

# ***CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT BIRTH TO TWO MONTHS***

*While reading this information, please keep in mind that all children are unique. While the sequence of development is practically the same for all children (for example, most children learn to crawl before they learn to walk), each child's rate of development is different. There is a wide variation in normal development. Some children reach developmental milestones earlier than others. Some reach them later than others. Rarely does a delay in reaching a developmental milestone mean that there is a problem. In most cases, delays turn out to be normal. Remember that premature infants generally reach developmental milestones later than other infants of the same birth age. Parents with any questions or concerns about their children's development should contact their children's health care provider.*

## **Appearance**

Newborn infants do not usually resemble the dimpled, softly rounded bundles that are often seen in television commercials. Many parents are surprised when they are presented with a wrinkled, puffy faced, lumpy headed, oddly colored, crooked shaped little creature. The infants shown in most television commercials are in fact closer to five or six months in age. New parents, thus, should not expect their newborns to be raving beauties.

## **Sleep**

The average sleeping time for babies during their first month of life is 16-1/2 hours, taken in 7 to 8 daily naps. It is important for parents to remember that 16-1/2 hours is an **average**, and the hours infants sleep can range from eight hours a day to almost 24 hours a day. Babies who sleep more or less than average are just as normal as the ones who sleep the average of 16-1/2 hours per day. It seems that some babies, like adults, appear to need more sleep than others, and some less.

Newborn babies may frequently appear to be in a twilight state between sleeping and waking. During the first months, most infants are alert about one out of every ten hours. Many babies during this early phase of life do not follow a rigid schedule. Daily patterns of sleeping, crying, and eating will probably be very disorganized and unpredictable.

## **Feeding/Bodily Functions**

During the first week of life most infants require about seven to eight feedings per day. By the end of the first month, the frequency of feedings will decrease to about five to six daytime feedings and two night feedings.

During the first week of life, most infants will move their bowels often and sporadically, but by the end of the first

month, bowel movements will occur about three to four times per day.

### **Senses**

At birth newborns are especially sensitive to the sights and sounds of other human beings. For most infants, their senses are working at birth, but not as completely and accurately as an adult's.

**\*Vision.** Vision is a very important sense in the developing infant. Intellectual development and learning begin with eye contact and visual tracking. At birth, infants have blurred vision, but by the end of the first month, they can see their parents' faces and distinct patterns. During the first month of life, infants learn to focus at a distance of 8-10 inches. At one month of age, infants are able to follow objects with their eyes, and by two months they will prefer to look at people rather than objects. At this time, infants are able to watch a person alertly and directly, and they will be able to follow a moving person with their eyes.

**\*Hearing.** The sense of hearing is fairly well developed in infants at birth. In fact, it is thought that infants are able to hear sounds in the womb up to four months before birth. Studies have shown that infants seem to prefer the sound of the human voice over any other sound, and that they prefer higher toned (usually female) voices. It is

important, therefore, for parents to talk to their newborns, even though they cannot understand, to stimulate hearing development. By the end of the first month, most infants will be able to respond physically to sounds in some way, such as by startling, crying, or quieting.

**\*Taste/Smell.** Newborns are probably as sensitive to taste stimulation as they will ever be at any time in their lives. Sense of smell is present at birth, too.

### **Highlights in Physical Development**

**\*Reflexes.** During the first week of life infants' whole bodies respond to sudden changes in the environment. At this time, infants' arm, leg, and hand movements will be primarily controlled by reflexes. As children grow older, these reflexes will begin to disappear. By two months of age most actions will be voluntary, not reflexive.

One such reflex that infants have at birth is the grasp reflex. During the first month of life, infants will grasp objects put into their hands when their fingers are pried open, but this reflex will begin to disappear after the first month, and grasp will later become voluntary.

**\*Head/Neck.** The development of head and neck strength is a continuous process. At birth, most infants are able to turn their heads from side to side

while lying on their backs. When on their stomachs, they can usually lift their heads a few centimeters into the air. When placed in a sitting position, infants' heads will wobble uncontrollably if not supported. As infants grow and develop, they will be able to control their head and neck movements more and more. At about one month of age, infants' heads will still be unsteady when they are held or pulled into a sitting position. By two months of age, most infants are able to lift their heads for a few seconds to about a 45 degree angle.

**\*General Physical Development.** One of the first developmental milestones reached by infants is the ability to roll over. At about one month of age, many infants are able to roll part way to the side when lying on their backs. During the first month, infants begin to move their arms and legs in an energetic manner.

### **Highlights in Cognitive/Language Development**

**Language.** At birth, the only way infants can communicate is through crying. At birth, crying is a reflexive behavior, but the crying reflex begins to disappear during the first month of life, and infants then begin to cry deliberately for assistance. Between one and two months of age, infants will start to make gurgling and cooing noises as a mark of pleasure and contentment.

At this age, infants may begin to grunt and sigh, too.

**\*What Baby Understands.** Many parents are unaware of how much their newborns are able to do and to understand. For example, newborn infants can tell their mother's voice from all others, and when they hear their mother's voice, their eyes will move in its direction. Newborn infants will also try to follow their mother's face with their eyes (track) if it's less than twelve inches away. By one month of age infants will watch their mothers while they are talking, and if their faces are close enough, infants will mimic speaking by opening and closing their mouths. By one month of age, infants will also imitate movements of their mother's face. Infants this age will probably stop crying when they are picked up by their mother, because they know that their mother is a source of comfort.



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