

Advance My Baby: The Ultimate Secrets of Healthy Development for Your Baby -- Birth to 3 Years

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Pictures of babies in every stage of healthy development sets this parenting guide apart.

New parents can be anxious about their baby's development. When should she respond to her name? Sit up? Start talking? Advice from grandparents and pediatricians can be less than satisfying. *Advance My Baby* answers many questions with a detailed look at each three-month period of a baby's development and suggestions for supporting the important milestones at each stage. Written by experienced occupational therapists Paula Tarver and Jeanne Martin, this is a handbook that parents will keep on their shelves for repeated reference during their baby's first years.

Tarver and Martin bring to their writing decades of experience as occupational and physical therapists, work that alerted them to the fact that many parents were unclear on what constituted normal development in their infants and toddlers. As therapists, the authors recognized the importance of early identification and intervention in cases of delayed development, so they created a manual that provides parents with clear guidelines for understanding the rapid changes in these early months.

Colorful and engaging, *Advance My Baby* features lively graphics, bulleted lists, and color-based prompts to help busy parents find the information they need quickly and easily. The pages get a little cluttered with the variety of activities and exercises suggested, but the book is not meant to be read from front to back. For instance, a parent of a seven-month-old can quickly locate appropriate gross motor skills, like "sits independently with good head control," along with ideas for propped sitting and yoga ball exercises.

The specificity of the age ranges may be unnecessarily anxiety-provoking for some parents—not every normally developing baby follows this exact time line—but the activities encourage enrichment that can be valuable to a wider range of ages, with plenty of overlap between stages.

What really sets the book apart from other child-development books is that there are photographs of babies doing exactly what the authors describe in the text. It is simply easier to understand "bears weight on hands with arms straightened" when you see a picture of an adorable four-month-old lifting his torso from the floor and raising his curious face to the camera. The authors briefly explain why each milestone is important—in this case, shoulder stability is linked to good hand control later on—and offer ideas for parents to try, like holding a toy just a little higher than your baby's head to encourage them to reach for it. Photo illustrations of the exercises would be a welcome addition.

Useful for parents seeking reassurance about their baby's development or ideas for making up delays, *Advance My Baby* is a valuable addition to any parent's bookshelf. Tarver and Martin provide solid information and a tool for opening up the dialogue between parents and therapists for the maximum benefit to the child.

SHEILA M. TRASK (September 23, 2013)

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