

First Steps

PARENTING IN THE FIRST YEAR
WEXFORD, MISSAUKEE & NORTHERN OSCEOLA COUNTIES



1-2
Months

What is Baby Like?

If your baby doesn't have much hair, has short arms and legs and a head that looks too big, your baby looks pretty normal! Baby might not be what you expected, though.

Maybe you didn't get the boy or girl you wanted, or maybe the baby just doesn't fit the picture of the "dream baby" you thought about during pregnancy or saw in magazines and on television.

It can take time to get used to the baby you do have. Some parents love their new arrival right away, others have to get to know the baby better. That's normal.

It's a little bit scary at first to care for a tiny infant, but you'll gain confidence with time.



Children with special needs may not develop at the same rate as other kids, but they can still enjoy many of the same activities that can be adapted to meet the needs of the child.

IN THIS ISSUE

- What your baby wants you to know
- Why does baby cry?
- Feeding your baby
- Car seats
- Crib safety



Be Patient with Yourself

Becoming a parent is an exciting change in your life. But it will take time to feel comfortable in your important new role. Parents and babies learn together. Don't expect to know how to handle everything overnight.

During the first few weeks after your baby is born, you may be surprised by your strong feelings. You may feel down or on the verge of tears at times for no reason. You may also feel thrilled, proud or on top of the world. Some of these feelings may come from the changes that your body goes through to get back to normal.

Most parents have these types of feelings. You will recover your energy and good humor in time. Meanwhile, keep your days as simple as possible. Ask nothing of yourself but the basics. Plan to nap when your baby does. Be flexible.

When you are having a rough time, talk to your partner, a family member or a good friend about your feelings. It helps to talk with someone close to you or with someone who has been through the same experience. There are also new-parent groups in most areas.

Every Baby Is Different

Watch your baby closely, and see how she reacts. Is baby very active? Does she sleep and eat regularly, or do her habits change from day to day? Is she content, or does she cry a lot? Your baby can give you clues about the way she likes to be handled.

If your baby acts the way you expect, parenting may come a little easier.

Busy, active parents may understand a wiry, active baby better than a very sleepy, quiet one. Calm, mellow parents may understand a happy, alert baby better than an active, jumpy one.

If you didn't get the type of baby you expected, don't despair! It may take a little more work, but getting to know your baby is worth it.

Equal Time...

This series gives equal time to both sexes. That's why we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." Keep in mind that we are talking about all children when we use "he" or "she," "him" or "her."



Warning:

Honey is Harmful for Babies!

Babies less than one year old should never be fed honey. Honey has spores in it that can cause a disease called "Infant Botulism." Older children have more highly developed intestinal tracts, so honey is safe for them.



Children develop at different rates. Talk with your child's doctor, nurse or educator if you have concerns with delays in growth and development.



Your Baby Wants You To Know

- I like to look at your face, bright colors, mirrors and patterns.
- I feel comforted when you hold me and talk to me.
- I stare at things, but I don't grab for them yet.
- Loud noise, bright light and rough handling scare me.
- I quiet when someone picks me up and cuddles me.
- Please change my position sometimes so I can look at different things.

Who is Important to Baby?

There are many people besides mom and dad who will be important in your child's life. Here are just a few:

Brothers and Sisters: It may be hard for older brothers and sisters to get used to a new baby, especially at first. Infants need lots of attention, and sometimes it can feel like there's no time for anyone else. A good way to provide some special time for an older child is to give her a set of special toys only brought out at baby's feeding time.

If an older child wants to help with the baby, he or she can fetch diapers, talk or sing to the baby and draw pictures to hang by baby's crib or changing table. Change the display each week! Don't leave a child younger than 4 years old alone with a baby. Young children don't know that babies can be easily hurt.

Grandparents: Baby's grandparents may have time to spend visiting and/or helping with the new baby. Even if they live far away, they may have good advice on things like colic or laundry.

But sometimes it's hard for grandparents to see their own children as parents, especially with a new baby. You may get more advice than you want! You can always listen and then, if it isn't what you plan to do, say nothing, or say, "Thank you, but I think I'll do it this way," or, "The doctor says to do this."

Things may have changed a lot since your parents had a baby, and some of their advice may not be right anymore. It's up to you and your partner to decide what's best for your baby.

Child Care Providers: They are like family to your infant. Pick your provider carefully. We'll say more next issue.

Why Does Baby Cry?



Hungry — Babies often cry when they're hungry.

