

HUG Your Baby

Help, Understanding, Guidance
for young families



Understanding and Caring for Your Newborn



Babies certainly communicate.
If only they could speak our language!

They talk with their bodies, and you can learn
“to hear” and understand their body talk!

There are two skills you can use to help you figure out what your baby is saying:

See your baby send out an SOS (Sign of Over-Stimulation)

See what Zone your baby is in

See your baby send out an SOS

Imagine how busy, exciting, noisy, and stimulating this new world is to your baby. Most babies, especially if born early, can be over-stimulated. And when they are, they send out an **SOS**.



Babies send out an SOS two ways:

Body **SOS** with changes in:

- Skin color (turning red or pale)
- Movement (tremors or jerks of arms or legs)
- Breathing (choppy and irregular)

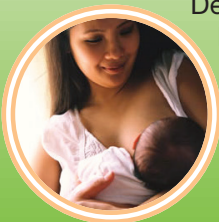
Behavior **SOS**:

- “Spacing Out” – When the baby is over-stimulated or upset she may stare off into the distance. How smart she is to Space Out as a way to decrease the stimulation she takes in.
- “Switching Off” – Because your face and voice are so exciting to your baby, if she gets over-stimulated she may just look away from you. She is not mad at you. Again, she is smart enough to know when she’s a bit overloaded with stimulation.
- “Shutting Down” – Some babies can decrease the amount of stimulation they receive by getting very sleepy and even falling asleep. Because a baby needs to conserve energy to grow, Shutting Down can be a smart way to go!



What does a parent do when she sees an SOS?

Decrease stimulation: quieting your voice or even looking away from her momentarily until she calms down. Increase your help: hold his hands to his chest, swaddle him, sway him, and let him suck your finger, breast, or a pacifier (but only after breastfeeding is well established).





See what Zone your baby is in

There are three newborn Zones: the **Resting**, the **Ready**, and the **Rebooting** Zones



Resting Zone – the sleeping Zone

- In deep/still rest her body is totally still, her breathing is deep, and she makes no sounds. She looks completely asleep!
- In light/active rest his body can wiggle, his hands or legs might jerk, his eyes can flash open, and he might even make some of those funny baby sounds. But he's still asleep. Watch him a few minutes to see if he goes back to his deep/still sleep. Babies transition from deep to light sleep every hour or so during the first few months of life.

Ready Zone – the ready to play or ready to eat Zone

See how her eyes are bright, her body is more still, and she looks like she's paying attention. But remember that it's hard for most newborns to multi-task. They have a hard time doing two things at one time – like calming their body and paying attention. Help him get to the Ready Zone by helping him calm his body:

- Hold his hand against his chest
- Swaddle him
- Sway him gently up and down
- Let him suck

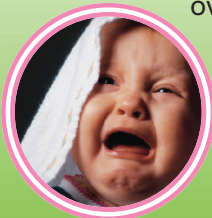
Once she gets to the Ready Zone, she may amaze you with all she can do. Catch her eye then slowly move your head and call her name. Eventually she will learn to look at your face. Shake a rattle near her ear and see her learn to turn in that direction. Or hold her up near Mom while Mom calls her name. Now, or in a few more weeks, she will learn to turn to Mom's voice.



Rebooting Zone – the fussing/crying Zone

Like a computer, all babies at times get overloaded with information from inside or outside of their bodies.

(I'm tired, hungry, can't wake up, can't fall asleep!) Crying is communication. You will soon learn what different cries mean and how best to help.



Rebooting Zone – the fussing/crying Zone (continued)

Did you know that some babies try to calm themselves? Watch for these smart, little efforts to calm himself down:

- Your baby brings his hand to his mouth. (You can even steady his hand a minute near his mouth so that he can suck his hand and calm down.)
- Getting in the “sword fighting position.” Her head turns to one side and the leg on that side bends while the arm on that side sticks straight out like she’s holding a sword. The other arm bends and the other leg goes straight. This funny sword fighting position helps her stay calm.
- Sometimes babies will “Space Out,” “Switch Off,” or “Shut Down” to keep themselves calm.



You probably feel you have a lot to learn about your baby, but be patient with yourself. Remember, your baby can be your greatest teacher. Watch for those SOSs and Zone changes. Notice how every day you will get better at understanding your baby's special language!

How Your Baby Communicates:

- What SOSs does your baby show?
- What can you do to help that SOS go away?
- How does she look in the Ready Zone?
- What tricks do you use to help her get to the Ready Zone?
- Is she learning how to look at you and follow your face or voice?
- Can you see his light/active sleep?
- If you leave him alone a second while in light/active sleep, will he go back to deep/still sleep?
- How do you help her in the Rebooting Zone?
- Does she use some of the tricks listed above to try to calm herself?

Share the joys of understanding a newborn:

Give The HUG to family or friends.

Order from **www.hugyourbaby.org**

Visit our Blog at:

<http://givethehug.blogspot.com/>



Jan Tedder, BSN, FNP, IBCLC
919-923-6609
hugyourbaby@earthlink.net

P.O. Box 3102
Durham, NC 27715
www.hugyourbaby.org