

## ***YOUR TWO MONTH OLD***

You and your baby have successfully navigated the first two months of parenting – often a difficult time of sleeplessness and emotional upheaval combined with excitement as well as anxiety. The good news is that your baby’s sleep may become a little more regular over the next several months, and the amount of crying he does will greatly decrease. In addition you will notice many wonderful changes in her ability to interact with you and learn from you.

### ***FEEDING***

We encourage mothers to continue to breastfeed for at least the first year of life. Babies will continue to grow well on breast milk (or formula if that is how you are feeding your baby) for the next 4 months. There are some good reasons to avoid giving your baby solid foods, including baby cereal, until she is about 6 months old.

+Babies’ muscles are not yet able to coordinate sucking and swallowing solid foods yet. When a baby can sit and reach out for objects, she is also able to use her mouth muscles to swallow solids. This developmental milestone is usually reached around 6 months of age.

+If you give your baby solid foods too early, he will not get all the nutrition he needs from milk which is specially designed to meet your baby’s needs.

+Waiting until 6 months to offer solid foods can help protect your child from developing obesity.

If you are breastfeeding, remember to continue to give your baby 400 units of vitamin D each day.

### ***SLEEPING***

There are many books written about sleep and many different ideas on how babies should sleep. These are some general guidelines on which most authors agree – but remember, you know what is best for you and your family.

Sleep patterns or habits are generally formed by six months of age. If you would like to help your baby sleep a little longer at night, there are some gentle measures you can take now that might help.

+Try not to wake up your baby at night. Don’t turn on the light and talk with your baby at night. This helps your baby realize that nighttime is not very interesting times to be awake.

+Consider beginning a little “night time routine” that helps your baby learn the difference between sleeping in the daytime and sleeping at night. Try to do the same thing every night at approximately the same time in preparation for sleep. A soft song, a gentle skin massage, a warm bath – these can all help your baby learn that nighttime is coming.

+If possible, place your baby to bed when she is slightly drowsy but still awake. She may be a little restless and wiggle a little before falling asleep – but it is helpful for her to learn that she can calm herself and fall asleep by herself.

+Consider shortening the middle-of-the-night feeding. If you are

breastfeeding, see if your baby will fall asleep after nursing from just one side. If you are bottle feeding, do not make your baby finish the bottle. This helps your baby learn he does not need a full tummy in order to fall asleep.

+Your baby still needs daytime sleep. If your baby has been awake for one hour, watch for clues that she is sleepy – yawning, rubbing her eyes, looking away from you, acting fussy. Many parents misinterpret these signs and think their baby is bored and needs more stimulation. It is more likely that your baby needs to be allowed to fall asleep. One author suggests that E-A-S-Y is a way to help babies sleep better during the daytime.

When your baby wakes up from nighttime sleep, she Eats. Then after feeding, the infant has some fun “A” time – she is Awake, Alert, and Active. “S” is for sleep. After about 45 minutes of wakefulness, the infant is allowed to fall asleep without nursing. This helps your baby know she can fall asleep without feeding. “Y” is meant to be time for you, the parent, although most parents laugh, knowing there is very little of this.

### ***DEVELOPMENT***

Remember - every baby develops at a different rate. It is tempting to compare your baby with other babies (or even your older children), but each baby is different. If you have concerns about your baby’s development, please talk with your pediatrician.

#### *Language*

Babies are definitely learning language, so when he is awake, talk and sing to your baby. Babies are beginning to smile and make sounds. Sometimes wait a little after you have talked to him to let him try to copy you. Try making a funny face, and he may copy that, too. Research tells us that the best way to help babies learn to talk is to respond when they talk to you. So, after your baby coos, talk back to him. Make sure you talk in long sentences to your baby so he can hear and learn the grammar of the language. Also spend time making “baby sounds” like “ba ba ba” to help encourage language development.