Lonely — If baby calms and stays calm as soon as you pick him up, he missed you! Remember, baby was in a snugly womb, hearing a heart beat for 9 months. Baby's need for closeness is very real. You can't spoil a baby by cuddling him when he needs it, or when you need it.

Cold/Hot — Feel baby's back or tummy to see if he is too cool or too hot. Adjust clothing to make him comfortable. Dress baby like yourself or one layer warmer.

Overstimulated— Lots of people bouncing or talking to the baby at once may overdo it. Give baby some calm and quiet. Rocking him in a dimly lit room may help.

Undressed — Put a cloth on baby's tummy until you redress him.

Startled — Baby may move suddenly, startle and cry. Wrapping a blanket securely around him and holding him firmly may calm him.

Wet Diapers — Some babies don't mind; others do.

Pain — Baby may be ill or uncomfortable because a pin is pricking him or his clothes have sharp edges or zippers.

Sleepiness — Some babies need to fuss a bit before sleeping.

Some Babies Develop Colic

Colicky babies have tummy pains and loud, piercing cries. These cries can last a few minutes or several hours, usually at the same time each day. Sometimes a colicky baby won't stop crying even after you've tried the usual things. **It's not your fault, or the baby's fault.** Try these ideas:

- Lay baby across your knees-- rub or pat her back.
- Rock baby at 60 rocks per minute — a slow adult walk, or use an infant swing. Walk with her tucked under your arm, with your hand under her tummy. Or, hold baby so she can look around to see things.
- Try changing her bath time to evening.
- Give the evening feeding with baby upright, not lying down. Burp her well to get air out of her tummy.
- Offer a pacifier. Sucking helps relax her stomach.
- Go for a ride in the car, putting her in a car seat.
- Sing to her or play soft music. Sometimes a vacuum cleaner, fan or radio tuned to static may help calm her.
- Talk to baby's doctor to see if he or she has other ideas.

Crying is a Call for HELP

Crying means baby needs your help. During the first few months, she can't control when she starts to cry. She cries only when in need and can't stop until those needs are met or she's too tired to go on.

Studies show that parents who responded quickly to their baby's cries had babies who later cried less often and for shorter times. These babies had more energy for learning and interacting with people.

When You've Had Enough

Sometimes it may seem like your baby never stops crying. This can be very stressful and hard to listen to, but don't take your angry feelings out on baby — he can't help it.

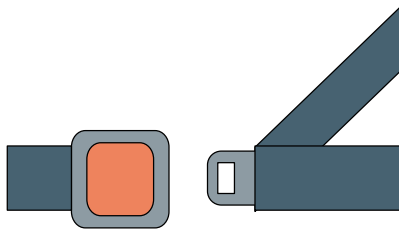
If you've tried everything and the baby still cries, try this: Put the baby in his crib and shut the door. Take a shower or vacuum. You won't hear him, and the noise might calm your baby. Look in on him every 15 minutes.

Call a friend or relative and ask one to watch your baby for half an hour or an hour. Everyone needs a break like this at times.

If you think baby is ill, call your doctor or health department.



Never shake a baby. This can cause blindness, brain damage, or death.



Buckle Up Baby Too

Each year, infants and toddlers die in car accidents. Don't let this happen to your baby.

Laws in most states require children younger than two years ride in a child car safety seat. In Michigan, children under one must ride in a child safety seat. One- to four-year-olds must be in a safety seat if in the front seat or buckled in with a seat belt in the back seat.

Using a car seat is the only way to protect your baby in a moving car. Infants less than 20 pounds and 26 inches long must face the rear. The car seat will hold baby safely in most crashes. If you hold the baby on your lap, a crash could rip the child from your arms and throw him into the dashboard with the same force as a fall from a three-story building. The child could also be crushed between your body and the dashboard or be thrown out a car window.

Everyone riding in a car should wear a seat belt and a shoulder harness if available. Any person or object not strapped down could be thrown into and injure your baby. Tool boxes or other heavy objects become dangerous flying missiles in a crash or even a sudden stop. Keep them in the trunk or on the floor of the car.



Please don't smoke.

There's a baby in the house.

No baby should ever be exposed to tobacco smoke. It's immediately harmful to babies with breathing problems, and it can bring about illness for all babies later on.

To protect your baby, use car seats correctly:

1. Put baby in the seat. Be sure the straps are snug and over her shoulders. Don't put thick blankets under the baby. If it's cold, put baby in a snowsuit, with blankets on top of the straps.
2. Place the car seat so it faces out the back window. Fasten the car's seat belt through the slots. Never set a rear-facing infant car seat forward.
3. A car seat can only protect your baby if you use it on EVERY ride. You may be a very safe and careful driver, but you can't be sure of the other drivers on the road. Many car accidents occur within two miles of home at speeds less than 30 miles per hour.
4. If the car is equipped with an air bag, never use a rear facing car seat in the front seat.



