

BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

Babies Play

Remember the first time you held your baby in your arms? Did you suspect that they were already hard at work, examining their world, collecting information and beginning to construct the foundations of the future? Babies begin to experience their world by moving, touching and tasting. They listen, they observe and they begin to make sense of their environment. Adults can facilitate learning through play by providing infants with opportunities to see, touch, taste, and smell.



DID YOU KNOW???

- Even at a very young age, newborns are ready to learn about the world around them.
- A newborn loves to look at faces, especially his mother's.
- In the first days and weeks of life, newborns can recognize their caregiver's voice. Your infant will respond to your voice, or other interesting sounds, by looking alert and becoming less active.
- When you smile and talk to your infant, your face and the sound of your voice will become a familiar source of calm and comfort, and your little one will learn to associate you with getting food, warmth, and feeling secure.
- You enhance your baby's development when you answer their baby's babbling, encourage them to reach for a dangling toy, read them a board book, or elicit a laugh with a well-timed raspberry to their belly.
- As your baby gets older they might enjoy brief periods of highchair play. This will provide opportunities for more concentrated focused play such as stacking blocks, filling and emptying containers, simple puzzles, etc.

- You can encourage your newborn to learn by stimulating your baby's senses in positive ways — with smiles, soothing sounds, and gentle caresses. You are your child's favourite toy!
- You may also want to introduce some simple, age-appropriate toys that appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, such as rattles, textured toys, musical toys, and unbreakable crib mirrors.
- Try toys and mobiles with contrasting colours and patterns. Strong contrasts (such as red, white, and black) stimulate an infant's developing vision. As vision improves and babies gain more control over their movements, they'll interact more and more with their environment.

SIMPLE PLAY IDEAS

- Babies love music. Gently sway to quiet music while holding your baby.
- Pick a quiet song or lullaby and sing it softly to your baby. The familiarity of the sound and words will have a soothing effect, particularly during fussy times.
- Smile, stick out your tongue, and make other expressions for your infant to study, learn, and imitate.
- Shake a rattle and watch as your baby looks to find it or follow it.
- Let your baby spend some awake time on his or her tummy to help strengthen the neck and shoulders. Always supervise your infant during "tummy time" and be ready to help if they get tired or frustrated in this position.
- Read and talk to your baby. Look at picture books with very simple pictures.
- Play games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake. They provide times of special closeness and help babies develop fine motor skills and object permanence.
- Infants and young children learn through play, and they thrive on repetition. Play is the way that infants learn how to move, communicate, socialize, and understand their surroundings. More and more, researchers are verifying what Moms and Dads have known for generations. The playful interactions we have with our children are not just fun. They are the foundation of future learning.

Happy playing....and learning!

