

# The Best Baby toy is YOU!

Playtime isn't much of an issue at first. A newborn eats sleeps and fills their nappies, and in between they mostly wants to be rocked and soothed. Soon, however, your rapidly growing baby becomes more wakeful and you start thinking about ways to keep them entertained and happy. But what the heck do you do with a baby? If you thought buying plenty of toys was the way to go, think again.

## Why should you play with baby?

- stimulates baby's brain development
- helps build baby's coordination and motor skills
- enhance baby's language and problem-solving skills
- you'll nurture a strong, secure and loving bond between you and baby

## Experiences for Birth to 6 months

### **Baby Sit Ups**

Lay your baby on their back and then pull them up to a sitting position by holding their hands. Do this very slowly and gently so that even if his head lags, it is not jerked roughly at any stage. This is actually the first step of your baby's road to walking! Support them firmly as he sits upright for a minute or two. Then lower them down onto their back.

### **Physical Play**

You can sit a small baby on your knee and bounce her up and down while singing a song or help them clap hands while you sing "Clap hands for NAME" change the name each time so that baby learns names of their friends, family members, etc.... An older baby who can stand/walk can sit on your lower legs and have a horsey ride as you hold their hands and move your legs up and down. At nappy changing time, move baby's bare legs in bicycling motion and sing The Wheels on the Bus.

### **Tummy Time**

Provide 15 minutes of "Tummy Time" play daily. This position encourages them to lift their head, place toys around for their visual enjoyment

### **Baby Massage**

To a newborn baby, touch is as essential as food to ensure they thrive. Baby will love a gentle massage from you spend a few minutes a day concentrating on touching all part of their body. Lay your baby on her back and gently stroke her neck, shoulders, trunk, legs and feet. Repeat these strokes when lying on their tummy. Always downwards from head to foot. (If you are unsure ask Leah on her next visit, she is a trained massage therapist and can show you how to do a simple baby massage)

### **Hug-a-Baby**

Gently cross your baby's arms over her chest, allowing her to 'hug' herself. Then gently stretch her arms out wide to embrace the 'whole world'. Then bring them back to the crossed position.

### **Over-the-Shoulder Baby**

Hold your baby over your shoulder in an upright position and let them view the world from this sight, this activity helps to build the muscle tone in a newborn's neck as they study their surrounds.

### **Baby Bicycle**

With your baby lying on his back, hold one foot in each hand. Bicycle baby's legs slowly causing them to flex legs at the knee and thigh.

### **Rolling Pin**

To play this game, lay your baby down on the bed or on a carpeted floor. Gently roll him back and forth. Repeat this motion, telling him he's rolling out the cookies.

### **Ball Rolling**

Roll a ball along a tabletop and let your baby see it falling off onto the floor. Babies find cause and effect actions such as these fascinating.

### **Funny Faces**

Hold your baby in front of you and make a funny face. Try squinting, smiling, raising one eyebrow, sticking out your tongue, or scrunching up your nose. If your baby copies you, make the funny face again. Once your baby stops copying you, try a new face.

## Experiences for 6 to 12 months

### Anticipation games

Babies learn through repetition and are delighted when you repeat something enough times that they know what's coming next. These games can be anything from saying, "Who wants a kiss? Who wants a kiss?" several times before you plant a kiss on baby's cheek or belly, to the "tickling" songs like:

Round and Round the Garden

Tracing a circle with your finger on your baby's hand and say: "Round and round the garden, like a teddy bear. One step (jump your fingers to the middle of her arm), two step (jump further up the arm), tickly under there!" Watch them giggle with laughter as you tickle them under their arm.

### Physical Play

You can sit a small baby on your knee and bounce her up and down while singing a song or help them clap hands while you sing "Clap hands for NAME" change the name each time so that baby learns names of their friends, family members, etc.... An older baby who can stand/walk can sit on your lower legs and have a horsey ride as you hold their hands and move your legs up and down. At nappy changing time, move baby's bare legs in bicycling motion and sing The Wheels on the Bus

### Peek-a-boo

Incorporate peek-a-boo games into your everyday routine. Try hiding behind a washcloth after baby's bath, behind a bib at breakfast time, behind a curtain or door, or behind a tree when outside.

### Creepy Crawlies

Help baby navigate over an obstacle course made of cushions and through a tunnel made of a large cardboard box. If you do it first, he'll soon get the idea! You will probably have to help him around at first, but soon he'll be crawling around with the best of them.

### Opposite heaven

Working out upside down and right way up, turning on and off, standing up and sitting down - all these concepts are beginning to make sense at last. Put an upside down container in front of baby and see if he turns it the right way up. Let baby turn on and off the tap. Pull him up to stand, lower him to sit and talk to him about what he is doing. Nod your head a lot for "yes" and shake your head for "no" - and it's almost guaranteed that the shake showing refusal will be copied very quickly!

### Stacking and Sorting

Stacking and sorting activities begin to come into their own at this stage. Putting smaller pots into bigger ones, taking them out again, trying it the other way round - play along with your baby and copy what he does, as if it were all new to you too. Experiment with blocks in a box, baby keys and rattles in a basket, crumpled up paper in a bucket, small soft toys in a pillow case. Can you get them out? How? Do they go back in? Can I use two hands to do this? What happens if...?

