

# Ages & Stages for Caregivers

## 5-8 months

**M**any infants begin their child care experience when they are between four and eight months old. As the provider of care for babies this age, you have the privilege of nurturing and supporting their development during this time of rapid change. This *Ages and Stages for Caregivers* will help you understand what to expect of babies this age and how you can best meet their needs.

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## SIGNS OF DEVELOPMENT —by 8 months

*(individual development varies)*

### Developing Body

- Weighs 14-23 pounds
- Measures 25-30 inches long
- Grows his first baby teeth
- Needs at least 3-4 feedings per day
- Has developed a rhythm for feeding, sleeping, alert playtime, and eliminating
- Rolls over, sits up, may begin to crawl
- Holds bottle; transfers object from one hand to the other; uses finger and thumb to pick up objects
- Has begun eating cereal and soft vegetables and fruits

### Developing Mind

- Can match a happy sounding voice to a picture of smiling face
- Understands simple cause and effect actions
- Can imitate actions she's seen many times
- Anticipates an expected action
- Experiments with simple physical relationships, like gravity and one object hitting another

### Developing Communication

- Follows your face with her gaze
- Laughs in response to playful interaction
- Uses gestures, eye contact, and verbal sounds to communicate
- Distinguishes adults from children, enjoys interactions with other children

### Developing Self

- Repeats actions he finds interesting
- Has developed strong attachment to mother; shows fear of strangers
- Calms himself when upset (by sucking fingers, etc.)

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### Encourage baby's muscle development.

Allow plenty of floor time. Place toys and colorful objects around baby so that she will need to move in order to reach them.

#### This will also:

- Encourage interactions with other children and help their understanding as you talk about what the baby is learning and how to play with her.

### Build on baby's curiosity and drive to understand his world.

Repeat simple cause-and-effect actions as you play with him, such as covering and uncovering a toy with a blanket or putting a toy in a container and dumping it out. Then give him the toys to experiment with.

#### This will also:

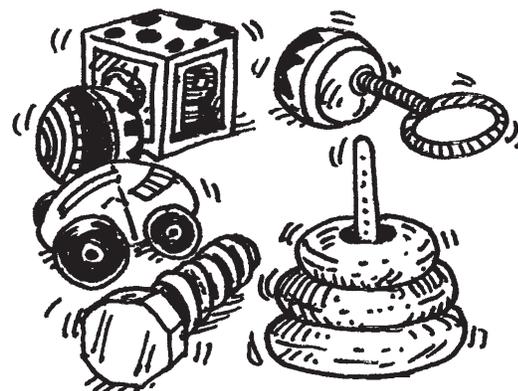
- Help in the development of his eye-hand coordination and of the muscles in his fingers, hands, and arms.

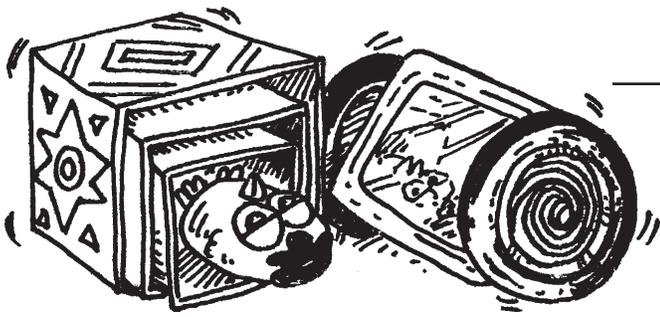
### Stimulate his language development.

Talk to him often, especially when you are doing routine care, such as diapering, feeding, and moving him from one place to another. Describe what you are doing, label objects, and respond to his babbling.

#### This will also:

- Strengthen his sense of trust and security with you.





## A Great Place to Grow

### Toys and Materials

- Toys with openings for putting smaller objects in
- Toys that respond to baby's actions
- Board books with simple, bright pictures
- Unbreakable mirror

### Safety Tips

Follow these guidelines to ensure that baby's naps will be safe:

- Place baby on her back on a firm tight-fitting mattress.
- Remove quilts, stuffed toys, and all other soft items that can cause suffocation.
- Consider using a warm sleeper instead of a blanket.
- Do not place baby on a waterbed, sofa, soft mattress, pillow, or other soft surface to sleep.

Consumer Product Safety Commission

## HELP!

*I've decided to take an infant in my family child care program for the first time. I'm nervous about being able to care for her needs and still provide all the activities that my older kids love. How do I balance the needs of the baby and the other kids at the same time?*

Deciding to include infants in your program is a big—and challenging—step. Providers who do care for babies as well as older children say that there are many benefits, however. Older children learn to be more helpful and nurturing; the infants have the benefit of older children to interact with and learn from.

The key to multi-age care is providing a balance of opportunities for infants to be separate from older children and opportunities for the children to be together. Separation might mean setting aside a room just for older children's play at certain times of the day or having specific toys or activities that are only available when the baby is napping. Much of the day, however, a baby can be incorporated into activities with the other children. The baby will enjoy being held on your lap as you read to the others. She will enjoy music, being outdoors, and being included in meal and snack times, even if she is not eating. Offer activities that use materials that she can enjoy, too, such as blocks, finger painting with pudding, or water play. As you plan, remember: she will put everything in her mouth; she doesn't need to actively participate in order to be learning and enjoying herself; and she will remind you when you need to put her schedule ahead of yours.

## Working with Parents

Communication with parents is especially important when caring for infants. Infancy is a time of big adjustments for parents and rapid change for the child. Frequent and detailed communication from you will go a long way toward helping parents to feel more comfortable and involved in their baby's world away from home. Many providers have a daily report sheet that includes: type and

amount of food eaten (liquid and solid) and time; number and time of wet and soiled diapers; baby's supplies that are running low; length and time of naps; and activities that baby enjoyed during the day. You might also take photographs of daily activities to share with parents. Always let parents know that they are welcome to visit or call during the day.

## What to do if you are concerned about a child's development

Child care providers are often in a position to be the first to notice when a young child has a developmental delay, chronic illness, or disability. If you suspect a child's behavior is indicating a problem:

- Talk with parents in a calm way, being careful to say that there probably isn't a problem, but that it would be worth checking out further.

- Work with parents, comparing what you have seen in child care with what they have seen at home and talking together about what to do next.
- Suggest resources, community professionals, articles to read, etc.
- Be a compassionate listener; hearing that there may be something wrong with your baby is very tough.

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Reference: Berk, L. (2000). *Child Development* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.