



Your Child and **Hydrocephalus**

Section two

Your Baby's First Year



“It’s important for your baby that you are as relaxed as you can be, to stay calm and to handle your baby with confidence”

Your Baby's First Year

Having a new baby takes some getting used to no matter how prepared you think you may be beforehand! You might be especially nervous about handling your baby following surgery but as long as you follow any instructions the hospital gave you, you'll be fine. It's really important your baby has as full a range of experiences as possible, including touch and moving, so if you have any concerns the team at Shine is here to help.

0–3 months

Social and emotional needs

Bringing your baby home from hospital, especially if they've had a difficult time, can be nerve-racking. Many parents feel anxious about the possibility of a shunt blockage, and you may find it difficult to relax or sleep. It's important for your baby that you are as relaxed as you can be, to stay calm and to handle your baby with confidence. This will help your baby feel secure. Over time, the majority of parents become used to the idea of their child's shunt and confident they would spot the signs of shunt malfunction. Feeding is a great opportunity to bond and your baby will soon get to recognise your face. Responding to your baby's needs will help keep her calm and feeling secure.

Never bottle-prop, no matter how tired you are. It is highly dangerous and associated with death, tooth decay and ear infections.

Cognition and learning

Babies and young children learn through play. Toys with different textures, or which make different sounds, or move (such as hanging mobiles), or that are black and white in colour, can help their early learning.

Communication

In the early days, your baby will cry to let you know they need something. It's important that their crying isn't ignored, partly to keep the stress hormone cortisol down (which is linked with permanent changes to the part of the brain handling emotions) but also to help your baby to learn to communicate. By answering your baby's cries and meeting those needs, you will build a strong bond, and let your baby know that communication works!

Later, communication will involve smiling and laughing, and copying the sounds you make. The more that babies hear language and new words, through talking or singing, the better their communication skills will develop.

Language development supports learning and emotional development, so take any opportunity to chat or sing to your baby. It's never too early to talk or sing to your baby; in the early days it doesn't matter what you talk about – quantity not quality is what matters! Constant talking can be exhausting for parents sometimes, so you may want to use a picture book as a prompt to keep the communication going.

Use words to describe what your baby is doing and how he is moving (for example, up, down, over, under, through). This helps to learn the concepts that go with the words and will help with learning to move too.



By the end of this stage, your baby can see clearly within thirteen inches from her face. She will respond positively to touch and will usually settle when picked up. She listens to voices and will smile and show pleasure in response to social stimulation. Her head will fall back if not supported so ensure that you always support it well.

Physical and sensory

Baby massage can be started from a few days old and will help to develop body awareness, touch sensation and is a fantastic opportunity for bonding with your baby.

Your Baby's First Year

Time to play

Use bright colours, patterns and shapes and encourage your baby to look at and follow these objects.

Move toys to encourage baby to look from side to side, up and down. Do this in a variety of positions including side lying, tummy time, sitting and lying on their back.

Skills to look out for

- Holds on tight to your finger or toy placed in his hand
- Brings hands to his mouth
- In tummy time will lift her head to 45 degrees and put weight on her forearms
- Developing head control
- Brings hands together
- Begins to hold her hands open by three months
- Grasps and shakes toys
- Will start to put hands to her bottle
- Will begin to fix his eyes on your face and begins to follow objects with eyes (tracking)



IMPORTANT TO KNOW... Some children with hydrocephalus may have difficulty with things like recognising a toy against a patterned background. This is known as 'figure-ground configuration' and is important for judging distances and being able to walk safely, and to use kerbs and steps.

Tummy time

Tummy time is really important and the earlier you start it the better.

The benefits of tummy time

- Develops head control so your baby can hold her head up
- Strengthens back muscles for sitting up, and eventually standing and walking
- Stretches out the muscles at the front of the body
- Develops all seven sensory systems
- Gets your baby ready for crawling (another super skill)
- Helps with vision
- Promotes communication
- Can even help with wind!

The best time to start tummy time is from day one. Your baby will start to briefly lift his head from very early on. Little and often is ideal and it's best to do a little with your baby every time he is awake. The earlier you start, the more your baby will enjoy it and it is the very best activity for your baby's development in the first few months.





IMPORTANT TO KNOW... Babies who have hydrocephalus may find tummy time difficult, as their head may be quite heavy.

