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4-H 310 4-H Child Development: The Infant

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4-H CHILD DEVELOPMENT

THE INFANT

Connie M. Francis
Extension Family Life Specialist
**The Infant: 4-H Child Development**

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Presentations or community service activities:
Welcome to the 4-H Child Development Project. This project is written in four separate parts:

The Infant (Birth to 18 months)

The Toddler (18 months to 3 years)

The Preschooler (3 to 6 years)

Middle Childhood (6 to 8 years)

You have chosen to study the infant. The objectives of this unit are:

* To understand how an infant grows physically, mentally, socially and emotionally.
* To learn how to care for a baby and promote feelings of security and safety.
* To choose types of play an infant enjoys.

The amount of responsibility you will have for caring for a child in this project depends on your age. Your age also will determine how you will study the infant you are watching. The next page has some ideas about what you may do in this project.
PROJECT SUGGESTIONS 1

9-11 years old

Because you are very young, we suggest you do not take a babysitting job to complete this project. You may choose to observe and help with your infant brother, sister or cousin, or an infant in your neighborhood. You will feel more comfortable learning about the baby if an adult is with you at all times.

In this project you may learn how to:
* feed and burp an infant.
* play with infant.
* give the infant a bottle.
* change an infant's diaper.
* lift, hold and carry an infant.
* select the best kind of toys for an infant.
* make a simple toy for an infant.

In a notebook or journal, write down what you learn about infants as you do the activities in the project.

12-14 years old

If you and your parents feel you are capable of taking care of an infant by yourself, you may babysit as you complete this project.

In this project you may learn how to:
* feed and burp an infant.
* bathe an infant, with an adult present.
* change an infant's diaper.
* dress an infant.
* select the best kind of toys for an infant.
* make a simple toy for an infant.

Using the information in this project on clothing an infant, visit one or more stores and make a written comparison of three different baby garments.

In a notebook or journal, write down what you learn about infants as you do the activities in the project.

15-19 years old

You may select activities from the lists for 9-11-year-olds and 12-14-year-olds. In addition, do some reading and write a short paper on a specific topic of interest to you. Topics might include colic, teething, infant play and a baby's diet.
A newborn infant is entirely dependent on other people. A baby needs food and warmth, and a feeling of being cherished and loved. Holding, rocking and singing to an infant will make the child's first months seem very secure.

An infant's life changes rapidly. It is remarkable how fast a baby grows from a helpless infant to a person with an individual will and personality.

A smile is the beginning of an infant's social life. At first, smiles are showered on everyone alike; but later babies smile when they recognize familiar people.

It is interesting to watch an infant learn to talk. Crying comes first, but soon the baby begins to discover that a voice can make many sounds. The baby repeats sounds over and over to attract attention. Soon the infant has learned a few words to express feelings.

Gradually, the infant expresses many feelings such as fear, anger or love. The infant is learning to relate to others.

Fear is one of the first feelings a baby expresses. Loud or sudden noises may cause a baby to cry.

When strangers approach, or when people who are familiar go away, some babies may get scared and cry. But if a stranger approaches an infant slowly, the baby can get to know him or her gradually and not be frightened.

A sudden change in daily routine may also frighten or upset the infant. That is why it is important to follow the baby's regular schedule carefully.

You need patience and kindness when caring for infants of any age. A secure infant is one who feels wanted and loved.

To help you understand how infants develop mentally, physically, socially and emotionally, observe an infant and fill in the chart on the following page. You may want to copy this chart and put it in your journal. By observing the same child two or three times during your project, you can see how the infant has changed. Or, you can see how individual children develop at different rates by observing more than one child of similar ages.
INFANT OBSERVATION FORM

Name of Child _____________________ Date ____________

Age _______ Boy ____ Girl ____ Weight: _______ pound, _______ ounces

Height: _______ inches

(Write YES or NO in each blank.)

