



School Begins at Birth Series

Year One, Month Two

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Dear Parents

Your baby is two months old!

Great, you have survived the first month with your newborn. Are you constantly amazed at the changes you see daily? It may be difficult to keep track of these changes. Infants grow and make more changes in their first year than at any other time in their lives. Proper development in the first 12 months is very important. Your baby is forming the basic groundwork for thinking, walking, talking, and eating. Babies must learn these complicated functions we take for granted as adults.

More and more, research reveals that a child's first year is very important for future success in life. Warm nurturing and proper development in the early years helps children do better in school. Those who miss out on important activities do not do well in school. Success or failure in school shapes a child's thinking and behavior. When children achieve, they are not afraid to try new things because they are usually successful. With success in school, children get positive feedback about themselves and the cycle is complete.

There are countless life experiences that children must face to achieve their maximum potential. Early learning experiences do not just happen automatically. Your child cannot make them occur either. You are the key to making

good things happen for your child. You can arrange even very simple activities. These require only a little extra time. Make sure that your child has the right experiences at the right time. Parents such as you, who care very much about your child, lay the foundation for his or her future.

Consider this: infants enter this world pretty helpless. They cannot care for themselves. They have little control over their bodies. They cannot move around or even roll over. Right at the beginning most infants have some difficulty with eating, digesting food and breathing.

During the first year babies learn what it means to be a person separate from the surrounding world of people and things. So many important changes take place this first year! It is exciting to watch this development.

We know from studying infant growth that all babies acquire certain skills in about the same order. Your baby is unique. His or her skills may appear right on schedule. They may develop more quickly or more gradually than those of other babies. If you recognize these abilities as they appear, you will be able to help your child learn as much as possible.

School Begins at Birth will tell you which activities match your child's age and development. By following these instructions you will provide a warm, stimulating environment for your child.

Mental Development

Between six and eight weeks of age, your infant will exercise some willpower. For example, your baby may pause a while during feeding to observe the things around him or her. This will be a new trick and is a significant event in the learning process. By about eight weeks these pauses come at regular intervals. This gives you a chance to help your child pay attention. Help your baby focus on large colorful objects, your face, voice or touch.

A few years from now a school teacher may say to your child, "Pay attention!" We know it is not as easy as it sounds. The skill of paying attention starts very early, even in the cradle. You can begin to help your child develop this skill while he or she is pausing during feeding.

Emotional Development

At two months of age, your child can communicate with you. Infants tell how they feel through body movements or

"body language." When they smile, wave their arms and kick their feet they express happiness, anger, frustration, contentment. Your child's true social smile is developing. Expressing your feelings through physical movement is a healthy way to deal with emotions. We can all take a lesson from these wise infants. Reward and encourage your child's development with warm, softly voiced responses.

Communication between you and your child occurs during feeding. You communicate whether your infant is breast-fed or bottle-fed. A very important part of feeding is holding and cuddling. During the early months infants sense your love by the way you touch, talk and caress them. These communications of love are the most important messages you can give your child.

Social Development

At one time or another every new parent asks, "How can I really know if my baby is okay?" This tiny, helpless infant has

come into your life with nothing. You know that much of what your child learns is up to you. You have a heavy responsibility. How can you really be sure that your child is growing and behaving in a normal pattern? Unless you have had many experiences with newborns you probably have no way to judge your child's development.

Remember, all babies grow and develop at different paces. They all go through the same stages but at different times. No two children are alike. It is as if all children hear a different drumbeat in their heads and, although each child marches along the same parade route, the beat is different for each marcher.

Careful study of many infants gives experts a vast amount of information about infants' ages and stages of development. Although there really is no such thing as the normal child, most children fall within a range of growth and development.

School Begins at Birth will present the parade route. Your child will hear the beat. Your job is to watch the parade and figure out how your child fits into the line of marchers. If your child is the drum major leading the group, you can provide activities to improve control or high stepping. If your child is slow, you can provide activities to encourage attention, motivation and enjoyment.

Language Development

Your child will learn to talk by listening to you. Talk to your infant as you work and care for your child's needs. Imitate the sound your child makes. Also, get into the habit of using complete sentences: "It is time for your bath. Now I am going to wash your face. Won't it feel good to be squeaky clean? Then you will take a long nap and wake up happy and ready to eat."

Talk, talk, talk. Respond to your child's sounds. When talking, get down to your child's level and establish eye contact.