Little ones who have had surgery may need some adjustments to positions and how they get the opportunity for tummy time – a physiotherapist will be able to give specific advice for your baby's needs. Babies who have reflux may also need some adjustments to tummy time practice.

What you can do

- Get involved! Use this time to play and bond with your baby. If possible, get down on the floor with him. If there are older brothers or sisters around, get them involved too
- Distraction – have a box of toys or sensory objects close by that you can pull out to distract your baby and fit in a couple of extra minutes
- Use a variety of positions – 'tiger in the tree' carrying position, on a gym ball, over a nursing pillow or small rolled up towel or simply on your chest
- Do little and often – by around four months your baby should be spending between 60 and 90 minutes every day playing on his tummy. This is not all in one go but a few minutes little and often will soon add up!

Ideally, by around six months your baby will be pushing up onto straight arms and flat hands and lifting an arm for a moment to reach a toy. This develops arm strength ready for crawling.

Always be close to your baby when he or she is doing tummy time and never leave him on a raised surface like a changing table or bed (babies learn to roll really quickly!).

See positions for play on pages 21-22.



If your baby is not lifting her head up at all when placed on her tummy by 8 weeks, or if you have any concerns, do speak to your health visitor or your physiotherapist. If you don't see a physiotherapist, ask your GP or paediatrician for a referral.



IMPORTANT TO KNOW... Don't let your baby spend more than 20 minutes at a time in a reclining seat, bouncer, swing or anything similar. These can slow down development – rather place your baby in a variety of positions to play (see positions for play on pages 21-22).



AWESOME SKILL: HEAD CONTROL

Head control is super important for everything! It starts to develop right away, and tummy time is the most important way to strengthen head control.

What to do to help

- Hold baby upright while supporting her head
- Tummy time
- After baby has some head control, after six weeks or so, support her in an upright position to practise 'balancing' the head
- Some babies with hydrocephalus can have heavier heads, which may mean gaining head control can take longer

Flat Head Syndrome (Plagiocephaly)

When babies are born, their skulls are very soft and pliable so that they can be born more comfortably. This means there is a risk that pressure can cause the head to change shape and flatten when it is in prolonged contact with a firm surface. This is called plagiocephaly or 'flat head syndrome' and research shows that 1 in 10 babies will develop severe flattening of their head, causing changes in facial symmetry and ear position.

In most cases, flat head syndrome is completely avoidable. To reduce the risk, make sure that your baby has plenty of opportunity to move and experience different positions. This ensures an even distribution of pressure all around the head.

Things that increase risk

- Tight neck muscles – make sure that your baby turns his head to look both ways evenly. Sometimes one side of the neck can be stiff from being in the womb, or from having surgery or being in hospital. This makes it difficult for them to move their head from side to side and they may need specific stretching exercises. In babies with hydrocephalus there is an increased risk that they will prefer to keep their head turned one way because of their shunt or they may have developed a flat spot in hospital
- Being in baby equipment for too long – bouncers, car seats, swings, pushchairs etc. all place pressure on your baby's soft skull. Restrict the time in these to 20 minutes at a time and for no more than two hours total in one day if possible



What you can do

Five tips to avoid flat head syndrome

- 1** Encourage your baby to turn her head to look both ways. You can alternate the way you place her in her crib, change the side you stand on when doing a nappy change, place toys/ yourself at both sides of your baby in turn
- 2** Alternate the arm you hold her in to feed her, if bottle feeding
- 3** Only ever use a car seat when your baby is travelling in a car. Place him in the carrycot or fully reclined buggy when you're out and about, or even better, carry him in a sling! Check with a physiotherapist or OT before using a sling if your baby has spina bifida
- 4** Start tummy time from day one and make sure your baby has some tummy time every time he's awake through the day
- 5** Play with your baby in different positions (see 'Great positions for play' on pages 21-22)



If you notice a flat spot developing on your baby's head ask for a physiotherapist to assess your baby and to support you as soon as possible. If you notice that your baby does not turn her head both ways, see a children's physiotherapist for advice as soon as possible.

Feeding

Babies with hydrocephalus may be sleepier than other babies before their shunt is put in. This can make feeding a challenge. Babies may sleep through feed times, fall asleep throughout the feed and have a weaker sucking action. Some babies may need tube feeding in the early days.

