

Dear Mother and Dad:

As new parents, you will enjoy watching your baby's progress—as he grows bigger and more active, as he becomes aware of things around him, and as he learns to use his eyes, ears, hands, feet and even his smile.

You'll have no precise yardstick for measuring his growth and development. No two infants are exactly alike at any given age. Each develops in his own way and at his own speed; sometimes slowly and other times rapidly. Your child's heredity, coupled with his environment and experiences, will determine how, what and when he develops.

This letter and the three following will discuss what you may expect during the first year of your child's life. Hopefully, we'll have answers to questions new parents often ask.

FOR MOM AND DAD ALONE.

But before we discuss your new baby, let's talk about you, mother and dad.


After getting mother safely checked into the hospital, many new fathers feel completely left out of the process of becoming a parent. It is a common feeling. Hopefully, it has passed, now that you have brought your new baby home. As father, you can and should be involved with your infant. There is no better time than now to establish a warm, friendly relationship. If you wait too long to begin holding, feeding and playing with your child, he may react to you as a stranger. Getting used to another touch besides mother's may also help your child be "friendlier," more comfortable and happy when held by grandparents and admiring friends.

Most wives really appreciate their husbands' help in caring for a new infant too! Those first few weeks at home with a new baby are no picnic for a new mother. Pregnancy and giving birth place great demands on her body. It will take some time to regain previous strength and energy. Your support and help are most important.

Many fathers shy away from handling and caring for their infants because they feel awkward and clumsy holding something tiny and seemingly fragile. But babies aren't china dolls, within limits they are relatively durable. Remember, neither you nor your wife were born knowing these skills. With a little practice, they will become second nature.

Mother, you can help too. Encourage your husband, and don't tease if he doesn't do the job right the first time. So, the diaper falls off a few times—that's part of the fun of being new parents!

You both have experienced many emotions during the past nine months—sometimes joy, and excitement; sometimes uncertainty and fear—common feelings when confronted with the unknown. But one of the most anxiety-producing emotions is one experienced by many mothers after the baby is born, often called the "baby blues." If you feel slightly depressed, cry easily, suddenly lose confidence in yourself or feel discouraged, take heart! It is only a tem-



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You and Your Baby

1 to 3 months

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porary reaction to your new situation and responsibilities, shared by many. It quickly passes. And, Dad, this is the time, more than ever, for you to help by showing your affection and letting your wife know how much you care.

NOW, ABOUT THAT BABY!

You have likely received many gifts of baby clothing. If you are wondering if you have enough, consider these basic needs:

3 to 6 nightgowns (one-year size—you can use them longer).

4 to 5 dozen diapers (one dozen if you use a diaper service).

3 to 6 cotton shirts (6-month size).

2 to 3 cotton receiving blankets.

3 to 4 pairs of waterproof pants.

For a "cold weather" baby, you may also like to include 2 to 3 stretchy one-piece day-night garments. They're also good on cool summer evenings.

These numbers are only suggestions. Your needs may vary, depending on your laundry situation. If you use a laundromat, you may want to purchase extras.

BABY'S HEALTH

Due to the natural immunities passed on by you, mother, your baby isn't likely to become ill in the early months (except for a possible cold or intestinal infection). But some infants develop the distressing problem commonly called colic. Some doctors refer to it as periodic crying. Colic causes cramps in the intestine which produces discomfort.

We don't know the exact cause of colic. It may be related to the immature nervous system of the infant. Fatigue may play a part, as most infants become more colicky after the late afternoon or evening feeding. The condition usually develops between 2

and 4 weeks of age. It may last through the third month.

If your infant cries after a feeding, he may have colic, or he may simply be tense and restless. Your doctor can judge that best. The important thing to remember is that colic is a common occurrence during this stage of life. In fact, it most often occurs in babies that are growing and developing well. Staying calm and accepting the condition is your best approach. Parents exhausted from worry do not help the situation. To help lessen the discomfort, you may want to lay the baby on his stomach across your knees and rub his back. Holding the child and rocking him gently may also help. If his discomfort seems extreme, check with your doctor.

BABY'S DEVELOPMENT

Sight, like all development, is a gradual process. At birth an infant can tell light from dark. For the first few weeks he cannot focus his eyes. Between one and two months he can recognize objects and respond to them. By three months he can look around in all directions. If he sometimes looks crosseyed, it is probably because his eye muscles are still weak.