Your child will be talking back to you through loud cries, soft sounds and arm and leg movements. Try to read that early language and respond to it. Your habit of responding to your child at this stage will encourage future listening and answering skills.

Small Muscle Development

Your child is beginning to use both the small and large muscles. Place a two-month-old on your lap and observe. You will see both hands tightly shut with the thumbs curled closely to the fingers. Sometimes a fist will go toward the mouth. The arms may be out to the front and side with the head turned to one side. Gently turn the baby's head to look into your eyes. He or she probably will move it back to the original position. If you gently turn the head to the opposite side, your child probably will reverse the arm position. The baby straightens the curved arm and curls the straight one. This is a normal infant reflex and occurs only in the first few months of life. It will gradually become less noticeable each succeeding month.

Large Muscle Development

During the second month, your child may enjoy sitting on someone's lap at the end of a meal. If you make a big fuss

when your infant begins to look around, it will make it worth the effort. Your child is beginning to respond to voice and head movements.

As your baby lies in bed, he or she raises both feet at the same time. This is a new trick. Your baby may even rock back and forth. Neck muscles should be stronger allowing your baby to hold up its head for longer periods of time. Reward the effort with happy words, smiles and praise.

Physical Needs

Sleep still occupies most of your child's time but the sleep periods are now a little longer than in the first month. The intervals that your infant is awake and active lengthen. Since every child behaves differently, the length of naps, depth of sleep, and activity during sleep varies. Some may be awake for as many as 10 hours per day. The typical amount of sleep for two-month-olds is 7 hours at night, for 3-4 hours without awakening. During the day your baby will need 7-9 hours of short sleep periods.

Special Note:

As you participate in all of these activities with your baby, you will grow. You are viewing and experiencing life through the eyes of your baby. You can discover the kinds of complex learning required to do all the simple, seemingly automatic tasks you do daily.

By learning to read your baby's nonverbal messages more effectively, you will become increasingly more responsive to your child. You also will gain an invaluable skill to use in other human relationships.

Special Message to New Parents

Having a baby is exciting, courageous and exhausting. In the first few months your baby's needs will interrupt your sleep. You may question your sanity. You may begin to question how you can put in a full day's work on two or three hours of sleep. Nerves become frayed and emotions tense, and you become tired and moody. You may not be sure you even love the baby at times. This too will pass. Your feelings are normal. All new parents have these feelings.

Talk over your feelings; get your feelings out into the open. Try to share as much of your child's care as possible. New mothers sometimes need to leave the house so that fathers can experience the feeling of being the total caregiver.

Health Suggestions for New Mothers

A visit to your doctor about six weeks after delivery can affect your health for the rest of your life. When you visit your doctor he or she will check to see that all your organs are recovering properly and your tears healed. The doctor also will weigh you and may advise a diet.

You will feel better if you look and feel slim. However, this is no time for fad diets. Lose weight and feel better at the same time. Exercise. Eat more salads, fresh fruits, grains, cheese and milk. Cut out empty calorie foods and sweets. Following delivery, exercise is very important to improve muscle tone and general health. Your doctor can recommend exercises to firm your tummy and strengthen your muscles.



At this age, your child will probably prefer the human face over everything else.

Health Suggestions for Your Baby

Parents usually feel easier about the way their baby is growing after a check-up by their doctor. Schedule this visit about six weeks after your baby's birth. Be sure you go, even if everything is going well with your child.

Before your check-up, make a list of all the questions you have about your child's growth and development. Have a notebook handy and jot down your worries as you care for your child.

Because you spend so much time and money on diapers, you may never want to see a diaper again. Disposable diapers are very convenient and required by most child care programs. However, disposable diapers are much more expensive than cloth diapers. Consider the facts. Your baby will wear diapers for at least 2 years. Babies use as many as 10-12 per day. This means 300-350 diapers each month.

Cloth diapers are more work but you will save enough money to buy a washer and dryer. Some consider disposable diapers environmentally unsound. Some states and local governments ban disposable diapers from land fills. Others say washable diapers negatively impact water quality.

Evaluate your priorities of time, money, energy, and environmental concerns. Fit the right diaper selection to your needs. Many parents now choose to use both cloth and disposable diapers. Consider a diaper service, especially when the baby is very young.

Here are some diaper tips.

