

# *Healthy Start, Grow Smart*

*Your 4-Month-Old Baby*





# *Healthy Start, Grow Smart*



## *Your 4-Month-Old Baby*

*Prepared by*

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Agriculture

2008

## Acknowledgments

This publication was an initiative of Laura Bush as the First Lady of Texas and sponsored by the Texas Department of Health. President George W. Bush and Mrs. Bush have asked that this series of booklets be revised and distributed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

We would like to thank the Texas Department of Health for their cooperation and assistance in bringing this publication to families across the United States. In addition, we recognize the contributions that Susan H. Landry, Ph.D.; Craig T. Ramey, Ph.D.; and many other individuals made in the development of the documents.

This publication is distributed by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Agriculture and is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Healthy Start, Grow Smart, Your 4-Month-Old Baby*, Washington, DC 20201.

This publication is available to download on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at [www.ed.gov/parents/earlychild/ready/healthystart/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/earlychild/ready/healthystart/index.html). It is also available in Spanish on the Department of Education's Web site.

On request, this publication is available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette. For more information, please contact the Department's Alternate Format Center at 202-260-0852 or 202-260-0818.

This publication can also be downloaded at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Web site at [www.cms.hhs.gov/LowCostHealthInsFamChild/03\\_HSGSPamphlets.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/LowCostHealthInsFamChild/03_HSGSPamphlets.asp).



# Here's What's Inside

What's It Like To Be 4 Months Old? .....	1
Your Baby's 4-Month Checkup.....	2
When To Call Your Health Care Provider.....	4
Feeding Your Baby .....	5
Taking Care of Baby's Gums and Future Teeth.....	6
Helping Your Baby Fall Asleep.....	7
Keeping Your Baby Safe.....	9
Toy Safety Is Important .....	10
How Your Baby Grows and Develops .....	11
Your Baby Learns From Experience .....	13
Help Your Baby Every Day.....	14
Coping With Stress.....	15
Dads Have a Role to Play.....	16
Babies Can't Be Spoiled .....	17
Games You Can Play With Your Baby .....	18
Helping Your Baby Explore.....	19
Talking With Your Baby.....	20
Babies Respond to Angry and Happy Faces.....	20
Is Your Baby in Distress? .....	21
Helping Big Brother or Sister Adjust .....	21
It Takes a Family To Raise a Child.....	22
Where To Find Help .....	23



# What's It Like To Be 4 Months Old?

## How I grow:

- When I lie on my tummy, I may roll from side to side. I may even roll over onto my back.
- I can hold my head up on my own. I can turn my head from side to side.
- I use both hands to grab toys and other objects.
- When I'm in the bathtub, I like to splash in the water. I always need to be held firmly so I don't slide into the water.



## How I understand:

- I may get excited when I see people I know.
- I like some toys better than others.

## How I talk:

- When you talk to me, I smile and squeal and coo.
- I like to imitate sounds. I like for you to talk to me and make sounds to me.
- I babble now. I make lots of different sounds.
- When I am happy, I coo, squeal, gurgle, giggle, grin, and laugh out loud.

## How I respond:

- I like to look at myself in the mirror. Sometimes I smile at myself.
- I like to be touched and held.
- I may fuss if I am left alone. I get bored.
- I may cry when you take a toy away from me. I may cry when you stop playing with me.



# Your Baby's 4-Month Checkup

Your baby needs regular health checkups. She needs the checkups even if she's not sick. Checkups can keep her healthy. The 4-month checkup is very important to your baby's growth, health, and development.

During the 4-month visit, your baby will have another complete checkup. This includes her weight, length, and head size. Her heart and lungs will be checked also. The health care provider will check on how your baby holds her head up and uses her hands. Your baby's hearing and vision will also be checked.

Your baby will get her second set of shots. Shots will keep her from getting sick and keep her healthy. Several shots may be given, including: rotavirus (Rota) (prevents certain types of diarrhea); diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP); inactivated poliovirus (IPV); *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib); and pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) (prevents certain types of pneumonia). Although it may seem that these are a lot of vaccines, many are combined into one shot.

Ask your health care provider what to look for and what you should do if your baby has any reaction to these shots, including fever or fussiness.

