

TEN TIPS FOR THE FIRST YEAR



- 1 Important milestones occur at 6 and 12 months:** By 6 months, babies should start putting sights and sounds together, recognizing patterns, and reaching out and grabbing things. They typically start to recognize their name, and may be able to get into a crawling position and be propped in a sitting position. By one year, most babies will speak one to three discriminative words ("baba" for "bottle" is considered a "word" as it is intended to mean one thing.) Some will show signs of trying to walk, and should begin to develop more fine motor skills.
- 2 Early intervention is important:** If your baby is falling behind relative to his peers in speech development, expected social interaction, fine motor skills and/or gross motor skills, early intervention is helpful. Intervention can include physical therapy, occupational therapy, and/or speech therapy.
- 3 Narrating to your baby:** "Narrating" means telling your baby what's happening next, what you are going to do to her, what she may be seeing, and what she may be experiencing. For example, you might tell your baby, "I'm going to change your diaper," or "I'm going to pass you to Daddy." Narrating helps the baby make sense of her experiences, regulate her emotions and build language.
- 4 Becoming the parent you want to be:** If you make sense of your childhood experiences, their impact on your development and what your triggers are, you can break negative patterns and reactions in your parenting.
- 5 Most experts agree that proximity in sleeping is key:** Of all the animals and all the primates, the human infant is the least neurologically mature at birth. Their bodies are designed to engage with parents in a similar way that the fetus engages with the mother during gestation. It is especially important for the human infant to sleep closely to a parent or caregiver and exchange sensory signals. Sleeping in the same room as your baby enables this connection.
- 6 Breastfeeding your baby:** Breastfeeding is the best nutrition for your baby. If the mother goes back to work, introduce a bottle of pumped breast milk at three weeks to avoid bottle resistance. Seek support from a lactation consultant if you encounter any difficulties breastfeeding. If you can't breastfeed, you haven't "failed" your baby; use formula and your baby will thrive.
- 7 Introducing solid foods:** Breastmilk or formula should be the main source of nutrition until eight to twelve months of age, but solids can be introduced between 4-6 months. To begin, introduce green and yellow vegetables; one food, once a day for four days. By seven months of age, segue to two meals a day, with two foods presented at each meal.
- 8 What to look for in a daycare:** You want your baby to attach to an adult rather than to the other children in the center. There should be one adult in charge who will preserve the attachment. Also, you want the daycare provider to speak well of you when you are gone and act as a team with you to minimize the child's feeling of separation.

TEN TIPS FOR THE FIRST YEARS CONTINUED

9 Isolation for the new parent: It is a myth is that all new parents are happy and fulfilled. The first few weeks or months of having a baby can be very challenging. There can be anxiety about how to take care of the baby and there can be social isolation. If you are really struggling to get through daily routines, seek professional help.

10 Incorporate a wellness plan to help prevent and manage postpartum depression: To help you feel better, focus on eating well, engaging in exercise for endorphins and breathing exercises for stress relief; getting nighttime sleep to regulate brain chemistry (try taking turns for being responsible for night wakings with your partner if possible, so that you can both get some interrupted sleep); maintaining realistic expectations as you adjust to motherhood; ensuring that you have some time away from the baby; and making an effort to socialize with other mothers to avoid isolation.

The following Kids In The House interviews contributed to this “Ten Tips for the First Year”: Allison LaTona, MFT, Barbara Olinger, MSW, Cynthia Epps, MS, IBCLC, Daniel Siegel, MD, Gordon Neufeld, PhD, James Mckenna, PhD, Jay Gordon, MD, Lawrence Kagan, MD, Shoshana Bennett, PhD, and Wendy Haldeman, RN, MN, IBCLC.