

Improving Visual Skills in Infants

It is important to encourage your baby to use their eyes to help develop visual skills and brain development. During the first few months of life, your baby should start to follow faces and objects with their eyes.

Use these tips to help your baby's vision:

- A parent or caregiver's face is the perfect visual stimulation to start with before toys.
- Provide good support to your baby's body and head when working on vision.
 - Hold your baby in your arms in a face-to-face position. If your baby needs extra body support, lay them on their side or back.
 - As your baby gets bigger, use an infant seat or recline baby in a high chair if extra support is needed for head control.
- Move the object slowly from side to side. This will help your infant practice following with their eyes. Objects should be:
 - High contrast color. Use black and white, or red and black.
 - Larger. Use objects that are tennis ball sized.
- Place mobiles or hanging toys so they are hanging over your infant's chest to help them direct their eyes down and in front of them.

Use these tips if your baby is having trouble focusing:

Watch for signs that your child is "ready". They should be in a quiet alert state. Make sure your baby is not too hungry or tired.

- Change the distance between the toy and their eyes. Most babies see well 8 to 12 inches from their face.
- Use gentle touch or sound to get your baby's attention.
 - Be careful not to over-stimulate with too much noise, touch or fast moving toys. You may lose your infants attention.
- Offer objects one at a time to keep it simple and easy to see. Too much clutter can make it hard for your baby to focus.
 - Put a toy against a solid colored backdrop to make it easier to see.
- Pay attention to the lighting and noise level in room. Extra-bright lights or extra noise can be distracting. Natural light is best. Think about background noise from the TV, radio and other kids. Try to keep noise level down.
- If your baby is blinking a lot or closing their eyes, they may be over-stimulated. Wait for them to open their eyes and look around or at you. Be ready with a smiling face!
- **Move your face or the object slowly!** Give your baby time to see and respond.

ALERT: Call your child's Occupational Therapist if you have questions on this material or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.