### Eager reader

Many older babies adore books. Turning the pages is now a thrilling activity, a baby has the manipulative skills to start to master handling books himself. Start with the soft ones and then move onto board books. Books with flaps, holes or textures to feel make this more of an adventure, but you can also look at old magazine pictures together and point to the different things. Gardening magazines with large photos of flowers, store catalogues with pictures of familiar baby toys or toddler magazine publications will open baby's eyes to the variety of printed material.

### Baby Body Bits

As your baby begins to understand more about how things around him work, he'll become more curious about himself, too. Play lots of games pointing to your nose, eyes, mouth, waving your hands and arms, wiggling your feet and stretching your legs. Point to baby's nose and see if he can point to yours.

### Ball Games

Sit on the ground with your baby. Roll a ball slowly towards her, help her catch it and roll it back to you. Be sure to use a ball large enough that it is not a choking hazard. Say "Now we are playing with the ball. Look at how it rolls along. Are you ready? Here it comes. Ready? Catch it. Now roll it back to me."

### Throw it!

After learning how to let go of objects, your little one is now ready to start throwing them! A small soft ball is ideal for this. You can practice rolling the ball to each other at first, and then lifting your arm and throwing the ball through the air. Sit opposite each other and keep practicing until baby starts to throw better in your direction. Then a little more rolling. Then throwing.

### **How things work**

Show baby how things work eg: show them how to turn a light on/off at the switch, show them the light, show them how to open/shut a door (your tupperware door in the kitchen is good for this).

### **Peg Play**

Peg some colourful (new) pegs onto babies clothes, watch as they pull to remove them and then delight in their success.

### **TA Game**

Attach a peg to your shirt, sit with baby on your lap facing you, they will pull the peg off your shirt, when they do this say "Ta" and encourage the baby to give you the peg. Then place the peg back on your shirt for another turn.

### **Body Part Song**

Here are your fingers,  
Here are your toes,  
Here is your tummy,  
And here is your nose

(point to the parts as you sing: Add different body parts at Finger and tummy but keep toes and nose so the song still rhymes)

### **Make a Discovery bottle**

Fill a bottle with water and vegetable oil (equal amounts) then add some food colouring, sequins, small plastic animals, beads (great shapes are available). Secure the lid with hot glue or super glue.

### **Instrument Play**

Set out some safe instruments for your baby to explore. For younger babies sit with them and explore the different noises that the instruments make.

### **Find a colour**

Take baby for a walk (in your arms or hold their hands) and look for this month's colour. When you find an item in the play area say "Look there is a COLOUR, toy, let's look for another one." As you walk around collect up these items and present to baby as group of toys in the same colour to play with.

### **Who says that?**

Collect up some plastic animal figurines like a cow, pig, dog etc.... and encourage the child to say moo, oink, woof etc... Younger babies need to hear you say the sounds and older babies will attempt to say the sounds with you.

### **Ping Pong Bucket**

Older babies can gather ping pong balls and place them in a bucket. If you have a piece of PVC pipe (Clean) or cardboard tube from wrapping paper lay this against your lounge and have the children feed the ping pong balls into the pipe/tube. Take the bucket to collect up the balls around the room.

### **My Special Place**

Babies of all ages love to go inside covered areas eg: under beds, in cupboards... let encourage safe play by having a special Play area that could be a box, play tent, chairs with bed sheets to make a cubby.

### **Bouncing Baby**

You need a large exercise ball (fit ball) for this activity sit baby on the ball, standing behind them and holding their waist gently bounce them on the ball. For more adventurous babies lay them on their stomach and gently roll the ball back and forward while you hold them.

### **Stacking Cups**

If you don't have store bought specifically designed stacking cups, then you could use 3 plastic drinking cups that slightly vary in size, so you can offer a similar experience for baby.

### **In and Out Play**

Take an ice-cream container or similar and select a few toys of interest to baby, Encourage them to put the toys "IN" the box and take them "OUT" of the box.

### **Nature Walk**

As a group go for a walk outside/park and look for animals in nature. When you find an animal help baby locate it by pointing and getting as close as is safe for baby. Let baby hold leaves, bark etc... to help them explore Nature and texture.

### **Letter Play**

Select a letter from the alphabet any letter will do and focus your activities on this letter today. Eg: Letter **B** = **B**all play, **B**ubbles, **B**ouncing, **B**anging, **B**ooks and **B**aby dolls.

### **Hair Play**

Children love to play with hair (unfortunately sometimes they pull hair) to help curb this fascination offer baby: Dolls with hair, Fringing, wool strands knotted together, and wigs to play with. This a great tactile experience for babies of all ages.

### **Surprise Box**

Use either an empty tissue box or an empty baby wipes bag, remove any loose bits of the item that you choose to use. Then place a toy of the baby's liking inside the tissue box or wipes bag. Baby will manipulate the item to retrieve the toy.