If your baby will hear more than one language at home, begin allowing our baby to hear all the languages now. It is much easier for children to speak more than one language if they have heard the languages from infancy. Hearing more than one language does not confuse the baby. But you may consider having one person speak one language and another person speak the second language to help the baby differentiate the languages. Many babies in America today are learning more than 2 languages as they grow up in multicultural homes.

#### *Muscle development*

The first muscles the baby can control are her neck and shoulder muscles. You can help her develop these muscles by allowing her to spend some time on her tummy when she is awake. She will soon begin to raise her head and look around. Put your face in front of her so she will have something interesting to see. Babies at this age still love to see faces.

Your baby will begin to use her shoulder and arm muscles more in the next month. She will reach out for objects and will be able to move her hands to her mouth. So she will put everything she can hold into her mouth. This is normal behavior and is your baby's way of exploring and learning about her world. You can hold toys out in front of your baby to encourage her to reach. But remember to be careful what you hold when you are carrying your baby as she may grab it. She will also enjoy playing with her own hands.

The old development textbooks used to say that all babies would be rolling from their tummies to their backs by 3 months and from their backs to their tummies by 4 months. However, since babies have been sleeping on their backs, their development is a little different now. Some babies do not like to roll over in either direction even by 4 – 6 months, and later on some babies will skip crawling. Your baby may show you she likes to stand up and bear weight on her feet, and it is fine to allow her to do this.

#### *Vision*

Babies are able to see farther distances now – and sometimes they even become distracted from feeding as they see something of interest across the room. Their eyes should be tracking together most of the time but may occasionally still cross. If you have concerns about your child's vision or hearing, please let your pediatrician know.

#### *Social*

These next two months will be very exciting ones as your baby is more social and interested in her world. She may want to be carried facing forward so she can see what is happening. She will gaze into people's faces and enjoy smiling and laughing with everyone she sees.

#### *Toys*

Parents often wonder about toys for babies. Babies prefer seeing your face and hearing your voice over other objects. But this is a time when babies like to look at moving mobiles or hold a soft rattle. Be careful to choose toys without sharp or pointed edges and make sure there are no small removable parts that could come off and cause choking. Choose toys that say they are for infants so they are safe for your baby.

### ***YOUR BABY'S APPEARANCE***

#### *Flat head*

Now that babies are sleeping on their backs, many babies' heads are becoming flattened in the back. This usually happens on the baby's right side. You can help avoid this by encouraging your baby to look to his left and letting him spend more time sitting up. You can also place your baby on his tummy when he is awake, even if he will only tolerate this position for a few minutes.

### *Drooling*

Your baby's salivary glands will soon start to work, so your baby will begin to drool. This does NOT mean that your baby is teething. Teething usually doesn't happen until 4 months of age.

### ***SAFETY and HEALTHY HABITS***

Always place your baby on her back for sleep

Always place your baby in his car seat when traveling by car or taxi

Never leave your baby alone on a high place

Don't drink a hot beverage while holding your baby. She may reach out and knock the drink out of your hand, burning both of you

Never shake your baby

Wash your hands before and after changing diapers.

Discourage people from smoking in your home

Protect your baby from sun exposure by using a hat or blanket

Walking is excellent exercise for new parents – so take your baby for a walk.

### ***PARENTING***

Parenting is difficult and emotionally and physically draining. You and your partner need each other for support, but often parents are not able to pay attention to each other as they are so focused on the new baby. If you and your partner have not had the opportunity to spend some time (even 1 – 2 hours) together without your baby, consider planning a date together when you can reconnect and re-establish your relationship with each other. Even a brief walk around the block without your baby allows you to convey to each other the important message that you value your relationship.

Hopefully mothers are feeling better emotionally, but if you are feeling depressed, anxious, or too tired to care for your baby, please talk with your physician or your pediatrician so you can receive help. Confidential calls can also be made to 1-800-773-7090.

We hope you enjoy these next few months as you watch your infant “become a real little person” who recognizes you and responds to you.

Used by permission: Jane E. Anderson