

BABY INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Don't you wish your baby came with an instruction manual? Here's the next best thing – a top-to-toe guide to how your baby changes every day in those first miraculous months

FONTANELLES

The main diamond-shaped soft spot, or fontanelle is on top of your baby's head and there's a smaller one at the back. Fontanelles are the points where skull bones meet. The sutures (joins) allow the bones to move, to ease the baby's passage through the birth canal. The fontanelles take up to 18 months to close.

HAIR

Your baby grows body hair called lanugo in the womb. She also grows hair on her head and can be born with quite a barnet! After birth your baby starts to lose this hair and you may notice a bald spot at the back of her head. By 6 months the next lot of hair starts to grow and it may be totally different in colour and texture.

EYES

Your newborn's natural focus is on objects about 20-30cms(8-12inches) away – the distance between your face and hers when you're breastfeeding. She has yet to learn how to control the eye muscles to focus at other distances. Your newborn can see colours but they appear rather hazy – what she really likes is contrast between black (or red) and white. Good eyesight is actually a skill that your baby has to learn and practice.

TEETH

Your baby's born with a full set of teeth in her gums. The first teeth usually the lower central incisors (cutting teeth) may appear at between 4 & 14 months. Early or late teething runs in families. By the age of 1, most babies have cut their first tooth.

HANDS AND FINGERS

Your baby's born with curled up hands, which loosen and unfold in the first 12 months. By 3 months your baby discovers her hands. They're open, no longer curled and she'll deliberately hold or grasp an object. Your baby's nails are tiny at first but they grow quite quickly – cut them with baby nail scissors while she's asleep or bite them off yourself.

NAVEL

The average umbilical cord is 50cm (20inches) long. Once the cord is cut the small piece that is left, called the stump, take up to 10 days to dry out and drop off. To avoid infection, your

midwife or health visitor may suggest cleaning the area with cool boiled water and ensuring the areas' dried thoroughly.

SEX ORGANS

Your baby's genitals may appear swollen shortly after birth and babies of both genders may have 'breasts'. Newborn girls may also have a period-like bleed. The hormones passed from you to your baby in the womb via the placenta cause all these effects, they will soon subside.

LEGS

Your newborn arrives with her legs drawn up in the classic fetal position. When placed on her front she may make movements resembling crawling. By 6 months she'll try to kick other objects as she lies on her back. She will also touch her toes and play with her feet. While standing on your lap, she'll actively bounce up and down.

NAPPY NOTES

In the first day or so after her birth your baby passes her first bowel motion – a greenish-black substance called meconium – which is made up of the waste matter that accumulated during her time in the womb. After her first poo, your baby will start to pass ordinary motions.

FEET

If you stroke the side of your baby's foot, she curls up her big toes and fans out her other toes. This is commonly known as the Babinski Effect and usually lasts for her first year. The plantar reflex (or toe grasp) can be seen when you press lightly on the sides of your baby's foot and the toes curl under – this lasts until he's 8 to 18 months old.

WEIGHTY MATTERS

Around 95% of newborns weight between 2.7kgs(6lb) and 4.5kgs(10lbs). Because they lose fluid and pass meconium and don't take much milk at first, most babies lose up to 10% of their birth weight in the first few days, and then they gain the weight back at about 25g (1oz) per day. By 6 months your baby's birth weight has usually doubled.