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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Months Three and Four: Play and Physical Development¹

*Donna Davis*²

In just months, a newborn baby takes on amazing new dimensions. Parents who are just growing accustomed to changing diapers, constant feedings and probably a good bit of crying will continue to be surprised by the new developments in their baby.

By the third month of life, a baby is already learning to play. Researchers agree that play is essential for a baby's healthy development. Babies love to play. At three and four months, babies begin to playfully explore the power of their little bodies, finding joy in splashing in the tub or kicking their feet in the air as they lie on their backs. Through play, babies learn about themselves and the world around them.

The simple pleasure babies experience when discovering their own hand, bringing hands together, and exploring fingers will keep a baby entertained and intrigued. At this stage of development, an infant will also begin to hold his head steadier and turn it from side to side. This is also the time to expect a baby to roll onto one side or roll over and to begin to grasp objects and put them in his mouth. Now babies can also lift their heads and upper bodies when lying down, and at this point some babies will be able to sit up with some help.

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2. Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Millie Ferrer, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida.

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Of course, with these new abilities come new challenges. Young infants have been known to roll off beds while napping or being diapered. While a new parent can be very entertained with their baby's new skills, it's important to remember not to overstimulate an infant. Even babies need downtime.

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