Physical Development

____ lifts head and controls it
____ sits up
____ creeps
____ walks with help
____ crawls up stairs (Tell how__________)
____ toilet training
____ handles a spoon
____ has teeth (how many? _______
____ handles a cup
____ plays simple games (What kind?__________________________________________________)
____ sleeps well (How long? _______ hours napping, _______ hours at night)

Social Development

____ smiles regularly
____ friendly to strangers
____ plays well with other children

Mental Development

____ notices people
____ likes to explore surroundings
____ says words (What words? __________________)
____ gurgles and babbles
____ has short attention span

Emotional Development

____ overall a happy child
____ afraid of new experiences
____ afraid of strangers
____ cries when parents leave
____ gets angry quickly
____ has temper tantrums
____ wants attention
____ seems secure
____ shows pleasure with attention
____ shows love for stuffed toys, toys, dolls, favorite blanket
____ patient enough to wait

If you have additional comments about any of the observations above, record them in your journal.
**I AM AN INFANT**

When I was born, I was between 18 and 20 inches long and weighed about six to nine pounds. If you measured me with a yardstick, you would see that my head is one-fourth of the length of my body. My neck is so short you can hardly see it. Notice my pudgy legs and arms. Because I need a lot of food to make me grow. I have a large liver in proportion to the rest of my body. This makes my stomach look big.

This is how I grow:

1-3 weeks: I like to sleep a lot. When I'm awake, I cry for food and a clean diaper. I may enjoy being cuddled, or I may not.

1-2 months: Bright and moving objects fascinate me. I can coo and smile at people, and I like to listen to music and voices. I can hold my rattle but I don't like to play with it. I may hit myself in the face and head with my rattle because I can't control it.

3-4 months: I recognize my bottle and will reach for it. My head doesn't need to be held any more. I can squeal and laugh aloud. I surprise everyone and roll over in my crib.

5-6 months: I like to sit up with help. I play very actively with my rattle. I can recognize voices, people and objects.

7-8 months: I can sit by myself now. I have my first tooth. I like to repeat sounds I hear. Strange people and places may scare me.

9-10 months: I can sit by myself and am trying to stand. I can crawl all over, too. My parents are proud when I say words. I finally know what "no" means.

1 year: I am very wobbly but can walk with help. No more bottles for me—I can drink from my own cup.

1 1/2 years: I am still wobbly when I walk. I may walk backward and forward. I may climb stairs. Everyone thinks this is dangerous. I may not be able to speak words anyone can understand or I may know a few words. I use lots of baby talk to try to talk with others.
CARING FOR THE INFANT 3

Feeding An Infant

Babies need food because it:
* satisfies hunger.
* provides security.
* provides nutrition for growth.

A baby feels warm and safe when being held and given something that makes the empty feeling inside go away. It will take several years before the baby uses the word “food,” but the secure and content feeling that goes along with being fed is always there.

Most newborn babies need to be fed every three or four hours. They eat a specially prepared formula that contains all the nutrients a very small baby needs.

Babies may not mind whether their formula is warm or cold, as long as it is always about the same. Be sure to ask the parents.

If you warm the bottle, do it immediately before feeding according to the parents’ directions. However, there are two precautions:

*Never use a microwave oven to warm the bottle. Microwave heating can warm the formula unevenly and create some hot spots in the liquid that will burn the baby’s mouth.

*Do not let bottles stand out of the refrigerator to warm between feedings. This may cause spoilage.

Feed the baby in a quiet, cheerful place where there is nothing to distract the baby from eating.

Hold the baby in a half-sitting position, supporting the head and back. Tip the bottle so the neck and nipple are always filled with formula. Occasionally move the nipple in the baby’s mouth to make sucking more active. Do not force the baby to drink all the formula. This may lead to poor eating habits later.

A baby needs to be burped several times while drinking a bottle to get rid of the air taken in while eating. Hold the baby against your shoulder and rub the back in a circular motion or pat gently until the baby burps. Place a towel or diaper over your shoulder to protect your clothes. (Some babies prefer to be held sitting up to burp.)

Many babies begin to stop the late evening or middle of the night feeding by the time they are six weeks old. Other foods are added to a baby’s diet sometime between six weeks and six months.

Enriched cereals such as rice cereal or oatmeal are usually the baby’s first solid food. Gradually, strained fruits, vegetables and meat are added.

Because a baby cannot chew, foods must be strained to remove all coarse fiber that might irritate the digestive system. Like formula, these foods may be eaten warm or at room temperature, according to the parents’ directions.

At around eight to ten months most babies can be shifted gradually from strained food to more coarsely textured junior foods and finger foods. Finger foods may be anything from mashed potatoes, to soft cooked vegetables, to diced fruit and crackers. A baby at this age is not neat. Be prepared for a mess.

When feeding a baby strained or junior foods, use a clean spoon to remove a small amount from the jar and then refrigerate the leftover portion. You don’t need to put it in another storage container because the original jar was sterilized during processing.