Car Seat for Baby

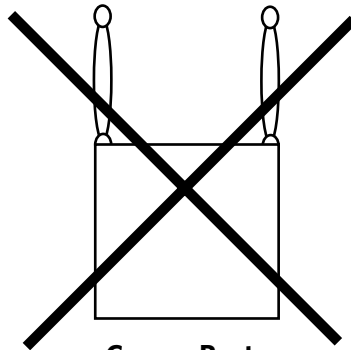
Contact the OASIS/Family Resource Center at (231) 775-7299 to find out more about the Wexford-Missaukee Car Seat program.

Crib Safety

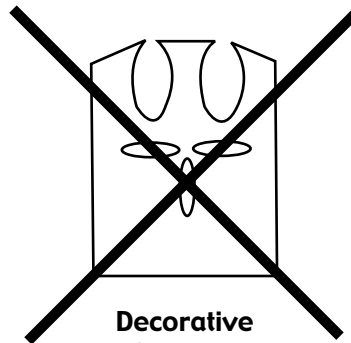
Crib accidents have seriously injured and even killed babies. Look for these things when shopping for cribs:

- Slats should be no more than 2-3/8 inches apart, so baby can't wiggle through, become trapped and choke.
- If the paint contains lead, strip and repaint the crib. Cribs manufactured after 1977 are NOT painted with lead paint.
- Be sure there are no sharp metal edges or splinters.
- Crib sides should be high enough so baby can't fall or roll out, even when the sides are down.
- The manufacturer's name and crib's model or code number should be permanently labeled on the crib in case there is a recall.
- The mattress should fit tightly against all four sides of the crib. If you can fit two or more fingers between the mattress and the sides, get a better-fitting mattress.
- Bumper pads should be tied in place with six or more straps. Do not use a pillow. It could cause choking.

- Don't buy a used crib with plastic latches holding up the mattress. If a latch breaks, one corner can slip down and baby can get his head caught under the side.
- Don't buy a crib with decorative cut-outs or corner posts that stick up more than half an inch above the crib's sides. A baby can get his neck or clothing caught and choke.
- Place baby on side or back for sleeping unless your physician has directed otherwise. (See article on SIDS to the right.)



Corner Posts Too High



Decorative Cut-outs

What about SIDS?

SIDS, also called Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, is when a healthy baby dies during sleep. SIDS peaks between the ages of 2 and 4 months and then declines. No cause is known, but it is suspected that causes could include: existence of a brain abnormality combined with a lack of oxygen, repeated exposure to tobacco smoke, increased carbon dioxide levels, or an infection.

What you can do:

- Make sure nothing interferes with the baby's oxygen supply.
- In general, put baby to sleep on his or her back. However, always check with a doctor as to which sleeping position is best for your baby. Because of certain medical conditions, baby may need to be placed in various positions to sleep.
- Put baby to sleep on a firm, smooth surface.
- Give her tummy time when she is awake.
- Make sure pillows, comforters, and animals stay away while she sleeps.
- Babies should be kept warm, but they should not be allowed to get too warm. Keep the temperature in your baby's room so that it feels comfortable to you.

Language Development

Early Communication

Your baby does not yet understand language but will respond to loud noises with a startle and to your voice by becoming quiet. By three months of age babies will turn their heads then they hear a voice or an interesting sound.

From the very beginning, parents and their babies become partners in “conversation.” They create a pattern of turn-taking which is basic to communication.

A good example of early turn taking between an infant and mother occurs at feeding time. While feeding, mother and newborn look at one another: when the baby is actively sucking, the mother is passive. She continues to look at her baby. When the baby stops sucking briefly, the mother becomes active, cooing and talking to the baby. Finally when the baby starts to suck again, the mother quiets and continues looking.

The mother fits her behavior to her baby's behavior, each one taking a turn. Turn taking is the basis of a conversation.

Make Your Baby's World More Interesting

Your baby has all the same senses you do. Even at birth, babies can see, hear, smell and touch.

Vision

Babies prefer to look at faces. For the first few weeks of life, they see best at a distance of 8 to 12 inches— about the distance between your face and their when you hold them close to feed or to talk to them.

