



PARENTING WITH SUCCESS NEWSLETTER

From 6 Weeks to 4 Months



YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT FROM 6 WEEKS TO 4 MONTHS

Brain Development

Look for your baby to:

- Bring fist into line of vision and study it
- Bat at objects with both hands
- Begin to grasp objects and bring to mouth
- Explore objects with mouth
- Be very interested in surroundings
- Follow people and objects with eyes

Here's what you can do:

- Give baby a variety of safe objects to grasp
- Remember that much of baby's first learning comes from exploring with the mouth
- Provide objects to bat when baby is lying on back (toys strung across crib rails are dangerous and should be used with supervision only)
- Provide stimulation for your baby's senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch
- Keep talking and singing!
- Place a child-approved unbreakable mirror in crib or hold baby in front of a mirror
- Provide objects and toys with lots of stimulating color and motion
- Give baby supervised tummy time on a bright quilt or blanket with a variety of textures
- This is an important time for baby's visual development. Provide opportunities for baby to focus on objects and to follow objects side to side, up and down, and in and out. (Focusing on a television or other electronic screen DOES NOT help with baby's eye development!)

PREMATURE BABIES

If your baby was born earlier than expected, developmental milestones may be "off schedule" a bit. Don't be concerned if your premature baby isn't doing all of these things yet. You may need to save this newsletter for a few weeks and then check again.

Language Development

Look for your baby to:

- Enjoy sounds
- Recognize the voices of important people
- Talk to you by cooing, gurgling and squealing
- Listen to himself or herself make sounds when alone
- Turn toward a sound
- Use saliva to make noises

Here's what you can do:

- Use self talk — talk to your baby about what you are doing
- Use parallel talk — describe what your baby is doing, seeing, hearing
- Show things to your baby and name them
- Provide toys that make sounds
- Play music for your baby
- Imitate your baby's attempts at making sounds
- Show simple books or pictures to your baby and talk about them
- Shake a rattle or ring a bell beside and behind baby (out of sight). He or she should turn toward the sound



Social-Emotional Development

Look for your baby to:

- Suck to calm herself or himself
- Recognize family members and other significant people
- Cry to have needs met
- Smile on purpose
- Enjoy attention and affection
- Giggle and laugh

Here's what you can do:

- Reward baby's smile by smiling back
- Make sure to smile at your baby even if baby doesn't smile back yet
- Provide lots of eye contact, especially when feeding or playing with baby
- Let baby know from your voice, face and your touch that you love him or her
- Babies whose cries are answered quickly actually cry less; you cannot spoil a baby at this age
- Baby still needs lots of sucking; allow her or him to suck thumb, fingers or pacifier
- Gentle stroking or massaging can be calming to a baby
- Feeding time is learning time; hold baby when feeding — do not prop bottle (propping or putting baby to bed with a bottle is a choking hazard and can harm ears and teeth)

Physical Development

Look for your baby to:

- Develop his or her body from head to toe. Baby will first gain better control over the head and upper body
- Move arms and hands; bring hands together
- Push and kick with both legs
- Unclench fists and use them to grasp and bat objects purposely
- Lift and turn head when on his or her stomach
- Look intently at objects; follow moving objects
- May begin to roll to one side or roll over

Here's what you can do:

- Use a crib gym or floor gym to encourage reaching and batting. Remember that toys stretched across crib rails should be used only with supervision
- Give baby lots of supervised floor time to encourage stretching and kicking, which strengthens muscles
- When baby is on his or her tummy, put bright toys or a safety mirror directly in front of him or her to encourage head and chest control
- Place baby on tummy on your chest when you are on your back. Baby will lift his or her head to see your face
- Encourage rolling by placing baby on his or her side

ALL BABIES ARE DIFFERENT

All babies develop at their own rates. Notice your child's growth in each area so you can encourage each new stage. Your job is to provide opportunities for your child to learn new things when he or she is ready, without being pushed or pressured. If you have concerns, contact your health care provider or the family life education office at Avera, 605-322-3660.



LET'S MAKE IT SAFE

PRODUCT RECALLS

All parents should monitor recalls of children's products (toys, equipment, clothing, etc.). We recommend the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which will either email you periodic updates on product recalls or send a newsletter by mail. Visit cpsc.gov.

