to sleep. If you take her out right away she might think it's time to play. As soon as babies accomplish their new learning task – crawling or walking for instance – their sleep patterns usually improve. Of course, teething can also disrupt your baby's sleep, and yours.

LANGUAGE

Babies are listening like crazy to you talk. This is such an important time for language development. Your baby may have begun to say a word, like da-da, or mama, or ba-ba or even kittie. It might be hard at first to realize it's a word, but if you watch your baby closely when you talk to her, you'll see she is watching your mouth to see how your words are formed. This is a great time to play noise games with her. Copy the sounds she makes – she has already figured those out – and see if she'll repeat them for you. Making 'raspberry' sounds, clicking or bubbly sounds is totally silly and lots of fun. It is the play that is the beginning of speech.

When getting your baby dressed, talk about what you are doing, and comment on what he is doing, "There, you are putting your toes in your blue sock." (There, you've flipped over and are crawling away! How am I going to get that diaper on you!) Try to use descriptive words, like soft kitty, or slippery little toes, rubbery red ball, crunchy leaves. This is the time your baby is **recording the sounds of the words in his mind** so the interesting words you use provide him with more sounds for his "word sound bank."

Giving him lots of different word sounds is why reading to him and singing to him makes sense. It is an easy way to increase his vocabulary; it is like building a dictionary of sounds so that when the words are ready to come out, the sounds will be there. Some babies begin speaking early and others not until they are almost two years old. Learning to creep, crawl, walk and talk are new skills that take time to learn and master. Some babies learn by watching, others by doing and experimenting. By now you probably know your baby's temperament and you'll be able to judge the pace of his or her learning and appreciate the wonderful baby you have!



Enjoy your baby! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us, your doctor or nurse.

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 10 months old.