

# Parent Express

A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



TOPIC

## 8 months old

### Dear parent,

This is the age of curiosity.

Imagine that you are 8 months old. You try to talk, but no one understands your language. You try to walk, but you're not quite sure how to do it yet. You reach out to touch things that are shiny, soft, hard, smooth, or sticky, but everyone tells you, "No-no – don't touch." How would you feel? A little frustrated, you can bet. Well, that's how your baby feels at this age. He is curious and wants to find out about all the fascinating things that surround him. Open up the world to him. Lovingly and safely guide him while he examines, explores, and satisfies his curiosity.

### What it's like to be 8 months old

#### How I grow

- I crawl backward and forward on my stomach.
- I pull myself up by holding onto furniture, but I have difficulty getting back down.
- I stand up if I lean against something.
- I sit without any support for several minutes.
- I reach for things and hold them with my



- thumb and my first and second fingers.
- I hold onto a toy such as a rattle for several minutes.
- I pick up small things, including pieces of string.

#### How I talk

- I let you know if I am happy, sad, or scared by the sounds I make.
- I still babble a lot and shout to get attention.

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- I say two-syllable sounds such as choo-choo, da-da, and ma-ma.
- I recognize some words.
- I watch and try to imitate your mouth movements.

### How I respond

- I like to pat and kiss my reflection in the mirror.
- I turn and listen when I hear familiar sounds, such as the telephone or my name.
- I love to imitate people I know.

### How I understand

- I am curious and want to explore everything.
- I know how to solve simple problems such as making a toy bell ring.
- I understand the meaning of in and out.
- I remember events that just happened.

### How I feel

- I might be frightened by new people and experiences.
- I am upset when you leave me, even if it's for a short time.
- I feel relieved when you return.
- I am upset when people make a lot of fuss over me.
- I get frustrated or lose my temper when I can't find something.

## Making it easier for teenage parents

If you are a teenage parent, chances are you're living at home with your family. Sometimes problems come up because you're a mother to your child and still a child to your own parents. Being a mother and a daughter – at the same time, in the same household – can be hard for both you and your parents.

Does your mother sometimes act like the baby is hers, not yours? Does she keep telling you she knows what's best? Do you resent still being treated like a child? And yet, do you wish at times that your mother would take over so you could be like your friends?

And what about dating? Do your parents tense at the idea of you going out? Remember that it might be hard for them to tell you their worries. For

example, they might be afraid you'll get pregnant again.

Here are some ideas to help you get along better with your parents.

- Talk out your feelings calmly and patiently.
- Listen to your parents' reasons and fears. Try to understand their feelings and the reasons for those feelings.
- Show by the way you act that you are a responsible person.

## Feeding fork-mashed foods

At this age, most babies enjoy fork-mashed foods in addition to pureed foods. Now that your baby is 8 months old and might have some teeth, you can fork-mash vegetables and fruits in addition to straining or pureeing them.

Mash a favorite vegetable or fruit thoroughly with a fork. Use a potato masher on foods such as ripe bananas and cooked apples, winter squash, white or sweet potatoes, or carrots. Make sure the food contains no lumps, pieces of skin, strings, or seeds.

The consistency of fork-mashed food will be a little thicker than pureed food. Your baby might take a few tries before she likes this consistency.

Meats are good for your baby, too, but do not give her fried meats. Trim all fat from the meat, and mash the meat thoroughly with a fork. Low-fat meats such as chicken and lean beef are good sources of proteins. Mashed beans, such as pinto or kidney beans, are low fat and also supply protein. Refried beans are another good choice. Your baby is still too young for eggs or peanut butter.

Cooked foods can be strained through a fine mesh sieve or strainer. A sieve also is useful for steam-cooking small amounts of food for your baby. Be sure that you remove food particles when you wash the strainer.

Your baby should still be drinking breast milk or 24 ounces of iron-fortified formula each day.

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## Be careful

- Do not add salt, sugar, or seasonings to baby foods. Foods that taste bland to an adult are a new taste experience to an infant. Some sodium is necessary for good health, but there is enough natural sodium in foods. Added salt provides too much sodium for a small baby.
- Do not feed honey to your baby during her first year. Honey could carry botulism spores that might harm her.
- Do not use leftovers to make baby foods. Leftover foods are likely to have higher levels of bacteria in them than freshly prepared foods.
- Do not feed your baby raw eggs or raw milk. These raw foods might be sources of bacteria that can cause disease.
- Do not feed your baby chunky foods such as corn, nuts, popcorn and seeds, or coarse-textured foods such as cookies that crumble easily. Such foods are difficult for your baby to eat and might make her choke.



- Do not be afraid to serve foods cold. Most babies accept cold food. If you want to warm your baby's food, do so just before serving, but always check to make sure it is not too warm that it could burn your baby's tongue.

With a little patience, you can help your baby appreciate a wide variety of tastes and textures in new foods.

