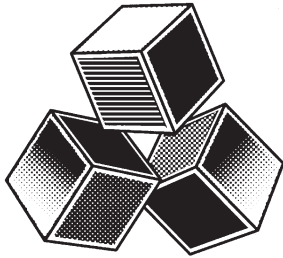


7 Months Old



# PARENT EXPRESS

## A Guide for You and Your Baby

### Dear Parent:

*Your baby's world is growing.*

Have you noticed how your baby is fascinated by her hands? How she makes a fist? Claps her hands? How she just loves to poke your face with her fingers? At this age, your baby is interested in everything.

Encourage her wonderful curiosity by playing simple games with her. Clap hands to music together. Play peek-a-boo or a naming game in which you point to different things and name them. Playing is a form of teaching, and you are your baby's most important teacher.

### In This Issue

- ▶ What It's Like to Be 7 Months Old
- ▶ Temper and Frustration—A Part of Growing Pains
- ▶ Feeding Protein, Breads, and Juices
- ▶ Games Babies Play
- ▶ Be Your Own Best Friend
- ▶ A Question about Stress

### What It's Like to Be 7 Months Old

#### How I Grow

- ▶ I creep on my stomach—I might even crawl.
- ▶ I get around on my back by raising my bottom and pushing with my feet.
- ▶ I balance myself and sit for a while without any support.
- ▶ I keep my legs straight when you pull me up, and I try to stand by myself.
- ▶ I explore my body with my mouth and hands.
- ▶ I can keep my diaper dry for up to two hours.

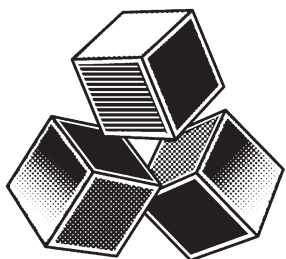
- ▶ I may have some teeth.
- ▶ I feed myself finger foods—I'm pretty messy!
- ▶ I play with a spoon and a cup, but I'm not so good at using them yet.

#### How I Talk

- ▶ I imitate the sounds I hear—that's how I learn.
- ▶ I say several sounds, such as *ma*, *mu*, *da*, *di*, and *ba*, in one breath.

#### How I Respond

- ▶ I want to be included in all family activities.
- ▶ I like to see and touch myself in the mirror.
- ▶ I get excited when I see a picture of a baby, thinking it's me.



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*Now that your baby is able to get around more on his own, life is more exciting, but it's scary and frustrating too. Don't be surprised if he begins to show some signs of temper or frustration—most babies do that at his age.*

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- ▶ I like toys that make noise such as bells, music boxes, or rattles.
- ▶ I like to grab, shake, and bang things and put them in my mouth.

### **How I Understand**

- ▶ I concentrate better now and spend a lot of time examining things.
- ▶ I know the difference in the size of blocks.
- ▶ I can tell if something is near or far.
- ▶ I can tell when people are angry or happy by the way they look and talk.

### **How I Feel**

- ▶ I may fear strangers, so stay with me when they are around.
- ▶ I feel strongly about what I want and don't want to do.
- ▶ I feel playful and like to tease.

## **Temper and Frustration—A Part of Growing Pains**

Your baby moves into another room to explore and satisfy his curiosity. He doesn't see you, gets scared, and starts to howl. Or, if you leave the room, he begins to cry because he is frightened of being separated from you. Or, if he drops a toy out of sight, he screams with anger because he can no longer see or get to it, and he wants it back immediately.

Now that your baby is able to get around more on his own, life is more exciting, but it's scary and frustrating too. Don't be surprised if he begins to show some signs of temper or frustration—most babies do that at his age. Temper and frustration are normal. They will pass as he gets older, feels more comfortable, and is more skillful in moving around.

Give him some extra cuddling during these bursts of independence. He can always use some loving, and so can you.

## **Feeding Protein, Breads, and Juices**

You can now begin feeding your baby strained meats and other protein foods, as well as breads and 100 percent fruit juices.

### **Protein Foods**

Between the seventh and the ninth month, begin adding meat or meat alternatives, whole grain or enriched breads, and fruit juices to your baby's daily diet. Prepare or buy only plain, single-ingredient items such as jars of strained chicken, beef, or liver. One jar of strained chicken has more protein than four jars of strained chicken and noodles. Give your baby 1 to 2 table-spoons of protein foods twice a day.

You also may offer mashed home-boiled soup beans, chicken, or fish. Do not add fat, gravy, or salt to baby's food.

### **Breads**

Try giving your baby up to one serving daily of whole grains in the form of toast, crackers, or hard biscuits. (If your baby is teething, chewing on biscuits will feel good.)

### **Fruit Juices**

Try giving your baby three to four ounces of a vitamin C-rich 100 percent fruit juice in a cup each day. Do not offer too much juice, but continue to breastfeed or give formula. Babies need the fat and protein in the formula or breast milk.

