

One-page summary: Babies (0-12 months)

What's normal at this age

- Fussing and crying average about 2 hours a day in the first 6 weeks and drop to about 1 hour by 10–12 weeks.
- Cries, smiles and fussing are signals. You and your baby steer your time together through them.
- Missed signals are common. Repairing them often may be linked with healthy development.
- Hitting or biting can already appear around 12 months.
- Recommended sleep at 4–12 months: 12–16 hours in 24 hours, naps included.

What works, and why

- Respond warmly and soon. In a trial, more responsive mothering led to more growth in babies' social, emotional, communication and thinking skills.
- Keep a simple daily rhythm. Make the bedtime routine short and the same every night.
- Baby-proof, so most of the house is a yes.
- Swap, don't scold: trade the unsafe thing for a safe one.
- Talk with your baby: answer the babbles, name what they look at.

What backfires

- Punishment. In its 2018 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises against hitting, spanking and shaming at any age.
- Shaking, ever. Put your baby down safely and walk away instead.
- Screens to soothe. In 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics discouraged screens other than video chat before 18 months.
- Long explanations and repeated warnings. Move the baby or the object instead.

Things you can say

"I hear you. I'm coming."

"That's not for babies. Here's your cup."

"Gentle hands. Like this."

"Stairs are not for playing. Let's play over here."

"Bath, book, song, bed."