

The soft spot may look flat or slightly depressed when your baby sits. When baby lies down, it may become slightly rounded. This is normal, but a severe depression or bulge may signal dehydration or swelling. Your doctor will check the soft spot during your regular visits. You can expect the skull bones to grow together sometime between 12 and 18 months.

Baby's hearing is well developed at this point; he will already recognize Mom's voice! His sight is not as well developed. He can distinguish light from dark, and he may be able to focus on an object about 7 inches away. For the first two weeks or so, your baby will see only in black and white. Then he will begin seeing bright colors like red and yellow. Babies especially enjoy looking at other faces, so talk and sing face-to-face. Your baby can use only one eye at a time right now, so don't be surprised if his eyes cross. This is normal and will likely correct itself in time.

His reflexes are developing also. Try the following: Touch your fingertip lightly to your baby's cheek. He will turn his head in that direction and will probably try to get your finger into his mouth and then suck on it. This is called the sucking reflex.

Now, put your finger in his palm. Did his fingers close tightly around it? Your baby will also react to loud noises or to a prick on the bottom of his feet.

Your baby's sense of touch is developing, and he needs you to hold him, pat him, and cuddle him. This will help your baby to feel more secure and learn to trust. Use soft tones of voice. One of the first negative emotions a baby feels is fear. If he dislikes a bath, it may be because he is afraid of falling. As he learns to trust you to take good care of him and keep him safe, many of these fears will be overcome. Try to move into new activities gradually to give your baby time to adapt.

SAFETY TIPS

By law (and good sense!), babies cannot travel in any vehicle unless they are safely buckled into an approved child safety seat. This includes the trip home from the hospital and even short trips around town.



New baby cribs are much safer than older cribs. If you have an older crib, make sure that the openings between the side slats are no wider than three fingers, that the mattress is firm and fits snugly against the crib sides, and that the headboard and footboard don't have openings that could trap a baby. If a crib was built before 1978, it may have lead-based paint. Lead-based paint anywhere in a baby's environment can be very dangerous.

To avoid suffocation, do not put a pillow in your baby's crib. He doesn't need it, and it's dangerous. Should his face become buried in it, he would not have the strength to lift his head. When placing a baby in a crib, always lay him on his back, not on his stomach. Some parents use an electronic monitor in baby's room to alert them to trouble.

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PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

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Gale A. Buchanan, Dean and Director

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This newsletter is provided to you by:

County Extension Agent

Baby Bouncer



**FIRST MONTH
Congratulations
on Your
New Baby!**



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
The University of Georgia
College of Family and Consumer Sciences and
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences cooperating



Baby Bouncer

FIRST MONTH: Congratulations on Your New Baby!

The “Baby Bouncer” newsletter includes 12 editions that will accompany you through the wondrous first year of your baby’s life. It will answer many of your questions about safety, feeding, health, and the stages of development. All babies are unique, of course, so check with your family doctor if your baby seems to be developing in ways significantly different from those described in the “Baby Bouncer.”

The first month of your baby’s life is full of many changes. But the baby isn’t the only one to experience change. Here is a word to you parents, whose lives will take on new meanings very quickly.

MOM AND DAD

Fathers often feel they have very little part in their new baby’s life, but they can and should! Dad, if you wait too long to begin holding and caring for your child, he may react to you as though you were a stranger. So get acquainted with him now! He isn’t nearly as fragile as you think! The baby’s mother will really appreciate your help. Carrying a baby for nine months and then delivering the child is hard on a woman’s body. These first few weeks will be very tiring for her, and your help and support are important. Remember, this bundle of joy is just as much your responsibility as hers!

Mom, are you slightly depressed? Do you cry easily? Don’t despair! Your reaction is common and is called “baby blues.” Not all mothers suffer from this, but many do. It is temporary, and you will likely recover quickly! If not, talk with your doctor. Some women take longer than others to adjust to the new life—physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually.