Toward the end of the first year and into the second year, a baby will want to eat alone using his or her own little cup and spoon. It will take a long time for the baby to learn to get the cup or spoon to the mouth right side up. While the baby is learning, don’t scold the baby for being messy.
Every baby is an individual. Some are big eaters; some are small eaters. A baby may eat more at some meals than at others. Whatever the baby's eating habits may be, make mealtime pleasant and relaxed. When the baby finishes eating, don't force any more food.

**Bathing An Infant**

Bath time is a happy time for you and the infant you are watching. In the tub a baby will splash, kick and babble away in baby talk.

Bathing an infant is a grownup's responsibility. It takes a lot of practice before you can bathe a baby alone. Do not attempt to give a bath unless there is an adult to help you.

A good time to give an infant a bath is just before the mid-morning feeding. Don't bathe a baby right after feeding since the infant may get overly excited and spit up.

For the first few weeks the infant should get a sponge bath rather than a tub bath. Lightly sponge the baby with a warm, damp washcloth, paying special attention to the baby's face and bottom. Use a piece of cotton moistened with baby lotion or mineral oil to clean the baby's bottom. Thoroughly dry the baby with a soft towel.

Once the baby gets used to the feeling of water, the infant may start taking a bath in a little tub. Line the tub with a small soft towel to make it safe and more comfortable.

The baby's bath water should be around body temperature (95-100 degrees F). Test the water with your elbow. If it doesn't feel either hot or cold, it will be the right temperature. The room should be warm and free from drafts.

Assemble all the things you will need for the bath, including the clothes the infant will wear after the bath. Never leave the baby alone in the bath. Never

When you are completely ready, bring the infant to the table or sink and remove the baby's clothing.

It is much easier to wash the baby's face, head, neck, eyes, nose and ears before putting the baby into the water. (It is best to let the parents clean the baby's delicate ears, eyes and nose.)

Put the baby slowly into the tub. Your left arm should support the head, neck and back, and your fingers should be around the upper arm for a secure hold.

Gently wash the scalp with a light lather of mild soap. Rinse well and pat dry.

Rub some soap between your hands and the washcloth, and gently wash the baby all over, including all crevices and folds in the skin. Rinse gently, holding the infant in a half-sitting position.

Gently lift the infant out of the water and pat dry. Rub a little lotion or oil in the folds of the skin and other delicate areas.

Dress the baby quickly so the infant doesn't get chilled. Lay the baby in a safe place before you clear away the bath supplies.

Work quickly, but carefully, and the infant will enjoy the bath much more.
Clothing An Infant

At birth an infant’s head is about one-fourth the body length. The shoulders are narrow, and the legs and arms are short. Most of the body consists of stomach.

Because babies grow rapidly they need just a few clothes. Garments and accessories should be soft, easily laundered, lightweight and absorbent. Cotton clothes are wise choices. Cotton helps retain the baby’s body heat and keeps the body temperature uniform.

The baby’s layette, or wardrobe, consists of loose-fitting garments such as nightgowns, kimonos or wrappers, shirts, various sizes and weights of blankets, sweaters, bibs, and diapers. A baby doesn’t need booties except for warmth. A very young infant’s feet and hands may feel cold to the touch; however, they may actually be warm enough, since a young infant’s circulatory system is not fully developed.

When you dress and undress a baby, roll the baby from side to side, taking the clothes off one arm or leg and then off the other arm or leg. So the baby doesn’t get chilled, never take all the baby’s clothes off at one time, except for a bath.

An Infant’s Sleeping Habits

During the first few weeks of life a baby will sleep most of the time, only waking up for food and a dry diaper. By the end of the first year, a baby will sleep about 12 hours at night and take a morning and afternoon nap.

A baby’s bedroom should not have drafts or bright lights that may wake the baby up. It is best to continue normal household sounds, so you need not whisper while a baby is sleeping.

Keep a sleeping infant covered, and make sure the blankets don’t get pulled over the face.

Many babies like to sleep on their stomachs with their knees tucked up under them. Others prefer to sleep on their sides. For safety reasons, babies should not sleep on their backs because they might choke. Ask the parents what the baby’s favorite sleeping position is.

A baby should not share a bed with anyone else. The sides of the crib should be up so the baby won’t roll out. Bars should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart so the baby’s head will not get stuck between them. To learn more about safety standards for cribs and other children’s furnishings, ask your Extension agent for the Fact Sheet called, “Children’s Furnishings for a Safer Environment” Home Furnishings/Interiors Fact Sheet 45.

