

Getting to Know Your New Baby

I'm getting used to the world and I need your help

Because my brain is so young, I can only take in so much information before I need a break. Watch my cues that tell you what I need.

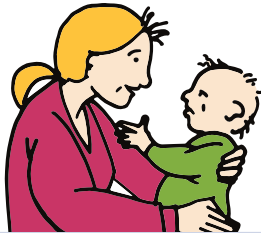


When I'm calm and alert

I love to see your face, hear your voice and be held by you. This makes me feel safe and loved. My brain grows best from my relationship with you—I learn by looking at you, listening to your voice, and being with you.

When I show that I need a little break

Sometimes my brain and body need a break from all the sights and sounds coming in. If I look away, it means I'm taking a little break. Wait for me and I'll look back when I'm ready.



When I start to get upset, I need your help

Respond with what you think I might need to calm my brain and body. You can't spoil me (no matter what others sometimes say). It may take a little while for me to calm down.

Sometimes I just can't calm down

Sometimes late in the day, my brain might go into OVERDRIVE. I might have trouble feeding or sleeping, and I might cry a lot. Once I get some good sleep and my brain is rested, it will be easier for me to be calm again.



Evenings might be harder for you too after taking care of me or being at work all day. If you have friends or family who like to help, this is a good time to have extra support.

Getting to Know Your Baby

Your baby will give you cues about what they feel and need.

When they are alert and calm, they will want to interact with you by looking at you or by just being together. When they need a small break from the interaction, they may turn their head, look away from you, or get a little fussy.

If the fussiness increases, this can be a sign that they are hungry or tired or have had enough interaction for now. Over time, you will be able to read your baby's cues that tell you when they are hungry, sleepy, or need a break from interacting.

When babies are hungry, they often have their arms bent (flexed) and their hands in a fist. As they take in the feeding and become full, their sucking pattern will slow down, their body will relax and look content, and their arms and fingers will straighten out. It is good to stop feeding the baby when they show you cues that they are full.

Note: Very young newborns or babies who are born preterm or with health issues may get tired easily and stop sucking before they are full. They may need to eat more often to get enough food to support their growth.

When babies are sleepy, they will start to look away and their eyes will become less alert and start to glaze over. They might start to fuss, cry more easily, or need to change positions more often. When you see these signs it is good to help the baby fall asleep before they get too tired. The more tired they get, the harder it is to get them to fall asleep and stay asleep. **Most young infants can't stay awake for more than 1-2 hours before they need to go back to sleep again.**

Babies frequently become fussier as the day goes on. Their brain gets tired from taking in all the new sights and sounds while they also figure out feeding and sleeping. This evening fussiness increases for the first 6 weeks and then gradually gets better. Evening fussiness shows that your baby's brain is working hard to figure out their new world.

Follow your baby's cues. It is not spoiling to follow your baby's cues for when they want to be held, interacted with, fed and helped back to sleep. By following your baby's cues, you are helping your baby learn that their cues have meaning and that you are listening to what your baby is saying with their body. This helps your baby feel safe and loved.

Following your baby's cues in the early months will help you get to know your baby. When you respond to a cue, like letting a baby take a break when they look away, it will help you develop a strong relationship with your baby. The heart of parenting, no matter the age of your child, is seeing and responding to your child's communication. The newborn period is the beginning of a lifelong relationship!

It is common for these first few months to feel draining and exhausting. If you have friends or family that like to help or hold the baby, this is a good time to have extra support.

