



School Readiness Program
Provided by the WIC Program and First 5 LA

Congratulations On Your New Baby!

Imagine if someone fed you when you were hungry, wrapped you in a blanket when you were cold, held you when you wanted to be cuddled, and let you sleep when you wanted rest!

Trust grows as your baby learns that you will take care of him or her. Look inside this handout for ideas about how to help your baby learn to trust you.

Bonding is the special name for how babies and parents learn to love each other. Bonding continues over time. This handout will give you ideas about how to help your baby bond with you.



**LOVE
ME!**



Your newborn wants to communicate with you. Babies use their bodies and make noises to let their parents know when they need to eat, learn, play or rest. These are called **cues**.

Hint: You will miss your baby's cues if you are looking at your phone. Look inside this handout for ideas about how your newborn communicates.

Your newborn is an individual. No two babies are the same. Even twins are different from each other.



QUESTION: What is bonding?

ANSWER: Bonding is the special name for how babies and parents learn to love each other. You may fall in love at first sight, and your first minutes with your baby may be magical. Or, you may be so tired that you want a short break before you hold your baby. You or your baby may need medical care that separates you from each other. Don't worry. You have plenty of time to fall in love with each other.

QUESTION: Will I spoil my newborn baby if I pick up my baby every time he or she cries?

ANSWER: No! You can't spoil your newborn or young baby by cuddling or responding to their needs. We used to think so, but doctors now know that **babies this little are too young to spoil.**

QUESTION: How does my newborn baby communicate?

ANSWER: Babies are born with the ability to communicate. They use cues to show parents what they need. Newborns are still learning to control their bodies. Sometimes their cues are hard to understand. Watching your baby will help you learn what she needs. With practice, your baby will get better at giving cues and you will get better at responding. By responding quickly to your baby's cues, you will learn to communicate with each other. Your baby will develop confidence that their world is safe and secure.

Try this!
When your newborn is looking at you, stick out your tongue and hold it out. Sometimes your baby will copy you and stick out their tongue. You are communicating!

QUESTION: Is there such a thing as playing with my newborn too little?

ANSWER: Yes! You can also play with your baby too much. As your newborn gets older, you will be better able to tell when he is ready to interact, learn or play. He might:

- Have a relaxed face and body
- Stare at your face
- Raise his head
- Follow your voice and face
- Reach toward you

Learning is hard work for babies and they can tire quickly. Your baby will show you signs that he needs something to be different. He might:

- Look away, turn away, or arch his back
- Frown or have a glazed look in his eyes
- Stiffen his hands, arms or legs
- Yawn or fall asleep

Responding to cues quickly before your baby starts to fuss may help your baby cry less. When your baby gives you cues that he is overwhelmed, give him a break from the world around him.

QUESTION: I'm so tired that I don't even feel like playing with my baby. What can I do?

ANSWER: Many mothers feel tired or sad in the days after their baby's birth. Take a break if you can. Have someone else watch your baby for a few minutes. Sleep when your baby sleeps. Give yourself a chance to relax. If you feel you cannot take care of your baby, ask your doctor for advice.

QUESTION: What does my newborn baby SEE?

ANSWER: Your newborn sees most clearly about 8 to 10 inches from her face. Guess what? This is about the distance from your face to your newborn's face when you breastfeed. **Be sure to put down your phone so that your baby can see your face, your eyes, and your smile.**



At first, babies see black and white best. They also like red. They love checkerboards, stripes and other simple patterns in black, white, and red. That's why newborn toys are in these colors.

QUESTION: What are newborn babies' MOVEMENTS like?

ANSWER: Did you know that your newborn needs to learn to move? Newborns' movements are often not coordinated. Their hands are clenched, and their bodies are curled. Your newborn will slowly learn new positions.



Try this!

Your newborn also loves to look at faces. When your baby is looking at you, move your face slowly to the right, then to the left. Watch your baby's eyes follow your face.

QUESTION: What does my newborn baby HEAR?

ANSWER: Your newborn has very sensitive hearing. Loud music can be too much for your baby, and can even damage their ears. Babies like quiet music. Talk and sing softly to your baby often.

Your newborn has been listening to you since the sixth month of your pregnancy. At birth, newborns recognize their birth mothers' voices. If you did not give birth to your baby, do not worry. He will learn your voice quickly.

Reflexes: Your baby is born with automatic movements called reflexes. These early reflexes will disappear when your baby is between 2 and 4 months old.



Try this!

Protect your baby's neck by holding their head. Watch! Your newborn begins to lift their head during this first month.



Try this!

Stroke your baby's cheek gently. Your baby turns toward your finger. This is the rooting reflex and helps your baby turn toward a nipple to feed. Sucking is another reflex.

And this!

Stroke the inside of your baby's hand. Your baby will grab your finger. This is the palmar reflex.

And this too!

Stroke the bottom of your baby's foot. Your baby will curl their toes in toward your finger.

QUESTION: Is my baby SLEEPING too much or too little?

ANSWER: Newborn babies usually sleep more than they are awake. Most babies do not sleep for more than three or four hours at a time until they are at least two months old. Also, babies have to learn that night is for sleeping. Until your baby starts to sleep more of the night, try to rest or sleep when your baby sleeps. Your sleep is important, too. **Your baby should sleep on his or her back.** That is the safest way for babies to sleep.

QUESTION: Why does my baby cry so much?

ANSWER: Babies use crying as a way to communicate many different things. When your baby is crying:

- 1 Try to figure out the reason.** For example, is she:
 - In need of a diaper change?
 - Too hot or too cold?
 - Tired?
 - Overwhelmed?
 - Hungry?
 - Uncomfortable?
- 2 Hold your baby close to you.**
- 3 Repeat the same action over and over.**
You might try one of the following:
 - Speaking or singing softly
 - Gently rocking, swaying or bouncing your baby
 - Gently massaging her back, arms and legs



There may be times when you've checked everything and your baby still cries. Remember to be patient. Sticking with the same action for several minutes before trying something different can be the secret to success.



QUESTION: What are the best TOYS for newborns?

ANSWER: Your newborn needs **YOU** more than any toys! Cuddle, talk, make faces, put down your phone, sing and watch your baby.



Screen time is not recommended for infants under 18 months. Remember, this is a great time to read to your baby.

Safety Corner



Bath time for baby.

Water that feels warm to you may be too hot for your baby. Here are a few tips to keep in mind to have a safe bath time:

- Gather all of the supplies you need and place them close to you.
- Test the temperature of the water. You can use your elbow, wrist or bath tub thermometer to make sure that the water is not too hot.
- Don't leave your baby even for a second while reaching for an item.
- Avoid distraction, put down your phone.



First 5 LA

First 5 LA is a child advocacy and grant making organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in programs for improving the lives of children from prenatal through age 5 in Los Angeles County. First 5 LA champions health, education and safety causes concerning young children and families. For more information, please visit www.first5la.org.



The WIC Program

WIC provides nutrition and health education services, breastfeeding support, referrals to community agencies and healthy food to eligible women, infants and children under age five. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For more information, please visit www.wicworks.ca.gov.