## Fun with books and rhymes

Give your baby small, stiff cardboard books to push and carry as she moves from place to place. Sit with her on the floor and help her turn the pages with her thumb and forefinger. By now, she is able to make those two fingers work together better than before. She'll enjoy seeing the pictures in the book and may try to imitate your words and the sound of your rhymes. You can imitate her sounds, too!

## Recycle magazines

Your baby will have fun tearing the pages of old magazines. Tearing helps develop his eye-hand coordination and ability to grasp. He'll love the ripping sounds as well as seeing the pictures and print. Show him the difference between the magazines and his stiff cardboard books.

## Games babies play

### Little piggy: A Communication game

#### Purpose

This game teaches your baby about his body. It also helps him become interested in playing games with others.

#### How to play

- Your baby can be sitting and facing you, lying on his back, or sitting in your lap.
- Hold your baby's big toe between your thumb and index finger, and say, "This little piggy went to market."
- Hold the second toe and say, "This little piggy stayed home."
- Hold the third toe and say, "This little piggy had roast beef."
- Hold the fourth toe and say, "This little piggy had none."



- Hold the little toe and say, "And this little piggy cried wee, wee, wee, all the way home."

## Babyproof your house

To get an idea of what the world looks like to your baby, get down on the floor and look around. Don't things look big and exciting? Wouldn't you be tempted to explore? No wonder your baby tries to satisfy her curiosity and touch everything! Now that she is getting better at moving around, it's a good time to babyproof your home.

- Make sure there are no sharp edges on furniture or loose cords dangling from lamps.
- Keep pot handles turned so they don't hang over the stove front or sides.
- Insert plastic safety caps in all unused electrical outlets.
- Keep drawers and cabinet doors shut.
- Unplug appliances when they are not in use.
- Remove all plastic bags, especially those from dry cleaning stores. Throw them away, or put them out of your baby's reach.
- Don't allow a small child to play with inflated balloons or leave out balloons that are uninflated or have burst. Your baby might try to swallow them, and they could get stuck in your baby's throat and cut off her air supply.
- Check the house for small objects including buttons, batteries, coins, needles, rubber bands, bottle tops, and razor blades. Put them in a safe place.
- Put safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Open only those windows that are out of your baby's reach. If you must open low windows, open them only a little so your baby can't fall out.
- Lock all medicines out of reach in a medicine cabinet. Even multivitamins and other supplements can be toxic to a baby, so keep them locked up as well.
- Remove all cleaning aids (detergents, ammonia, etc.) from under the kitchen sink. Store on a high shelf or in a locked cabinet.
- Keep cosmetic items out of your baby's reach.
- Keep drapery or blind cords out of your baby's reach.
- As soon as your child can stand up, lock the side rail of the baby bed at the maximum height and adjust the mattress to the lowest position. Remove



bumper pads, large toys, and boxes. An active toddler will use anything to climb out of the crib.

- If the height of the side of the crib is less than three-fourths the child's height, the toddler has outgrown it and should sleep in a bed. Remember, a crib is not a playpen.
- In case of emergency, you and your family should know the phone numbers of the nearest hospital and fire and police departments. Make a list of these phone numbers and keep it in a handy place.
- Safety information on babyproofing your home is available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207. You also can call its hotline for consumer product safety information (1-800-638-2772).

## A question about shyness

**My baby has suddenly become scared and shy of strangers. She sometimes cries even when my mother comes to visit.**

**Why does she act this way, and what can I do to help her overcome this fear?**

Don't worry. A fear of strangers at this age is normal. Babies are beginning to develop a sense of self and others, an important step in growing up. They are afraid because they know the difference between close family members and strangers. They often become upset when someone they don't know hovers around them.



Some babies howl or whimper with genuine fear. Others cling to their mothers and refuse to let go. Some babies, just like adults, develop an instant dislike for a person.

However she reacts, comfort your baby if she is fearful of strangers. Hold her close to let her know that you love her and she is safe. If you are embarrassed, explain to friends or relatives not to take it personally – that your baby needs time to get used to people. Ask them not to rush up to her or try to pick her up. As your baby gets older, she will feel more secure and comfortable with other people.

## Setting family rules

Parents used to think that the only way children developed into responsible adults was through strict discipline and the rule that “children should be seen but not heard.” Today, many parents set family rules that are not so strict.

Even though your baby is only 8 months old, it’s not too early to start setting family rules. For example, when you say, “Don’t touch the stove – it’s hot,” you are teaching a basic rule of safety.

Now is a good time to decide what your family rules will be, who will make the rules, and how your baby will learn the rules.

Teach your baby what is allowed in your family, be honest about your feelings, and say what you mean.

For example, if he does something you don’t like, tell him not to do it anymore and explain why. You will get your message across by being firm in your voice, manner, and actions.

As your baby develops, he will learn what the limits are in your home, and it will be easier on all of you.

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