

# Your Baby's Development

The first 3 months are all about babies learning to feel comfortable, safe, and secure in the world. By responding to their signals and providing lots of love and comfort, you help them form a trusting bond with you.

*How are you helping your baby learn to feel safe and secure?*



What Your Baby Can Do	What You Can Do
<p><b>I am getting to know you and the other people who love and care for me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I recognize your faces, voices, and smells.</li> <li>• I respond to your smile and touch with pleasure.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Talk and sing to your baby.</b> This makes him feel loved and helps him bond with you.</p> <p><b>Hold your baby.</b> Enjoy some skin-to-skin cuddle time with your little one.</p>
<p><b>I am learning how to “tell” you what I need.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can use my sounds, facial expressions, and body movements to tell you how I’m feeling—sleepy, hungry, happy, or uncomfortable.</li> <li>• I can show you when I want to play and when I need a break.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Watch your baby to learn her signals.</b> Does she have a “hunger” cry? Does she rub her eyes or look away from you when she is tired? Smiles are easy to figure out.</p> <p><b>Respond to your baby’s signals.</b> When her eyes are bright and she is awake and alert, it is time to play. Slow things down when she cries, turns away, or arches her back.</p>
<p><b>I am beginning to use my body to make things happen.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can grip your finger or a toy you put in my hand.</li> <li>• When I am hungry, I might move my head toward my mother’s breast or the bottle.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Give your baby something to reach for and hold onto—a finger or toy.</b> Let him touch objects with different textures and shapes. Hold a toy within your child’s reach so he can swat it with his hands or feet.</p> <p><b>Watch to see how your baby is “discovering” his body.</b> Does he look at his hands, suck on his feet, or try to roll?</p>
<p><b>We are becoming closer and closer every day.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am learning to trust that you will read and respond to my signals.</li> <li>• I rely on you to comfort me. This helps me learn to comfort myself.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Comfort your baby whenever she cries.</b> You can’t spoil a baby. Soothing makes her feel safe, secure, and loved.</p> <p><b>Help your baby calm herself</b> by guiding her fingers to her mouth, giving her a pacifier, or offering her a blanket or soft object that is special to her.</p>



As you use this resource, remember that your child may develop skills faster or slower than indicated here and still be growing just fine. Talk with your child’s health care provider or other trusted professional if you have questions.

Your family’s cultural beliefs and values are also important factors that shape your child’s development.

For more information on parenting and child development, go to: [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

# Spotlight on Crying

## What's on Your Mind

**I have to go back to work. Will my 8-week-old be okay in child care?**

Yes, as long as it is a high-quality program. Look for a clean and safe setting with no more than three babies for every caregiver. There should be toys and books at the baby's level and child care providers who will let your baby sleep, eat, and play according to her own schedule. Make sure that the caregivers talk and play with the babies, that they comfort them when they are upset, and that they are loving and nurturing.

- Crying, as hard as it is to hear, is a normal way babies communicate hunger, discomfort, distress, or a need for your attention.
- Most newborns reach a crying peak at about 6 weeks. Then their crying starts to decrease. By 3 months they typically cry for about an hour a day.<sup>2</sup>
- Being with a crying baby who is hard to soothe can be exhausting, stressful, and frustrating. But keep in mind that just by being there—holding and comforting your baby—you are teaching him that

he is not alone and that you will stick by him through thick and thin.

- While all babies cry, some babies cry much more than others. This is known as colic and it's defined as crying that:

- ✓ begins and ends for no obvious reason
- ✓ lasts at least 3 hours a day
- ✓ happens at least 3 days a week
- ✓ continues for 3 weeks to 3 months<sup>3</sup>

## What You Can Do

## Did You Know...

**Babies whose mothers reported high stress cried and fussed more than babies whose mothers reported little stress.**<sup>1</sup>

## What It Means for You:

Even very young babies pick up on how their loved ones are feeling. When you are calm and relaxed, your baby is more likely to feel calm. When you are feeling stressed out and overwhelmed, your baby is more likely to feel tense. So in order to take good care of your baby, **it's really important that you take good care of yourself.** Ask trusted friends and family members for help when you need a break. Make time to do things that make you feel good. And be sure to talk to a trusted health care provider if you are feeling down or depressed.

**Talk with your health care provider.** Crying may have a medical cause—a food sensitivity, heartburn, or other physical condition.

**Try holding your baby more.** Some babies cry less when they are held more.<sup>4</sup> Wrap your baby snugly in a blanket—called “swaddling”—and rock her gently.

**Use soothing sounds.** Talk or sing softly to your baby. Try running a fan or humidifier in your baby's room. Sometimes babies are soothed by this background noise.

**Reduce stimulation—lights, sights, sounds, and textures—for your baby.** Sometimes less stimulation leads to less crying for babies with colic.<sup>5</sup>

**Reach out for support.** Extended families and friends may be able to step in to give you a needed

break. Everyone needs support, and nobody needs it more than the parents of a crying baby.

**Stay calm.** When you're calm, it helps your baby calm down. If you find yourself feeling frustrated, put your baby on his back in a safe place—like the crib—and take a short break. Crying won't hurt your baby, and taking a break will let you soothe another very important person...you!

**Don't give up.** Soothing your baby is a trial-and-error process. If one strategy doesn't work, try another. Hang in there, and remember that the crying will get better.

*What are some things you can do to soothe yourself after a tough day?*



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[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org)

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