

Encourage your child's learning with engaging educational activities, and read our articles to gain insight into your baby's emotional and mental development.

## Birth to Two Months

From the moment of birth, there are already characteristics of both of you and your baby that allow you to begin developing a special relationship. Newborn babies themselves are very effective at getting their parents and other adults to take care of them.

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## Physical Appearance

Have you ever noticed that most animal babies are considered cute and cuddly? Some scientists believe that this is nature's way of ensuring that animals [including human beings] care for their young. This is why your baby's physical appearance alone makes you feel warm and good inside. His large head and rounded features make him look "cuter" and more "babyish." In fact, the more any baby has these features, the more positively he is seen by adults in general. Studies report that adults look at chubbier babies more and express a greater desire to play with and take care of them. Even parents have been found to be more responsive to their children when they are "cute" than when they are not. Apparently, new babies endear themselves to their parents and grandparents, in part at least; just by the way they look.

## Reflexes

Many of a newborn's reflexes [unlearned behavior patterns] serve to ensure physical proximity to his mother. During your baby's first examination, your pediatrician may demonstrate how your baby's hand forms into a tight grasp around your finger. In the early months, the grasp reflex is so strong that your

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

Watching him as he starts to grow and learning how he does things are the first steps towards good parenting. Remember, you are the key observer of your infant. Enjoy his growth. However, if you have any questions about his development, please do not hesitate to check with your doctor and/or Early Childhood Direction Center.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

### New Baby Gift Ideas

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baby can almost support his own weight. When a newborn is startled by a loud noise or a sudden change in position, his arms flail out to the side and then are quickly brought together, as if he were trying to grab onto his mother. This reflex is called the Moro, or startle reflex. This and other reflexes are believed to be remnants from our evolutionary ancestry.

## Under the Sea Diaper Cake



Our "Under The Sea" theme diaper cake is great for ocean themed nurseries or baby showers. From starfish to lobsters to whales, this sea themed cake includes all kinds of fun characters and toys to stimulate baby's imagination.

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## The Cry

Any parent can tell you that a baby's crying is a very unsettling sound, one that is not easy to tune out. Although annoying, your baby's cry should be thought of as her first means of communicating with her.

Crying is a highly adaptive response from an evolutionary viewpoint, probably designed to get the caregiver to tend to the baby's needs. In fact, four out of five times that a parent interacts with her baby, it is because the baby cried. Crying alerts you to your baby's needs. Most parents quickly respond by trying to find out what is wrong, checking to see if the baby is cold, wet, or hungry, or if she is just bored. In fact, babies may have different cries for different reasons. Parents can often recognize what their babies' mean.

Many parents think they can actually identify their newborns by their cries. This may be an actual perception. Psychologists have studied the acoustical features of individual babies' cries with sophisticated technology-spectrographs that record sound patterns. They have found that babies may be identifiable by unique "cryprints."

Although all babies cry, wide variations occur in how much time a baby spends crying. Some babies may have "three month colic"; others may cry only when distressed, hungry, angry, or in pain. Fortunately, by three months most babies

will dramatically reduce the amount of time they spend crying.

You can help your baby to cry less, it has been found that parents who quickly attend to their babies' crying by picking them up during the first three months seem to have babies who cry less at nine months. Contrary to old wives tales, you are not "spoiling" your baby by comforting her and relieving her crying.

What works to soothe a crying baby varies depending on your baby's age. Once you have determined that your baby is warm, dry, and fed, age old soothing techniques can be employed, and these will change with your child's developmental changes. Of course, the best way to quiet a young baby is to pick her up. Next comes holding a very young baby so she can look over your shoulder, combining closeness and distraction. Newborns also like to be swaddled in receiving blankets. Rocking, giving something to suck, and providing some sort of auditory stimulation, like music, will help reduce newborns' crying about half the time. Sometimes, touching your baby or just being nearby can make her stop crying.

### **Looking Patterns**

Although a newborn baby can't see things very clearly from a distance, he is quite able to see your face when you hold him in your arms. In fact, that's about all you see. Newborns tend to look at areas of high contrast [like a black object on a white background] and the outside of images [like a hairline on a face]. Thus, a parent's face is an optimal visual stimulus for a baby.

### **Cuddliness**

When you hold your new baby, you may notice that he naturally molds his body to cuddle with you. This molding ensures maximum body contact between the two of you and makes you feel warm and tingly.

Unfortunately, not all babies like to cuddle as much as their parents would like, but may squirm in their parents' arms. This may just be their nature-and not a reflection of parenting skills. Developmental tests of infants, such as the Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale, measure newborn's reactions. In one of the tests babies are rated from "very resistant to being held" to "extremely cuddling and clinging." One study indicated that mothers had difficulty teaching "resistive" newborn babies to cuddle. The more a mother tried to cuddle an unwilling baby, the less the baby cuddled. If your baby does not want to be cuddled all the time, don't be alarmed or assume you're doing something wrong. Remember that your baby is an individual, and adjust your desire to cuddle him to his responsiveness to being cuddled.