During the 4-month visit, the health care provider should check your baby's development through a standardized test, such as the Denver Developmental Screening Test or others. Different tests are used to test a baby's development. Be sure to ask the health care provider the name of the test used.



During the test, the health care provider will ask if your baby is doing certain things, such as smiling and babbling. The health care provider will also examine the baby's strength, reflexes, and other things.

Before the checkup, write down questions you have about your baby. Checkups are a good time to ask the health care provider questions like, "What are the symptoms a baby has when she has a cold? How should I treat her if she has a cold? What kinds of problems should I call you for? What temperature should I call you for?"

If you are feeding your baby only breast milk, your provider may recommend that you give your baby an iron supplement starting at 4 months. Babies who are fed only breast milk can get iron deficiency. They will need iron supplements until they start to eat other foods. Eating solid foods usually happens around 6 months. Then they can get iron from other foods like iron-fortified rice cereal. However, breastfed babies should take iron supplements until the time other foods are added to their diet.

Always ask the health care provider for a copy of your baby's checkup results. It's a good idea to keep the copy in a notebook. These records should be kept in a safe place along with other important documents, such as your baby's birth certificate and Social Security card.

If the health care provider tells you to give your baby any medicines, ask your health care provider to write down the names of the medicines and directions on how to give them to your baby.

Make an appointment for your baby's 6-month checkup.



# When To Call Your Health Care Provider

When your baby explores the world and plays with other children and adults, she will have more contact with germs. As a result, your baby may get a minor infection, such as a cold or ear infection. If you don't know what to do about her symptoms, call your health care provider. It is important that you treat these minor infections. If left untreated, they can become serious.

Signs of serious illness to look for are a fever above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, refusal to eat, persistent vomiting or diarrhea, unusual fussiness and excessive sleepiness, wheezing or having difficulty breathing, and pulling on the ears. If these should occur, call your health care provider.

Always keep your health care provider's phone number where you can find it. This number should be on a list of emergency phone numbers that you can find quickly.

If there is an accident or your baby chokes or stops breathing, call 911 immediately for emergency services.

## About Antibiotics

If your baby has certain conditions, she will need antibiotics to get better. You must see a health care provider to get a prescription for antibiotics. Antibiotics are used to treat ear infections. They are also used to treat some serious illnesses like pneumonia, sepsis, and meningitis.

When you give your baby antibiotics, it is very important that you follow the instructions carefully. Give your baby the exact amount directed at the required time. Even if your baby seems better, continue to give her the antibiotics for the length of time directed by your health care provider. If you do not give her the antibiotics as directed, she could get sick again.



# Feeding Your Baby

**B**reast milk and/or formula are the only foods your baby needs during the first 6 months of life. Giving your child solid food during the first 6 months can contribute to the development of overweight and obesity in infants and children. Early introduction of solid foods may also lead to the development of food allergies.

Vitamin D supplements are recommended for babies who are breastfed. Babies who are fed formula do not need vitamin D supplements because formula is fortified with vitamin D. Once solid foods are added, usually around 6 months, vitamin D supplementation is not needed if you give your baby foods containing vitamin D, such as rice cereals. If you have questions about the about supplements for your baby, ask the health care provider.



*Your 4-Month-Old Baby*



# Taking Care of Baby's Gums and Future Teeth

**I**t's never too early to start taking care of your baby's future teeth. Here are some simple things you can do for her:

- Never put your baby to sleep with a bottle.
- If your baby uses a pacifier, do not clean a pacifier by putting it in your mouth, because your germs may cause the baby to get dental disease. Never dip a pacifier in sweet liquids, honey, or syrups to make it tasty. Germs in honey can make your baby sick. Sweet liquids and sweets may cause tooth decay when your baby is older.
- Twice a day, gently wipe her gums with a wet, clean, soft cloth using only water. Start doing this even before her teeth come in.
- Some babies show teeth as early as 4 or 5 months. Most babies show teeth between 6 and 10 months.
- When her teeth begin to show, you may use a soft toothbrush for cleaning. Make sure it is a baby-size toothbrush. Or you can continue to clean her teeth every day with a cloth.
- Gently brush her teeth with water only. (Do not use toothpaste until your baby is around 2 years old. She should be old enough to spit out the toothpaste after brushing.)



