

Playtime from three months helps your baby discover ...



Their body

Your baby can now see further and is interested in people and things around them. They can become frustrated as they are still learning to move their hands and bodies well enough to do what they want.

Continue to help them to develop strength and control

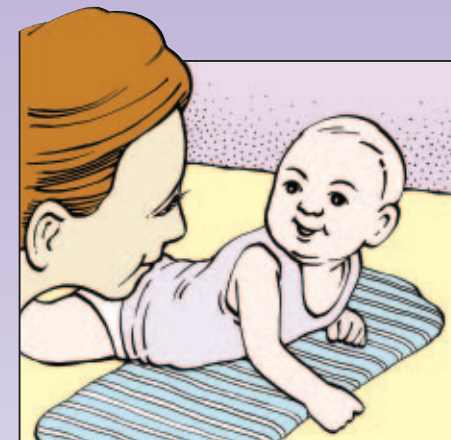
- When your baby is on your lap gently sway them as you sing or say a rhyme so they can practise their balance by bringing their head back to the middle.
- Hang toys on a mobile toward the centre so that babies can reach out with both hands in front of their eyes. Their grasp is still controlled by reflex activity, so if they grab something they will curl their hands around it and may not easily let go.
- Take advantage of everyday routines such as changing, bathing and dressing. Make sure you have their attention by telling them what you are doing and then giving them time to move their head, body and limbs in response to what you are doing.
- Involve your baby in moving from one position to another. Gradually change the support you provide as your baby gets stronger. At first when pulling to sit you may have to support their head or shoulders, later they will be able to pull up if you hold their hands.
- Limit the time they spend strapped into any type of baby equipment. Babies need to be able to move themselves around as much as possible so they can develop muscle strength and co-ordination.



Continue with tummy playtime - two to three times a day

- If babies are happy and well balanced they may be able to play for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. If they cannot look around easily or grizzle after a few minutes they still need some chest support – like a rolled up towel.
- They may soon “accidentally” roll so they need to do tummy time where they cannot fall, for example on a clean mat on the floor.

- When they start to show an interest in toys, place one or two where they can reach out for them. The best toys are things that make gentle sounds, have interesting textures or shapes for fingers to explore, and can safely be put in the mouth.



The world around them

Babies need to relate and interact with the important people in their lives

- Make faces, coo and blow raspberries. You will be teaching your baby to take turns and develop communication skills. Your baby will enjoy and benefit from playing these games with others as well.
- Talk about things as they happen so your baby can connect simple words with real objects, sounds, body parts or actions.
- Let your baby see you talking with other adults. This is helpful for you as well as them. It is difficult to deal with the constant demands of caring for a baby, especially if you spend long periods alone.

Avoid distractions that make it difficult for you and your baby to concentrate on each other

- Babies will be more responsive and vocal if you turn off the TV, radio or other background noise during times you are interacting with them.
- Do not put them in front of the TV or a DVD as a way of entertaining them. Their eyes and ears are not developed enough to “watch” a program. Babies love to be where you are and can learn by interacting with you from a safe position – when you hang out washing, prepare food or get dressed. You could place them on a mat, in a playpen or if necessary in a baby seat.
- Babies need you to notice when they have had enough play and are tired so they can get plenty of sleep. Babies may take longer to settle when they have had a big day out.