

# The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

ISSUE NO. 47

## THE WONDER YEAR: Your Baby's FIRST Year

**W**ith the arrival of a newborn, the wonder year begins.

Parents begin to wonder:

- "Is my baby developing normally?"
- "Is my baby happy?"
- "Am I doing the right things for my baby?"

All of these are typical thoughts and concerns that parents may have at one time or another about their child's development, safety, health, and happiness. A child's first year is a time of many amazing and seemingly overnight changes. It would be unusual for a parent not to have questions.

When a new baby arrives, parents usually focus on two primary things – bonding with baby and the baby's development. Although these are different concerns, they are very important to one another and almost cannot be separated.

### Bonding with Baby

Getting to know your new infant and "bonding" is a two-way process. You get to know your baby and your baby gets to know and trust you as well. Being attached and having great affection for your baby can be immediate without really "knowing" anything



about him. However, as part of the bonding process, you do want to pay attention to your baby's:

- **Temperament:** reactions to people, sounds, places, routines and changes, general mood;

- **Physical needs and patterns:** how often and how much your baby eats and sleeps and soils diapers; and

- **Behavior:** amount of energy and alertness your baby has throughout the day, what your baby "does" and "does not" do, likes to do and does not like to do.

Bonding also involves how *you* respond to your baby, making sure your baby knows you are there to take care of her needs and are a consistent and dependable caregiver. It is critical for babies' development that they feel a sense of safety and security. It is important that babies "know" that their needs will be taken care of and that they have consistent, loving, adults that respond to them. It's the emotional, interactive relationship between parents/caregivers and child that is the foundation for the development of intellectual, emotional and social skills.

### Growth and Development the First Year

As a parent, you want to know that your baby is growing and developing just like other babies her age. It is important to know that all babies are individual. Although there are average time periods when most babies and toddlers achieve growth milestones, such as sitting up or saying their first words, many children will reach these milestones within

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their own times. If your child is not trying to walk at 12 months or doesn't point or reach by four months, do not panic. Your baby may just develop at a different rhythm, and you need to just keep track of her progress.

## What to “Do” With Your Infant/Toddler

Parents have a natural desire to bond with and care for their child. Your natural instincts are usually the right ones. Your baby’s doctor will give you general safety and health recommendations to follow to care for your baby. You will also receive information on the growth you will likely see in her in your baby’s first weeks and months.

Here are some things you can do to develop the ongoing relationship with your baby and toddler, along with activities you can do to support his development.

### Things to “Always Do”

- **Follow your baby’s doctor’s health and safety instructions** for caring for your baby. Follow the recommended procedures for sleeping, diapering, as well as baby-proofing and safety practices to follow to keep your baby safe in the home and the car.
- **Talk to your baby about everything you are doing with him** (changing, feeding, bathing, walking)
  - ~Use simple language to describe your daily activities while engaging with your baby, labeling objects (ball, tree, bottle) and actions (change, eat, rock) and feelings (happy, sad, frustrated)
- **Trust your feelings or instincts** about how your baby is feeling or behaving. No one knows your baby better than you. All parents get to know their child on a deep level and if you feel your child is ill, doesn't respond well to a certain food, or is not acting “right”, act on it.

Here are some “major” developmental milestones that your baby/toddler may reach by the **end of their first year.** (From the American Academy of Pediatrics)

| 1st Year   | Social/Emotional   | Physical   | Intellectual   | Language   |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>What To Look For in Your Baby’s Development</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cries when parent leaves the room</li> <li>• May be anxious or shy around strangers</li> <li>• Smiles at faces</li> <li>• Recognizes parents’ voices</li> <li>• Prefers mother’s care/holding to others</li> <li>• Prefers certain people or objects</li> <li>• Can self-feed with finger food</li> <li>• Imitates others in play</li> <li>• Tests parent when being fed (spitting out food)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sits up on own</li> <li>• Rolls over on stomach</li> <li>• Crawls forward on stomach</li> <li>• Transfers objects from one hand to the other</li> <li>• Can pull self up to stand</li> <li>• Holds onto furniture when standing</li> <li>• Tries to walk or can walk</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plays with, analyzes objects in different ways (shake, bang, drop)</li> <li>• Finds hidden objects or knows objects are there even when covered or hidden</li> <li>• Matches image or picture to name when mentioned</li> <li>• Builds, stacks objects</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays attention to speech</li> <li>• Coos and babbles</li> <li>• Uses and responds to gestures, “no”</li> <li>• Says “mama” and “dada”</li> <li>• Mimics sounds</li> <li>• By end of first year understands or says several words</li> </ul> |



