

3 MONTHS



Your Baby...

- Raises head and chest when on tummy
- Opens and closes hands
- Reaches for dangling objects
- Grasps and shakes toys
- Pushes down with legs and tries to bear some weight
- Begins to imitate sounds
- Recognizes familiar objects and parents
- Smiles socially
- Begins to develop hand eye coordination
- Brings both hands together
- Shows interest in circular and spiral patterns
- Kicks legs energetically
- Holds head up with control

As a baby:

When I'm awake, sometimes Mommy puts me on my tummy. I like to raise my head and look around. After a while, my head feels heavy and I get tired of being on my tummy. I get mad because I can't quite roll onto my back by myself. If I have something interesting to see, it helps me feel a little happier. I like to see my daddy's face or even a mirror where I can see another baby looking back at me. When I've had too much and get really angry, my parents gently turn me onto my back or pick me up.

When I'm lying on my back, I love to look around. I especially like having toys dangling over me. I watch them move back and forth, and I try to grab them! My hands are so fascinating! I open and shut them and love watching my fingers move back and forth. I try to bring my hands together, and when I do, I kick my legs excitedly. I'm so proud!

I'm getting better about controlling when I am asleep and awake. I can sleep for a longer time at night before I wake up with a hungry tummy. I'm sort of interested in other people besides Mommy and Daddy now too. Big brother is this crazy running-around small person. He is fascinating! The sights, sounds and smells of the whole world are just amazing. Now that I'm awake I can experience it all.

But nothing is better or more comforting than the way my family gently holds me and talks to me. They read me books and sing songs to me; they play peek-a-boo and help my legs do Wheels on the Bus. They are so funny! I feel so warm and loved when they snuggle me and feed me and say my name in a soft gentle voice. I feel safe and loved when they take care of me; I even smile and try to talk to them!



As a parent:

I am really enjoying my three-month-old! She doesn't cry nearly as much. She's still tiny and needs to eat and sleep often, but oh we are in love! She smiles and coos, and prefers me to people she doesn't know. I feel like I know what she needs and am able to provide her with it. It's really great now that we understand each other and have a bit more predictable schedule. I'm relieved that we've made it through the 'newborn' time, and I have more confidence in my own parenting skills.

My baby likes to be held upright now and holds her head well, so she usually likes cradling only for a feeding. She seems to like to look at toys and her fingers and is starting to realize she could reach and grab with those fingers. Her gaze follows her interest. She likes to lie and play on her tummy for a short while and holds her head and chest up, but then she gets mad. I guess she gets tired using her muscles to hold herself up.

Recently, my baby has gone from pooping several times a day to pooping once a day or only every other day. Her pediatrician said this is a normal change for this age. She still spits up some. I feel like she's more content being set down on her play mat or in her bouncer or swing for a short while. I get things done as quickly as possible and then pick her up to reconnect and have some loving time.

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Reflection

RETURNING TO WORK?

While you are happier things seem to be getting a bit easier, you are probably still tired. Important decisions may seem overwhelming. Most parents struggle with decisions about returning to work or staying home, finding a sitter to come to their house, or in-home day care versus a large day care center. A lot of families try to adjust their schedules so that one parent or the other is at home with the baby as much as possible. This crazy balancing act is a source of hardship for many families in our society. As soon as you think you have it figured out, your baby will get his first cold and throw your plans out the window! Hopefully you have sick time saved up and work in a family-friendly company. If you don't, think about extended family or friends as an option for keeping your little one for a day or two until he is better.

If you have been nursing and are now returning to the full-time work force, you may be reexamining your baby's feeding situation. Will you pump bottles while you are at work? Will you go to your child's day care over your lunch hour to feed him? Have you decided to wean from the breast and move to formula full time? Any of these can be accomplished! If you are determined to keep nursing, speak with your employer and your child's care provider about this priority, so they can be on board, and you can do just that. This might be an easier time to wean to a bottle than a few months from now, so if that is what you choose, your baby will probably adjust well.

YOUR UNIQUE BABY

Another battle you will face as a parent is the constant comparison we seem to make of one baby to another. From the day your baby is born, people talk about her in terms of weight, length, if she is "easy" or "hard." Your friend may tell you how wonderful it is to have her baby on a schedule, and how great she feels now that she sleeps through the night. This is particularly annoying to hear if your sweetie sleeps and eats at different times each day and still wakes every hour and a half through the night, leaving you with major sleep deprivation. While you love your baby just the way she is, it feels lousy to have all of these judgments placed on your baby from the moment she comes into our world. Try not to take it too seriously when parents brag about how easy-going their three-month-old is compared to yours. These comparisons will continue on for years to come, so adapt a practice of hearing these accomplishments with a dose of humor. No baby is perfect. She may be hard to keep happy, and she may not be the first of her peers to take steps or use words. Babies are individuals too, with strengths and weaknesses, just like the rest of us. Love your little one because of and despite all she is. Help her grow in her challenges and don't compare her.



3 MONTHS

Our Professional Opportunity...

You have successfully supported this family through the newborn period. Some of the challenges of the newborn, such as fussiness and erratic sleep schedules, may persist for some families. But even in those cases, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Parents have learned about what works (and what doesn't) and have incorporated this learning into what they do everyday. Bouncing and walking a crying baby has become second nature to parents when they have done it every day for three months.

But having passed this milestone opens the door for parents to see the next stage of infancy. Observing the baby together with parents at this stage will give them an opportunity to see their child's progress. When you are together, ask the parent to show you how the baby does with tummy time. You can comment on her strong neck and shoulders. When she becomes frustrated, you can affirm the parent's effort to give her just a taste of tummy time several times each day before turning her onto her back.

Another opportunity is to watch how she interacts with a toy. Does she focus on it? Does she look like she is getting ready to reach for it? Her own hands are an amazing toy at this time, and you and the parent can observe her looking at them. Most babies at this age do a fair amount of social smiling, so watch for the opportunity to affirm this interchange when it occurs between parent and child. Comment on how the baby and parent seem to mould into one another as babies are held. Parents usually demonstrate how well they know their baby's preference for how he wants to be held by this time.

Do all you can to promote the parent's responsiveness to her baby at this time. Babies are so encouraged by their parents' responses, and your affirmation may increase those. These little interactions are the foundation for how parents and children will communicate for years to come.

If you have the opportunity, watch the parent breast or bottle feed the baby. During this time, when babies pause in their "suck, suck, suck, pause" rhythm of feeding, parents usually do something to stimulate the baby to continue sucking. Parents may jiggle the bottle or pat the baby's bottom. You will notice that the baby is watching the parent when this happens. You can affirm for the parent that this is really the root of conversation. The baby is learning that he does something with his mouth, and then his parent does something. By his interactions during feeding, parents are teaching their babies about language and conversation.

If a parent is returning to work at this time, listen for her feelings about that. Some parents are eager to return to a job where they felt some mastery, or where they had a social network. Some parents are grieving giving up the care of their child to another person. In truth, most parents are feeling both ways. Your job in this entry to child care is two-fold: First you can help the parent make a decision about a child care placement. You may be in a position to assist with finding high-quality child care. You may have knowledge about potential child care settings in your community which will be helpful. You can share information about what to look for as indicators of quality. http://www.babycenter.com/0_how-to-find-good-daycare_5924.bc

Your second job in supporting a family who is returning to work is to listen and help process the parents' feelings. Sometimes a parent is feeling guilt about returning to work, and having the chance to talk about these feelings with someone who will not pass judgment is a great gift. Parents can be assured that other parents feel the same way. If they are worried that their baby will fall in love with his caregiver, they can be assured that babies always love their parents best!