

Manual for fathers

The early years of your child's development

This manual is a guide for fathers to explain their baby's development and a guide of what developmental milestones babies should be reaching. It highlights:

- developmental milestones from 0 to 12 months.
- provides an introduction to psychosocial development from the age of 0 to 5 years.
- gives brief information regarding postnatal depression.

Please remember all babies are different and some reach stages at different times. If you have any concerns about your baby's development please seek advice from a healthcare professional.

From 0 to 1 month

After the birth of your baby you will notice your baby is more than likely to sleep for long periods of time and be awake for short periods. Skin to skin contact at this stage is important as it can help with the bonding and attachment process between you and your baby.

You can interact with your baby by smiling and pulling faces, your baby may try to imitate you. From birth your baby is also sensitive to light and sound. Objects and faces can be seen at a 30cm distance from your baby's face, this distance is necessary for the baby to show interest. You may also notice that your baby will move their eyes to slowly follow your face.

If mum is breastfeeding support can be provided by reassuring her and providing emotional as well as practical support, such as making sure mum has a drink or food. Being with her while she is feeding is just as important.

Health professionals

When your partner and baby are discharged home from hospital the midwifery team will continue to visit you at home up until your baby is 10 days old. During this period a health visitor will contact you to arrange a visit that will take place after the 10 day period. The visit from the health visitor will involve checking how feeding is going and on both your partner and baby's health.

Tip : Remember that you should be entitled to two weeks paternity leave from your work

From 1 to 3 months

1 month

When your baby is lying on their back they will usually keep their head to one side. If you touch the corner of your baby's mouth they will turn to that side and attempt to suck your finger. Your baby will also begin to recognise you and your partners voices and will explore your faces.

Tip: Speak near to one ear then the other, this will encourage your baby to move their head.

Playing, bathing and reading to your baby is also an active way for you to get involved, these activities also assist in your baby's development by creating an attachment, bond and sense of security.

2 months

Your baby at this age may stop crying momentarily when they hear you or your partners voice. When babies are content they will usually gurgle and make cooing noises, they will also start to smile and will start to grasp your finger. At this stage your baby may be having a growth spurt and may increase their feeding pattern. If your partner is breastfeeding this could be a difficult period and support will be necessary.

Support is available from breast feeding support groups, or your health visitor may be able to offer some advice. At 6 to 8 weeks your baby will be seen by your GP for a check up. There will also be an appointment with the health visitor for a check on baby's development and mothers health.

3 months

Your baby will be able to lift their head when lying on their stomach. They will be very alert and distracted easily and will be able to follow toys with their eyes and head. Your baby, when stood on their feet, will sag at the knees.

Tip: "Try cooing to your baby and see whether they imitate you".

From 8 weeks your baby will receive immunisations at your GP surgery. This should be explained by your health visitor and information should be provided.

Postnatal/perinatal depression

Research has shown that fathers who are involved provide emotional support for their partners. This can lead to a better quality relationship with their children. Postnatal/perinatal depression can occur soon after birth, but can also occur anytime in the first three months after the birth. If your partner or you are experiencing feelings of anxiety, loss of pleasure, unable to concentrate and irritability you should speak to a health professional as soon as possible.

Fact: Fathers can also suffer from depression in the perinatal period (Fathers Reaching Out, 2013).

From 4 to 6 months

4 months

At this stage your baby will be able to bring their hands to their mouth. Placing their thumb in their mouth is an important part of their development and assists with self soothing and comforting. They will also be able to reach for objects accurately and will also be able to move their body towards an object of interest. This is also an important part of physical development. Your baby will also be able to hold toys, but will find it hard to let go of them.

5 months

Your baby will now show more interest in bathing and will respond to interactions such as singing. Your baby will be more vocal at this stage, will smile along with vocalisation and may show excitement at the sound of a familiar voice approaching. Your baby will also be able to laugh and chuckle as they play. They may also be able to roll from their front to their back at around this age. You may also notice that they will protest when separated from you or your partner - this is all part of the attachment process.

6 months

At this stage when lying on their back they will raise their head up and reach out their arms to be picked up. If you were to grasp your baby's hands they will grasp your hands and pull themselves up to sit. Your baby should also be trying to roll from front to back at this age. They can also bear weight on their feet and enjoy bouncing up and down. When your baby drops a toy they will watch where it lands.

At this stage weaning can be introduced as long as your baby is able to sit unaided, hold objects and put them to their mouth. It is recommended by the World Health Organisation that babies are weaned at 6 months as their digestive systems are developed enough to cope with food at this stage.

Note: Safety is important as your baby is beginning to be more mobile.

