

My baby is so small! He seems so helpless. What can he do? How much can he see? Can he hear me?

Step by step

From the minute your baby is born, he's busy doing two things:

- **Growing:** Getting stronger, growing longer, and gaining weight.
- **Developing:** Learning new things and being able to do new things.

Babies grow and develop step by step over time. As they grow bigger and stronger, they're able to develop new skills.

Every baby grows and develops at his own pace. Your baby needs your help to grow and develop into a healthy, happy person.

When you feed and take care of your baby, you help him to **grow**.

When you pay attention to him and play with him, you help him to **develop**. You teach him about himself and his world.

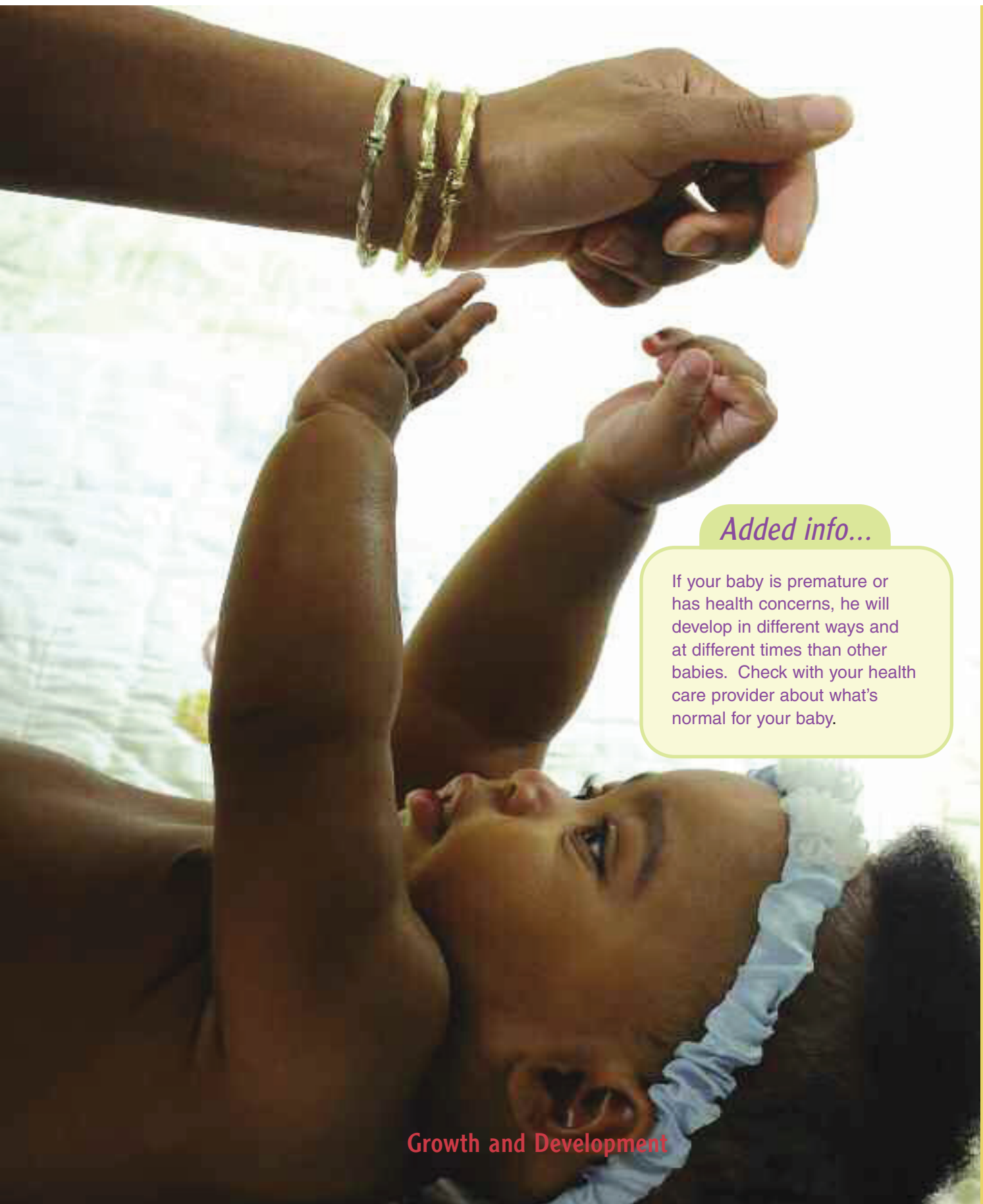


Double Check

In **Loving Care** we use the term “health care provider” to mean professionals who offer primary health care services to parents and families.