After the shunt surgery, feeding should be easier; your baby should feed enthusiastically and gain weight. Gastro-oesophageal reflux (sometimes called possetting or reflux) is more common in children with neurological conditions. Visit www.bjmp.org/content/paediatric-gastro-oesophageal-reflux-disease for more information.



If your baby begins to feed slowly again after shunting, especially if accompanied by drowsiness, lethargy, vomiting and a bulging soft spot at the top of their head (fontanelle) seek urgent attention from your neurosurgical department to check that their shunt is working.

Talk with your paediatrician or GP if reflux becomes a problem, particularly if large amounts of most feeds are being vomited, if your baby is not gaining weight as expected and if the vomiting is projectile (shooting across the room).

4–6 months

By now you can expect lots of smiles and laughs, crying when upset and showing excitement by waving their arms and legs. Favourite pastimes include smiling at herself in a mirror and looking at faces. She pays attention to her own name and notices a difference between two people based on the way they look, sound or feel.

• Social and emotional development

During this time, you will become much more confident in understanding what your baby wants by their sounds and facial expressions. By meeting these needs quickly, your baby will continue to feel secure. Babies have no sense of time at all, so they don't know how long they've been waiting – for food, a nappy change, or you! They aren't able to plan out any actions; and have no idea of other people's needs.



Your Baby's First Year

• Cognition and learning

Every experience at this age helps learning. Games like 'Round and Round the Garden' and 'This Little Piggy' will help your baby begin to learn to look ahead at what might happen – before long they will anticipate the tickle that comes at the end!

'Cause and effect' toys can help with learning to predict events. Thinking ahead about 'what will happen?' is a useful skill because it helps with planning, managing change and motivation, which are all areas that can be hard for children and adults with hydrocephalus and this is a fun way to practise.

At six months, it's important for the development of the part of the brain needed for vision that your baby spends time sitting completely upright.

• Language and communication

Listen out for your baby making different sounds according to what you're doing together. By listening to the sounds and talking or singing back, your baby will start to learn to

'take turns' in conversations later on. At this stage a baby is effectively learning the 'tune before the words', and will make sounds which seem like conversation. Your baby will also start to use gestures like pointing, or looking at objects, to help communicate with you, as head control and control of their arms and legs develops.

Naming the objects your baby is pointing at helps the flow of communication before your baby can talk. Your baby's pointing reflex needs to be fed with information so they can learn to name the world around them. Keep talking and singing – more is better!

Talking about what you're doing, and what your baby is doing, will help their language skills. Sometimes children with hydrocephalus can have difficulties with grammar, sentence construction or picking up the more subtle meanings of language. The earlier that you introduce lots of language and turn-taking, the better. Talk about how they're moving (up, down, over, under, through). Using the correct language to describe positions is great for learning about movement.

Physical and sensory

This is a really exciting time with lots of sensory-motor skill development taking place.

Skills to look out for include

- Brings both feet to their mouth for play
- Raises their head and chest in tummy time and pushes up on their hands
- Reaches out for a toy
- Grasps and holds a small block or cube
- Holds a small toy with both hands
- Rolls from tummy to back, and on to tummy again
- Will grasp a tiny toy with their palm and fingers
- Able to hold one toy in each hand

IMPORTANT TO KNOW... Babies who have decreased sensation or movement will need extra help and support to play with and learn about their legs and feet.

They may need their skin protected when their teeth come in, to prevent damage from biting themselves, if they can't feel. Do lots of massage and brush your baby's legs with a variety of textures.

Ways to play

- Place a small towel or padding under his bottom and gently lift his feet up so that they are in his line of vision. Bring his hands to his knees and feet, talking about them, kissing them and helping him to hold them himself. Play 'This Little Piggy' or other games

IMPORTANT TO KNOW... Some children with hydrocephalus need help to learn how to do new things the first few times. When it comes to learning about movement, they may need you to physically help them to move in and out of the positions a few times before they figure out how to do it on their own.

Likewise with using things like a spoon or holding a cup. Although they may watch you, they might need you to physically help them to hold it and take it to their mouth a few times before doing it themselves.



