



Welcome Words for your Three Month Old

The Rhythm of Routines

By the end of her third month, it's likely that your baby will have a fairly regular routine. A typical schedule might be: baby wakes up about the same time every morning, has a breast or bottle feeding, is awake briefly, naps, has lunch, naps, has another feeding, has a longer period of being awake, another meal and a nap. Some parents wake their baby to eat again before they go to bed, say at about 11 p.m. Your baby may go to sleep again and sleep for as long as six hours.

If your baby doesn't develop a regular schedule, you can take the lead. Choose the best time to schedule baths, outings and bedtimes. Once you've worked out a routine, try to stick to it. If feedings are coming too close together, you may be able to gradually stretch the interval by singing or playing with her for a few minutes first. Frequent nursing may be a response to boredom (but it may also indicate a growth spurt). Your milk supply is often diminished in the evenings, which may mean more frequent nursing.

A regular bedtime allows you and your partner some time alone together, which is important for the entire family. If one of you spends 10 to 30 minutes doing something quiet with the baby, such as looking at a book, singing softly, or rocking, she'll begin to associate this ritual with bedtime. If at 3 months she's waking during the night, it's OK to let her cry for up to 15 minutes, then pick her up. By the time you've calmed her, you've probably lengthened the interval between feedings by 30 minutes.

Be as businesslike as you can during these late night wakings. Keep the lights dim and the conversation to a minimum. Once she's settled into a good sleeping pattern, don't be disappointed when it's disrupted. Illness, teething, or a growth spurt will probably change the schedule, but within a few days you should both be getting to sleep again.

Try to set a regular time for you and your partner to enjoy each other without the baby. Make arrangements for a sitter once a week, or trade child-care with another family. Taking time for yourselves is good for you and your baby.

Milestones

By the end of the third month.....

- You can lift your head up 45 degrees when you're on your stomach, and
- Follow an object in an arc about 6 inches above your face past the midline (straight ahead).
- You bring your hands together and spend time looking at them.
- Since you may be able to roll over one way, I never leave you unattended where you could fall or roll into something.

I'm letting you know you're loved by . . .

- Being generous with gentle hugs and kisses.
- Answering you from across the room when you try to attract my attention.
- Playing copycat sometimes when you gurgle and coo. I mimic the sound and enjoy watching your response.
- If you signal you need a break from play by looking or turning away, I give you some quiet time.

*Adapted from You and Your Baby,
Ross Laboratories, 1987.*



Suggested Reading

The Girlfriend's Guide to Surviving the First Year of Motherhood by Vicki Iovine

Infants & Mothers: Differences in Development by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

Our Babies, Ourselves: Home Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Parent by Meredith F. Small

This Isn't What I Expected, Overcome Postpartum Depression by Karen R. Kleiman, MSW and Valerie D. Raskin, MD

Playing with Your Baby

It's through play that a baby learns. Your infant is playing when she uses her senses to explore the world around her. She tastes, smells, touches, watches and hears everything in which she comes into contact.

As Dr. Miriam Stoppard puts it in her book, *Complete Baby and Child Care Guide*, "Learning to think... results from observing and interacting with the world."

Babies vary in the amount of stimulation they like, and no baby needs constant stimulation. Watch your baby for cues that she's had enough playtime or conversation: she may look away or become fussy.

While the most important thing you can do to help your baby learn is give her a safe and loving environment, there are some specific activities you may want to try.

- Call softly to her from behind when she's on her back or tummy, so she looks for you.
- If you're not sure how to talk to your baby, try doing a running commentary: "Now it's time for a diaper change, and then we're going to have lunch." You can also ask her questions, even though you don't expect an answer. "Isn't it a beautiful day?" or "What should we have for dinner tonight?" After a thoughtful pause, chime in with an answer, "Let's have chicken and rice."
- It's not too soon to read aloud to her, even though the words have no meaning yet. She'll enjoy the rhythm of nursery rhymes and simple stories, as well as looking at the pictures.
- To give her a changing view of her world, put a safe metal mirror in her crib or play area.
- Place a mobile between 12 to 15 inches above her face, and to one side, rather than directly above her.
- Tasting, or putting things to her mouth (such as her hands), is one of her primary ways of exploring her world, and will continue to be, for many months to come. Resist the temptation to discourage this behavior. However, it's not too early to get in the habit of moving object that's small enough to cause choking out of reach.
- Let her feel different textures. Put her down on the carpet, a terry towel, a cotton quilt, a wool blanket, and other clean, safe surfaces. Gently touch her palm with toys that are smooth and firm, such as a rattle, or a soft and furry stuffed toy.
- Change her position often during the day — let her lie on her back and her stomach, sit with support, or hold her high on your shoulder. These activities not only gives her different world views, but encourage the use of different muscles.
- Remember, babies develop at different rates. Your baby will have her own timetable. Meanwhile, the important thing is to take time to be playful with her. You'll both enjoy the exchange.



Baby's Body Language

Although she can't say a word yet, your baby's body language already speaks volumes. Closely observing how she responds to the world around her, including yourself and the other people in it, will help you understand what she's saying. You won't become a mind reader overnight, but you can learn how to "read" her body language.

Remember that every baby, even an identical twin, is unique, just as every parent is. It's up to you as the parent to figure out what your baby likes and adapt as much as possible to her, at least in the beginning. She is also adapting to you. This mutual learning process will continue as you get to know each other better and better.

Stanley Greenspan, MD, suggests that you try "to relax and let the baby be the teacher." A good way to begin is to watch how your baby uses her senses.

Sounds: Try watching your baby's face to see which tone and volume of voice she prefers. When you make a sound she likes, she'll make eye contact and seem interested. You can also try different types of music. If she's frightened by loud noises, try to protect her from them and introduce new noises gradually. Remember that too much noise (TV, music, loud talking) for too long will tire any baby, some sooner than others. Some infants sleep better with white noise from a fan or humidifier in their bedroom.

Sights: Does your baby look more at a specific color or patterns? Does bright light (or sunlight) make her frown or smile? Does she turn away after several minutes of eye contact (which lets you know that she needs a break from play)? Try to notice and honor her preferences.

Touch: Does your baby like a light, almost tickling touch or does she prefer a gentle squeeze of her arms and legs? If she becomes fussy after being held by several different people, it may be that she can't tolerate so much handling. Try to limit holding to just the few people who are regular caregivers. Does she notice a wet or dirty diaper immediately and let you know she wants to be changed? She'll probably enjoy soft, comfortable clothing and may not tolerate being either too cool or too warm.

Remember that all babies need a break from "play." Dr. T. Berry Brazelton likens parent and baby interaction to a dance: you move close to your baby and play until she looks away or her eyes glaze over, signaling you that she needs some privacy. You then move away, but check later to see if she's ready to play again. Before you know it, you'll both know the steps to this dance.

