

From bump to baby

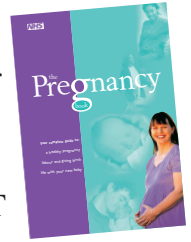
As soon as you're pregnant, request a copy of the free NHS book *Pregnancy* from your midwife. If you want to attend an NCT antenatal class, book as early as possible!

Whether you are working till the last day or opting for early maternity leave, sort out all the paperwork in advance (if unsure, find out if you are eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay or

Maternity Allowance at www.direct.gov.uk).

Join online forums for advice and support (mumsnet is a good one and if you join through the NCT's site, the NCT gets a donation).

Register with sites such as Baby Centre (www.babycentre.co.uk) or the NCT's Stepping Stones - you will get info straight to your inbox.



From newborn to baby

FIRST THREE WEEKS

Your newborn is getting to grips with her new world - a bright and noisy one, a startling contrast to the dark and quiet space in your womb. Her limbs are curled and her movements are uncoordinated as she is not used to have so much space around her.

Her vision is blurry - she can only see well up to about 40cm. She is getting to know you and will love seeing your face close by. Her attention span is short, but she will enjoy looking at black & white patterns - a mobile or a cloth book in contrasting shapes will amuse her.

She'll be sucking and chewing her hands - even nappy changing will be a stimulating activity. At



this stage she will be ruled by her hunger, and because her stomach is tiny, she will be feeding often. Her only way of communication is crying, so if her nappy is wet, if she is hungry, bored or unhappy, she will let you know and you will have to do the guesswork.

By the end of the third week, she will be able to lift her head when she is on her tummy. Encourage tummy play, so she can strengthen her muscles and learn to coordinate her movements. You might notice patterns in her feeding and sleeping habits, but it's early to establish a routine.

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS

Your baby can hold your gaze and follow your movements around

the room. His communication skills are improving, so instead of just crying, he will coo, gurgle or grunt to attract your attention. Repeat these noises back to him and talk to him: 'Now mummy is making a cup of tea; mummy is washing the dishes...' Sing to him - if you are not a confident singer or you forgot your nursery rhymes, join a baby group - it's never too early for your baby to socialise. If you stimulate him, by

five weeks you might be rewarded with a smile. Although he still enjoys his black and white toys, upgrade them to colourful ones, with bold lines and shapes. By six weeks, many babies can recognise their parents and prefer them to strangers. Your baby will smile when you enter the room and perhaps kick his legs to express pleasure. He is more aware of his surroundings and may be startled by sudden noises.

From baby to toddler

ONE TO TWO MONTHS

Your baby's limbs are stretching out and he might be able to hold his head for short periods when on his tummy. His attention span is improving, when you speak to him, he might stop what he's doing and listen. Start reading to him - nursery rhymes and poetry are better suited or maybe a board book with short sentences. Keep speaking to him and play simple games, like making funny noises.

TWO TO THREE MONTHS

She will gain weight more quickly now. She can hold her head up longer and her limbs are sturdier. She will kick her legs harder, so nappy changing can be challenging. She might start grabbing small things. Her fingers will open but she might still use her fist to bat toys when lying on the playgym.

Her eyesight has improved and she can focus on objects that are

up to 20cm away. She will be more alert and not nap as often

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during the day. Most babies will sleep longer than in the first month - think about introducing a routine. Keep a note of feeding and sleeping patterns and try to work out a routine. Keep talking, singing and reading to her. Your baby will enjoy playing with rattles, coloured shapes and soft, squidgy balls.

FOUR TO FIVE MONTHS

His stomach is bigger, so he doesn't need to feed as often. He might get distracted when you feed him - try feeding him in a quiet room. He'll start babbling, saying ma-ma and da-da. Use his first name as early as you can and you will be delighted when he will respond. Some responses are non verbal, he might just kick his legs or smile. He might start rolling over, so you'll have to watch him. The floor is the safest place - invest in a playmat.

Some babies might start teething, but the first tooth usually appears later. If his cheeks are red and his gums are sore, use a teething gel/powder and a teether.

Your baby might be able to hold a rattle and shake it. You can play peekaboo as he's starting to grasp cause and effect. By five months

he might be sitting up. Encourage tummy play with a mirror or a cloth book.