# Helping Your Baby Fall Asleep

You can start putting your baby to bed while she is still awake. Remember to put her on her back when you put her to bed. Most 4-month-old babies sleep 5–6 hours a night and nap about 5 hours during the day. However, every baby has a different sleep pattern.



Let her go to sleep on her own, alone. When she awakens during the night, she sometimes may go back to sleep on her own. This is much easier on the parents.

Your baby may wake up at night to be fed. You don't have to wake your baby for feedings at night. If your baby sleeps through the night, she will feed more often during the day.

By now, it is important to establish a routine for putting your baby to sleep. Feeding at the same times helps in setting routine sleep patterns.

Whether babies sleep through the night or wake up during the night, they go between deep and light sleep several times.

- A baby in light sleep may cry out. She may move around in bed. This may wake her up. As she cries and moves around, she gets upset. She will settle herself if she has a way to comfort herself. She may comfort herself by sucking her thumb or holding a blanket. Or she may get into a comfortable position, which will also settle her down.
- Some babies have more trouble settling down than others do. Going to bed at the same time each night will help her settle down. Keep the house quiet. Loud television or music may keep your baby awake.
- To help your baby to relax, you can give her a warm bath, massage her, or rock her. Reading or singing to her may also help her settle down. Don't rush to her if she starts to cry. She may calm down after a few minutes and fall asleep on her own. If she continues to cry, pick her up.
- What your baby does during the day can affect her sleep. If she had too much excitement during the day, she may not sleep through the night. It may take several days for her to get back to her usual sleeping pattern.



## Continue To Put Your Baby on Her Back To Sleep

At 4 months, your baby is still at risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or crib death. Research shows that babies who sleep on their backs are less likely to die from SIDS. Also, don't smoke around your baby. Don't take her around others who smoke.

Make sure your baby is warm but not too hot when you put her down to sleep. Dress the baby warmly for sleep, and do not use blankets in the bed. If you use a blanket, the blanket should reach no higher than the chest, and the ends should be tucked under the mattress.

Other ways to keep your baby safe when she is sleeping:

- Do not sleep with your baby in your bed. You can roll over and smother her.
- Keep your sleeping baby nearby. Be sure you can hear her if she cries or is in distress.
- Use cribs that have slats on the sides that are less than 2 3/8 inches apart.
- Be sure your baby is sleeping on a firm mattress. Don't put your baby to sleep on soft or fluffy things. Keep stuffed animals out of the crib at sleep time.
- Make sure your baby is warm but not too hot.



# Keeping Your Baby Safe

As she grows, your baby is becoming more curious. At this age, she is already actively exploring, reaching for objects, and putting things in her mouth. To protect your baby, you must thoroughly childproof your home.



## Safety at Home

- Never shake or hit your baby.
- Don't smoke around your baby.  
Don't take him around others who smoke. Babies in smoke-free homes have fewer colds and infections.
- Do not leave the baby alone with children or pets.
- Have at least one smoke detector per floor in your home and test each once a month. You should change the batteries in each detector twice per year.
- Do not have guns or drugs in the home.
- Do not hold hot liquids at the same time you are holding your baby, or when your baby is nearby.
- Never leave your baby alone on a bed, couch, table, or chair.
- Check the bath water before bathing your baby. Test it with the inside of your wrist or with a thermometer. If possible, set the water heater in your home to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Instruct caregivers carefully. Write things down for them. Make sure that everyone who takes care of your baby understands what you expect about how to treat and care for your baby.
- Learn CPR. The American Red Cross has classes in infant and adult CPR. You may visit the Red Cross at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or at 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).



## Safety Outside Your Home

- Use sunscreen made for babies on areas that are not covered by clothing, such as the face and hands. Put the sunscreen on your baby before you take her outside. Even with sunscreen, try to keep her shaded when she is outdoors. Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is the hottest time of the day.
- Use car safety seats in your car or in a taxi. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Web site can help you locate a car seat inspection station where you can get help installing the seat correctly. You can visit their Web site at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). Most fire stations or police stations can help parents with proper installation.
- Never leave your baby alone in a car, not even for a few minutes or if the windows are down.

