

BabySense 4-6 Months: Time for Toys!

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Around 4 months a baby becomes much more aware of himself and the world around him. He can see colors now, and has close to 20/20 vision like an adult. His hearing has been fully developed, and he has learned to control his hands, arms and legs better. He can sit with some support, and may enjoy standing on a lap to give him a whole new view of the world. Many babies show great curiosity at this age, and want to look, touch and taste everything!

Baby's senses are now all coming together as well. Where she used to just gaze at the mobile above her, now she reaches for it as well. Research has shown that giving your baby a chance to play with things that stimulate all of her senses promotes brain growth. But many parents protest, "How can I afford to buy all of the right expensive developmental toys to stimulate my baby?" You don't have to! There is a wealth of sensory experiences right in your own home (or at the dollar store). You may be amazed at how much more your baby enjoys a simple, homemade toy versus an electronic gadget.

- *Wooden spoon or spatula buddies.*

The texture of wood is so different than plastic (which is what most everything your baby encounters is made of). Take a clean kitchen wooden spoon or spatula and, using *permanent* markers, draw a face on both sides of the spoon. Don't forget hair, glasses, eyebrows, a mustache, etc. Soften the handle of the spoon or spatula by wrapping the bottom 3-4 inches several times with colored plastic or vinyl electrical tape. Show your baby the faces, and let him hold the spoon. Soon he'll learn to use it for banging, chewing, and batting at other toys.

- *Have you noticed your baby likes jingles and rattles?*

Sometime between four and six months, baby figures out that she can shake a rattle to make a noise. Watch closely, and you may notice that baby shakes everything just a little, as if testing if it will rattle or jingle. Fill a basket with a variety of rattles and noisemakers, including cat toys that jingle (no catnip please!), empty film canisters (washed) with a bell inside, and a small juice can or yogurt container with beans or marbles inside. An empty "Mini M&M's" tube with the label removed is the perfect size for baby's fist, and is an excellent rattle when filled with a teaspoon of dried lentils or split peas. Use a dab of superglue on the lids of any containers to help ensure they will stay shut.

- *Think of your trash in a whole new way.*

Stop! Before you throw away the lid to the peanut butter jar, wash it well and add it to a larger container or basket of lids for your baby to chew, dump, touch and discover. Use plastic lids, metal lids, canning jar rings, and other tops bigger than baby's fist. Save sour cream or cottage cheese containers for floating boats in the tub, or fill them with some of baby's toys (such as plastic keys) and watch his surprise when you open the lid and dump them out. Keep watching - soon he'll be able to do it too!