Change your baby's diaper often. Be sure to change the diaper soon after each bowel movement. Also change the diaper when your baby seems uncomfortable. Disposable diapers are very absorbent. They do not require rubber pants. Therefore babies stay comfortable longer in wet disposable diapers. This means we change disposable diapers less often than cloth diapers. This is why some feel cloth diapers and

cloth training pants are developmentally appropriate later when children are toilet trained.

Wipe your baby's bottom, front and back with a wet towel. Dry baby's bottom before you put on the dry diaper.

After a bowel movement, gently wipe your baby's skin with soft tissue. Wash and rinse baby's bottom. Use cotton balls or disposable tissue so you do not have to reuse unsanitary washcloths. Pat your baby dry with a soft, clean tissue or towel. Old t-shirts make good towels. Cut out the sleeves and use them for face cloths.

Remember, your child has its own ideas about when to eat, sleep and be awake. Your child's schedule may or may not match *yours* so you will have to follow your child in this area.

Some babies cry for feeding every two or three hours day and night. Other babies stretch their feeding schedule to every four or five hours. If your child cries in between, he or she may be wet, too hot or cold, bored, or lonely.

Between two and four months, most babies experience a deeper sleep pattern and begin to sleep through a feeding. If this happens during the day, you may want to wake your child and feed as usual. In this way you may encourage your child to sleep through one of the night feedings.

Doctors express concerns now than ever before about your baby overeating. Avoid giving an extra bottle before bed or feeding cereal too early. It usually does not help your baby's sleep and can start an overeating habit. We now believe that babies are not usually ready for solid food until they reach 13 to 15 pounds. This is at about four months of age.

Immunizations

At two months of age your child will be ready to begin receiving immunizations. These protect against diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella (3-day measles) and polio. Immunizations cause the body to build up antibodies that fight germs and viruses that enter the body. Some diseases require more than one immunization to get complete protection.

Like most medicines, immunizations can cause temporary side effects: a slight fever, a sore arm, a mild rash. Occasionally, side effects can be more serious and, in rare situations, can be very severe. The benefits of immunizations, however, far outweigh the risks. These are serious diseases. They can cause brain damage and mental retardation, paralysis, deafness, blindness and other conditions. Parents have little choice but to immunize their children. Immunization is required for child care and school. Protection begins with the last in the series of immunizations. It is never too late to start the series.

Also, always record your child's immunizations. You will have to show the records before your child enters school. Use the above chart to record your child's immunizations.

Activities for Growth

Babies begin learning from day one. They learn faster and show more interest in their surroundings if you provide interesting things. Empty space and dull colors are boring. Your baby needs nourishment for mental, social, emotional, lingual, and physical growth.

At this age your child will probably prefer the human face over everything else. You may see your baby's eyes stop mov-

Cut Out and Save

IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE

Recommended Age	Diphtheria/Pertussis/ Tetanus	Polio	Measles/Mumps Rubella	Date Given
2 months	✓	✓		
4 months	✓	✓		
6 months	✓	✓		
15 months			✓	
18 months	✓	✓		
4-6 years	✓	✓		
14-16 years	Diphtheria/Tetanus			
Every 10 years	Tetanus			

ing, looking vacant or sleepy, and then focus on your face. At six weeks of age, your baby likes faces with detail. At eight weeks, your baby may smile when looking at a face.

The following activities will help you to stimulate your baby's interest in its surroundings.

1. Choose a snapshot of you, your spouse or the whole family. Be sure that it portrays a loving feeling. Have the photograph enlarged. Tape the picture above your baby's head, on the ceiling or wall. Baby can look up and see it while lying down. Point out the picture whenever the baby is in bed.

Your child will see a picture of people who provide love and care in the household. This idea is especially good for the first months of your baby's life, when eye muscle strength and social skills are developing. Your child is learning about the people and things in the near environment.

2. When your baby seems to be losing interest in the picture, take it down and put up another. Use a picture of a favorite toy or a pretty design. Your car or a picture of baby in the first few days of life may interest baby. Your baby may not like the picture. Baby may cry and fret at

the picture, or look away from it. Remove it. Put up a different picture.

3. Glue faces onto white paper plates. Use felt-tipped pens to draw smiling faces. Cut out large, pleasant faces of men, women, or children from magazines. Photographs of family members are good too. If you have older children, help them make a paper-plate face for baby.

Watch your child respond to these faces. Change them often. Surround your child with loving faces, both real and constructed.

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