When An Infant Cries

Crying is an expression of feelings. It is the first means a baby has of communicating with others. By crying, a baby lets you know that something is wrong.

A crying baby may be wet, hungry, sick or just uncomfortable. Babies soon learn that crying brings comforting results such as a bottle, clean diapers or a cuddle.

A baby who wants to be fed will cry in a fussy manner. Stuffing a fist in the mouth or making sucking movements with the lips are two other signs of a hungry baby.

An older baby will begin to listen for familiar sounds that mean food is coming, such as the click of the refrigerator door.

Fussy crying between meals may mean a wet or soiled diaper. Change the diaper promptly and the crying will stop.

Like older people, babies like to change position. So, until they are old enough to roll and move themselves, small babies will cry when they are uncomfortable and want to move.

Older babies will cry to get attention. This is their way of saying they want to be held and played with.
Hard crying spells, especially after eating, may be caused by colic. Colic is common among babies during their first three or four months. A red face, hard crying and even screaming as if in severe pain may indicate colic.

The cause of colic seems to be connected with the nervous and digestive systems. Report this kind of crying to the parents so they can watch for further symptoms. All you can do is make the baby as comfortable as possible.

Babies six to eight months old may fuss or cry because they are cutting their first teeth. While teething, a baby may lose its appetite and put anything possible, like fingers and fists, into the mouth.

To ease the baby’s discomfort, give hard toast or teething toast to chew on. A teething ring of hard rubber or plastic also will help a baby that is cutting teeth. Do no give the baby anything to chew on (food, teething ring, pacifier, etc.) without checking with the baby’s parents first.

Many parents use pacifiers or rubber nipples to keep babies quiet. Doctors also use them to discourage thumb sucking, which may cause incorrect formation of some babies’ teeth.
Playing With An Infant

Smiling is the first sign of infant play. A baby will respond to a parent’s smile at about eight weeks. Gradually play develops into cheerful gurgles and noises, and vigorous hand and leg movements.

An infant not only enjoys playing with parents, but must also learn to occupy time in the crib. Watching brightly colored and moving objects hanging above the bed is a two- to four-month old baby’s idea of fun. Plastic shapes hung between the top rails of the crib within the child’s reach help develop reaching skills.

Toward the middle of the first year a baby’s greatest joy are objects such as rattles and teething rings. Because babies put everything into their mouths, be sure anything they have in their hands is also safe for their mouths.

NEVER allow the baby to play with any toy so small that the whole thing will fit into the baby’s mouth. For example, some pull toys have strings or handles that will fit into the mouth.

During the second half of the first year, babies will begin to like simple games. Babies enjoy playing pat-a-cake, peekaboo, and “This Little Pig Went to Market.”

Don’t try to make a baby laugh by tossing, tickling or making frightening motions. The baby may be only frightened. These motions also may damage the central nervous system.

On warm sunny days, older babies enjoy going for a ride in a carriage or stroller. However, do not take a baby out of the house without the parents’ permission.

Toys for Babies

Because babies have short attention spans, they will play with a toy for only a short time. Therefore, babies need a number of things to handle, bang, suck and throw.

Good toys for babies are ones that:

* are brightly colored
* squeak or make pleasant sounds
* help develop movement and reaching skills
* help develop coordination
* satisfy the urge to cuddle, squeeze and love
* are durable (can be thrown, dropped and banged around)
* have no sharp edges or points
* have no parts that can come loose and be put in the mouth
* are large enough so they cannot be swallowed
* won’t cause illness if sucked on
* provide a variety of textures for feeling.

Ideas for suitable baby toys:

* colorful mobile to hang over crib
* soft, washable stuffed animals and dolls
* large, soft, colored balls (Balloons are dangerous. When they break, baby may choke on small pieces.)
* large building blocks
noisemakers—rattles, bells, shakers, chimes
* rubber or plastic bath toys that float
* beads—many shapes; large enough so they cannot be put into the mouth; fun to shake
* simple push-pull toys
* nested cans or boxes
* squeeze toys that squeak
* simple take-apart, put-together toys.

Making Baby Toys

Choose a toy you would like to make. Be sure the toy you select is safe for an infant to use.