## Toy Safety Is Important

Babies put things into their mouths, so it is important to make sure all toys you give your baby are safe. Here are a few things to look for when choosing toys:

- Make sure toys that you buy for your baby are labeled “nontoxic.”
- Toys should have no sharp edges or points.
- Check toys often to make sure there are no loose parts. Older toys may break and have sharp edges.
- Make sure small toys, such as squeak toys, rattles, and teethingers, are large enough so that your baby can’t put the whole toy in her mouth. Smaller toys can get stuck in your baby’s throat.
- Don’t give your baby toys with strings or ribbons. If you have toys like this, just remove the strings.
- Don’t hang toys or a pacifier around your baby’s neck.



- Don't give your baby toys that have small parts. The parts can come off, and she could choke on them. Check for small parts such as buttons and eyes that are glued on. Don't give her toys with beads that can be pulled off. Toys that are stuffed with small pellets can come apart, and your baby could choke on the pellets. Check the package on the toy for the age appropriate label.
- Don't let your baby play with a plastic bag. It can choke or smother her.
- Don't give your baby balloons to play with. The balloon can break and create a choking hazard. Don't give pieces of popped balloons to children of any age. Babies and children can choke on balloon pieces.
- Don't let your baby play with plastic wrapping from toys or other items.
- Older children should be told not to use loud toys around the baby. Such loud noises can damage her hearing.

## How Your Baby Grows and Develops

When your baby reaches the age of 4 months, things will start to happen really fast. She is growing and learning about her world. She is interested in everything she sees or hears. She is reaching for things and putting them in her mouth. This is how she learns about them.

When she is feeding, she stops and plays with your clothes, or she looks at other people in the room.

She may try to roll over. The more she tries, the better she can do it.

She smiles when she sees her parents and other people who care for her. She babbles. She tries to imitate your words as she makes sounds.

She may start sleeping at night for longer and longer periods of time.

She will love it when you sit on the floor and play with her. You can have a lot of fun with your baby at this age.



*Your 4-Month-Old Baby*



## Watch for Developmental Delay

Watch your baby carefully. Your baby will develop at her own pace, so it is hard to tell exactly when she will learn a new skill. The *Healthy Start, Grow Smart* booklets aim to give you an idea of what to expect as your baby grows. Do not be worried if she learns at a different rate. You should discuss with her health care provider your baby's development and any of the following signs of *possible* developmental delays:

- Does not grasp and hold objects.
- Does not smile at people.
- Cannot support her head well.
- Does not begin to roll over and reach for toys.
- Does not babble.
- Does not try to imitate any of your sounds.
- Does not push down with legs when feet are placed on a firm surface.

Organizations can provide help if you and your health care provider determine that there is a problem with your baby's development. The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center has information on available programs at [www.nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp](http://www.nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp).



# Your Baby Learns From Experience

Each brain, like each child, is unique. Here are some things you should know about your baby:



- The brain grows fastest in the first 3 years of life.
- It's hard to describe how a child's brain develops. It depends on traits that come from the parents. It also depends on the child's experiences. You can influence the part that depends on experience.
- Babies cannot see well when they are born. At 4 months, your baby's vision has improved. Now, she may show interest in objects all the way across the room. Show your baby bright and colorful objects. Move them slowly to help her stay interested in them.
- A baby's hearing develops early. Talk to your baby often. A baby can remember patterns of sounds. She can remember the sounds of a story that you read over and over. She can also remember the sounds of a song. Tell her a rhyme over and over for several days. Read her a story over and over for several days. Or sing the same song for several days with your baby. Watch how she responds.
- Touching your baby gently can help to quiet her or to stimulate her. It depends on how you do it. Massaging your baby gently can help her relax.
- Your baby learns more when you respond to her needs.
- Most infant memories do not last long. Even so, your baby's memory is active.



# Help Your Baby Every Day

Here are some important things you can do that will help your baby every day:

- Be your baby's teacher. Babies learn when they have many good experiences with someone who loves them. Give your baby a rattle. Say, "Shake, shake," as you move it, and make sounds together. Name things for your baby. For example, say, "Look at the tree. Let's sit under the tree." This helps your baby develop language.
- Encourage your baby to explore. Your baby is at an age when she likes to be held up to look at things. Looking at things is important for her. Look at something together, and move it around. Your baby now is holding on to things and putting them into her mouth. This helps her explore. It also helps her develop movement skills. Find things she can play with, like unbreakable spoons or plastic cups, and get down on the floor and play with her.
- Get excited about your child. Show your excitement when she does something. Make sure you act immediately. Your baby will connect your pleasure with what she has just done. For example, when your baby sits up as you hold her, say, "Look at you! You are sitting up!"
- Repeat things with your baby. Babies learn by doing the same thing over and over. Your baby may learn faster when she has lots of time playing and talking with you.
- Communicate. Talk and sing to your baby. She has been learning about language since birth. Talking to her helps her to learn.