To help him learn to use his eyes, you can provide a mobile. You can buy one at any baby department. But it may be more fun to make one. A string of gaily painted spoons, hung over the crib works very well. You can also make an interesting mobile using a wire coat hanger or rod, colored paper or cardboard, and string. Simply draw circles of various sizes on the paper. Cut them out, punch holes at the top and attach pieces of string. Attach the circles to the hanger and move the strings back and forth until the weight is distributed evenly.

Hang the mobile so your baby can see it but not touch it. If there is a ceiling light nearby, the mobile can be hung from that.

As your baby gets older you may wish to replace the paper circles with more

sturdy objects so he can reach and touch the mobile.

BABY'S EATING

The idea was once wide-spread that babies must eat at rigidly set intervals, no matter when they become hungry. But each baby has a rhythm all his own. The best schedule is one that fits this rhythm. It is true that most babies fall into a schedule of feeding at three- or four-hour intervals by the end of the first month of life. It takes that long for a baby to become accustomed to the process of eating and digesting food. But waking a baby from a sound sleep because it is the "scheduled" feeding time is unfair. So is letting a hungry baby cry for 30 minutes because it isn't time to eat yet.

A realistic approach would be to keep the feeding times regular, but not rigid. Allow and expect variations of 30 to 60 minutes or more! As your baby grows and needs food less often, his feeding schedule will become more regular.

At each feeding let your baby's appetite guide the quantity of food he eats. The amount will not always be the same. If your baby does not drink all of the formula in the bottle within an hour, dispose of the rest. Germs may begin to grow, which can cause illness.

In the early months, most babies hiccup pretty regularly after meals, so don't worry. Picking him up and patting him gently on the back may help. Sometimes a drink of warm water will stop the hiccupping.

When your baby was born, he needed to suck to get his food. But when he begins to place fingers or thumb into his mouth

you may become distressed, because you've likely been told that thumb sucking is harmful. Don't worry. Only when thumb sucking goes on for years does there seem to be any danger of harm to teeth or jaws. In an infant, nothing could be more natural than sucking, and in the first three or four months the need seems to be greatest.

Some authorities believe that infants become thumb suckers when this need is not fulfilled in the early months of life. They suggest that babies be given the chance to suck, rather than waiting till they succeed on their own. One way to increase the time spent sucking is to get new nipples and make smaller holes in them. That way, it will take longer to feed the baby.

For some babies this is not enough. If your baby still tries to put fingers in his mouth, let him. A baby who isn't prevented from early sucking is much less likely to keep on past babyhood than one whose parents make an issue of it.

An alternative is the pacifier. Many mothers report that between three and six months their babies have shown decreasing desire to suck the pacifier. Opinions as to their use are varied. If you have questions, discuss them with your doctor. If you do give your baby a pacifier be sure to *keep it clean*.

IF THIS IS YOUR SECOND . . .

We wouldn't want to end this letter without saying a few words about the older child.

Having to share parents with a newcomer is tough! Even if a child has thought he wanted a brother or sister, he won't enjoy being neglected in favor of the newcomer. Don't be surprised if he reverts to some

"babyish" habits for a time.

It helps to make the older child feel the baby is his, as well as yours. Let him hold or hug the baby. Helping to pat him dry after the bath is also fun. Having a special time alone with you is important. If he continues to feel wanted, accepted and cherished, his jealousy won't amount to much.

I hope that you find this and the next three letters helpful in making this first year a warm and happy experience for the three of you.

Sincerely,

Your Extension Home Economist

For more information you may wish to read the following. Most books may be available at your local library. For Michigan State University publications, call the local Extension office.

Helping your Baby Grow. Circular 467. Cooperative Extension Service, Penn. State University. University Park, Pa.

Infant Care. HEW Children's Bur. Pub. 8, Supt. of Doc., U.S.G.P.O., Washington, D.C. (.50c)

Baby and Child Care. Dr. Benjamin Spock. Available in paperback.

Development and Behavior, Birth to Five Years. Extension Bulletin 437. Michigan State University.

Prepared by Mrs. Janice Kukar, home economist in Oakland and Wayne Counties; Mrs. Marilyn Rudzinski, home economist in Macomb and St. Clair Counties; and Irene Ott, program leader in family living education, MSU.

But life is more than babies . . .

It's getting along with your mate, balancing the budget, shopping for clothes, cooking meals and creating a pleasant home.

With all those challenges, you're sure to have plenty of questions. And Michigan State University has information that may help—so we've launched a periodical publication just for you, called *The Young Homemaker*.

It's designed for home study. It covers your family, your marriage, your money, home, food, clothing, and a special section called "just myself."

If you're interested in receiving a sample of the publication, send your name, address, to:

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