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TRUST YOUR FEELINGS OR INSTINCTS ABOUT  
HOW YOUR BABY IS FEELING OR BEHAVING.  
NO ONE KNOWS YOUR BABY BETTER THAN YOU.

- **Relax.** Caring for an infant is a difficult job. The more comfortable you are, the more comfortable your baby will be.

## **Interaction During Daily Routines**

First thing to do with baby is to have routines that your baby can depend upon. Routines help establish a sense of security and safety, which are important for children to have. There will be natural routines you have - feeding, sleeping, bathing, playing. These are perfect times to get to know your baby and respond to your baby's ever-changing needs.

## **Using Child Care: What to Look For**

If you use child care, you will want to make sure your baby is in a healthy and safe environment. Caring for children properly takes knowledge, skills, and training. There are many factors to consider when you are searching for child care that can escape you if you are not prepared with questions and specific items to consider.

Here are some basics of what you should consider and do when looking for a program or care for your infant:

- **Always visit the program:** Although you can make phone calls and talk to staff, do not substitute phone conversation for in-person visits.
- **Staff/child ratio:** Make sure the program or provider has a low staff to child ratio, no more than four infants per provider. Find out how the provider is able to care for the infants and older children.
- **Experience/training in caring for infants and toddlers:** Make sure the provider or program has experience



in caring for infants. Infants require more individual attention.

- **Program environment:** Ask about and observe the environment and what the typical day is for infants in the program. Find out how much time the provider is spending with your child, and how that time is being spent. Ask how the program ensures your baby's safety and health.

- **Program activities:** There needs to be plenty of interaction between providers and infants, just as there is with you at home: talking, singing, holding, reading. Babies need social stimulation and need to hear language directed at them.
- **Feedback from parents:** Talk with other parents of children in the program. Ask about their satisfaction and if their children seem content in the program.
- **Instincts:** Rely on your impressions. If you feel unsure or unsettled about anything when visiting the program, do not dismiss it. Parents still know best when it comes to what is right for their child.

Having a new infant is an exciting experience. It is also a stressful one. When parents know the "changes" a baby goes through and is expected to go through, they can relax knowing it's all normal. They can also be confident because they know not only how their baby is developing, but also know what they can do to help and encourage and support baby's growth.

What your baby needs most to thrive and grow is YOU. Your time, attention, your talking, your responding to his needs. So, relax and enjoy. And if you need it, there is a lot of information and support for you and your baby during this wondrous year.

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## For More Information

- ***Is This the Right Place for My Child?: 38 Research-Based Indicators of High-Quality Child Care***, NACCRRA, [www.naccrra.org/pubs/](http://www.naccrra.org/pubs/). This user-friendly booklet contains a checklist of 38 questions that parents can ask to evaluate the quality of child care programs and explains why each question is important and how it relates to the quality of care.

- T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. ***The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn, and Flourish***. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000. Dialogues between pediatrician and child psychiatrist define what every child must have in the first few years of life. Answers question on how much and what type of nurturing interactions infants and small children need.

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), is a national organization committed to the optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being



for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. There is a special section of their website just for parents. You can do an online search by health topics.

- **Child Care Aware®**, [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org). Child Care Aware is a program of NACCRRA which helps parents find quality child care and child care resources in their community. They have a toll free number, 1-800-424-2446, that parents can call to be connected to their local Child Care Resource & Referral agency that can help them with locating and paying for child care in their areas.

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