



## Learning in Families Together:

# Infant Development 1

No two Infants are exactly alike. Parents wonder if their baby is “normal.” Average developmental ages can vary by as much as six months from one child to the next.

Karen DeBord, Virginia Cooperative Extension Specialist, Family and Human Development; Reviewed by Crystal Tyler-Mackey, Extension Specialist, Community viability, Virginia Tech



### Parenting Secrets

- Infants are not born knowing right from wrong. They must learn by watching others and through trial and error.
- Infant vaccines (shots) help prevent sickness and serious disease. Be sure to get well-child checkups!
- When babies have their needs met — being fed when hungry, comforted when crying, held and touched gently, and kept warm and dry — they begin to trust the adults who care for them.
- Infants younger than a year old should be placed on their backs to sleep — never facedown on their stomachs (see [www.sids.org](http://www.sids.org)).

### Together Time

When you see a baby suddenly jump or twitch for no apparent reason, this is a “startle” response. This means the nervous system is still developing.

- Never shake a child or throw a baby playfully into the air. It could harm the nervous system.

### Play Time

Infants cannot support the weight of their head.

- Gently support the neck and head when you pick up or carry the baby.
- Allow some “tummy time” for play. Put a small toy within eyesight so the baby can practice focusing. Tummy time helps to strengthen their arms and legs.
- As they grow, infants will creep or crawl. Be sure the floor is safe and clean or use a clean blanket for floor time.

### Learning Time

Trust is the most important milestone in infancy. Infants learn about relationships from how people touch and hold them.

- Comfort babies when they cry. This helps them develop trust. Crying means they need something. They may need to be changed, fed, touched, rocked, or to hear your voice.