Help your baby learn to roll

- Rolling is a really important milestone for your baby because they will start to develop rotation or twisting of the trunk which is needed for turning to the side to reach something and also important for walking. It's also when babies get a three-dimensional view of the world and not just 2D – front and back
- You can help your baby to get comfortable with the experience of rolling by helping her to roll slowly from her back to her tummy and back again. Sing 'Ten in the bed' as you do it to make it fun. When your baby is on his tummy, gently push down on his bottom and give him a chance to try and pull his arms out on his own before helping him if he needs you to
- Trying to reach for a toy is often the way a baby first learns to roll. Encourage your baby to turn his head to look at a toy. He may then bring the opposite hand and leg over to try and reach the toy and then roll over. You can help him to roll by placing your hand on his hip and slowly guiding him over, waiting for him to join in the movement
- Encourage your baby to roll to both sides. This is important, so if your little one has a shunt or difficulty rolling both ways, try to roll him over your legs while

you are sitting on the floor so that his head is free and not in contact with a hard surface

- Add in sensory input by rolling your baby on different surfaces and textures, e.g. hard, soft, rough, smooth or noisy
- **Don't use 'sit in' baby walkers!** They have serious safety issues and many babies have been injured by falling when in them. They also, like the stationary activity centres, promote undesirable positioning and poor alignment of the baby's back. It is thought that they can actually delay, not help, a baby to learn how to walk



IMPORTANT TO KNOW... It is important that babies start the rolling movement and motivate themselves because it helps to teach smooth sequencing (going from one position to another). This contributes to other sequencing activities later, like reading and writing.

However, babies with hydrocephalus can have difficulty initiating movement and may need to be shown how to do things a few times to help them to learn.



What you can do

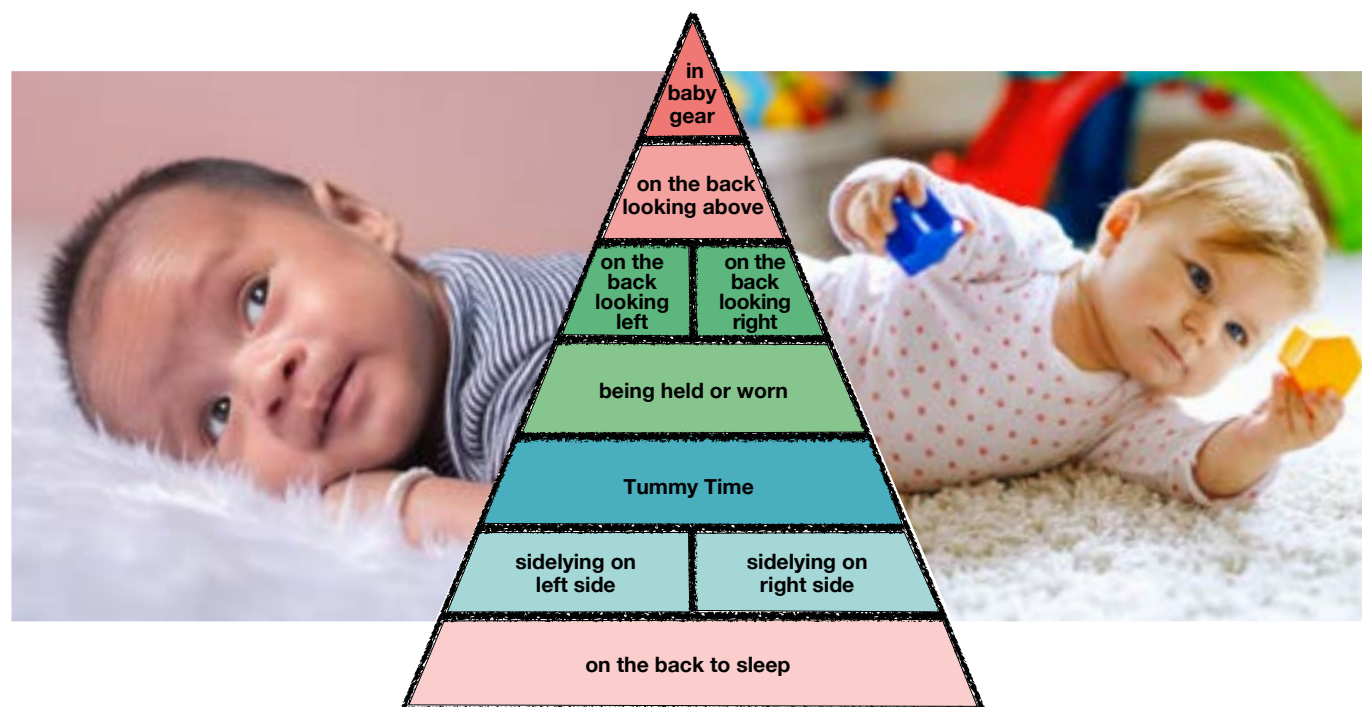
- Place baby on a slightly inclined surface, like a wedge
- Encourage continuous rolling by using a blanket either on or off the floor
- Add in sensory input by rolling your baby on different surfaces and textures e.g. hard, soft, rough, smooth or noisy

