



# Welcome Words for your Five Month Old

## Baby's First Teeth

Your baby's first tooth probably won't appear until she's 7 months old, but some babies get a tooth as early as 3 months. Others are more than a year old before this first tooth, usually one of the lower front teeth, comes in. Long before that tooth erupts, however, you may notice lots of drooling.

A skin rash or chapping may show up around the chin and mouth from all that saliva. The best thing to do is gently wipe the drool away and use a bib (or towel under the crib sheet) to help absorb some of the flood.

Once the tooth is about to erupt, your baby's gum can become very red and sore. Nursing may make the pain worse because the suction increases pressure and pain in the gum. Babies often reject the breast or bottle, because of this discomfort. Something cold to suck on may help her get through a bottle or breastfeeding.

While teething, your baby is likely to be irritable, sleep poorly, and may have diarrhea and/or a low-grade fever. Some doctors believe all the excess saliva loosens the stool and that gum inflammation causes a low fever. Here are some tips that may make your baby more comfortable:

- A frozen banana or bagel to suck on. Or secure a clean washcloth around an ice cube for her to gnaw on.
- Try rubbing her gum firmly with your finger. Sometimes the counter pressure helps.
- If she's eating fruits, try chilling the pureed fruit in the freezer.
- A bottle with ice water or very cold apple juice may help.
- Or, try blending a cube of frozen apple juice in the blender and feeding it with a spoon.

If your baby has diarrhea for more than two bowel movements, or a low-grade fever (under 101° Fahrenheit rectally) for three days, call the doctor. Treat the fever and pain with acetaminophen (ask the doctor for the correct dose). Don't rub anything on her gums without the doctor's approval, particularly anything containing alcohol (a dangerous poison for infants).



## Milestones

- At 5 months (20 weeks), you
- hold your head steady when held upright
  - push up on your arms when on your stomach
  - roll over one way
  - smile spontaneously and squeal in delight
  - reach for a toy or other object
  - grasp a rattle when it is held to the tips of your fingers

Remember that premature infants usually reach milestones closer to their adjusted age (the age they'd be if born on their due date) or later.

Source: What to Expect The First Year  
(Workman, 1989)

## The Unfamiliar Face

As wonderful as it is that your baby now recognizes you and your partner in a roomful of people, this new ability can have a drawback: stranger awareness.

The baby who smiled for strangers in the grocery store checkout line may one day suddenly burst into tears when she sees a friendly, but unfamiliar face.

This is hardest if it involves a loving relative, such as a grandparent, whom your baby hasn't seen for several months. Don't worry. This is only a phase, and one that will probably recur at about 7 months as separation anxiety.

Let your baby gradually warm up to new faces, and have faith that she will — in her own good time.

## Suggested Reading

The First Twelve Months of Life:  
Your Baby's Growth Month by Month  
The Princeton Center for Infancy and Early  
Childhood

The Father's Almanac  
by S. Adams Sullivan

Games to Play with Babies  
by Jackie Silberg

## Parents and Babies Together

Your baby's fifth month marks a turning point, a burst of activity that's both physical and social. Along with better head and upper body control, she now has a longer attention span and can grasp a toy. Her alert periods of play may stretch as long as two hours. Getting along with a baby may look like intuition, but it really involves trial and error as parents learn to care for their baby. When one parent is responsible for most of this care, the other parent often feels left out or "all thumbs" when caring for the baby.

Although it's sometimes hard, it's important that both parents be involved in basic care: feeding, bathing, diapering, soothing and play. Try to avoid assigning one task, such as bath time, to the same parent. Short of breastfeeding, dads can handle any part of a baby's care. Although your partner probably won't "do it your way," it's important to be supportive.

Remember, there are many ways to parent, and no one style is better than another. As Dr. Jonathan Farber points out in his book, *Welcome to Fatherhood*, there may not be magical moments with a baby —the unexpected smiles, the intense alertness during a burst of learning, the coos and shrieks — every day. The more often each parent interacts with a baby, the greater the chances of enjoying these special times.

Here are some ways you can make the most of your baby's fifth month:

- Use her name often and name other people, animals, objects and actions as you talk to her. Simple picture books from the library provide opportunities for naming. Ask the children's librarian for titles.
- Give her objects that make noise when she shakes, moves or squeezes them. If they are larger than her fist, she can't choke on them.
- Offer her toys from behind, above or below her so that she stretches and turns.
- Slowing pull her from sitting to standing, gently holding both her arms.
- Play simple games with her. (See "Games Babies Play")

## SAFETY TIPS

### What About Walkers?

If you've planned to use a baby walker, you may want to reconsider. Every year, walkers cause around 24,000 injuries that require medical attention, and many less serious bumps and scrapes. Walkers have sent babies tumbling down stairs and steps and into swimming pools. They can also quickly tip over if a wheel catches on a toy, rug or threshold.

For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents not use walkers. Not only are they unsafe, walkers don't help babies learn to walk because they don't strengthen the right muscles. In fact, walking may be delayed since a walker helps babies move around so easily.

### Feeding Chairs

Once your baby can sit up well, you'll have a variety of options for feeding chairs. Whichever you choose, remember to:

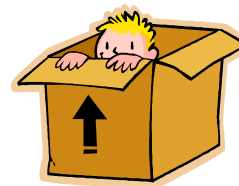
- Keep all surfaces clean. (Your baby will eat any morsel she finds.)
- Never leave a baby alone even for a second.
- Use the safety belt to keep her from sliding or wriggling out.
- Keep the chair away from walls and other surfaces that she might kick against, knocking the chair over.
- Hook-on seats should be used on sturdy tables. Be sure your baby can't push off on a table leg or brace, or a chair under the seat, which might dislodge it.

### Crib Mobiles

Remove the mobile attached to your baby's crib as soon as she starts to sit by herself or at 5 months, whichever comes first, to keep her from becoming caught in it.

## GAMES WITH BABY

Simple games can be fun for both you and your baby. Enjoying them together will help her feel safe, secure and loved, as well as support her mental development.



### Who's There?

Position a mirror so that you're sure she can see herself. Point at her reflection and say her name. Use her name frequently.

### Peek-a-boo

Hide your face in your hands or with a towel, then peek out, saying "Peek-a-boo!"

### Rhyming

Recite nursery rhymes as you use two fingers to "walk" from baby's feet to neck and then neck to feet. A good rhyme is "Hickory Dickory Dock."

### Little Piggies

Use this old favorite as you gently wriggle each of baby's toes or fingers. "This little pig went to market; this little pig stayed home; this little pig had roast beef; this little pig had none; and this little pig cried, wee, wee, wee, all the way home." In China, the toes are cows: "This little cow eats grass; this cow eats hay; this cow drinks water; this cow runs away; this little cow does nothing but lie down all day!"