### **Foods to Prepare**

- ▶ Fresh and frozen fruit juice without added sugar
- ▶ Fresh and frozen meat, poultry, or fish without added salt

### **Foods to Avoid**

- ▶ Fruit drinks, ades, and beverages. They contain a lot of sugar.
- ▶ Meat products with salt, sugar, seasonings, and other additives including bacon, bologna, hot dogs, and frozen meat pies

## **Games Babies Play**

### **The Mirror: Eyes and Hands Game**

#### **Purpose**

This game helps your baby become aware of her appearance.

#### **How to Play**

- ▶ Stand in front of a mirror with your baby and point to her reflection.
- ▶ Using her name say, "I see Tina. Where is Tina? Find Tina. Look at Tina." Encourage her to point to herself in the mirror.
- ▶ Still sitting in front of the mirror, do the same thing with objects. Pick them up one at a time and move them behind your baby's head.
- ▶ Name each object, telling your baby something about it, such as "This is a ball, and it's round."
- ▶ Then ask your baby, "Where is the ball?" and encourage her to point to it in the mirror.

## Other Eyes and Hands Games

- ▶ Let your baby play with toys in front of a wall mirror or dresser mirror.
- ▶ Let other people sit with your baby in front of the mirror and say their names.

## Be Your Own Best Friend

Remember how you felt just before your baby was born and during those first hectic months? Now may be a good time to think about how your feelings as a parent have changed. Are you feeling more confident and relaxed now about bringing up your baby?

Are there still times when you feel unsure of yourself and guilty that you're not the "perfect" parent?

Often we expect too much from ourselves. It's impossible to be patient, understanding, and loving all the time. We just try to do the best we can. Yet many parents feel guilty and discouraged if they don't live up to how they think they should be as parents. They have a whole list of "shoulds," such as:

- ▶ I should never get mad at my baby.
- ▶ I should always put the baby's needs ahead of mine.
- ▶ I should be patient at all times.
- ▶ I should always have dinner ready when my partner comes home, no matter how tired I am.

What are some of your shoulds? One way to find out is to make a list. Fill in the following sentences with any thoughts that come to mind.

A good mother should:

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When my baby cries, I should:

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When I'm tired and my baby is cranky, I should:

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As a parent, I should never:

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As a parent, I should always:

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Now make up some of your own "should" sentences. Where are your shoulds coming from—your parents? Your friends?

Don't be too tough on yourself. Instead of putting yourself down with your list of shoulds, accept your feelings and realize it's not easy to be all things to all people—even little babies. Nobody's perfect. Be a good friend to yourself.

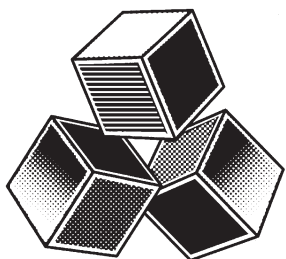
## A Question about Stress

**Ever since we had a baby, there's been a lot of strain between my partner and me. We never seem to have time just to sit and talk anymore. I can't seem to tell him how I feel. Things really seem to be piling up between us. Do you have any suggestions?**

Many new parents feel just as you do. Their lives are so busy with all the added demands a new baby brings that it's hard to find time to work things out.

As difficult as it may be, it's important to make time and openly talk about what's bothering you. Chances are your partner has been storing up some gripes, too. Here are some ways to make it easier for both of you:

- ▶ **Set a date.** Reserve a special time (or times) each week when you can be together to talk without distractions.
- ▶ **Use "I" messages.** Tell your partner how you are feeling without blaming. Make sure you put yourself in your communication. Instead of saying "You always put me down," say "I feel put down when you tell me..." When you use "I" messages, your partner is less likely to feel blamed or accused.
- ▶ **Be direct.** Say what you mean, rather than hoping your partner will guess or know what you mean. Instead of "The living room has been looking messy lately," say, "I get upset when you leave your shoes in the living room and expect me to pick them up."



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- ▶ **Avoid the question trap.** Asking questions often is a poor substitute for direct communication. Instead of “Why didn’t you call to tell me you’d be late?” say, “I was worried that something had happened to you when you didn’t come home at the usual time. Next time call me, so I won’t worry.”
- ▶ **Tip:** When you feel you are about to ask a question, stop and listen to yourself. Try to identify your real feelings and then say them in a statement instead of a question.
- ▶ **Listen.** Give your partner a chance to air feelings and gripes. Don’t interrupt, jump to conclusions, preach, or quickly offer advice. Check back with your partner to see if you really understood what he or she said.

It’s normal for new parents to have many mixed feelings. By using these basic communication skills, you may be able to find solutions to problems before they get out of hand.

## Sources and Recommended Readings

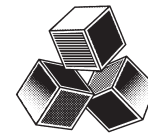
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*Parent Express guides you through parenting of children through age 36 months. For other publications in the 27-part series, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office.*