

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY BABY LEARN AT HOME?

By Sheryl Friess Zellis, Occupational Therapist

Your baby with Down syndrome, just like a typically developing baby, has multiple sensory systems waiting to be stimulated. Many simple and even fun activities can be part of your bonding experience and can positively contribute to the growth and development of your baby. Each interaction is an opportunity to stimulate his senses. At the same time, you can become more acquainted with your baby and learn what makes them happy and comfortable.

Activities to Provide Light and Deep Touch

- Gentle massage to baby's arms, legs, trunk, and back. You can do this while rubbing moisturizer on your baby after a bath or just to soothe him.
- Gently rub a variety of soft textured materials on your baby's arms, legs, back, trunk, and cheeks. A soft wash cloth feels very different to a baby than a piece of cotton or a thick towel.

Activities that Provide Auditory/Hearing Stimulation

- Play a variety of different types of music from classical to children's tunes.
- Sing, sing, and sing to your baby. He loves your voice! Make it high, low, animated, or quiet. (Look at your baby's face so he will follow your voice with his head, as well.)

Activities that Are Pleasing Visually Through Baby's Eyes

- When baby is on his back, place your face several inches from his. Move from one side of his face to the other side of his face to encourage him to follow you with his eyes.
- Lay baby on his side or belly, and prop black and white bold pictures of simple faces or shapes for him to look at. Be surprised when he "studies" them!
- Make different faces close to baby's face to vary what he is looking at. Eventually, you may even get a smile back!

Activities to Stimulate Tolerance to Textures Around and in the Mouth

- Gently rub various soft textured materials (washcloth, cotton, blanket), on baby's cheeks, lips, and chin.
- Place gentle kisses around the mouth, cheeks, and neck.
- Gently massage moisturizer on baby's cheeks and chin.
- Rub your clean finger (with closely clipped finger nails), over baby's lips, inside the mouth on his gums, and inner cheeks.

In summary, any of these activities will encourage wonderful responses from your baby and make you look forward to diaper time! Choose a few each time and enjoy your baby!

This is an excerpt from: [Welcoming a Newborn with Down Syndrome: A New Parent's Guide to the First Month](#) by Nancy McCreia Iannone and Stephanie Hall Meredith

To receive a copy of the full guide: [Welcoming a Newborn with Down Syndrome: A New Parent's Guide to the First Month](#), please contact Jessika Houston, DsO Coordinator: jessikah@arcwhatcom.org or call 360-715-0170 x 304.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MY BABY LEARN AT HOME?

By Sheryl Friess Zellis, Occupational Therapist