



How your baby develops

3–6 months

What can I expect?

- Your baby is awake more, interested in the world around, and controlling and learning new movements.
- Talk and sing to your baby, and your baby will make ‘baby talk’ to you.
- Your baby will start to show more personality – which might be easy going, demanding or quiet.
- Most babies are friendly towards everybody at this stage.
- Playing with babies helps them learn more about the world around them.
- Only give your baby safe toys to play with.
- Make sure your baby stays safe by going through the safety checklist.

Growth and development

Between the ages of three and six months, most babies:

- will make eye contact with you and you will smile at each other
- become more alert and are attracted by brightly coloured or moving objects. They will look at curtains, trees, shadows and mobiles
- can bring their hands together over the chest and look at them. Your baby can now reach out for objects, grasp them and hold them in their hands
- will dribble more as their mouths begin to produce more saliva
- become aware of other parts of their body, such as chest, knees, genitals and toes. Slowly they learn ‘what is me’ and ‘what is not’
- learn to roll over from tummy to back and back to tummy. Their view of the world changes when they learn to roll. It is easier and safer for your baby to learn new movements on the floor rather than on the bed or change table
- are developing skills for crawling. Tummy play will help to develop strong neck and back muscles. This should be encouraged during every wakeful period
- sleep less during the day, but probably a little more at night
- are learning to sit with support.

Language

Sounds are very interesting for babies at this age. They are beginning to babble and make some speech sounds themselves.

You will help your child’s language development by doing the following:

- Talk and sing to your baby, even when you are doing everyday things like changing a nappy, bathing or feeding.
- Smile and talk back to your baby whenever your baby makes sounds or smiles.
- Begin to read to your baby.
- Remember that when a dummy is in your baby’s mouth it is not possible for him or her to practise making the sounds needed for later speech development.
- Repeat the sounds that your baby is making back to them and add new sounds as well.
- Make sure your baby can see, touch and feel your face while you are talking to them. This will help them copy your sounds and make new sounds.

Baby and other people

Most babies are starting to develop their own personality during these three months.

They may be quiet, easy going, impatient or demanding. Parents can feel differently towards each of their children and, since every child is unique, each child will react differently to each parent.

Most babies at this age are friendly towards everybody. Babies can be easily distracted during feeding, but they usually manage to get enough food to stay healthy.

Babies of this age like to gain attention by smiling and ‘talking’.

If a baby has been fed when hungry and comforted when upset, they will begin to develop a sense of security and trust.

Feeding

Breastmilk or infant formula is all the food your baby needs until around six months. Your baby’s body is not ready for solids before this time. You may introduce a cup from three months.

Learning through play

Practice makes perfect with babies.

It is fascinating watching and helping babies learn about themselves and their surroundings. If you give them the opportunity, most babies will practise new activities until they can do them.

From now on, babies will explore things by holding, feeling and looking at them in their hands and putting them in their mouths. They will deliberately shake toys to make noise.

Babies of this age:

- learn to sit with support
- play with their toes
- are mobile (rolling, wriggling or crawling).

If your baby is playing contentedly alone, try not to interrupt. Interrupting teaches babies to rely on others for entertainment rather than amusing themselves.

Toys

Make sure the toys you choose for your baby are safe, durable and washable, by checking the safe toy guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* fact sheet. If toys are furry, remember babies can suck on the fur and swallow it.

Lots of practice helps develop new skills. At this age, babies need the following types of toys:

- bright, colourful objects within their sight
- rattles or toys that are stretched across the pram (within reaching distance)
- rattles and other objects of various shapes, sizes and textures for holding and exploring, such as small rattles for small hands, toys with bells, soft blocks or balls
- safe household objects
- musical toys
- books.





Safety

Between three and six months, babies can move independently, pick up objects and put them in their mouths.

To keep your baby safe, remember the following guidelines:

- Hold your baby when feeding them a bottle, rather than propping them up. Babies can vomit or inhale milk.
- Never leave your baby alone on a change table or other furniture (especially a bed), in the bath, in the car or near any family pets.
- Protect your baby from sun and heat. Seek shade when outdoors and use protective clothing and a hat.
- Every time your baby travels in a car, make sure you use an approved baby capsule or child restraint. Never leave your baby alone in a car – not even for a few minutes.
- Look inside mittens, bootees and socks to be sure there are no loops or threads that can wind around your baby's fingers and toes and cut off blood circulation.
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time. Babies should never be left in the care of older children, no matter how reliable they seem.
- Make sure there are no objects small enough to swallow around where your baby is playing. Pins, batteries, dead insects, buttons, beads, nuts, coins and other small objects may cause your baby to choke. Cigarette butts are poisonous to your children.
- Food can be inhaled easily when starting solids at around six months. Do not offer your baby, hard foods such as pieces of apple or carrot, popcorn or nuts (refer to the *Introducing solids* fact sheets for more information).
- Ensure that your baby is sleeping safely, according to the guidelines in the *Keeping your baby safe* and *Safe sleeping* fact sheets.

As your child grows, they will become more mobile.

- Always make sure your baby is strapped in securely when in a highchair, stroller or shopping trolley to prevent falls.
- Provide short periods in a playpen to help your baby accept safety limitations later.
- Check your home and garden for any poisons – or other dangerous objects such as medicines – that could be eaten. Put away all chemicals and cleaners in the kitchen, laundry, bathroom and garage into a lockable cupboard, high and out of reach. In the garden, remove mushrooms and any poisonous or irritating plants.

More information

If you would like more information about your child's development or you are concerned about your child, talk to your child health nurse or your doctor.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

Acknowledgement

This fact sheet is the result of input and effort from many health professionals in Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.