Great positions for play

It's really important for your baby's development that he gets the chance to play in a variety of positions. This also helps to reduce the risk of your baby developing flat spots on the head, while ensuring that your baby gets the chance to stretch, move and develop their sensory system.

The proactive positioning pyramid

It can be helpful to think of positioning in a pyramid. The amount of time spent in each position decreases as you go up the pyramid.



7th level

Baby gear – it is really essential that you limit the amount of equipment with your baby. Bouncers and swings should only be used for 20 minutes per day, maximum. **ONLY USE CAR SEATS IN THE CAR!** The rest of the time either place baby in the carry cot or seat part of the buggy or use a sling which has been checked and fitted for you and your baby

5th level

On their back looking to the right and to the left – place toys to each side to encourage baby to turn their head each way – this helps with stretching neck muscles and will also encourage reaching and rolling

3rd level

Tummy time (see page 17 for ideas)

2nd level

Right side lying / left side lying – roll a small towel up behind your baby's back

bottom level

Sleeping on the back – this is in line with the Safe Sleep message and is essential for reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

If your baby has had back surgery, it might be that you have been advised to let your baby sleep on the side until the site has healed – follow the advice you have been given from health professionals.



Feeding

Weaning to solid food (from six months)

Introducing new foods to your baby is exciting and fun. Weaning babies on to vegetables, rather than baby rice or rusks, sets up healthy habits for life.

New foods may have to be offered many times (up to 20 for some!) before he accepts them, so don't worry if he doesn't seem to like certain foods at the beginning. If he refuses the savoury flavours of vegetables, don't offer sweet foods instead.

Introducing a wide range of foods and flavours, especially vegetables, is important for long-term health.

Mealtimes are one of the best times to help your baby develop their senses. Give your baby plenty of opportunity to use her hands during mealtimes and encourage her to get a bit messy – if you're worried about your floor you could get a large sheet of plastic to put down.

Most crucially, leave wet wipes to the end of the meal so that your child learns that it's ok to get messy and touch her food. Interestingly, babies who have lots of opportunity for messy play tend to be able to cope with weaning and different food textures better and more quickly than those who don't.

When you start weaning it is best if your child is able to hold her head up to sit in a seat. If your child is quite floppy and not able to hold herself upright, then please ask your OT to recommend a suitable chair. Your local Social Services department may be able to lend you a chair.

7–9 months

Babies at this stage can express several different clear emotions. Your little one may get upset at the loss of a toy or respond to you when you talk to her or make gestures.

She may be happier around familiar people and show anxiety around strangers, and will possibly comfort herself by sucking her thumb or holding a special toy or blanket. Remember to continue helping your baby 'through the motions' when they are learning a new skill.



Your Baby's First Year

Skills to look out for

- During tummy time, raises his shoulders and shifts weight from side to side
- Pivots his body in a circle when lying on his tummy
- Reaches and gets a toy
- Transfers a toy from hand to hand
- Shakes a rattle in imitation
- Grasps a toy with her thumb and index fingers
- Holds a toy in one hand while reaching with the other
- Picks up food to place in his mouth



Sitting is an important milestone. Sitting upright helps the visual centre of the brain start to organise itself, and sitting allows for major changes in your child's arm movements. It's also important in developing language and early socialisation as they can see more of what is going on around them.

If sitting is difficult for your child, your physiotherapist and occupational therapist will be able to advise and work with you on achieving this.

