



This newsletter provides important information about your baby through infancy and early childhood. You will receive 10 issues of this newsletter before your child reaches age 5. Other publications for parents include *Path to Parenthood* and *Growing Up Healthy*. If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter or are interested in a home visit or other assistance, please call one of the Vermont Department Health district offices listed below:

Barre..... 802-479-4200	Newport 802-334-6707
888-253-8786	800-952-2945
Bennington..... 802-447-3531	Rutland 802-786-5811
800-637-7347	888-253-8802
Brattleboro..... 802-257-2880	St. Albans..... 802-524-7970
888-253-8805	888-253-8801
Burlington..... 802-863-7323	St. Johnsbury 802-748-5151
888-253-8803	800-952-2936
Middlebury 802-388-4644	Springfield 802-885-5778
888-253-8804	888-296-8151
Morrisville 802-888-7447	White River Junction 802-295-8820
888-253-8798	888-253-8799

Your health insurance benefits include many preventive services at no charge to you: regular health check-ups and dental visits; immunizations (shots); vision and hearing checks; and child safety and developmental guidance.

Information in these newsletters was adapted from the following sources: *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton, MD; *Babytalk*; *Link Letters*, Healthy Steps; *Baby Your Baby*, Utah Department of Health; *Cradle Crier*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics; and *Path To Parenthood*, Vermont Department for Children and families.

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES
 VERMONT
 Child Development Division
 103 South Main Street
 Waterbury, VT 05671



growing up healthy

A newsletter from Healthy Babies, Kids & Families

4 TO 8 MONTHS



By your baby's 4-month birthday, she'll probably have a daily routine for feeding, playing, napping, bathing and going to sleep at night.

This routine will help your baby feel secure, and aid you in getting back to life's other activities.

This is a very happy time for your baby. She now has better body control and can reach and pull things into her mouth. She's also learning how the world works by watching what's going on around her. During these months—before stranger anxiety hits full force—she will probably smile at everyone she meets.

General Development

Although all babies learn and grow at different rates, below are some predictable developmental milestones during these months.

At 4 months, your baby may still seem to be spending most of her time eating, sleeping and being held. Over the next few months, she will become increasingly assertive and interested in the world.

By the time your baby is 6-months-old, she probably will have doubled in weight. She will be more awake and interested in her surroundings. She'll know her own name and begin to tell people apart. She will try to copy the sounds and movements you make. She can grab her feet and suck on her toes.

When put on her tummy, she may push up with her arms and lift her head to look around. She may also learn to roll

over. Then she may sit—first with your help and then by leaning forward on her hands and arms.

Your baby will look at and play with her hands, and will soon learn to transfer objects from one hand to another. She will like to bat at hanging toys and pull objects to her mouth so she can explore them more. She will drop things for you to pick up. (This will be great fun for her.) She doesn't do this to annoy you—she's just learning about cause and effect.

Sleeping

Trying to get your baby to sleep may become a challenge in the next months as your baby starts to move, sit and stand. Establishing routines and bedtime rituals may help.

Your baby is probably sleeping for longer periods, maybe even through the night. There are many cultural practices around bedtime routines. You might try a warm bath, cuddling, stories, lullabies, soft music and breast or bottle-feeding before bed. Then continue to place your baby on her back to sleep. You may also want to put her down while she's still drowsy and at the same time every night, so she will begin to calm herself to sleep. This may help her to learn to get back to sleep on her own if she wakes up in the middle of the night.

Teething

Sometime during this period your baby's first teeth will appear. The two bottom teeth usually come in first.

As these teeth come in your baby might experience some teething pain. Some ways to help a teething baby include gently rubbing her gums with your finger; letting her chew on a cold washcloth; and offering her a teething ring that can be refrigerated. You can also check with your health

care provider (your baby's doctor, nurse practitioner or clinic) about the use of certain pain relievers.

Start cleaning your baby's teeth as soon as they come in. Use a gauze square wrapped around your finger or a child size soft toothbrush. Also, talk to your health care provider about possibly using fluoride drops—especially if you get water from a well. Make sure your baby doesn't go to sleep with a bottle. The liquid will pool around her teeth and can cause damage to her teeth.



Safety

Below are some safety tips for your four to eight month old:

- ◆ Avoid holding your baby while you're drinking or eating something hot—she will wave her fists and try to reach for things at this age.
- ◆ Make sure curtain loops or string cords are far away from your baby's reach.
- ◆ Check your smoke alarms to be sure they are working properly.
- ◆ Avoid baby walkers. Babies have been hurt when they fell down stairs in walkers and some have lost fingers when the walkers collapsed (for more information on baby walkers call the US Consumer Product Safety Commission at 800-638-2772).
- ◆ Choose playthings that are nontoxic, lightweight, too large to swallow, won't easily catch fire and have no sharp points.
- ◆ Keep vitamins, medicines, flowers, plants and other poisons (soaps, cleaners, cigarettes, ashes, cosmetics, etc.) out of baby's sight and reach.
- ◆ Never leave your baby on a table, bed, couch, or any other surface from which she could fall.
- ◆ Protect your baby's skin by using sunscreen every time she goes out in the sun.