From 7 to 9 months

7 months

Your baby may begin to start teething between 5 to 7 months old, normally the first teeth to appear are the bottom front teeth. Some signs associated with teething are red cheeks, diarrhoea and nappy rash. They may also be more restless at night. This stage can be particularly difficult, there are some ways that you and your partner can help by providing baby with something hard to chew on such as a teething ring. If your baby is over 6 months they can be given hard pieces of carrot etc.

Tip: Supervision is necessary when your baby is eating.

8 months

You may notice now that your baby will turn their head immediately to a familiar voice. They will also enjoy games such as peek-a-boo. You may also notice that your baby will become more aware of strangers.

At this stage you may have thought previously that you have heard your baby make sounds like 'mumma/dadda'. This is more than likely and this stage of development is important. A way that you can help your baby is by repeating the word back by saying 'yes there is 'mumma/dadda'. This is known as 'scaffolding' as you are responding to what your baby is saying and building on it. This helps them to associate the words they are saying with an object or person.

9 months

This is a pivotal part of your baby's stage of development. Your baby will now pull themselves up to the sitting position and will be able to sit unsupported on the floor and maybe able to pick up a toy without losing balance.

They can go from rolling to wriggling onto their front and even to crawling. Your baby may also pull themselves up to stand but they will not be able to support themselves for long. Your baby will also stretch out to grasp small toys when offered and will pass toys from one hand to the other. Your baby will enjoy throwing objects over the side of their chair. You will also notice that your baby will use their voice in either a friendly way or to express frustration. Your baby should also respond to their name and understand words such as 'bye-bye'. Your baby should also now enjoy play by pressing buttons on objects, pulling string and will also offer you toys to gain your interaction.

Reading to your baby encourages good visual development and is enjoyable for both you and baby.

From 10 to 12 months

10 months

Play is an important part of development, as babies become more mobile they will use play to develop their agility and strength. Physical play can also encourage development of motor skills. Enabling your baby to explore different objects, such as wooden spoons and saucepans, can be key to helping with their development. Babies also love to explore the world around them. Now your baby is able to sit and crawl they will be more interested in the world outside of their home environment. Visiting your local park, for example, and sitting on the grass is a good way to explore the world around them.

11 months

Your baby will now be able to tell the difference between people who are familiar to them and strangers. They will need reassurance from you before they will accept a stranger being present. Your partner may now be thinking of returning to work after maternity leave which will be a very emotional time for her and your baby as separation can often be difficult. Ensuring that childcare is adequate and that you are all happy with the arrangements is essential at this stage.

12 months

Your baby may be cruising around furniture at this stage and can pull themselves up to stand. They may also be able to walk with support and only holding on with one hand. From your baby's first birthday they will be able to have full fat cows milk and should be drinking from a free flow beaker with little or no help.

Your baby will be able to point at objects of interest and will enjoy play with you and your partner. Your baby will also imitate your actions such as talking on the phone or putting on a hat. Your baby will also be attempting to feed themselves with a spoon.

Tip: Something just as simple as bouncing your baby on your knee can assist with development and is very enjoyable.

Psychosocial development

Birth to 18 months

Within this stage of development babies develop a sense of trust towards their parents. Parents are looked upon to provide care, affection and reliability. By providing your baby with warmth, love, food and interaction, trust can be established effectively and can assist with secure attachments.

2 to 3 years

Within this stage children need to develop control over their physical skills and independence. This leads to enabling them to make their own decisions. Sometimes it can be hard to let go but they will now be exploring the world in their own way and will be progressing towards attending nursery.

3 to 5 years

This is known as the exploration stage of psychosocial development and your child will need to begin to be assertive and learn how to control their environment. Your child will at this stage of exploration begin to learn that they have a sense of purpose.

Useful resources

NCT Host a friendly e-group just for dad's which covers a whole range of parenting topics and is a place to ask questions available from:

- www.groups.yahoo.com/group/nctedads/?guide=248270320
- www.dad.info
- www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
- www.dadathome.co.uk
- www.dwp.gov.uk

Sources of information

Department of Health (2009) - Healthy Child Programme Pregnancy and the first five years of life. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/attachment-dad/16998/health-child-programme.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/attachment-data/file/16998/health-child-programme.pdf)

Fathers Direct (2007) including new fathers. A guide for maternity professionals. Fathers reaching out (2013) the illness can happen to anyone. Available from:

www.fathersreachingout.com

Sheridan M (2008). From birth to five years, children's developmental progress. 3rd ed. USA.Routledge.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – details below.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: palse@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: **01323 435886**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

Next review: June 2018

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