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APRIL 2012

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Hands Up, Baby!

From tight little fists to pea-precise pinching, your baby's hands will grow and mature right under your nose.

Babyhood is packed with Skype-worthy moments, but some important milestones may not even be on your radar: All that grabbing, poking, and swatting is developing the fine motor skills your kiddo will need to eventually write her name and text to her heart's content (and your

dismay). Here's what to expect and (approximately) when:

1 MONTH: Your babe doesn't even know those little fists exist yet!

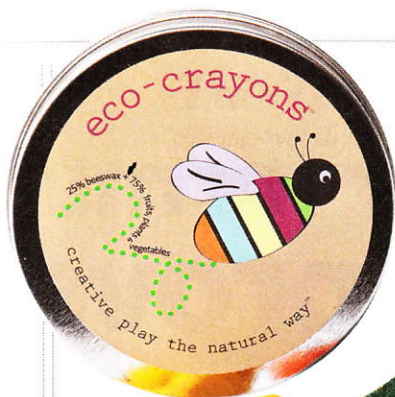
3 MONTHS: She discovers her hands, can bring them together, and may delight in simply gazing at them.

4 MONTHS: She starts reaching out and grabbing objects held out for

her, then brings them to her mouth to explore.

6 MONTHS: Your baby develops a raking grasp (yep, just what it sounds like) that allows her to pick up toys from the floor. She can also transfer an object from one hand to the other.

9 TO 12 MONTHS: She can now pick up tiny objects, using her thumb and index finger. —Lois Barrett



TRUE COLORS

Inspire your child's next burst of creativity with these eco-crayons made from **natural and organic** fruit, plant, and vegetable extracts. \$12; ecokidsusa.com

Righty or Lefty?

You won't know until her second year. Babies are ambidextrous!



Get a grip!

Easy, everyday ways to help strengthen those little digits.

1 Put your baby's hands on his bottle while feeding him and gently press your hands over his. "One day he'll just take over," says Anne Zachry, Ph.D., a Memphis pediatric occupational therapist.

2 Give him plenty of tummy time "Shoulder strength is needed to be able to manipulate the hands," explains Dan Cross, a pediatric physical therapist in Crestview Hills, KY.

3 Serve finger foods "Letting babies use their hands to eat is messy, but it helps develop fine motor skills," says pediatrician Lisa Hammer, M.D., of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

FOAM-TASTIC!

Bright hues and toxin-free materials come together in bObles, a most excellent line of **foam toys that double as furniture**. Tots can roll on a fish, rock an elephant chair, burrow under a snake table, and more. \$49 to \$329; abesmarket.com