TOYS FOR BABY

Toy selection is an adult responsibility that should not be taken for granted! Due to the tremendous number of toy manufacturers, toy products and toys made in other countries, parents cannot assume that all toys on the market are safe. Because babies first learn by putting items in their mouths, the biggest concern for infant play materials is choking. Check toys for small pieces that may break off. Be sure toys do not have rough or sharp edges. Immediately discard any plastic packaging and wire twist ties from a new toy. A new concern is hazardous metals like lead (often found in paints that may be used on a toy). Pay close attention to country of origin.

[Learn more: Toy Safety](#)

OUTGROWING THE INFANT SEAT

As physical strength develops, baby will start to wiggle and lean forward in an infant seat. It is probably time to put away the infant seat and look at other options.

Baby walkers were removed from the market for a time due to injuries caused by the walker collapsing, the walker causing babies to fall down stairs, and finger injuries from hinge mechanisms.

Baby walkers also gave babies increased mobility, giving them more access to dangerous objects and situations. Stationary activity centers without wheels (saucers, rigid baby seats, etc.) may be a better alternative. These items give baby a chance to be upright for a time without increasing their mobility and access to danger.

Whatever option you choose, limit time of usage to two hours per day to protect neck muscles and foot development. Babies still need lots of floor time for physical development. Too much upright time does not follow the natural sequence of development. Remember — baby still needs to be supervised when using this type of equipment. Be cautious when using hand-me-down items or items purchased at thrift shops and garage sales. They may not meet current safety standards.

FIRE SAFETY

With a new baby in the house, it's time to rethink your home fire safety plan. Develop a plan that includes escape routes from any room your baby might be in at any time of the day. Make sure smoke detectors are working and batteries are ALWAYS charged and in place. Use fire retardant sleepwear and bedding for your baby.

[Learn more: Fire Safety](#)

BATH SAFETY

Whether you use the kitchen sink, a special baby bathtub or the big bathtub, keep in mind these safety tips for bathing your baby:

- Water temperature should not be greater than 100 degrees F. Your water heater should be turned to a medium setting (120 degrees F) to avoid scald burns. Even if you use a bath thermometer of some type, always check with your hands as well.
- Keep the water shallow. A baby can drown in less than 2 inches of water.
- Hold the baby securely at all times. Babies at this age are very wiggly and slippery! Never leave a baby unattended in the tub for any length of time.
- Adults should make sure they bend from the knee, not the waist and use the stronger leg muscles when leaning over a tub. Lift, then twist; avoid lifting and twisting at the same time.

CHANGING TABLE SAFETY

Wherever you change your baby's diaper, keep in mind these safety tips:

- Never leave a baby unattended for any length of time when changing, whether on a bed, couch or changing table.
- If using a changing table, make sure it meets safety standards. Visit cpsc.gov or aap.org for information.
- If using baby powder, avoid brands containing talcum (zinc stearate). This can harm your baby's lungs. Choose a powder with a corn starch base, shake into your hand and then onto baby. Use a small amount.

HEALTH HINTS

LITTLE BODIES NEED BIG NUTRITION

Starting Solids

Breastmilk or formula is usually all babies need in the first six months. Your health care provider can advise you on when to start solids. Generally, a baby should meet all criteria before starting on solid food:

- Able to sit with support
- Good head and neck control
- Shows an interest in food
- Is able to keep some food in the mouth (loss of tongue thrust reflex)
- Doubled birth weight (or at least 13 pounds)
- Taking more than 32 ounces of formula or more than 8-10 breast feedings and still acting hungry

Adding cereal when baby is too young can increase risk for allergies and possibly the development of diabetes. Adding cereal will not necessarily help your child sleep longer at night.

WARNING: Honey is harmful to babies. Do not feed honey to babies until they are at least 12 months old. A young baby's immature immune system and intestinal tract cannot handle a harmful spore that can be present in honey.

Learn more: [Children's Nutrition Guide](#) and [Feeding Guide for Healthy Infants](#)

Bottle Tips

If your baby is bottle fed, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Never prop your baby's bottle. This not only can be a choking hazard, it can also deny baby important bonding/learning time with you.
- Do not put baby to bed with a bottle. The sugars in the milk can pool around baby's developing teeth and cause decay, even if teeth have not yet appeared.
- Warming bottles in the microwave is not recommended. The uneven heating of the microwave can cause hot spots and burn a baby's mouth.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Childhood immunizations are important! Talk to your baby's health care provider to set up a schedule of immunizations for your child.