Ways to play

When sitting, your baby's back should be up nice and straight – this shows that his back is strong enough to support him in this position. If his spine is curved and his head is dropping forwards, then his back muscles need to get stronger.



Tummy time helps strengthen your baby's back muscles for sitting, so until she is actually getting herself up into a sitting position and sitting with a straight spine, carry on with tummy time!

Supporting your baby in sitting: start with your hands over the ribs and as she gets stronger move your hands down until you are just supporting lightly at her hips/top of the thighs. It helps to start with baby facing you as she can then balance by looking at you, and will feel safer to fall forwards on to you. Once balance has improved, face your baby outwards to look at the room.

Sitting on the floor: start with baby sitting with his legs straight out in front and playing with a toy in front of him. Once your baby can do this, start putting toys to each side so she has to twist a little and lean over to reach them. This helps to develop balance skills.

Side sitting: once your baby is able to sit with her legs out straight in front, you can gently move her legs slightly to one side and bend her knees. She should lean to the opposite side to her legs and prop on the opposite hand for balance. Show her how to reach for toys in different directions using her free arm.

By moving toys just to the side, your baby will start to lean and reach over to get them.





How to help your baby learn to get up into sitting from lying down

- Roll her on to her side and then gently press down on her top hip while placing your hand under her ribs, while she uses the arm to push herself up. You should notice that during this movement she is lifting her head and working to get up. As she gets stronger you will be able to give her less support. Do it in reverse as well so that she learns to get back on to the floor from sitting
- From her tummy, help your baby to bring her knees up under her into a crawling position, then push her bottom back over her feet and slightly to one side until she is sitting

Moving about

Commando crawling: you may notice that your little one starts to scoot around the room by pulling with her arms and maybe bending her knees and pushing off the floor. She may even start to rock backward and forwards on her hands and knees in a crawling position. This is the best exercise for developing those arm and leg muscles!



Crawling is really important for developing strength in the shoulders, core and hips, plus it helps with learning how to coordinate the two sides of the body. Even if your baby doesn't crawl for long, we really want to encourage them to experience it and to be able to do it! If you have a slippery or wooden floor, you will need to put a rug down so that your baby has some grip when trying to move.



Ways to play

London Bridge – place your baby in 4-point position over a bolster or your leg. Your baby should be putting weight through hands and knees (you may have to hold knees in place gently). A hand on the bottom may help to keep position. Encourage playing – build a tower and see if your little one can lift one arm to knock it down.

Ready steady – position baby on the floor in front of you on their hands and knees. Support her with one hand just under her arm around the rib cage and the other just above, opposite the hip. As she gets stronger in this position you can change where your hands are and how much support you are giving by moving both hands to hips. Hips should be just above knees and hands under shoulders. Talk the whole time to your baby about what she's doing and, as she gets stronger, you can gently rock her backward and forwards.



If your child is not showing any signs of wanting to move, or being able to move at all, either by trying to roll, pivot or pull themselves along the floor by nine months, contact your physiotherapist or paediatrician.



You should contact your health visitor or paediatrician if

- Your child is not responding to sounds
- Your child is not smiling or responding to you the way you expect
- Your child avoids close contact or cuddling
- Your child is inconsolable at night
- Your child can't seem to self-soothe or calm herself
- Your child has no interest in games like peek-a-boo

Things to remember about moving and playing

M Motivate your baby to move and explore their surroundings

O Opportunity to play in lying, especially on their tummy. Helps muscles to develop

V Vary the toys you use. Bright colours will hold their attention

E Encourage your baby to do as much as they can independently, placing toys just out of their reach

P Play should be fun for you and your baby

L Look at the things your baby enjoys playing with and use them to motivate them to move

A Attention observe what your baby takes notice of, e.g. noisy toys, interactive books, mirrors. Use those toys, especially during tummy time

Y Your time with your baby should be fun. Watch your baby during play activities so you can see you're both enjoying it



If your baby struggles to move up from soft/pureed food to lumps (for example chokes or splutters on them) stop for a few weeks, then introduce them again. If there is still difficulty, raise it with your neurosurgeon, as it could be a sign of a shunt issue, or Chiari II in babies with spina bifida. Your paediatrician may suggest referral to a speech and language therapist, as they are experts on anything to do with the mouth.



10–12 months

Get ready, for life as you know it to change completely – your little one is about to get mobile!

