

Just in Time Parenting (JITP)

REACHING CAREGIVERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN – PRENATAL TO AGE 5 – WITH AN AGE-PACED, CHILD DEVELOPMENT & PARENTING E-NEWSLETTER

*“The most helpful piece in the JITP newsletters for me was seeing the milestones my child would be hitting and the **insight into how they were feeling at each age.**”*

- JITP Parent

*“Thanks for your support. It’s scary being a new parent so **the material helped me to feel supported.**”*

- JITP Parent

Results

In 2019, 12,621 parents and caregivers subscribed to receive JITP via email. Wisconsin and Nebraska consistently had the most subscribers. The JITP website had 34,783 visitors. Visitors from all 50 states accessed JITP but Wisconsin, Illinois, and California had the most visitors to the JITP website. JITP also received international traffic with most website hits originating from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.

Situation

Parenting newsletters have been shown to be effective in increasing parents’ knowledge about child development and other positive parenting behaviors, increasing their understanding of their baby and decreasing stress. Historically, newsletters were printed and mailed. Yet, today, online access is nearly universal and electronic newsletters have the potential to reach more parents and better meet their need.

Response

Just in Time Parenting (JITP) is an electronically delivered age-paced parenting newsletter developed in 2008 and updated several times by a national network of Extension Family Life Specialists who adapted parenting newsletter materials from eleven states (www.jitp.info). Available in both English and Spanish, JITP was designed to teach parents during developmental transitions with research-based information about pregnancy, parenting, and child development. JITP currently delivers three prenatal newsletters, monthly newsletters for parents of infants, and bi-monthly newsletters for parents of 1- to 5-year-olds. To subscribe, parents submit their email address, due date or child’s birth date, and respond to a confirmation email. Parents are then emailed a newsletter each month or every other month that corresponds to their child’s current age.

The screenshot shows a newsletter page with a blue header and a photo of a family. The main title is "What's It Like to Be 1 Month Old?". There are three columns of checklist items, each with a blue header: "How I Grow and Talk", "How I Respond", and "How I Understand and Feel". At the bottom, there is a disclaimer in a rounded box.

What's It Like to Be 1 Month Old?

How I Grow and Talk

- I cry when I'm hungry, wet, tired, in pain, or when I want to be held.
- I'm beginning to make some throaty sounds.
- I like your hand behind my neck when you move me, so my head doesn't wobble.
- I turn my head sideways when I'm on my stomach.
- I root around and try to suck even when I'm not feeding.
- I roll part of the way from my back to my side. Never leave me alone in a place where I could fall.
- I keep my hands in a fist or slightly open most of the time.
- I have a soft spot on my head. My skull was soft to allow me to be born more easily. My flexible skull will give my brain room to grow.

How I Respond

- I like to look at things that have a light versus dark contrast.
- I like to look at your face the most, but I like mirrors, too. I make eye contact with you.
- I stare at things, but I don't grab for them yet. Please change my position so I can look at different things.
- I don't show much expression in my face, but I will soon!
- I may smile when I see or hear you. Don't believe those people who say I'm smiling because of gas. Babies smile for real (it's not just a reflex) within two to eight weeks after birth.

How I Understand and Feel

- I feel comforted when you hold me close, smile, and talk gently to me. Don't be afraid of spoiling me because I need to be held and touched.
- I tune in to Mom's voice, and I like to hear her heartbeat and similar beats or rhythms. I spent a lot of time listening to her voice and heartbeat before I was born.
- I can recognize Mom by her smell. As Dad and other caregivers play with me and help me, I'll recognize them too.

Some children do things earlier or later than described here. Most differences are normal. Focus on what your child can do and get excited about each new skill. If you notice that your child is lagging behind in one or more areas for several months, circle the things that your child cannot do. Check the things your child can do. Use this list to talk with your doctor about your child's development.

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Our 2019 parent survey shows that the JITP newsletters positively impact parenting. Parenting knowledge and practices changed after receiving JITP. Specifically, parents' knowledge of appropriate age-based expectations increased and parents felt more confident in their parenting role. Respondents rated the JITP newsletter as "very useful" more frequently than any other source of parenting information, including health professionals and family/friends. These findings are consistent with results from previous years.

Across all child ages, parents reported the strongest impact of JITP to be increased knowledge about what to expect their child to be able to do at each age. One parent commented that JITP "kept me in tune with how my baby was progressing." While another JITP respondent shared the newsletters helped her remember to "not rush my child to be more developed than she is." Parents also reported increased confidence in their parenting and using more ideas to play and help their child learn. Parents mentioned that the newsletters "helped me make decisions about feeding and discipline" and "helped us teach our child different ways of learning and . . . with different ways to redirect behavior."

Parents trust and value the JITP newsletters. When asked to describe the usefulness of multiple sources of parenting information, Wisconsin parents found JITP to be the most useful source of parenting information, even more useful than doctors or family and friends. One parent called JITP "our favorite source of parenting information." Another parent suggested that JITP is "just a great newsletter every parent and grandparent and caregiver should subscribe to!!"

336 parents (84% female) completed the 2019 questionnaire. Parent respondents were primarily from the United States, white, married, college educated, and typically in their 30s. Respondents most commonly learned about JITP from a community organization, such as Extension.

Conclusion

Just in Time Parenting represents the power of a partnership of educators and researchers from land-grant universities across the country to provide high quality, research-based information, help families thrive, and support children to grow up healthy and ready for success. The newsletters support appropriate parent expectations, increase parent confidence, and provide parents with actionable tips and ideas. In an age of information overload, parents value a source of child development and parenting information from a trustworthy source without outside influence.

For more information about JITP, contact:

The JITP Advisory Board at contact@jitp.info

*"As a PhD clinical psychologist . . . I think **JITP does an excellent job of presenting extremely important information to parents, both naïve and experienced, in a manner that is easy to accept and to incorporate into a personal approach to parenting. JITP is a fantastic resource for the public.**" - JITP Parent*

*"I find the newsletters to be so **helpful in reminding me what is normal development for each age. When I get frustrated by my son's behavior, JITP helps me remember that his job is to learn, push the limits, and explore his world. I always forward the emails to my husband so he can read them as well and we're both on the same page.**" - JITP Parent*

*"**My husband & I always enjoyed reading the newsletter together. It was valuable time for us to reflect on our parenting & to reflect on how wonderful the experience of raising our child has been!**" - JITP Parent*

2019 JITP Advisory Board

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