

Phone: 404-463-2192



## Your Baby's Vision

### **Sight**

Unless she has a vision impairment, your baby can see from birth. As she grows, she'll use her eyes to take in massive amounts of information about the world around her, which in turn will stimulate her brain development and lead to physical accomplishments such as [sitting](#), [rolling over](#), [crawling](#), and [walking](#).

### **When it develops**

Over her first few months your baby's sight will sharpen, until at about 6 to 8 months she'll see the world almost as well as an adult does.

### **How it develops**

Your baby's sight develops somewhat gradually, unlike her [hearing](#), which is fully mature by the end of her first month. At birth, her vision is pretty fuzzy, though she can make out light, shapes, and movement. She can see only about eight to 15 inches — just far enough to clearly make out the face of the person holding her. Handily enough, your face is the most interesting thing to your baby at this age, followed by high-contrast items such as a checkerboard, so be sure to put in a lot of eye-to-eye time.

Your baby's sight will gradually improve, until at about 8 months she'll see just as well as you do.

#### **1 month**

At birth your baby didn't know how to use her eyes together, so they may have wandered randomly. But by the time she's 1 or 2 months old she'll have learned to focus both eyes and will be able to track a moving object (though she may already have been able to do this for brief periods since birth). A simple rattle passed in front of her face will often transfix her, or you can play eyes-to-eyes by moving very close to her face and slowly moving your head from side to side; often her eyes will lock onto yours.

#### **2 months**

Babies see color from birth, but they have difficulty distinguishing similar tones such as red and orange. As a result they often prefer black and white or high-contrast colors. But starting at 2 months and continuing through month four, color differences become clearer, and your baby starts to distinguish like shades. As a result, she'll probably begin to show a preference for bright primary colors and more detailed and complicated designs and shapes. Encourage this by letting her look at bright pictures, photos, [books](#), and [toys](#). For the next couple of months, she'll also be perfecting her object-tracking skills.

#### **4 months**

Sometime around now your baby will begin to develop depth perception. She'll also be gaining better control over her arms, so this new visual development comes at just the right time to help her grab for things such as hair and earrings much more accurately.

#### **5 months**

At this point your baby will be getting better at spotting very small objects and tracking moving things. She may even be able to recognize an object after seeing only part of it — the basis of little hide-and-seek games you'll be playing in the coming months. Most 5-month-olds have already learned to distinguish between similar bold colors, and now they'll begin to sort out subtle differences in pastels.

#### **8 months**

Your baby's vision — previously about 20/40 at best — will be almost adult like in its clarity and depth perception at this point. Though her short-range sight will still be better than her long-range acuity, at 8 months her vision will be good enough to recognize people and objects across a room. At this age her eyes will also probably be close to their final color, though you may see subtle changes after that.

## What's next

Your baby's eyesight is fully developed when she's still very young, but it's important to have it checked regularly so you can nip any possible problems in the bud. Make sure your child's pediatrician checks her vision at every regularly scheduled checkup.

## Your role

Studies show that babies prefer human faces to all other patterns or colors, so keep your face close to hers (especially when she's a newborn) so she can study your features. At about 1 month, almost anything you pass in front of your baby's face is likely to transfix her. The stores are packed with developmental toys, but you'll do just as well with everyday household objects. Move shiny foil or a bright plastic ladle from side to side in front of her. Then try moving it up and down. This should attract her attention, though most babies probably won't be able to smoothly follow vertical motion until three or four months later.

As mentioned above, encourage your baby's interest in primary colors and pastels as she gets older. Some great eye-catchers include primary-colored mobiles (hung out of reach), bright posters, and visually striking [board books](#).

## When to be concerned

Babies should be screened for vision problems regularly — starting at birth and continuing at every checkup. Pediatricians and ophthalmologists can usually correct most eye deficiencies if they're spotted early enough; the older your child gets, the harder it will be to fix any problems. You probably won't be able to detect conditions such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism (an uneven curvature of the cornea and / or lens) on your own, but keep an eye out for bigger difficulties. If your child can't focus on or track an object (or your face) with both eyes by the time she's 3 or 4 months old, tell her pediatrician. Premature babies are at a greater risk for developing certain eye problems including astigmatism, myopia, and strabismus (eye misalignment), so their parents and doctors should pay special attention to their sight. A few other warning signs include:

- Your baby has trouble moving one or both of her eyes in all directions.
- Your baby's eyes are crossed most of the time.
- One or both of your baby's eyes tend to turn out.

For more information:

Children 1st

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