Skills to look out for

- Bears weight on hands and knees and rocks backwards and forwards
- Crawls on hands and knees
- Can get into a sitting position independently
- Uses index finger to point
- Lets go of objects easily
- Can use hands to catch himself if off-balance while sitting
- Tries to copy a scribble after being shown
- Copies sounds
- Bangs toys together in play
- Places a block or cube in a cup
- Deliberately drops toys
- Can find a toy hidden under a cover
- Brings spoon from bowl to mouth
- Waves bye-bye
- Copies actions
- Pulls to stand

Look out for your baby clearly showing happiness to see your face, her toys or herself in a mirror. She can recognise family members versus strangers, she may show fear in new situations and demonstrate affection and love.

Up on your feet

Children need to start standing by the age of 12 months because this helps with hip-joint development and muscle strength, and increases awareness of the legs. A child with spina bifida may not be able to maintain standing on his own so a standing frame could be ideal to help with this. Physiotherapists and OTs will be able to assess your child and recommend the best option.

Standing requires control of the ankle joints as well as the knees. Awareness and strength at the ankle joints is needed to be able to stand. Children with spina bifida may require extra support at the ankles and supportive shoes or splints – called an ankle-foot orthotic can help with this.

Ways to play

Kneeling is really good for strengthening the hip and bottom muscles. It also helps with early weight bearing for standing, and promotes hip-joint development.

From all fours, encourage your baby to pull up into kneeling at a surface about the height of armpit level. Put toys up on this surface to play.



“ Play is your baby's ‘job’! The more he practises, the more confident he gets ”

Your Baby's First Year

Pulling up to standing

From a kneeling position your baby will start to pull herself up into standing. Place toys up on a surface (e.g. sofa, low coffee table). Some babies might need help to put one leg up into a half-kneeling position. Make sure you help your little one learn to do this with both legs. You can use this technique to encourage your baby to climb stairs as well when she's ready.

Encourage your baby to turn around to climb (slide) down backwards off higher surfaces like a sofa or bed – **always supervise**. This makes it easier to be safe when starting to come down the stairs in a reverse crawl.



Once in standing

All of the time your baby has spent playing on the floor practising tummy time, crawling and sitting has helped to prepare for this massive step towards independence.



Ways to play

When he's standing and holding on to a piece of furniture (something without sharp edges!), sit about two feet away and hold his favourite toy close to the hand that he's using to support himself. See if he'll reach for the toy. Be patient and don't rush him. The more he practises and the more confident he gets the easier this will become.

Once he can stand on his own, you can help him to practise shifting his weight ready for stepping. Do this by gently holding him at his hips and slowly moving him from side to side in a rocking motion. Make sure hands are free so he can use them for balance. Good songs to sing for this activity are 'Hickory Dickory Dock' or 'The Bear went over the Mountain'.

Hold your baby in standing position on your thighs, support lightly at hips or upper thighs, facing either towards or away from you. Slowly raise your legs up alternately to facilitate a stepping motion. If facing you, you could just hold hands if baby feels steady enough. A marching song would be good here – 'The Animals went in Two by Two' for example.

Encourage your baby to play while standing at the sofa, coffee table or a similar low surface. With arms up on surface for support and balance, encourage him to play with toys such as a shape sorter, an easy puzzle or to look at a book, etc. If your baby needs a bit of help with balance you can support by either placing your hands lightly on his hips or one on his tummy and the other on his bottom.

Decrease your support as he gets more confident.

Once up on her feet, your baby will start to practise standing while holding on. Encourage playing at the surface to start increasing confidence. Once confident, baby will let go with one hand and turn their body. Pass her a toy to encourage this.

As with sitting, crawling and kneeling, encourage your baby to stand on different textured surfaces like carpet, solid floor, grass and sand to help improve balance.