SMOKING AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Second-hand smoke is one of the most common and most harmful environmental dangers for children, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at greater risk for:

- Asthma
- Respiratory infections
- Decreased lung growth
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Childhood cancers

This exposure is most dangerous for the youngest children because they spend more time with the smoking parent and have immature lungs.

If you are a smoker, now might be a good time to consider quitting. In the meantime, do not smoke in the house or car. When you go outside to smoke, wear a jacket or coat and hat, and then remove these garments before handling your baby. Wash your hands thoroughly. The harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke can linger on your clothes, skin and hair.



BABY PLAYTIME

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

You Are Your Baby's Favorite Toy!

Baby recognizes your voice and your face and loves to look at you and listen to you. When baby is on your lap facing you (8-12 inches away), smile and talk happily to baby. Exaggerated movements of your mouth, eyes and eyebrows attract baby's attention. If baby makes a sound, repeat it. If baby turns away, wait a minute for him or her to turn back; sometimes baby just needs a little break. Give baby this kind of attention without the competition from screens (TV, cellphone, computer, etc.)!

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO READ TO YOUR BABY!

Choose books with high contrast and simple pictures. Use sturdy books that baby can handle. Even though your baby can't understand the words yet, he or she loves the sound of your voice. Looking at the pictures helps develop eye muscles. Reading is a way to begin to teach your baby about language. Remember, singing is just another form of story telling!

[Learn more: Tips for Reading to Your Child](#)

Get your baby off to a great start with reading by enrolling in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library through the Sioux Empire United Way. Your child will receive a FREE book every month until age 5! You must live or work in Minnehaha, Lincoln, Turner or McCook county in South Dakota to be eligible. Contact seuw.org or call 605-336-2095.

If you live outside of this area, visit imaginationlibrary.com to see if there is a program available for you.

CHILDCARE DECISIONS

Back to Work or Staying Home

Parents need to think about what situation is best for themselves and their child. Financial considerations will have an effect on this decision. If you choose to return to work and use childcare for your baby, the most important thing is to find a high-quality childcare environment. The childcare provider should enjoy caring for children and babies and should have an understanding of child development. For information on choosing childcare in the Sioux Empire area, contact the Help!Line Center by dialing 211.



THINKING ABOUT GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

NEVER SHAKE A BABY!

All parents have moments of frustration when their baby cries.

Sometimes it's hard to know what the baby needs. Remember, crying is the baby's only way to communicate. The baby is not trying to provoke you and is not saying that you are a bad parent. If you are feeling very frustrated and angry with your baby, try these tips:

- Feed baby slowly, try burping or changing the baby
- Allow baby to suck on a pacifier
- Check for fever or other signs of illness
- If nothing seems to work, put the baby in a safe place like a crib and take a break. Go to another room and watch television, call a friend, listen to music, etc. (Always check on baby every 15-20 minutes)
- Find a trusted relative or friend to relieve you for a short time

Abusive Head Trauma, formerly known as Shaken Baby Syndrome, occurs when a parent or caregiver gets so frustrated and angry that they lose control. Make sure you or anyone caring for your baby never gets to that point. Never shake, hit or handle your baby roughly. Ask for help!

CAN RESPONDING TO A CRYING BABY SPOIL A BABY?

Crying is a baby's way to let you know that he or she needs something. Parents should work on trying to identify the baby's different cries and what they mean. Responding quickly and successfully to your baby's cries will actually result in a baby who cries less. This baby has learned to trust you to meet his or her needs!

MOMMIES MATTER; DADS DO, TOO

Baby Blues

The baby blues are typical in the first few weeks after giving birth. If you are still feeling sad or hopeless, cry often, have difficulty sleeping or taking care of your baby, or just feel that things are not right, contact your health care provider. Post-partum depression is a very real medical condition and can be successfully treated using a variety of therapies.

Daddy Rocks!

In today's world we understand that babies are not just the responsibility of moms. We know that children grow better and are better adjusted when fathers are actively involved in their care. Even though Dads might do things a little differently than moms, they can be just as good at caring for babies.

