



How your baby develops

0–3 months

What can I expect?

- Up to three months of age, your baby can't control many movements.
- Your baby will interact with you from birth.
- Your baby will gradually become stronger, smile, make 'baby talk' and use happy movements.
- Putting babies on their tummy when they're awake helps them learn important movements.
- Talking and singing to babies helps them learn to talk.
- Responding to your baby's crying shows you love them.
- Playing with babies helps them learn about their world.
- Make sure your baby is safe by going through the safety checklist.

Your baby's movements

Up to three months of age, most of your baby's movements are uncontrolled.

Babies have reflex movements, which they use for survival. Some of these are sucking, sneezing and swallowing. Some reflex movements – like throwing their arms out, stiffening and crying when they hear a noise – disappear after a short time.

At one month

At one month, most babies:

- turn their head and eyes towards light
- watch faces while being fed or talked to
- may smile to show pleasure.

Between one and three months

Between one and three months, most babies:

- become stronger
- lift their head and upper chest and may start using their arms for support when on their tummy
- show an increasing awareness of people
- smile and coo to show pleasure
- use joyful movements when expecting an enjoyable event, like a bath or feed time.

Feeding

Breastmilk or infant formula is all the food your baby needs until around six months. Your baby's body is not ready for solids before this time.

Tummy time

Even though you have been encouraged to sleep your baby on their back, it is very important for babies to have some 'tummy time' every day when they are awake.

This will help your baby to develop essential movements and skills, like rolling, sitting, crawling and hand skills.

At first, this can be following bath time when you are drying your baby, or during a massage time.

If your baby cries or becomes distressed:

- try tummy time for a shorter time but more often
- distract the baby's attention by talking to your baby and using toys
- keep persisting!

At a later stage – by three months – your baby should be playing on his or her tummy when awake and you are with them.

Your baby and other people

Language

Babies develop skills for speech and language by listening to the sounds around them. They also practise making noises.

To assist your baby in developing speech and language, every opportunity should be taken to talk or sing to your baby. Bath times and nappy changes are good times for this.

In the first few weeks, babies may respond to adults talking to them by altering their breathing pattern and by moving their mouth in response to seeing adult's mouths moving during speech.

Remember that when a dummy is in his or her mouth, it is not possible for your baby to practise making sounds for later speech development.

Crying

Crying is an important means of communication for young babies.

They always cry for a reason. These reasons include:

- tiredness
- hunger
- pain
- discomfort, such as wet, hot or cold
- parents' anxieties (which babies quickly sense).

If your baby's needs are responded to, they will learn that they are loved and wanted, and they will build a sense of trust and attachment.

Playing and learning

Your baby learns from every activity you do with them – talking to them, changing their nappies, bathing, feeding or just being close in the same room.

For babies, play is for learning and practising skills, as well as exploring and finding out about their world and the people in it.

During the first three months babies learn to:

- smile, chuckle and coo
- turn towards sound
- look at and follow things with their eyes
- reach out and touch things with their hands.

Favourite play items

Favourite playthings for your baby at this stage include:

- attention from parents or caregivers
- colourful mobiles, leaves or curtains blowing in the breeze
- a variety of sounds to listen to
- pram rattles or dangling objects to encourage coordination of hands and eyes.





Safety

Babies' early movements are uncontrolled. To help keep your baby safe, remember the following:

- Hold your baby when feeding them a bottle, rather than propping them up. Babies can vomit or inhale milk.
- Do not heat your baby's bottle in a microwave oven. The milk can heat unevenly, risking scalding your baby's mouth.
- Never leave your baby alone on a change table or other furniture (especially a bed), in the bath, in the car or near any family pets.
- Always make sure your baby is strapped in securely when they're in a pram, stroller or shopping trolley.
- Protect your baby from sun and heat. Seek shade when outdoors and use protective clothing and a hat.
- Every time your baby travels in a car, make sure you use an approved baby capsule or child restraint. Never leave your baby alone in a car – not even for a few minutes.
- Look inside mittens, booties and socks to be sure there are no loops or threads that can wind around your baby's fingers and toes and cut off blood circulation.
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time. Babies should never be left in the care of older children, no matter how reliable they seem.
- Make sure there are no objects small enough to swallow around where your baby is playing. Pins, batteries, dead insects, buttons, beads, nuts, coins and other small objects may cause your baby to choke. Cigarette butts are poisonous to your children.
- Ensure that your baby is sleeping safely, according to the guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* fact sheet.

More information

If you would like more information about your child's development or you are concerned about your child, talk to your child health nurse or your doctor.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

Acknowledgement

This fact sheet is the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