As well, Public Health Services and many other professionals and community resources are available to offer advice and support.

You'll find more information in the “Welcome” section of **Loving Care: Parents and Families**.



Added info...

If your baby is premature or has health concerns, he will develop in different ways and at different times than other babies. Check with your health care provider about what's normal for your baby.

What a newborn baby can do

From the moment they're born, babies have abilities that will help them to learn and grow.

Your newborn baby can:

See

- New babies see light and dark, black and white shapes, and bright colours.
- They see things clearly when they are 18 to 25 cm (7 to 10 inches) away.
- They blink at bright lights.
- They stare at faces.



Hear

- New babies hear very well.
- They turn toward a sound or voice.
- Gentle sounds soothe.
- Sudden or loud noises startle them.



Move

- New babies move their arms and legs.
- They hold your finger.
- They turn their heads.
- They lift their head for a few seconds when lying on their tummy.



Make sounds

- New babies cry.
- They make soft little sounds.



Added info...

Your baby's hearing should be tested in the hospital after birth.

If for some reason your baby's hearing hasn't been checked, contact your local Hearing and Speech Centre ([contact information, page 102](#)).

Added info...

Babies can also FEEL. It's important to hold them close. Babies love to be held skin-to-skin and to hear your heartbeat. This not only makes them feel good, it helps them grow and develop.

Developing new skills

Babies grow and develop at their own speed, step by step. Every baby develops in her own way.

Every day, your baby is learning new things and developing new skills. She's developing a

personality and becoming her own special self. Your baby will develop new skills bit by bit over the months. It doesn't happen all at once. Your baby needs time to learn.

In the end, most babies do just fine.



Your baby wants you to know...

By the time I'm about 6 weeks old, I'll have learned to smile at you! Smile back when I smile at you! Your smiles tell me you love me.



Growth and Development

New skills to watch for

At 1 month, does your baby...

- Look at you?
- Lift his head for a few seconds when lying on his tummy?
- Notice sounds? Startle at loud noises?
- Blink at bright lights?



At 3 months, does your baby...

- Know your face?
- Smile when you smile?
- Follow objects with his eyes?
- Hold his head steady?
- Coo, gurgle, laugh, and squeal?
- Open and close his hands?
- Hold your finger?
- Kick his legs?



At 6 months, does your baby...

- Like to look at faces more than anything else?
- Smile when he hears your voice? When he sees someone he knows? When he's happy? When he wants to play with you? When he sees himself in a mirror?
- Make singsong noises and copy sounds?
- Turn his head to see where a sound is coming from?
- Make sounds while he's playing by himself?
- Love listening to music, rhythm, voices, and toys that make noise?
- Recognize voices he hears a lot? Look for you when he hears your voice? Notice when he hears a strange voice?
- Enjoy games like peek-a-boo?
- Push himself up on his arms when lying on his tummy?
- Pull himself to a sitting position if you hold his hands?
- Roll over—from front to back and back to front?
- Push down on his legs and support his weight when you hold him?
- Put his hands—and other things!—in his mouth?
- Reach for things with one or both hands?
- Grab and shake small toys?
- Pass things from one hand to the other?



Helping your baby develop

You can help your baby develop by talking, reading, and singing to her, playing with her, and responding to her.

To help your baby develop her muscles:

- Hold toys so your baby will reach for them.
- Give her things to hold and feel.
- Give your baby lots of tummy time. (See page 28 to learn more about tummy time.)



To help your baby develop social skills:

- Respond to your baby. Smile back when she smiles at you. Go to her when she cries. Help her learn she can depend on you.
- Make faces for her to copy. Stick out your tongue. Puff out your cheeks. Wrinkle your nose. Let your baby try to copy you.
- Respect your baby's feelings. Some babies warm up to new people quickly. Others take more time. Let your baby get used to people in her own way.
- Give your baby new things to think about. Take her for walks outside. Talk to her about what she's seeing.



To help your baby develop hearing and speech:

- Give your baby lots of things to listen to. Sing to her. Talk to her. For example, tell her what you're doing while you work. Tell your baby what you're doing while you dress her, wash her, and change her diaper. Give her rattles to make noise with. Play music for her. Describe what you see when you're out walking.
- Copy the sounds your baby makes. Make sounds for her to copy.
- Play games with her that have songs or words—like patty-cake, peek-a-boo, or this little piggy.
- Read to your baby.



