

What to play with a 0-3 month old baby?

(Source: http://www.baiboo.com.my/newsletter/10_2010/october10_newsletter.html)

Your baby's brain is changing and developing at incredible speed in the first year of life. During this time it is very important that you interact with your baby and expose him to appropriate levels of stimulation.



Your baby learns from observing and interacting with his environment. You can support his development with appropriate activities like playing games & playing with toys, singing songs & rhymes, talking to your baby and encouraging him to play and discover his environment.

BaiBoo in cooperation with Playskool will provide you in the coming month with information, tips and age appropriate activities and games that you can play with your little one to

help him to learn and develop.

Tips on what to play with your baby

Read: Research shows that reading is one of the best things parents can do for their child, because it supports the baby's development and also school performance in the future. So try to read at least once a day a story to your baby. Even if he doesn't understand yet what the story is about, he will get a feel for language and tones... and he will definitely love it.

Talk: Encourage the learning process by talking to your little one, responding to his vocal expressions. One of the most important stages of infant development is learning a language. Language skills are most effectively learned from others. That simply means you have to actively talk to your child even if you can't expect to have a "proper" conversation with him. When you are doing housework or cooking explain to your child what you are doing. If you are taking your baby for a walk in the park tell him what you are seeing, describe the colours, plants, animals, smells, noises. This will teach him awareness of his surroundings and help him to develop his language skills.

Note that you actively need to spend time talking to your baby. Using television as a substitute won't work. Interaction is essential.

Sing: Try to sing rhymes which involve any type of co-ordination activities like clapping hands. This will teach your child rhythm and co-ordination. All babies have some instinctive skills, but also many that need to be developed. Babies learn by moving as well as by observing and listening. Try to play games that encourage movement like holding his hands and clapping to songs, supporting him under his arms and bounce him so his feet touch the ground while you tell a rhyme.

You'll now see your baby's personality emerge. As you play with your baby, keep in mind that play is supposed to be fun. Both you and your child will have more fun if you keep the pressure to learn to a minimum.

Age appropriate activities, games & toys:

1 month old baby: At this age your baby can focus on an object that is 20 cm away from his face, but he does not see detail. He also pays attention to noises and sounds.



Activity:

- ♥ Try to place a toy at 20 cm distance from your baby's face and move the object slowly to the left or to the right, you will see that your baby follows the object slowly with his eyes (don't worry if he loses it, this is normal).
- ♥ Talk to him, he will watch you intently and try to imitate your facial expression.
- ♥ Show him your tongue several times in a row – you will see that he tries to imitate you.

♥ When your baby is almost 4 weeks old, demonstrate cuddling and nurturing behaviour to your baby. You can hug, kiss and coo him and then cuddle a stuffed toy close to him so he can feel the soft texture on his cheeks.

Toys: Rattles, squeak toys, soft stuffed toys or dolls, child-safe activity mirrors, pull-string musical toys like mobiles or music boxes for the crib.

Note: Musical toys or mobiles are also a great toy to soothe your baby when he is crying or he needs to calm down before going to sleep.

2 month old baby: Your baby will kick and wave his arms when he is excited. He will smile at you and he will be able to locate a sound if it is in front of him. He also learns cause and effect and how to make things happen.

Activity:

- ♥ Place a cause and effect toy like a rotary phone in front of your baby and let him discover how something pops up if he rotates the dial. For the first time he will discover that he has some control over the environment around him.
- ♥ Handy clap: Place yourself in front of your baby so he can see you. Hold your baby's hand and sing a rhyme like "If you're happy and you know" and clap your baby's hand. Note that you should hold and clap your baby's hand gently.
- ♥ A possible variation of this game would be to use your baby's feet to do the clapping part. Note: make sure to lay your baby on a soft surface before you play this game.
- ♥ Tootsie Roll: you will need place a soft blanket or towel on a soft surface (like your bed or a mattress on the floor). Lay your baby down on the blanket, on his tummy. Pick up one side of the blanket and slowly raise it, causing your baby to tilt to the side. Continue to slowly roll your baby over, talking to him as you go and using a hand to spot or guide him as he turns. When your baby turns over, show your delight. You can repeat until your baby is tired of playing. Note: Be sure to move slowly and keep a hand on your baby so he doesn't roll too fast and get hurt. Make sure your baby is in the middle of the bed and can't fall down.
- ♥ Place a baby appropriate safety mirror in front of your little one and let him discover himself. Explain to him that he is seeing himself at the mirror. Point to his nose, eyes, ears, mouth and tell him this is your nose, your eyes, your ears, your mouth.

Toys: Balls with bells inside, floor gyms with hanging parts that encourage physical activity like kicking or pulling, pop-up toys where hidden figures like cartoon characters pop up when your baby spins, turns, pushes a button or pulls on a lever.

3 month old baby: When your baby is lying on his stomach, he will begin to lift his head up and prop himself on his elbows. He recognizes you and is interested in faces. He manages to hold onto objects and wave them around.



Activity:

♥ Place a swinging object in front of your baby. If he hits the object and it swings he will realize that he caused it and will try to hit it again.

♥ “Hat’s Off Game”: Collect a variety of hats around your house or buy inexpensive hats from party stores. Possible hats could be a baseball cap, a knit cap, a funny hat, a fire-fighter’s hat, a clown hat, a pair of earmuffs or a feathery hat. (Note: Don’t include masks in your play. They tend to scare babies at this young age). Place your baby in his infant seat on the floor and sit facing him. Put the first hat on your head and make a funny face as you say something interesting, such as, “Look what mummy is wearing!” or, “I’m a firefighter!”. Lean toward your baby so he can grasp the hat and pull it off. In case your baby doesn’t pull it off you can do it yourself. Repeat this several times with the same hat before moving on to another hat. Note: Sometimes babies get scared when your appearance changes. If your baby starts to get upset, put the hat on only briefly, then remove it and show him you’re still Mommy. If he continues to be upset, play the game another day.

♥ Sock Puppet: As your baby’s vision improves, he can see objects more clearly at greater distances. To work on his focusing and tracking skills, keep a Play Puppet “handy” for feeding, changing, or play time. You can create the puppet yourself! For this you will need a clean white sock and some permanent felt-tip markers. How to do it? Buy a pair of white socks, large enough to fit over your hands. Use permanent felt-tip markers to draw eyes, eyebrows, noses, and ears on the socks’ toes. Outline the heels to create mouths and draw red tongues inside the folds. Place your baby in your lap, on the changing table, or in his infant seat. Slip one puppet onto your hand and entertain your baby with songs, rhymes or simple conversation. Make sure you move your hands so it looks like the puppet is talking. Slip the second puppet onto your other hand for two-handed fun. Note: Don’t let your baby suck on the sock, since the ink might come off. If you place your baby on the changing table make sure he can’t fall off.

Toys: Hand-held rattles; Hand or Sock Puppets, Playskool’s play mats, toys on a ring, child safe mirrors.

The most important thing if you are playing with your baby is that he and you are having fun. If any of the above mentioned activities and games upsets your baby, you should stop it and try it another day.

Make sure that you always praise your baby for every achievement – be it big or small. In this way you create a secure environment in which your baby is happy, confident and feels emotionally secure.

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