A word about Language

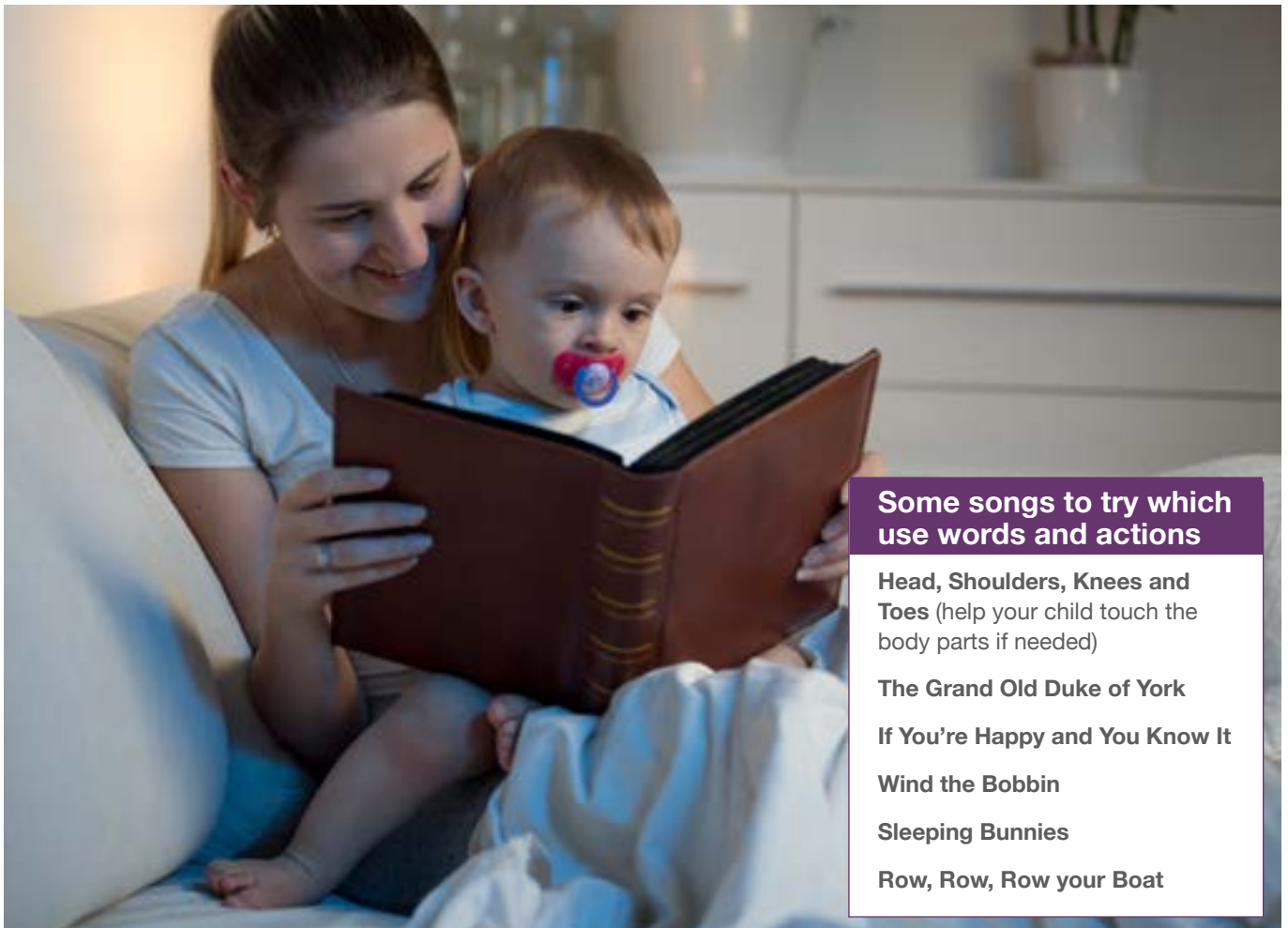
Language is vital for learning, in all its many forms – body language, gesture, spoken language, singing and symbols. It turns what a child ‘does’ into what a child ‘thinks and knows’.

When you're doing activities with your child, talk to them about what you are doing.

For example, by saying, “Can you touch the teddy when

you stand tall?” In this way you are explaining what your child is doing at the same time as prompting movement and providing a challenge. All this helps a child to understand what they are doing, and so they do it again.

Read to your child often; this does not have to be just books. When out for a walk, read road signs, or adverts; at home read cereal packets over breakfast, anything really. It all helps your child develop.



Some songs to try which use words and actions

Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes (help your child touch the body parts if needed)

The Grand Old Duke of York

If You're Happy and You Know It

Wind the Bobbin

Sleeping Bunnies

Row, Row, Row your Boat