

for children with low vision and blindness

Vision impairment in the early years

Did you know that much of a baby's vision develops in the first year after birth? In this period, major changes happen within the eye and the brain in response to visual experiences. So, even if your child has a visual impairment, there are simple things you can do to help.

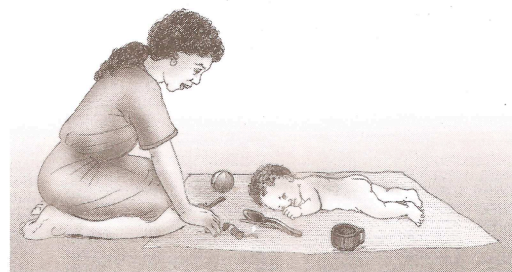
Your baby may have a visual impairment

if after 3 months the baby

- seems very passive (not looking at faces or toys)
- seems bothered with the normal lighting in the room
- keeps the eyes wide open only in a darkened room
- presses against the eyes a lot

or, if at any time

- the eyes do not look normal
- the lids do not open normally or close fully
- the eyes seem to shake
- the baby has a strong squint or develops a strong squint
- the baby has another impairment like cerebral palsy or deafness



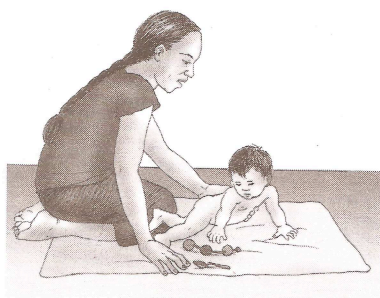
If your child has a visual impairment

See an eye doctor so that your child will receive the medical treatments that may be necessary. Many babies will benefit greatly from glasses. Some will need surgery or medication. Nutritious food can help some eye conditions.

When vision is impaired, it can affect the way children learn and develop. Find a teacher who knows how to help development in the early years even while the child is getting medical treatment for the visual condition.

Meanwhile, some things you can do

Ask your doctor what your child can see. Select one thing that your child can see and place it where it will touch the child. This will encourage your baby to reach out and play with it. Babies love cloth and you can always find something that your baby can see, for example, a silvery dupatta, a cotton tie-and-dye cloth with bright patterns. Tie some bells or beads in the cloth so that they jingle or feel nice to touch.



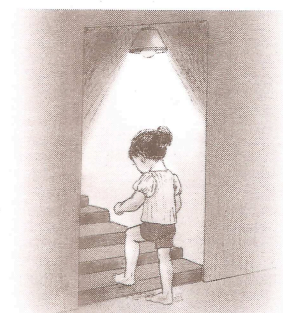
Put a bright baby sock on the milk bottle or cover it with shiny wrapping paper. At feeding time, bring the bottle close, shake it, and wait to see if your baby looks toward it. Then bring your baby's hand to the bottle while you place it in the mouth.



Encourage your baby to move toward things she sees. Place a toy your child can see and loves, a little out of reach. Show your child how to move toward it. Use movements typical to children of that age.

Help your child develop a sense of things far away. Use things your child can see, like lights or bright colours, in different parts of the house. It will help increase awareness of things in the distance and help develop awareness of space.

Talk when you enter the room so that your child will know you are coming. Position yourself in your child's line of sight and wait. Does your child look at you? If you get no response, come closer and wait again. It may take a while to get a response. Meanwhile, before you pick up your child, touch and talk so that the child is not startled.



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