

# Play and toys for babies

PLAY  
IDEAS 2

ABOUT  
BABY PLAY

Birth - 18 months



Play promotes learning, development, growth and health. Movement skills, thinking skills, language, social interaction, and emotional development all happen best when your child is actively involved in an activity - when they are having fun - when they are playing! As a parent you are their first teacher and best playmate. You can help choose toys and activities that motivate your child to play, explore and learn about themselves and their environment. But most importantly take time to play and learn with them.



## BABY PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT



### Discovery

Babies are busy discovering about themselves and their surroundings, and especially love people's faces, the sounds that you make and your expressions. They learn through exploration: looking at, listening to, touching, mouthing, smelling, shaking, banging and dropping objects.



### Communication

Babies start to communicate from the time they are born: listening and responding when they are spoken to, imitating sounds, babbling, smiling, laughing and crying. By 18 months most babies have six clear words and understand a lot more of what's said to them.



### Physical skills

Physical skills progress from pushing themselves up while on their tummy's, to rolling, sitting, crawling, standing and taking first steps at around 12-15 months. Hand skills also develop quickly: babies reach for toys around 4 months, then progress to being able to hold them and then pass them from hand to hand. Later they learn to shake, squeeze and bang toys together. By 12 months most children can finger feed and pick up very small objects with their thumb and index finger.



P.A.L. PLAY AND LEARNING PROGRAM  
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## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Be available!** Your baby needs your love, warmth and touch to grow and develop. Have baby with you to talk to and sing to as you go about your daily activities.
- Babies are into everything and investigate by pushing, pulling, banging, tasting and dropping! Think about removing your treasures from low coffee tables, putting precious items out of reach and fixing child proof locks to cupboards.
- Try making toys! Make a mobile by hanging everyday objects from a coat hanger and hanging it up for baby to enjoy. Books can be made from photo albums: put in pictures/photos you know your baby will enjoy. A scrunch bag can be made by filling a mesh onion bag with cellophane.
- Choose toys that are durable and easy to clean.
- Prepare a basket of toys for baby to explore. Include: soft balls; ring shaped rattles; cotton reels/large beads on a string; board books; a set of measuring cups/spoons; blocks; a drum; toy telephone; dolly or teddy; a car and pop-beads.

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Supervise babies closely at all times. Make sure they can't fall forward or roll into pillows and get stuck so they are unable to breathe. Never shake babies. Their skulls and brains are still developing and shaking may result in brain damage.
- Make sure toys are durable and easily cleaned, with no sharp edges or small parts that could come off and be swallowed or poked into ears or nose. Be aware of long cords/ties on toys that may strangle your child. The free length should be less than 30cm. Also, babies are sensitive to loud noises so avoid toys that produce noise that is too loud when held close to the ear.

## SOME ACTIVITIES TO TRY

- **Bathtime fun** Play with sponges, funnels, floating toys, bubbles, cups, strainers, etc, All which make bathtime fun. Always supervise baby closely at bathtime. After your baby's bath, get a large soft towel and give an extra rub down or try some baby massage.
- **Songs and Fingerplays** Right from birth you can introduce your baby to music. Slow rocking and swaying will be soothing while gentle jiggling and bouncing will be fun. Sing rhymes and action songs for your baby to watch. Favorites are: Twinkle, Twinkle; This Little Pig; Pat-a-Cake; Round and Round the Garden; Can You Keep a Secret. Take a look at the Songsheet as part of the Play and Learning parent handout series.
- **Active play** As your baby gets more active provide toys that will help develop their movement skills: a large cardboard box to crawl through; sit and "ride on" toys; a swing; balls to kick and throw; sand and water play; a push-along wagon and pull-along toys.
- **Thinking play** Babies are developing "cause and effect" thinking. That is, if I do this, that happens! Show your baby how to pull a string to get a toy and push a button to make the toy respond with light or sound. You can drop a ball and follow it down a tunnel or pull away a cloth to find a toy. Other thinking toys include shape sorters, chunky blocks/rings to stack, nesting cups/barrels, pegboards with large pegs, posting boxes and early inset puzzles (1-5 pieces).

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### ABOUT BABY PLAY