EXERCISES

As you start to feel less tired and sore, you can begin exercising. Most women need some abdominal exercises to tighten stretched stomach muscles. If you gained excess weight during pregnancy, now is the time to start losing those pounds before they multiply. If you are breastfeeding, don’t lose more than about one pound per month.

During childbirth education classes, you may have learned exercises to help keep you in shape. Continue to do these now. Sit-ups (with bent knees), leg raises and crunches all help the hard-to-exercise stomach muscles. Go easy if you have back problems.

After nine months of pregnancy your body needs gentle, but continual, exercise. Try to set aside a time every day to run through your routine. This might also be a good time to relax and be by yourself for a few minutes. Joining a class of new mothers may help you develop a schedule and choose the best exercise for you.

Don’t expect immediate results. It may take several months to get your figure back. Stick with it—the results will show soon!

BABY’S HEALTH

Within a week or two after birth, the baby can be taken outside for fresh air and filtered sunshine. On these outings, however, keep your



baby away from crowds and sick people. Babies catch colds and infections easily.

Some babies develop colic as early as the second to fourth week after birth. A crying, irritable infant may be one sign. Because colic usually cramps the intestine, babies with colic usually tense their muscles and draw up their legs. Some babies react any time of night or day, and others only after feeding.

Doctors are not sure what causes colic. It may be caused by an immature digestive system or allergic reaction to food. Breast-fed babies often react to foods the mother has eaten. Vegetables in the cabbage family, milk, onion and chocolate are a few foods that may cause discomfort. You can try several things to lessen colic cramps and pain. If you are nursing, change your diet. Eliminate one food at a time for several days. If colic lessens, you will know that this food may have affected the baby. Many mothers find that drinking less cow’s milk helps. If you stop drinking milk, be sure to get calcium from other foods such as cheese and yogurt. For bottle-fed babies, check the nipple size; sucking too hard or gulping formula may cause the baby to swallow air. Try to hold baby in an upright position while feeding to allow air to escape. You may try laying your baby on his stomach across your knees, supporting his head and rubbing his back to lessen his discomfort.

Most important, comfort your crying baby, even though you may feel stressed out yourself! A baby left to cry gulps more air and becomes more tense. Walking with the infant, letting him suck on a pacifier, finger or breast, or playing soothing music may ease baby’s pain. The “colic cradle” puts pressure on the baby’s stomach and helps relieve pain. Place the baby face-down on your forearm, with his head at your elbow and tummy on the inside of your wrist. Support him with your arm and hand. This position also frees your other arm so you can steady the baby and take care of other things at the same time. Some

babies seem to calm down when riding in a car, or when wrapped snugly in a blanket. Time spent comforting your baby is good for his emotional growth. For severe cases, your doctor may suggest medication. Colic is usually outgrown by 3 to 6 months of age.

BABY’S DEVELOPMENT

The first month of life is called the neonatal period. During this time your baby will probably have reddish, wrinkled skin and tightly curled hands. He may have an elongated or bumpy head, due to coming through the birth canal during delivery (unless you had a C-section).

Expect Your Baby to:

- Sleep a total of 18 to 22 hours each day.
- Use 10 or more diapers a day.
- Cry as much as 2 hours each day.
- Breathe noisily. Remember, he has just begun to breathe.
- Have runny, irregular bowel movements, unless breast-fed.

Also, remember that each baby is an individual and will grow, develop and react differently than any other baby.

You have probably noticed the soft spot on top of your baby’s head. This is normal. It appears where skull bones have not yet joined and hardened. Baby’s skull was soft to allow the head to pass through the birth canal. During the first year, the flexible skull gives baby’s brain room to grow.

Although the soft spot is covered by tough membrane, you need to avoid bumping or hitting baby’s head. Washing and rubbing will not harm the baby’s head. Massaging the scalp is important to keep baby’s head clean, especially if “cradle cap” occurs. Cradle cap looks like scaly, dandruff-like patches on baby’s scalp. It can usually be removed by massaging his scalp with baby oil, and then washing his scalp with shampoo and a washcloth.