

What Your Newborn Sees and Hears

Your newborn experiences the world the same as you do, through sight, smell, touch, taste and sound. But your baby's senses are still developing, so it can be helpful to understand what your newborn sees and hears. Your baby's sense of hearing is the most strongly developed of all his senses.

Babies can recognize sounds even before they're born. Your little one heard your heartbeat in the womb and the voices of those close to you such as your partner, family and friends. From the first day of life, your baby can hear things loud and clear, so don't be surprised if she reacts to sounds or acts startled by sudden, loud noises.

Your baby's sense of sight is not nearly as strong. When your baby is born, she can only see about 8 – 12 inches in front of her face. This is the perfect distance to view Mom's face while breastfeeding! Your newborn's eyes are also sensitive to bright lights. She is more likely to keep her eyes open in low light to protect her eyes.

In the first few months, your baby will begin to recognize her world with all of its sights and sounds. In these months, babies are learning very quickly and love stimulation. Newborns love human voices and soothing sounds. Don't be surprised if your baby quickly learns to recognize your voice and is soothed when you talk to her. Newborns like high-pitched voices, or "baby talk." This is natural and talking to your baby with exaggerated facial expressions actually helps your baby develop language and social skills.

"The voice is very important. It's singing, it's talking, smiling. It's getting back to singing the little songs we were sung to, but close contact and real contact. Instead of using a teddy bear you actually need to have your face."

While your baby is listening and learning, her eyesight is also getting better. Babies are attracted to bright colors and contrasting images. It's never too early to start reading to your baby, so choose simple books with lots of bright, colorful pictures. This is a great way for your baby to be exposed to natural speech and pictures.

In fact, talking to your baby and exposing your baby to interesting pictures and patterns is important for development. But remember that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time at all for babies under two years of age!

Your baby will also be screened for vision and hearing at well-baby check-ups. If you have concerns about your baby's hearing or eyesight, make sure to ask your pediatrician.