SIX MONTHS

Your baby can now pull an object towards her. She'll also find out that it's fun to throw objects or food off her high chair.

Most babies are weaned at this stage and you will be mashing veg and boiling fruit for England. She might only take a few teaspoons to start with, but she will be eager to try new flavours and she might even attempt to steal food off your plate. Breast milk or formula are still her main diet staple.

She is more social now and smiles if strangers coo to her. She will do anything to get your attention - distract

her when she is behaving badly and praise good behaviour.

You are getting to know her personality. She's only small, but she can be cheeky and funny. She will smile, shriek, do operatic voices, tap on surfaces and be as playful as a kitten.

Shh!
I'm reading
my book!



At five months, she will grab objects and put them in her mouth

SEVEN TO EIGHT MONTHS

Your baby might enjoy practising his bouncing skills in a bouncer, or even on your lap. His weight is going up and at times you might feel it's a struggle to lug him around - don't worry, your body will catch up.

If you're not the tall and strong type, try a sling or a backpack, they can be used into toddlerhood.

He may be able to sit unsupported, making it easy for him to play on his own. He will try to reach out for your things and his ability to crawl will make you dash around the room trying to keep him out of harm's way. Invest in a stair gate and safety kits to babyproof your home.

Some babies start crawling later or use other ways of moving around, such as shuffling on their bottom or advancing commando-style. Some babies never crawl much but take to walking easily.

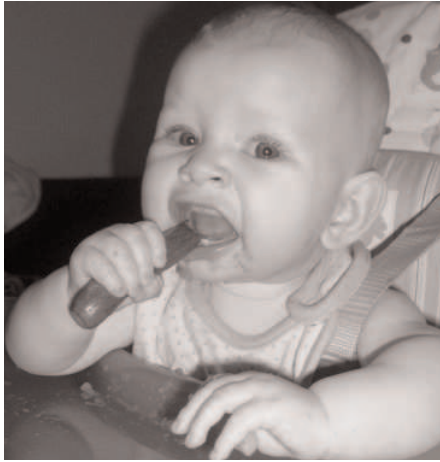
By this stage he will be able to scoop things up with one hand and transfer them from one hand to the other. He'll enjoy playing with colourful cups by transferring them from hand to hand and banging them together.

He can drink from a two-handled cup: there are many types for sale

- non-spill, free-flow, with straw... Wean him off bottles by one year old as it's better for his teeth.

Your baby is now enjoying more solids - cut down on breast milk or formula to entice him to eat more; by eight months he should be on three meals a day.

As he develops his motor skills, he might get frustrated and cry



when he cannot reach the object he wants or if something he is handling is taken away. Try and distract him with another toy.

As your baby gets confident, he will start to test your authority. Don't give him any objects that you

don't want him to handle just to keep him quiet. He is not being naughty, he is just curious and can't remember your commands for more than two seconds - use a simple 'no' then distract him.

Another behaviour that might drive you up the wall is separation anxiety. This starts as an unwillingness to go to bed in the evening or waking up at night. It is a tough phase as you're hoping to claw back a bit of me time and he will be ever so clingy. If you need to do some chores, try involving him, even if you have to lug him around the house. Keep a basket of toys in each room.

Try interaction games like hiding an object under a cup or a blanket and wait for him to discover it; also put objects just out of reach so he has to stretch or crawl to get them, blow bubbles at bathtime... He will love hearing you singing and might start clapping.

He will be soon scurrying around the house like a mouse and using furniture to pull himself up. This is the phase of bumps and falls and you will be ever so scared the first time it happens and if his head is involved in the fall, you might decide to take a trip to A&E. After the first shocks, you will get used to his fearless approach to exploring.

Your baby's hands are getting skilled at holding, pointing, scooping up pieces of food, throwing objects... He will imitate your gestures and show empathy (if someone is crying, he might start crying too).

If he has started nursery, he might get very clingy when he gets home. It's a normal reaction and there is nothing to feel guilty about as you can't be with him 24 hours a day.

He will now enjoy exploring objects by shaking them, banging them, dropping them and putting

them in his mouth. Play games like hide and seek, hiding small objects under cups and show him picture books. He will be pointing to find out the names of his favourite things. His vision is improving, he'll recognise people across a room. Make sure there are no small items lurking on the floor, such as pins, coins, nuts and other things he can choke on.

