**Your baby 1-6 months**

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How you care for and respond to your baby now will make a big difference to them later. The more you talk, play and respond to your baby the better your child’s speaking skills will be at age 3. When you show your baby love with praise and cuddles it builds their self-esteem and confidence.

The following information provides general information about the different stages of your baby’s development and some tips for what you can do to support your baby. Your baby may do some things earlier or later than described here. Most differences are normal.

There is more detailed information about your baby’s development in the [**‘Bump, Baby & Beyond’ book**](http://www.healthchallengewales.org/infantfeeding-publications) (External link). This also provides information about feeding your baby, teething, vaccinations, your baby’s health and making your home safe. If you are worried about your child’s development – ask your GP or health visitor.

**At 1-2 months your baby may be able to:**

* Reach out for you when they need attention or to feel secure;
* Move their arms and legs more strongly;
* Smile at people, blow bubbles;
* Follow moving objects with their eyes;
* Respond to loud noises by blinking, frowning or waking up;
* Hold on to things for a little while; and
* Hold their head up for a few minutes.

**At 3-4 months your baby may be able to:**

* Recognise familiar people;
* Turn towards you when they hear your voice;
* Make more sounds and laugh when you talk and play with them;
* Grab their feet with their hands;
* Reach grasp things better;
* Try to move a toy from one hand to another;
* Roll from side to side;
* Keep their head up almost straight when in a sitting position (make sure your baby is supported); and
* Show excitement when they see or hear familiar people.

**At 5-6 months your baby may be able to:**

* Hold out their arms to be lifted;
* Roll over from their front to their back and sometimes from their back to their front;
* Sit up with some support (don’t leave your baby unattended);
* Grab small toys and other objects put in front of them;
* Communicate using sounds, actions and facial expressions;
* Drop things and let them fall;
* Know that a rattle makes a noise when shaken; and
* May cry when they see strangers.

**Tips to encourage and support your baby's development**

* **Try to respond to your baby’s crying.**  If you do this it helps your baby to trust you. Your baby will soon give a small cry instead of a big one because they know you will come to sooth them. Researchers found that Mums and Dads who responded quickly to their baby’s cries at 4 months had babies that cried less by 8 months.
* **Respond to your baby’s ‘signals’.** Babies communicate in lots of ways - you don’t have to wait for them to cry to give them a cuddle or play with them. Play with your baby when they are alert and awake. Have a quiet cuddle when they cry, turn away or arch their back. You can use your baby’s signals to work out what your baby wants. Do they suck their fingers when hungry, or rub their eyes when tired?
* **Put your baby where they can see things happening.** You could change what they are looking at or move them to a different spot so they have something else to look at.
* **Try to respond when your baby is trying to communicate.** For example, when your baby babbles, talk to your baby. Long before your toddler utters their first words they will understand hundreds of words because you talked to them as a baby.
* [**You can speak some words in Welsh too**](https://gov.wales/cymraeg-education/pre-school)(External link)**.**  Even if you only know a little Welsh, speaking some words to your baby gives them the best start to a bilingual life. You and your child could also sing along to a range of Welsh nursery rhymes on **[Mudiad Meithrin’s website](http://www.meithrin.cymru/project-nursery-rhymes/)** (External link). These songs include many simple words making it easy for young children to learn the Welsh language.
* **Talk and sing to your baby during feeds, nappy changes and bath time - leave time for your baby to babble back.** This will help your baby learn to talk and your baby will know you care.
* **Talk to your baby all the time.**  When you’re on the bus, in the car, walking to the shops or in the supermarket point out the things you see. When you change their nappy or give them a bath talk about what you are doing.
* **Introduce new things slowly and gently.** Help your baby learn that it’s time to sleep by doing the same things, in the same order every evening. For example, at bedtime give your baby a bath, look at a book together, give your baby their feed, play some soft music and then turn off (or dim) the lights.
* **Handle your baby with care.** Support your baby’s neck and head whenever you lift them or lay them down. [**NSPCC**](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/) (External link) have a booklet showing safe ways to hold your baby.
* **Try distraction.** For example, if your baby is trying to grab onto something that you don’t want them to, give them a different toy or safe object instead.
* **Try to stay calm and patient.** Your baby is becoming aware of your moods. When you are calm and relaxed, your baby is more likely to feel calm too. If you get stressed your baby is more likely to feel tense. [**Is there anything you can do to reduce your stress?**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/make-time-to-look-after-yourself-and-manage-stress)
* **Plan Ahead!** Before your baby is mobile put things away which are dangerous or could break. Put up a safety gate on the stairs. This will keep your baby safe.
* **Play!** Try to give your baby bright and safe things to look at. Blow gently on your baby’s tummy or play peek-a-boo. There’s lots of ideas for play activities and songs on [**Words for Life**](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby) (External link) or **[Mudiad Meithrin](http://www.meithrin.cymru/project-nursery-rhymes/)** (External link).

**Dad’s are very important too.** Research has shown that Dads have a big impact on their child’s life right from birth. Getting involved in the daily care of your baby – dressing, playing, bathing and nappy changing create lots of one-to-one time with your baby. This will help you build a positive relationship with your baby.

**What doesn’t work**

* **Getting angry with your baby.**  Your baby is not old enough to do things on purpose yet or control their actions. Your baby doesn’t do things to upset you.  For example your baby may throw their toys on the floor.  Your child doesn’t do this to annoy you. To your baby this is a game and they are learning where things go.
* **NEVER shake your baby.** Shaking can damage your baby’s brain and the injuries can last forever.

**It’s OK to ask for help.** If you are worried about feeling stressed, low or depressed talk to your health visitor or GP.