# Coping With Stress

Taking care of a baby may cause stress. It's a big job. It's normal to have moments of sadness, fear, frustration, or anger.

These feelings can be powerful. When you are angry, you may feel like breaking things or saying hurtful things.

There are other ways to deal with strong feelings. Here are some tips:

- Talk about these feelings with someone you trust. The worst thing you can do is keep these feelings to yourself.
- Talk to your spouse or a family member.
- Talk to a friend, a health care provider, or a member of the clergy.
- Try to exercise. Put your baby in a stroller or in your arms, and take a walk. Exercise at home while your baby sleeps. Being active can make you feel better. Exercise can give you more energy to take care of yourself and your baby.
- Take time to relax. Take a moment for yourself while your baby naps. Do something that calms you down. Take a break from your chores. Take a moment to talk to a friend, read, listen to music, just be still, or enjoy a hobby.
- Don't take your stress out on your baby by yelling at her or avoiding her. Get someone to help you for a while so that you can calm down or get rest.

If your feelings of sadness are strong, it could be postpartum depression. Approximately 10 percent of mothers experience this kind of depression.

Some of the warning signs of postpartum depression are:

- Lack of energy.
- Hopelessness.
- Low self-esteem.



Your 4-Month-Old Baby



- Poor concentration.
- Insomnia (unable to sleep).
- Excessive sleeping.
- Change in appetite (either not hungry or overeating).

Treatment is available and it is important to address this depression as soon as possible. Talk to your baby's health care provider. Also, there are mental health providers in your community. Ask your health care provider where you can get help. You can also call the Therapist Referral Network at 1-800-843-7274 or find help at [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).

Don't try to hide these feelings from your family or your health care provider. It is important to talk about what is happening. Get help if you need it.

## Dads Have a Role To Play

Dad, it's never too early for you to get involved with your baby. You have an important role in your baby's life. She wants to play with you and learn from you. Showing your baby that you care about her will help her and make you feel closer to her. It will make taking care of her more fun for you and her mom.



Babies learn from the adults around them. They need to be with both men and women. It's good for your baby to have someone besides her mom to learn from.

You and your baby's mom can learn more about how to care for your baby. Look in the Yellow Pages of your phone book under "support groups" for parenting help. A "community service" section may be near the front of the book.



Be very gentle when you play with your baby. Use a calm voice. Here are some things you can do with your baby:

- You can hold her.
- You can talk to her.
- You can sing to her.
- You can show her toys.
- You can bathe her and dress her.
- You can comfort her when she's fussy.
- You can help teach her how to talk.
- You can take her to child care.
- You can take her to health checkups.
- You can help feed the baby. If your baby's mom is breastfeeding, she can pump some of her milk into bottles, and you can give this breast milk to your baby. When she is older and learning how to eat solid food, you can feed her with a spoon.

If you do these things for your baby, she will reward you with smiles, happy sounds, and love. She will smile when she sees you, and she will reach for you when she wants to play. The bond you make now with your child will last a lifetime.

## Babies Can't Be Spoiled

*"Whenever my baby cries, I pick her up. My friend says I'm spoiling her. Is my friend right?"*

No, you don't have to worry about spoiling your baby. When you pick your baby up, you are doing the right thing.

By reacting to her needs, you are teaching your baby that she can trust you. Holding her brings her comfort. It shows her that you care when she is hungry, in pain, afraid, or unhappy.



Meeting your baby's needs makes her feel safe and loved.

It's good to respond quickly when your baby is crying. Her needs are immediate. When your baby is hungry, she wants to be fed. When your baby is wet, she wants a dry diaper. When she is uncomfortable or scared, it helps her to be held.

When you are putting your baby to bed at night, it is okay to let her cry for a few minutes. This helps her learn to calm herself. If she cries for more than a few minutes, pick her up.