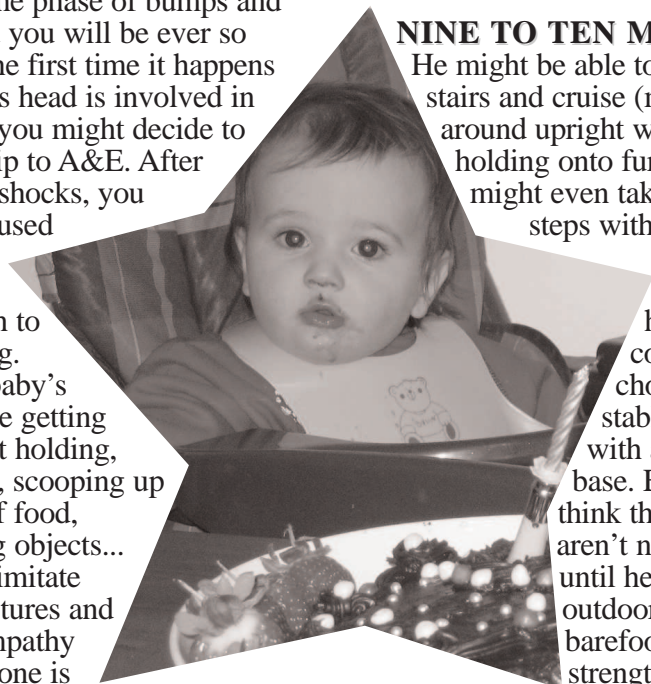
NINE TO TEN MONTHS

He might be able to crawl up stairs and cruise (moving around upright while holding onto furniture). He might even take a few steps with your help!

A walker can help him gain confidence - choose a stable model with a wide base. Experts think that shoes aren't necessary until he is walking outdoors. Going barefoot will strengthen his muscles and it'll

be easier for him to have a grip on the surface he is walking on as his toes will feel the different textures. If you need to buy shoes, have his feet measured.

He will enjoy filling and emptying boxes. Fill a box with plastic cups, balls and other tactile objects and leave him to sort them



out. Stacking cubes and rings are also good fun.

Separation anxiety is at its peak - he will become wary of strangers and sometimes he will refuse to be with other members of the family. He will be in flood of tears if you leave the room.

His babbling is starting to sound like real words and he might repeat sounds and simple words. Read him books and explain him what's happening in pictures.

At ten months, she'll be crawling faster. She can sit well and will enjoy picking up toys from a standing position.

She might be challenging at meal times as she'll enjoy flinging food and crockery from her high chair. She will also start picking her nose.

Separation anxiety is waning - she'll learn to say goodbye and smile to catch somebody's eye. She might start to rattle off sounds that don't make any sense to you - respond with 'Oh, how interesting', to encourage her to chat. There will still be some pointing and grunting when she asks for something. Games like 'this little piggy' are educational and fun. When surrounded by other kids, she will try to snatch anything that catches her eye. She doesn't understand about sharing yet.

Some babies are starting to walk if their parents hold their hand, others are still happy crawling.

11 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR

He can move, interact with you when playing and feed himself - he will not be flawless yet.

Buy or borrow books with images. He might point to a cow and say 'moo'. He can understand simple instructions, but don't overuse the word 'no' or it will lose its 'power'. You can set a few boundaries and he will learn.

At one year toddler sleeps better at night and has fewer naps

during the day. She plays well and is starting to show independence.

You can replace formula/breast milk with cow or soya milk. She can also

have honey along with most foods, except nuts and raw eggs.

She can understand simple directions and is willing to learn new words and games.

Your little one might take her first step alone now, but this can happen at 13, 14 and even after 18 months - don't worry too much.

Bedtime might become fraught as she will fight sleep - have books, CDs and other winding-down activities at hand and give her a bath as part of her bedtime routine. A cup of milk or a breastfeed can help.

During the day, don't hover over her all the time. Too much stimulation will raise her boredom levels and she will want to be entertained all the time.

Compiled by Simone Castello

Q Is my child doing well?
A Each child is unique and develops at his own pace, so comparing achievements with other parents is not advisable. Premature babies, for instance, will need more time to develop their skills. Focus on your child's strengths and enjoy what he can do rather than what he can't do yet, he will do it soon enough! If you have any concerns, talk to your health visitor.