
Baby development: Your 3 week old

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Welcome to week 3! Over the last three weeks, you've likely seen your baby growing more alert and even staring at your face for longer periods, especially during feeding. You're hopefully falling into a more predictable pattern now — even if it's an exhausting one — most moms appreciate having a better idea of when their babies want to eat and sleep and when they're most alert and even the grumpiest.

Your baby at this point has also no doubt discovered the **power of the cry**. Crying can be really stressful, so it might be reassuring to know that crying isn't always done out of distress. In fact, crying is your baby's primary form of communication and with a little practice, you can begin to decode what different cries actually mean. Examples of different crying types include:

- **Hungry:** A repetitive and rhythmic cry coupled with rooting or sucking motions.
- **Tired:** Crying that gets louder and may have some eye rubs or yawns with it.
- **Overstimulated:** Look away from object or person and have a fussy cry.
- **Scared:** This is more of a screeching cry, along with a startled face.
- **Gassy/Colic:** This is a highly intense, high-volume cry in a rhythmic pattern.
- **Cuddle:** This is a softer cry, although can still be intense.

If your baby cries for more than three hours at a time on at least three days this week and little will soothe him, this could signal the beginnings of **colic**. An estimated 20 percent of babies will develop this condition, which typically subsides after about three months of age.

Safe sleeping and keeping your baby calm

Babies should always be put to sleep on their backs. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and National Institutes of Health, this position has several benefits, the most important of which is a reduced risk for sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS. Additional benefits include reduced ear infections and fevers.

That doesn't mean that all babies like it! Some babies may not like sleeping on their backs at first. But it's worth it to stick it out. Your baby will get used to this sleeping position, and the earlier you start him on this way of sleeping, the easier it will become.

Speaking of SIDS, there is also research showing that **pacifier use among infants** can help reduce the risk, according to the AAP. While it's not known exactly how pacifier use reduces SIDS risk, pacifier use helps to satisfy a baby's natural sucking reflex. Once you have a well-established breastfeeding

routine with your baby (this typically occurs between three and four weeks), you can provide a pacifier at nap time and bedtime to help him off to a better sleep.

Other tips for calming your baby can include:

- Holding baby close and rocking or swinging for a soothing motion.
- Swaddling or snuggling up skin-to-skin (known as kangaroo care) can also soothe your baby.
- White noise machines, fans, and a vacuum may have soothing effects for baby.
- If you suspect your baby does have colic, you can utilize the “colic hold.” This involves placing your baby with her back to your belly, supporting the head and upper body on your left forearm. Place your right hand on your baby’s tummy and rock gently to soothe tummy woes.

Developmental milestones

Now is a great opportunity to start “tummy time” with your baby. This involves supervising your baby while he rests on his tummy. Even short time intervals can prevent your baby from developing flat spots on the head and help strengthen your baby’s core muscles. You can start by placing your baby across your lap for a few minutes several times a day.

You may notice your baby is starting to lift his head and look around more from this position. This shows your baby is getting stronger and also more observant to surroundings. As your baby increases in strength, you can place him on a blanket on the floor with some fun toys he can reach for.

At three weeks of age, your baby can see about 8-12 inches in front of him. You may see your baby taking an increased interest in his hands as they’re right in the line of vision.

Find answers to your biggest feeding questions with Bundoo Pediatrician, Dr. Kristie Rivers.

Reviewed by Dr. Sara Connolly, July 2019