

It's important to stimulate your baby's senses with one-on-one interaction.

Your new baby gains so much information in the first year of life that her brain will actually double in weight. It is a critical time for providing your baby with learning experiences and stimulation because the brain cells that are not stimulated within the first few years actually die. Your baby is learning about the world through her senses of touch, sight, sound, taste, and smell. Through a process called sensory integration she has to first take in all of this information and then learn to make sense of it all. Sensory integration lays the foundation for learning and development. You can dramatically improve your baby's development by providing experiences to stimulate each of these senses.



Vision

Your baby's vision and the tiny muscles around their eyes are developing and both components need to be exercised simultaneously. For the first several weeks of your baby's life, they can see contrasting colors, light, and movement more acutely than anything else. Your baby's eye muscles are not yet coordinated, so she may appear cross-eyed at times.

Babies can see objects best when they are 10-12 inches from their faces. Incidentally, babies prefer to gaze at mommy and daddy's faces and the faces of other children and babies more than anything else.

Tips for visual development

- Provide baby with black, red and white toys; hang mobiles above their cribs.
- Allow baby to look at himself in the mirror or cut out pictures of babies from magazines and hang for baby to look at while in the car seat.
- Switch sides half-way through feeding so that your baby has the opportunity to gaze at your face from both sides.
- Occasionally move baby's crib to another side of the room so that they have to turn their head to look at the light source or mobile.
- Jiggle a playing card in front of baby's eyes. Once they are able to focus on it, move it in horizontal and vertical arcs 8-10 inches from their face encouraging baby to track the card with their eyes.