Babies may follow moving objects with their eyes for a few seconds. During the first weeks their head will turn to the side when they lie down, so hang mobiles from the side of the crib, not from the top. Bright colors, high-contrast patterns and shiny things are more interesting to babies than pale colors.

Hearing

Infants may turn their heads toward the source of an interesting noise. They prefer high-pitched, gentle voices. When your baby is upset, soft music may help calm her.

Smell

Even babies react to smells. Strong, harsh smells may make your baby turn her head away and cry. By one week of age, babies know the smell of their own nursing mothers.



Touch

Touching is very important to babies. Being held close and cuddled helps babies know that their world is a friendly place. In fact, studies have shown that babies who are held for more hours each day cry much less than babies who aren't held as much. Hold your baby, or use a frontpack. Being in your arms and hearing your heart beat make your baby feel safe.

Cuddle and hold your baby whenever you want to. Don't worry about spoiling her. Babies are supposed to be babied! While you're at it, share a hug with the rest of your family. You'll all feel better for it.

Babies can also sense movement from very early on. Motion, like rocking and walking, helps calm a crying baby. Remember, she spent nine months floating inside the uterus; she's used to rocking and moving around. Holding her upright also lets her look around, so she may cry less.

Feeding Your Baby

Hold your baby so she can see your face when you feed her. Feeding is an important learning time for a new baby. Baby learns which person satisfies her strongest need (hunger) when she can see your face as you feed her.

Schedule or Self-Demand

When a tiny baby needs to eat every two or three hours, it's hard to believe you'll ever get to sleep again! As she gets bigger, she won't need feeding so often.

When should you feed your baby? Watch the clock, but also watch your baby! Babies usually cry when they are hungry. If your feeding schedule is too rigid, you may have to listen to a lot of crying. Be flexible.

Many babies, if fed when they're hungry, will start to get on a regular schedule by themselves in about a month. If your baby is very irregular and doesn't do anything at the same time each day, you may want to try feeding every three to four hours. Wake baby a little early for each feeding to start her on a schedule. If you wait too long, baby may cry, gulp lots of air, and spit up. It may take a little time to work out the details.

Your baby will stop eating when she is full. Don't try to get baby to take more than she wants.

Breastfeeding Tip

Some days it may seem like you don't have enough milk. Babies have growth spurts when they need to nurse more often. This should only last a couple of days, and you don't have to stop breastfeeding. The frequent nursing tells your body to make more milk. Baby is getting enough if there are six very wet diapers a day.

Bottlefeeding Tip

Don't heat bottles in a microwave oven. The bottle may feel cool on the outside but still have hot spots inside that could burn baby's tender mouth. Heat the bottle in a pan, or run it under hot water instead. Test formula on your wrist to check the temperature.



Is it safe to make baby's formula with well water?

Water from many private wells is not safe for infants and pregnant women. In some parts of the midwest, the water in about one out of 10 private wells contains too many nitrates or bacteria.

Nitrates keep a baby's blood from carrying enough oxygen. This is called "blue baby" disease -- babies turn a bluish color around the lips, cheeks, fingernails and toenails.

Boiling water makes nitrates or chemicals MORE concentrated and MORE dangerous.

You can test your water. Ask your local Health Department for a kit. The telephone number is located on the last page of this newsletter.

How much is too much? More than 10 mg. per liter of nitrate nitrogen (NO₃-N) or 45 mg. per liter of nitrate (NO₃) is unsafe for a baby less than 6 months.

If your well has too many nitrates or other chemicals, use bottled water from a safe source until baby is 6 to 12 months old.

When You Need Help

Catholic Human Services	775-6581	Love, Inc.	779-1888
Cradle To Classroom	876-2300	Mercy Hospital	1-800-33-MERCY 876-7200
Child's Doctor	_____	MSU Extension	
Day Care Information (4 C's)	1-800-968-4228	Missaukee	839-4667
District Health Department		Wexford	779-9480
Missaukee	839-7167	North Central Community Mental Health	
.....	825-2040	1-800-49-ALPHA	
Wexford	775-9942	(1-800-492-5742)	
Family Independence Agency		OASIS/Family Resource Center	
Missaukee & Wexford	779-4500	Car Seat Loans	775-7299
.....	1-800-684-2170	Crisis Line	775-7233
Emergency	911	Poison Control	1-800-POISON-1 (1-800-764-7661)
Head Start Enrollment/Information		Wexford-Missaukee ISD	
Cadillac	775-9781	(Intermediate School District)	
Lake City	839-4012	Preschool	876-2300
Manton	824-3385		
Mesick	885-1915		

Talk to me.
Play with me.
Love me.



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