



PARENTING POINTERS

Playing with Your Baby

Play and Toys

Babies need stimulation through many different avenues. Play is how your child will learn about the world, develop language, and lay the foundation for education. Below are simple things parents can do to insure their baby develops and grows in healthy ways.

Simple Activities to Do with Your Baby

- **Smile** at your baby. (18 inches is the optimum distance for focus.)
- **Talk** to your baby. (This is **KEY** for language development.)
- **Sing** to your baby.
- **Take** walks outside.
- **Read** to your baby. (Use cardboard books for baby to hold. Then read picture books once baby no longer puts the books in his mouth.)
- **Cuddle** and hold your baby often. (This builds trust and security.)
- Provide **safe, clean**, simple toys and rattles. (Check the age appropriateness on the label)
- **No TV for babies and even toddlers.**
- Pots and pans (in good condition) with a wooden spoon to **bang** with are great for toddlers.
- **Stacking** plastic bowls of different sizes builds the understanding of sizes. (These should not be for chewing or teething)
- Crawling into a box can be lots of fun. Make sure **mom** is watching to insure safety.

Simple Games

Peek-a-boo

Patty Cake

Finger Plays (*The Itsy Bitsy Spider*, *I'm a Little Teapot*, or *Wheels on the Bus*) are fun to do with toddlers.

Point to... (body parts like your tummy, nose, toes, foot, head, hand, or things around like dog, cat, book, spoon, flower, tree, car, etc.) This activity builds **vocabulary**.

*Local libraries can provide additional books for you to **read** to your children. Books are available to parents on child care, good parenting, and a host of other topics concerning babies and children.

***Never** give your baby toys with pieces that can fit in his/her mouth because these can cause choking. Be sure toys are in good condition and clean.

Resources: *Healthy Start, Grow Smart* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Agriculture; *Guide to Baby & Child Care*, JoAnna Moorhead; *Building Baby's Brain: What Parents Can Do*, Univ. of Georgia/College of Family and Consumer Sciences

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