### **Telecommunications**

Ring mum or dad at work (organise first) and let baby have a chat/listen to mum/dad. Baby may not be able to talk but can listen and make noises. Tell baby that you are going to ring to say hello. Afterwards have out phones (toy/real) to play with.

### **Squeeze Water Play**

Purchase some sponges and cut them in half, dip in water and give to baby. Encourage them to squeeze the sponge and get wet.

### **Velcro Play**

Take two wooden blocks the same size and place Velcro on them, attach together and give to baby to explore. 2-4 year old take add Velcro dots to your wooden blocks and begin joining the blocks in strange ways to create odd looking buildings.

### **Hammering**

Use hammering toys to encourage this skill of striking and hand eye co-ordination.

### **Catch a Butterfly**

For older babies and toddlers: Using tissues lay them flat and then tie them in the middle using sticky tape or wool. Then throw them up in the air to catch, encourages hand eye co-ordination.

### **Balance walking**

Lay on the floor some masking tape about 2mtrs long. Encourage the child to walk on the line and younger babies to crawl on the line. Older children can walk backwards, on their tippy toes or balance bean bags on their heads as they walk.

### **Egg Play**

Collect up some kinder surprise egg containers or purchase Easter egg containers. Take a 6 pack egg carton and let baby play with his/her pretend eggs.

Put rice/pasta in side egg containers to make shakers.

### **Multi-Cultural Eskimo Kisses**

Rub noses with baby and say "Eskimo Kisses, Eskimo Kisses" Rub noses again and say "Eskimo Kisses for baby". Encourage baby to try with soft toys as well.

### **Interacting with older children**

Invite an older Day Care Child or your own child to spend some quality time one on one with baby, suggest that they read together, play peek-a-boo or a tickly game. Both children will benefit from this socially and emotionally.

### **That's ME!**

Take photo's of baby, have them printed and laminated. Cut the individual laminate photos out (rounding corners) and hole punch the top left hand corner of each picture and then tread onto a key ring circle. Give to baby to look at themselves.

### **Routine Conversations**

When you are about to feed baby, change their nappy, remove a toy, give them a new toy, put them down for a sleep etc..... Talk them through the changes in their routine, doing this will help them learn to communicate and understand what comes next in relation to routines.

### **Where's??? Game**

Ask the baby where's the high chair? Where's Johnny? As they learn and assimilate, they will begin to point to the items you are searching for.

### **My name is ..... Game**

Sit with baby and clap out the letters of their name and then say Yeah my name is.....

Eg: L....E....A....H! Yeah my name is Leah!

### **Book Box**

Collect up some books for baby to freely access and place them in a small box on the floor.

### **Sorting Colours**

You need two washing baskets and several items/toys in two different colours. Encourage baby to put all the blue items in one basket and all the red items in the other basket.

### **Puppet Play**

If you have a hand puppet sit with baby and entertain them with your puppet, let them try the puppet if they are old enough.

### **Clean Painting**

In a bucket place a small amount of water and give baby a real paint brush to paint your house, concrete, cubby with water.

### **Baby Sounds**

Audio tape your children playing then play his/her play sounds back to the group.

### **Bubble wrap walking/Jumping**

Help baby to walk over some bubble wrap and make it pop. Older children can jump to make it POP!

## Finger Play songs for young children

### **To Market, To Market**

To market, to market,  
To buy a fat pig,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggety jig.

To market, to market,  
To buy a fat hog,  
Home again, home again,  
Jiggity jog.

To market, to market,  
To buy a plum bun,  
Home again, home again,  
Marketing's done.

### **Three Balls**

Here's a ball (make ball with thumb and index finger)  
And here's a ball (make ball with other thumb and index)  
A great big ball, I see (put arms up and touch fingers)  
over head  
Shall we count them?  
Are you ready?  
One, Two, Three (make all three balls in succession)

### **Counting Apples**

Five red apples  
Hanging on a tree (five fingers held up)  
The juiciest apples you ever did see!  
The wind came past  
And gave an angry frown (shake head and look angry)  
And one little apple came tumbling down.  
Four red apples, etc.

### **This Little Pig**

This little pig went to the market. (Hold up a finger or toe for each pig, starting with the thumb/big toe.)  
This little pig stayed home.  
This little pig had roast beef.  
This little pig had none.  
And this little pig went  
Wee, wee, wee, wee, all the way home! (tickle your baby!)

### **Incy Wincy Spider**

Incy Wincy Spider  
Crawled up the water spout ('Climb' up arm)  
Down came the rain (Wiggle fingers down from head to waist)  
And washed the spider out (Throw arms to sides)  
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain (Raise hands above head, make circle for sun)  
And the Incy Wincy spider  
Crawled up the spout again. ('Climb' up arm again)

### **Five Fat Peas**

Five fat peas in a pea pod (hold baby's hand in a fist)  
One grew, two grew, so did all the rest. (put thumb and fingers up one by one)  
They grew and grew (raise hand in the air very slowly)  
And did not stop,  
Until one day  
The pod went POP! (clap hands together)

Not only are these games a way for you to connect with baby, but they also help in their learning and development, some of the best games will be the unique ones you and your baby create together. The truth is, baby will thrive and learn best when they

**PLAY.....With YOU!**