

About babies

Having a baby changes your life. There is a new little person to get to know, love and care for. New parents can have a range of strong feelings including some they were not expecting. The most important thing is to believe in yourself and enjoy this special time with your baby. Most parents learn about babies and work things out as they go along. The following information is aimed at the first three months of your baby's life.

Baby's feelings and brain

In the first months of life your baby is in a completely new world. They need to learn that the world is safe and there are people who will look after them. They learn this when you are warm, loving, kind and gentle, and provide the comfort, cuddles and food they need. They learn to love and trust you and that they are lovable.

Your baby's brain is growing faster now than at any other time of life. Their 'brain wiring' is being laid down for the future. What they experience every day causes connections and pathways to develop.

- When babies feel loved, safe and secure the connections for feeling good and learning are strengthened.
- When you talk to your baby, smile and look into their eyes the connections for talking, learning, thinking and all the other things they will need are strengthened too.



- When babies are not responded to warmly or not touched, noticed or talked to, connections in the brain that react to stress are strengthened. Your baby may not grow, learn or develop as well.

Did you know that babies...

- love it when you smile, talk and play with them
- communicate from birth using their own special signals
- learn from what they feel, see and hear every day
- grow and learn best when they feel loved, safe and secure.

When babies feel loved they learn to love you too.



Baby's relationships

Babies grow and develop best when they have someone they are very close to in the first year. This is called 'attachment' or 'bonding'.

- When babies have loving early relationships it helps them learn how to respond and what to expect in future relationships. They provide the building blocks for learning and developing self-confidence, emotional control and the skills to get along with others. This is why these early relationships are so important.

Babies who have loving early relationships are better able to grow and learn and cope with stress as they grow up.



Baby's signals

Babies communicate their feelings and needs from birth.

- When babies feel good they may make eye contact or little noises, smile, copy your movements, look relaxed and interested.
- When they need a break they may look away, shut their eyes, struggle, pull away, yawn, look tense, become unsettled or cry.

When you respond to baby's signals you are building your bond with them. It lets them know they have been heard and is the start of two-way communication and learning to talk.

Why babies cry

Crying is normal. It's the main way babies communicate their needs. They might:

- need a feed or nappy change
- need a cuddle or to be close with you
- be frightened, bored or lonely

- be too hot or cold
- be unwell or in pain, eg tummy ache or earache

You cannot 'spoil' a baby by responding to them when they cry. They need your loving attention to help them feel safe and secure.



Safe sleeping

The safest way for your baby to sleep is:

- on their back with face and head uncovered
- in their own safe sleep space.

(see Red Nose website for more information)

Note: The term 'Parents' in this Guide refers to anyone caring for and/or raising children and young people, eg parents, caregivers, step-parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, guardians, foster or kinship carers.

Want more information?

Scan the QR Code to see the full version of this Parent Easy Guide.



Parenting SA

A partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

www.parenting.sa.gov.au

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia.

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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