



Illustration by
Billy Nuñez, age 16

PARENTING YOUR INFANT

PARENTING AN INFANT COMES WITH BIG REWARDS AND CHALLENGES

All infants:

- Love to explore the world around them, so you have to make your home safe.
- Have their own personalities, which may be different from their parents'.
- Put new and stressful demands on parents, so parents may need to ask for help.
- Need routines that match their unique abilities, and parents may need to adjust their schedules to fit this new individual.

Your baby is now smiling and cooing and will soon start to move around more. These are signs of your baby's personality and the start of a lifelong learning process.

INFANTS DO TALK

When infants begin to babble, they like the people around them to talk back. Have fun talking with your baby.

- Make silly noises.
- Play peek-a-boo games.
- Sing songs.
- Show and talk about simple picture books.

This is the way your baby learns how to talk.

Enjoy playing and talking
with your baby
and watching your baby
learn about the world!

INFANTS LOVE TO EXPLORE

You may have noticed that your baby is becoming interested in everything within reach, especially simple toys with bright colors and ones that make noise. It seems that whatever infants grab, it finds its way into their mouths.

By age 3 or 4 months, infants are drooling and chewing on the things they put into their mouths. This is how they learn about the world around them.

Make sure that you never give infants a toy so small that it fits entirely in their mouths or a toy with parts that can break off easily. This can lead to choking!

INFANTS HAVE PERSONALITIES

Even very tiny infants act in very individual ways. Some are loud and active, others are quiet and passive. Some are easygoing and cuddly, others are very serious. Some are relaxed, others are more high-strung. As a parent, you already know your baby's unique personality.

Think about this personality when you are caring for your baby.

- If your baby is naturally fussy and has difficulty calming down, avoid too much stimulation.
- If your baby is sensitive to changes in routines, make sure that your days are not too busy or filled with lots of changes.



If your baby's personality is different from yours, remember that what makes your baby comfortable and happy may not feel right for you.

INDEPENDENCE IS STARTING

As infants get older, they:

- Begin to roll over.
- Reach for toys, spoons, and other objects.
- Want to sit up.

This is the beginning of independence, but babies do not know what might put them in danger. Keeping your baby in a safe place, such as in a crib or in a playpen, will prevent falls, burns, poisoning, choking, and other injuries. Childproofing your home can also help keep your baby safe.

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS

Most infants will go through the following difficulties, which can be very frustrating for parents, but they will soon outgrow them.

- **Colic.** This is not caused by anything you have done. This usually goes away at about age 4 to 5 months.
- **Trouble sleeping.** Some infants will have trouble either falling asleep or waking up often during the night.
- **Clinging to parents.** When infants don't see certain people (even close friends and grandparents) very often, they may become afraid of them.

Even though these problems will go away, it can be very upsetting while they are occurring. Talk with your pediatrician about ideas that will work for you and your baby until these problems go away.

Babies are not trying to be a pain or difficult on purpose; they are just exploring and trying to talk with you in the only way they know!

Never yell at, hit, or shake your baby!

INFANTS THRIVE IN HAPPY FAMILIES

Just like adults, infants do best with happy and healthy people around them. Look for parent/baby groups, support groups, or organizations in your community where parents with common interests can meet and get to know each other.

If things are not going well in your family, if you need help finding groups in your neighborhood, or if you are worried about your baby, talk with your pediatrician. You are not alone; many other parents have these same concerns.

STARTING NEW ROUTINES

Now that you are beginning to know your baby's patterns, your family, like many others, may be starting new routines. Here are some tips to help you.

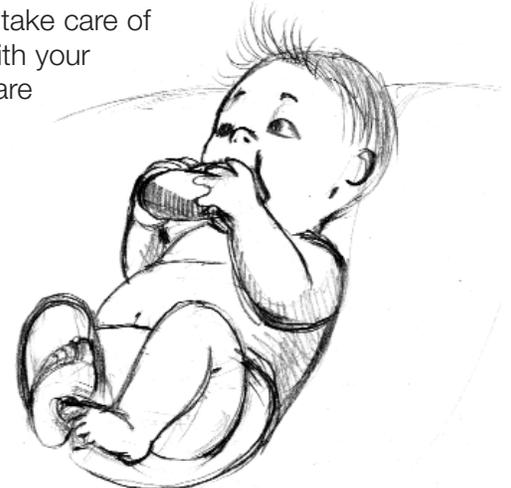
Taking care of yourself is important.

Even though infants usually are lovable, most parents have moments of frustration, and even anger, with their baby. Feeling this way is common and normal. What is important is how you deal with these feelings. When this happens to you, place your baby in a safe place like a crib or playpen and do something to relax and calm down—have a cup of tea or coffee, listen to music, call a friend or spouse, read, or meditate. These feelings of stress are natural and will pass.

Reach out to family and friends, or make new friends with other parents.

Having other adults to share the experience of raising a child can make all the difference in the world. If you are at home with your baby every day, it is a good idea to leave your baby with another trusted adult once in a while.

Use this time to take care of yourself or be with your partner. Babies are delightful, but all parents need a break!



Let your baby learn about being with other people early on.

Besides helping you out, having other adults in your baby's life will teach your baby how to relate with others. As infants get a little older, they begin to cry and feel restless when left with another adult. Developing a relationship with an adult other than you early on will help your baby have less of this discomfort later on.

If you need child care, find a setting where the same 1 or 2 adults will be caring for your baby every day.

Find a place that is safe and nurturing, where the adults really enjoy being with infants. Your pediatrician can help you think about what to look for in child care.



Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-JN-FX-0011 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

All rights reserved.
HE50382

Graphic design and illustrations by Artists For Humanity, a non profit arts and entrepreneurship program for Boston teens.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™