Feeding

Until now, your baby's diet has consisted mainly of breast milk and/or formula. Anytime in the next few months you may begin to offer her an iron-fortified infant cereal. Feed her small amounts from a baby spoon—never from a bottle.

Once your baby gets used to cereal, you may start other foods. Give her one at a time so it's easier to identify any allergies that might appear.

Let your baby decide when, how much, and how fast to eat. Even though your baby seems ready for solid foods, it may not go smoothly at first. Go slowly and be patient.

Also, with her new wonder and curiosity for the world, breast or bottle feeding may be interrupted. Each new noise or sight can distract her and make feeding more difficult. So be patient—this is a normal part of development. Feeding is still very important to your baby.

Siblings

If your baby has a big brother or sister, you may find that sibling rivalry is starting to occur.

In the first months, your baby slept a lot and didn't demand a lot of extra attention—but this is changing. As your baby becomes more responsive, it's a good time for your children to start interacting more meaningfully together. Have your older child sing songs or read with you to the baby. Tell him how much the baby looks up to him and loves him. Also, let him help by getting diapers or other things for the baby—and tell him how much you appreciate it.

Continue to spend some one-on-one time with your older child every day, such as reading a nice bedtime story and back rub after the baby goes to sleep.

Getting Out

Whether you are home with your baby or back at work, now that you are through the intensity of the first three months, here are some things to keep in mind:

Returning to Work

Two issues of particular concern to working parents are child care and breastfeeding.

Leaving your baby at child care for the first time will be hard. But, if you have found a child care arrangement that you feel good about, you and your baby will settle into a routine fairly quickly. It's important to establish good communication with your caregiver. If you still need to find child care, call the child care resource and referral agency in your area, call the Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642, or visit www.brightfuturesinfo.org.

As for breastfeeding, many moms are able to continue, even when working full-time. Breast pumps are available for purchase or to rent, and a caregiver can also give a supplemental bottle. At times pumping may seem inconvenient, but keep in mind the health and emotional benefits it offers your baby. Talk to your employer about a place and times of the day when you can express milk. Breast milk freezes well so it can be stored

up to several months. If you need more information, please contact your local Vermont Department of Health office.

At Home

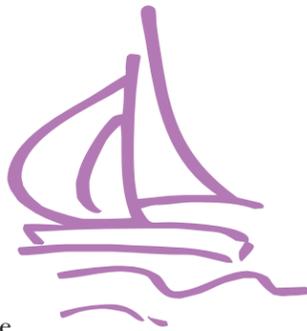
If you are at home with your baby full-time, it's important to keep yourself active—especially during long Vermont winters, when it is easier to become isolated or depressed. Think ahead about fun play activities you can do with your baby. Read books. Libraries often have play areas for babies. Call your local parent-child center or health department office to find out about playgroups or story times for babies. Get together from time to time with other parents you know with young babies.

In either case, whether you're at work or an at-home mom, it's important that you care for yourself. Ways to stay healthy and feel good are to eat well, exercise, get as much sleep as possible, and ask for help when you need it. For the first one to two years your baby's dependency on you may mean that you won't get much done except care for her. But as she becomes older and more independent, all this will get easier. Make sure that you have some alternate caregivers who can give you a break. You can use this to spend time with older children or do something for yourself.

A Message for Dads

Like your partner, you'll also be settling into a new routine, managing both work or school and family. Keep in mind that for the first year or two, your baby's dependency on you will mean that outside of work, neither of you will get much done except caring for your baby and a few other basic activities, like cooking, laundry and paying the bills.

This will be an especially fun time to play and interact with your baby—she's now much more alert and responsive. Dress her, feed her and read books to her. Go to her well-child doctor visits. If your baby is in child care, try to visit her during the day and get to know her caregivers. Remember that you continue to be a very important person to everyone in your family.



Environmental Spotlight: Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas that you can't see, taste or smell. Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headaches, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue—which can lead to death. Children are affected by CO quicker than adults. If you suspect CO poisoning, leave your home immediately and get medical attention. Below are some ways to protect against CO poisoning:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector in your home.
- Make sure that any fuel-burning appliance like a heater, furnace, gas kitchen stove or wood stove is working right; have them cleaned and inspected regularly.
- Don't leave your car running in an attached garage.
- Avoid cigarette smoke in your home—it contributes to carbon monoxide buildup.
- Never use a space heater with a flame (like a kerosene heater) that is not vented to a chimney or directly to the outdoors.
- Only use charcoal or gas grills outside.

Vermont Office of
Environmental Health
1-800-439-8550