Your baby wants you to know...

Smile at me! I love to look at faces! Hold me close so I can see your smile. Give me bright colours, patterns, and shiny things to look at.

Talk to me! I like gentle voices and soft sounds. Read to me. I like music. I like to hear you sing and hum. I like to listen to soothing sounds, like the washing machine, dishwasher, vacuum cleaner, or stove fan. Sudden loud noises can scare me.

Cuddle me! I need to feel gentle touches and cuddles. Your touch tells me that you love me. It welcomes me to the world. You can't hold or cuddle me too much.

When to wonder about your baby's development

By 6 months, most babies have developed a set of basic skills. You should talk to your baby's health care provider if your baby:

- Does not roll over
- Does not push down with his legs when his feet are placed on a firm surface
- Has not started babbling
- Has not started smiling
- Does not turn his head toward sounds
- Cannot sit up, even with help
- Does not laugh or make squealing sounds
- Seems very stiff—like his muscles are tight
- Seems very floppy—like a rag doll
- Still holds his hands in fists and doesn't hold things
- Has crossed eyes most of the time

Added info...

If your baby is a preemie, remember that he may develop skills at different ages. Check with your health care provider to find out what's normal for your baby.



*I know that play is important for babies. But she's so small!
What can I do that she'll like and is safe?*

Games and activities

Play is how your baby learns. It helps her to develop the skills she needs to grow and learn.

When you spend time playing with your baby, you're showing her that you love her and that she's important to you. And it's fun for both of you!

Tummy time—To build strong muscles

Tummy play gives your baby a break from lying on his back. It helps him learn to lift his head and to push up on his hands and arms.

- Lay on your back.
- Lay your baby on his tummy on top of your chest.
- Play with him. Talk to him so he'll lift his head to look at you.

OR

- Lay baby tummy down on a blanket on the floor.
- Lay on your tummy, facing him.
- Talk to him. Play with him.
- Show him toys so he'll lift his head to look. Put an unbreakable mirror nearby, so he can see himself when he looks down.
- Play music so he'll look to see where it's coming from.



Tummy time will also help prevent flathead. For information on flathead, see [page 87](#).

Baby massage— To teach baby about her body

While doing this, sing to your baby. Talk to her. Say the names of her body parts.

- Lay your baby on her back.
- Sit or kneel next to her.
- Gently stroke each of her arms, from top to bottom, all the way to her fingertips. Do this several times.
- Stroke each of her legs from top to bottom, all the way to her toes. Do this several times.
- Stroke the sides of her head from top to bottom. Go from the top of the forehead, around the cheeks, and under the chin.
- Rub her hands and feet between your hands.



Tracking—To help baby learn to follow things with his eyes

- Lay your baby on his back.
- Say his name until he looks at you.
- Hold something black and white about 20 cm (8 inches) from his face.
- Slowly move it from side to side. Go slowly so baby's eyes have time to follow.
- Give baby a rest. Smile, talk to him.
- Repeat the game a few more times.



Play

Copycat—To help baby learn by copying what you do

- Lay your baby on her back.
- Say her name until she looks at you.
- Bring your face close to hers—about 25 cm (10 inches) away.
- Slowly stick out your tongue. Wait a few seconds. Do it again.
- Give baby time to copy you.



Pull-ups—To help your baby use his muscles

Do this activity with your baby when he's old enough to hold up his head.

- Lay your baby on his back.
- Hold both his hands.
- Slowly pull up until baby is sitting.
- Talk to him while pulling. Say things like, "Up we go!" Do this several times.
- After a while, you'll find that your baby tries to do more of the work and you have to pull less.

Toys

Babies don't need a lot of expensive toys. They need:

- **Things to look at**—
colourful pictures, mobiles, books
- **Things to hold and chew on**—
teething toys, clean wet facecloth
- **Things that make noise**—
rattles, musical toys
- **Soft toys**—
to feel different textures

For a baby, a parent is the best toy in the world!

Your face and smile to look at...

Your voice to hear...

Your fingers to grab and hold...

Your warm body and arms to keep her safe while she learns about the world...

You are your baby's best toy!



Your baby wants you to know...

The best times to play with me or read to me are when I'm quiet, calm, and awake.

When I'm tired of playing, I'll look away or turn my head.

If I'm very tired, I'll cry.

Loving Care



Birth to 6 Months

2010


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