

# your baby

CARING | FEEDING | GROWING



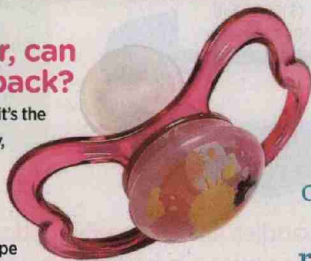
## Boy Talk

All tots benefit from building good communication skills, but boys in particular get a boost. The greater a boy's grasp of words at age 2, the better he'll be at avoiding tantrums and outbursts by the time he's in preschool, finds a recent study by researcher Claire Vallotton, Ph.D., assistant professor of child development at Michigan State University, in East Lansing. "Language skills help boys control their behavior," says Dr. Vallotton. Start him off by teaching a few baby signs. (Go to [americanbaby.com/babysigning](http://americanbaby.com/babysigning) for a short tutorial on the basics.)

**Say what?**  
Help him make his point with less frustration.

## Q If a pacifier hits the floor, can I wipe it off and give it back?

Every parent dreads the dropped paci, especially when it's the last one in the diaper bag and baby is fussy. Unfortunately, the five-second rule is a big, dirty myth, says Charles Gerba, Ph.D., a germ expert at the University of Arizona, in Tucson. Any contact with the ground results in a coating of potentially harmful bacteria, and if you swipe the Binky with a napkin or even a baby wipe, you'll succeed only in spreading the germs. A better option: Find a restroom. "Wash [the paci] with soap and warm water," says Dr. Gerba.



A clip can keep Binky from taking a dive.

## 6

The minimum number of months to breastfeed in order to reduce baby's risk for common illnesses like stomach and respiratory bugs, as well as thrush

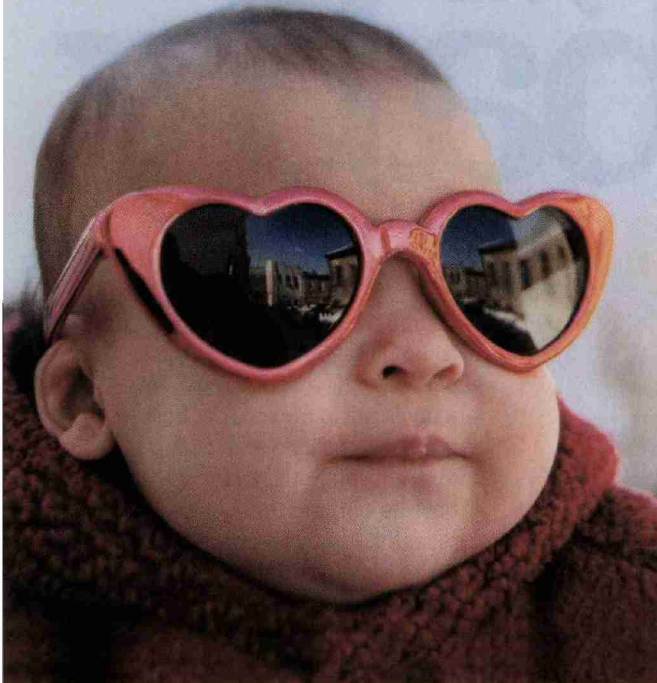
BOY: SANDRA SECKINGER/CORBIS; PACIFIER: PETER ARDITO

By Sarah Jio

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## Baby Shades

The sunny days of summer may be far off, but your infant benefits from sunglasses in any season. "UV rays reflect off snow, water, concrete, and asphalt and may be harmful to a baby's eyes," says optometrist Sandra Block, O.D., a spokesperson for the nonprofit organization Prevent Blindness America. "Parents need to keep in mind that UV damage is cumulative, and extended exposure can lead to cataracts and other eye conditions later in life." Protect your little one's eyes

year-round with infant sunglasses. Real Kids Shades (designed for infants through age 2) are comfortable and have a wraparound band so they stay put. Plus, 20 percent of the proceeds from the Star Pupils line go toward fighting blindness.

**EDITOR'S PICK**  
 These glasses won't slide off (\$15; realkidshades.com).



**THAT'S A WRAP!** Are your swaddles always coming undone? The TrueWomb Sleeping Swaddle is easy to use and mimics the feeling of being inside the womb by limiting (but not eliminating) baby's movements. Bonus: Escape-proof arm pockets mean your mini Houdini is unlikely to break free (\$40; truewomb.com).



## CRANK CALLING

If your baby can't stop crying, you're not alone. As many as 15 to 25 percent of babies are fussy or difficult to comfort and may have trouble feeding and sleeping, according to Linda Gilkerson, Ph.D., director of the Irving B. Harris Infant Studies Program at **Erikson Institute**, a child-development graduate school in Chicago. On days when you feel like you might dissolve into tears, get on the telephone. Erikson Institute's free "Warmline" connects parents of inconsolable babies with infant specialists who can answer questions, offer advice—or just remind you that this temperamental phase won't last forever (Monday through Friday, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. CST; 888-431-BABY).

## Kitchen Caution

That hot pot on the stove—your child may be able to reach up and knock it over. Little arms can go surprisingly far. Recent research at Children's Hospital of Michigan, in Detroit, found that 76 percent of toddlers ages 12 to 33 months could extend up to a whopping 8 inches onto a standard countertop or stovetop. How to keep your babe safe? Follow these tips:

**Use back burners.** Your child is less able to reach them with his hands. And even with pots in back, never ever leave a stove unattended while tots play nearby. Also, always point pot and pan handles inward.

**Beware of cords.** Push electric fryers, slow cookers, and other plug-in appliances to the back of the counter, and keep cords from looping toward the front of the countertop, where a small child could snag them.

BABY: CHARLES GULLING/GETTY IMAGES; PHONE: ISTOCKPHOTO; STILL: PETER ARDITO.