It's not good to ignore your baby. She depends on you to respond to her needs. She learns to trust because you respond to her needs. Your baby needs a lot of love from you.

## Games You Can Play With Your Baby

**B**abies learn by playing. Here are some games you can play with your 4-month-old baby:

- Play peek-a-boo. Place a sheet or baby blanket over your head, lift it up and softly say, "Boo!" Your baby will enjoy many ways of playing this game.
- Sing simple songs to your baby. You can sing nursery rhymes, or you can make up your own songs.
- Lay your baby on her back and sing a song while you gently move her arms in a big circle. You can also gently move her legs and raise her arms.
- Slip a colorful scarf through a plastic bracelet and tie the scarf to the arm of a chair. Lay your baby next to the plastic ring. Your baby will grab the ring and move the scarf around on the chair arm.
- Put a brightly colored sock on your baby's foot. Your baby will notice her foot. In time, she will be able to grab it with her hands. Make a game out of it by helping her reach for the sock and helping her pull it off.



## Helping Your Baby Explore

By the time your baby is 4 months old, she is beginning to learn to move around. She may even roll from her stomach to her back. Since she can now hold toys, your baby spends more time playing.

At this age, babies need time to explore the world around them. It is important to give them time on a flat surface. Place your baby on a blanket on the floor or outdoors on the ground. If outdoors, make sure the blanket is in a shaded area. Let her wear clothing that allows her to move easily. Watch her very carefully. Do not walk away, leaving her on the blanket, even for a moment.



Here are some activities to try:

- Place toys just out of reach so your baby will reach for them. She will learn that she has to wiggle and reach to get the toys. If she can't reach a toy in a few seconds, place it within her reach so she doesn't get frustrated.
- Spread a cloth on the grass and lay your baby on her stomach at one edge of the cloth. Gently raise the edge of the cloth so she will roll onto her back. Reward her with a hug and a kiss.



*Your 4-Month-Old Baby*



## Talking With Your Baby

**A**t 4 months of age, your baby is already putting together ideas about speech and sounds. She does this even though she cannot speak.

Even without speech, your baby already knows how to “talk” with you. She “speaks” by being fussy, babbling, or with happy giggles. She will learn more ways to let you know her needs, even before she learns to speak. She has learned to coo and laugh.

Taking turns is part of language. When your baby coos or gurgles, be sure to listen to her. Then respond. Talk to your baby often. Use both familiar words and sounds and new words and sounds. This will get her attention and hold it. Talking to your baby a lot helps her learn.

## Babies Respond to Angry and Happy Faces

**A** baby’s social skills start to develop long before she can talk. So do her emotions. Babies quickly come to know emotions and to show them.

A 4-month-old baby can tell a happy face when she sees it. And she can tell an angry face when she sees it. She is also aware of a face with no expression.

If there is a lot of yelling and screaming in the house, the noise and emotion will affect your baby.

Another step in learning social skills is that your baby will show when she is angry or sad. She’ll do this when she doesn’t get what she wants. Anger and sadness are normal. Even so, you don’t want your baby to have any negative experiences that last a long time. Babies should have far more positive experiences than negative experiences. Always be sure to comfort your baby quickly.

Babies differ in how social they want to be. Some babies want almost constant time with others. Other babies want more “alone” time. However, it can be very harmful to a baby to leave her alone too much or ignore her.



## Is Your Baby in Distress?

**I**nfants cry for a variety of reasons. Crying is a way that babies communicate their needs to parents and caregivers. Very early on, parents learn to recognize their infant's behavior cues.

Your baby uses crying to tell you that she is hungry, has a wet diaper, or wants to be comforted. When your baby cries, the important thing is to respond to her.

You will learn what your baby sounds like when she is crying to tell you she has needs that she wants met. This type of crying will differ from the way she cries when she is in distress. If she is in distress, her crying will most likely be louder and at a higher pitch than her regular crying. The most important thing is to respond to your baby and you will quickly learn the difference.

## Helping Big Brother or Sister Adjust

**I**f you have children other than your new baby, you need to make a special effort to help them to adjust to baby. Sometimes, when you bring a new baby home, older brothers and sisters can be jealous. As they get older, this can lead to competition and arguing. This is called sibling rivalry.

