

# You and your premature baby: 12 months



Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

[www.childrenshc.org](http://www.childrenshc.org)

## *NICU Follow-Up Clinic*

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## What to expect this month

At twelve months, your baby can do so many things, sometimes so independently that you hardly seem needed at all. Then the next moment, your baby may cling to you and need you more than ever. This flip-flop between independence and dependence is very common. It happens throughout childhood. When your baby learns new skills, his or her world expands. This can be scary, and your baby may need to hold on to mommy and daddy again. Encourage and applaud the new skills, and be available for reassurance.

As babies near their first birthday, they imitate more and more. They pick up pens and try to write; they cuddle dolls and kiss “their babies”; and they carry on “conversations” with toys and people even though the “words” are mostly just strings of sounds. Every time babies mimic another behavior, they are showing us what they have noticed and learned about the world.

Encourage your baby to imitate you in actions and games. At first, praise even the slightest attempt. For example, you might place a peg in a hole then ask your baby to try. As soon as you see her moving the peg near the hole, say, “That’s right. Put it in the hole. Good job!” Your immediate praise will help your baby learn to copy specific actions.

## Caring for your baby

### Footwear

Barefoot is best for babies as they begin walking. Shoes are okay if needed for warmth or protection. Baby shoes should have plenty of toe space, a flat heel, and no arch support. They should be lightweight and comfortable. Cotton socks, which allow feet to breathe, are best for babies. Special shoes are rarely needed.

### This month with baby

Here’s what 12-month-old babies might tell you . . . if they could!

### Fussiness

As I get older, I may seem aggressive and impatient at times. I used to take everything in stride. Now I may make a fuss if, for example, I want to play and you need to change my diaper or take me on an errand. You can try to distract me and tell me about your plans, but I may keep fussing. Sometimes I just need to protest a little. Just pick me up and change me or take me to the car. You can’t reason with me when I’m mad and fussy. I may continue for a little while, and in a few minutes I’ll probably be my happy self again!

## **Movement**

I like to:

- try to walk.
- climb up and down stairs.
- lower myself to a sitting position.

I enjoy it when you:

- give me lots of opportunities to move.
- roll a ball or blow bubbles so I can chase them.
- give me a car or truck to push as I crawl.

## **Playing**

I like to:

- imitate waving, saying bye-bye, clapping hands, closing my eyes, and blowing a kiss.
- learn to dress myself by putting my arms out for sleeves.
- give affection to familiar people and toys.

I enjoy it when you:

- let me dress myself.
- tell me good-bye when you leave and that you'll come back.

I don't like:

- strange people or places
- new foods.
- Napping. I may throw a tantrum, so give me a special toy to hold while I sleep.

## **Thinking**

I like to:

- turn pages in a book.
- try to build towers and other buildings.
- make things happen (action and reaction).

I enjoy it when you:

- give me things that I can put together, take apart, turn, open, close, and switch.
- tie a toy on the end of a string to my high chair so that when I drop my toy I can pull it back up.

## **Communication**

I like to:

- follow simple directions like "give it to mommy" or "clap your hands."
- recognize my name and turn to see who called me.
- babble with rhythm.

I enjoy it when you:

- tell me all about places we are going and what we are seeing.
- ask me, "What does a dog say?" and give me a chance to think, even if I don't know the answer.
- tell me nursery rhymes and sing songs to me.