
BACK TO BASICS

What it's like to be a baby

Newborn

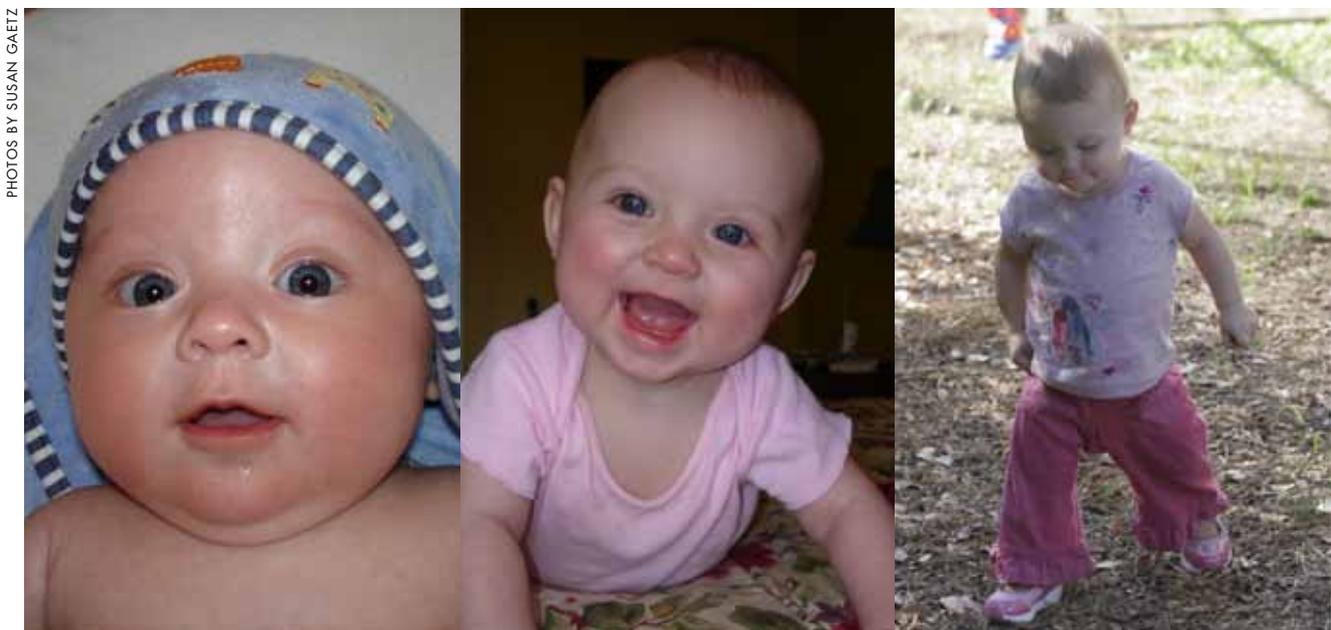
- I have soft areas in my skull where the bones haven't yet fused. If you look carefully, you can see throbbing as blood nourishes my growing brain.
- I suck, swallow, startle, and grasp by reflex. I'll begin to move my hands, legs, and head more deliberately as I gain muscle control and you encourage my sensory explorations.
- I can hear and respond to different sounds and am especially sensitive to the voices of my primary caregivers.
- I can see, but my vision is limited. If you hold objects close and move them slowly, I'll follow with my eyes.
- I don't have much physical coordination and can't move my body to avoid danger. Put me to sleep on my back, and keep toys, bottles, and fluffy blankets and pillows out of my crib.
- I try to communicate by crying. Soon I'll use non-verbal and verbal communication to let you know

when I'm hungry, afraid, lonely, wet, overwhelmed, or in pain.

- I'm beginning to feel secure and attached to you. Help me build trust by holding me, talking to me, and playing with me. Your attention won't spoil me—it just lets me know that I can trust you to respond to my needs.

2 to 4 months

- My body is active and strong. Make it safe for me to kick, wave my arms, reach for objects, and roll from my tummy to my back.
- I'm starting to learn how to suck and swallow deliberately but need lots more practice before you feed me solid foods.
- I recognize the sound of your voice and can tell if you're angry or frustrated, but I can't always tell whether you're angry with me or someone else. I like it best when you're relaxed and your words are gentle.



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- I'm learning to put myself to sleep in my crib but always need to know that you're around if I need help.
 - I can use my mouth to make sounds and blow bubbles—and like it when you respond as I learn the first rules of conversation.
 - I explore objects by putting them into my mouth. Help me learn about the world by giving me safe, clean things to hold and taste.

4 to 8 months

- I am getting my first teeth, and sometimes it hurts. Please help me learn to deal with the pain.
- I am getting better at imitating sounds and actions. It makes me happy when you turn my actions into a back-and-forth game.
- I've almost mastered deliberate swallowing and can move soft food from the front of my mouth to the back—usually without spitting or choking.
- I can use my finger and thumb to pick up small objects and can move things from one hand to the other. I can do this so fast that it's best for you to keep my play spaces free of things that are dangerous.
- I'm eager to explore my environment and am working on scooting forward and backward to reach something I want.
- I'm beginning to understand that things exist even when I can't see them. That's why peek-a-boo is my favorite game and I cry when I miss your presence.
- I respond differently to strangers and people I know. Give me time to meet new people so I'm not afraid.

8 to 12 months

- I'm building the coordination, balance, and body control that lets me crawl, pull up, and take tentative steps. I like to practice walking with you holding my hands. Your encouragement and a safe environment help me learn these important skills more easily.
- I'm almost ready to say my first real words and appreciate your willingness to interpret and respond to my babbles—even when the sounds come out wrong.
- I do things to get your attention and often make mistakes about which behaviors I should use. Show me that you're interested in what I do, and gently help me learn the right ways to get your loving response to my behaviors.

- I have eight to 10 teeth and find small crackers on a tray more interesting than formula in a bottle. Help me practice feeding myself; I'll get less messy soon.
- I recognize other children but don't yet know how to play with them. If you give us each a toy to explore—but not share—we'll enjoy each other's company.
- I'm eager to explore but don't have enough experience to know what's safe and what's not. Help me learn rules by being consistent and keeping rules simple. I need lots of practice time to get things right. ■