With a new baby, older children may become aggressive or have tantrums. They may also begin acting more like a baby, such as wanting a bottle or wetting their pants. Younger children may have more trouble getting used to a new baby. They still rely heavily on their parents and have been used to more attention.

No matter what the age of big brother or sister, they must understand that they are never, ever allowed to hurt the baby. Talk with them about how they can express their feelings if they are hurt or angry. There are also things that you can do with older children to help them adjust to their new baby brother or sister.



*Your 4-Month-Old Baby*



- Spend one-on-one time with each older child.
- Make sure adults and other visitors to your home spend time with your older children. Don't allow everyone to focus only on the baby.
- Give big brother or sister a special job to help you take care of baby.
- Talk to your children about how they feel, even if their feelings are negative.
- Make sure that your older children have special things of their own that they do not have to share with the baby.
- Read a book to all of your children.
- Spend time together as a family and encourage your older children to interact with the baby.

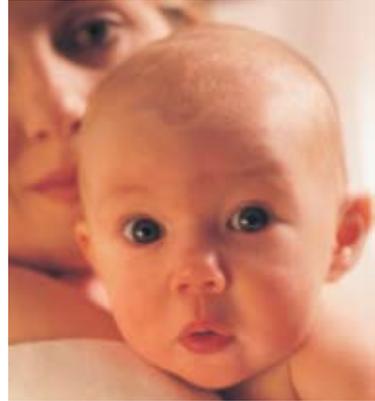
## It Takes a Family To Raise a Child

Grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors, and anyone else who is important in your life all have a role to play. These people are your family.

Involving brothers and sisters in the care of the baby can help address sibling rivalry. Praise older brothers and sisters for their help. Praise raises self-esteem.

Babies learn from those around them. Surrounding baby with loving people can increase her opportunities to learn.

Family members and others can also provide an important break for mom and dad.



## Where To Find Help

You are not alone. Many organizations can help you keep your baby healthy and safe. They are there to provide support to all parents.

**Health Insurance:** If you are eligible for Medicaid, your baby can get free checkups. You can call your local social welfare, health, or family services office to see if you qualify for Medicaid or State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) services. To learn more about free or low-cost health insurance for children, you can call the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Insure Kids Now Program at 1-877-KIDS-NOW (1-877-543-7669). You can also visit their Web site at [www.insurekidsnow.gov](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov).

**Food and Nutrition/WIC:** Families who are enrolled in the WIC program (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) can get information on breastfeeding, formula feeding, and nutrition at their local WIC office. Families eligible for WIC receive nutrition counseling and supplemental foods, such as baby formula, milk, and cereal. To find the WIC office nearest you, call your state health department or visit the WIC Web site at [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic).

**Education:** For information about early childhood education programs, call the Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) or visit [www.ed.gov/parents/earlychild/ready/resources.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/earlychild/ready/resources.html).

**Child Care:** To learn about child care options, call the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246 or visit [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org).

**Postpartum Depression:** For more information and resources on postpartum depression, breastfeeding, and many other women's health issues, call The National Women's Health Information Center at 1-800-994-9662 or visit [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov).

**Breastfeeding:** To learn more about breastfeeding, call La Leche League at 1-800-LALECHE (1-800-525-3243) or visit [www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org).



**Poison Control:** The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) poison control hotline, 1-800-222-1222, should be on your list of emergency numbers. To learn more, you can visit the AAPCC Web site at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org).

**Car Seats:** For information on resources that help families purchase or borrow child car seats, call the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at 1-800-424-9393 or visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). Always test the seat to make sure it is installed correctly.

**Safety:** To learn more about safety, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 or visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

**Child Abuse—Preventing and Helping:** For information on how to prevent or stop child abuse—or for help in a crisis, you can contact the Childhelp USA National Abuse Hotline. Call 1-800-422-4453 or go to [www.childhelpusa.org/report\\_hotline.htm](http://www.childhelpusa.org/report_hotline.htm).

Remember to also take time for yourself. Your baby will be happier with happy parents. **Try to do healthy things that make you feel good!**

## Coming Next Month

*Is Your Baby Teething?*

*Your Baby's Sleep*

*Playtime Is Learning Time*

... and much more!