Here are some ideas:

Mobile

You will need:
* three dowels or stiff wires about 12 inches, 9 inches, and 6 inches long
* nylon thread or cord, fish line, sewing thread, or string
* glue
* scissors
* ruler or measuring tape
* four small brightly-colored items to hang from the mobile. These should all be about the same size and weight.

To make mobile:

1. Cut two lengths of string or thread, one 6” and one 12” long. Tie each string to a brightly-colored item.

2. Tie one string to each end of the 6” dowel or wire.
3. Cut another piece of string 3" long. Tie one end to the middle of the 6" dowel or wire. Attach the other end to one end of the 9" dowel or wire.

4. Cut a piece of string 12" long. Tie one end to another decorative item and one end to the other end of the 9" dowel or wire.

5. Cut a piece of string 3" long. Tie one end about 3" from the end of the 9" dowel or wire measuring from the end attached to the 6" dowel. Tie the other end to the end of the 12" dowel or wire.

6. Cut a piece of string 12" long. Tie one end to the last decorative item, and the other end to the 12" dowel or wire.

7. Cut a length of string to use for a hanging loop. Tie it about 3" from the end of the 12" dowel or wire, measuring from the end attached to the 9" dowel or wire.

8. Hold the mobile up to check balance. Shorten string if necessary. Use a little glue to help secure each attachment. Let glue dry before hanging.

Your mobile may hang from the ceiling above the baby's crib. It should hang low enough so the baby can enjoy the brightly-colored objects, but high enough so the baby cannot reach it from the crib.

**Nested Cans or Boxes**

Find several cans or boxes that fit inside each other. Be sure all edges are smooth and free from sharp points. Paint with brightly colored, non-toxic paint. A baby can stack them on top of each other upside down, or nest them inside each other.

**Stuffed Animals or Dolls**

Find patterns for simple stuffed animals or dolls in books or stores, or make up your own pattern. Use all washable materials so they can be washed easily. Do not attach buttons or other trim that a baby might pull off and swallow.

These are just some suggestions for toys for infants. Use your imagination and come up with ideas of your own.

When you have finished your toy, evaluate it using the “Guidelines for Evaluating Toys” on the following page. If your toy meets the requirements, give it to an infant to play with it.
GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING TOYS

Originality

Creating and constructing imaginative toys can be an opportunity for you to express your knowledge and CREATIVITY.

1. Shows evidence of originality in design.
2. Exhibits unique use of available and inexpensive materials.
3. Is a creative adaptation of an existing idea.

Safety

Toy should be designed so that a child can use the toy safely.

1. Is free of sharp or pointed edges.
2. Has been put together so that there are no exposed straight pins, sharp wires, rails, etc.
3. Is made of a material other than glass or brittle plastic.
4. Has been painted with non-toxic paint.
5. Is free of parts that deliberately pinch fingers, toes, or catch hair.
6. Is free of small detachable parts that can lodge in the windpipe, ears or nostrils.
7. Is of a material that would be difficult to bite into and/or swallow.
8. Cord or string is no longer than 12". 
Appropriate for the Child's Age and Development Skills

Toys are the child's tools for learning and are part of a rich learning environment. Toys should be appropriate and usable at each age level.
1. Attracts the child's attention and interest.
2. Stimulates the senses (color, textures, shape).
3. Enhances intellectual development.
4. Is versatile — can be used in a variety of ways.

Promotes Growth and Development

Toy should be age specific.
1. Can be used by the child when playing alone as well as with others.
2. Encourages interaction between child and others.
3. Helps develop large muscle skills (reaching, grasping, kicking).
4. Helps develop small muscle coordination (picking up).

Quality of Construction

The toy should be able to withstand the rigors of child use.
1. Is durable.
2. Buttons, trims, and other parts are well-fitted and securely fastened.
3. Sewing is well done and secure.
4. Is washable.
5. Has been carefully and attractively constructed.
6. No rough edges and corners are smooth.
FOR MORE HELP WITH YOUR PROJECT

* Ask your parents
* Ask your leader
* Read the 4-H Babysitting Project manual
* Refer to the following Fact Sheets (available at your Extension office):
  FL12 Milestones of Baby's Growth
  FL13 Your Baby at Three to Six Months
  FL14 Your Baby at Six to Nine Months
  FL15 Your Baby at Nine to Twelve Months
  FL16 Your Child at Twelve to Fifteen Months
  FL17 Your Child at Fifteen to Eighteen Months
  FL50 Baby Sitting

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