

FROM BIRTH TO ONE YEAR

CHILDREN NEED TO BE HEALTHY AND SAFE IN ORDER TO THRIVE AND LEARN

Keeping your baby healthy

Your baby needs healthy parents

The health and well-being of new parents are important to a new baby. Mum's health is important both before and after birth and eating well (fruit, vegetables, protein and Vitamin D) is important. Parenting a new baby can be stressful and stress can quickly be picked up by a baby so really looking after yourself, taking care of your own well-being and trying to remain calm is better both for parents and babies. Having a baby is life changing and new mums often feel very emotional. If this gets difficult to manage in the months after the birth then help from the GP may be needed.

Attachments to special people are essential for your baby's healthy development

Hearing is the first sense to develop and a baby can hear noises, including mum's voice, from the womb and will seek security in hearing this voice from birth and into the first weeks. After which, dad and other carers will also become important for your baby to feel secure. Babies will seek reassurance from visual clues such as smiling calm faces when they are being cared for or picked up. Babies will need to form strong attachments usually firstly with mum, after which they form attachments with dad and other close family members and if attending nursery with their Key Person. Secure attachments are essential for babies' well-being and are needed for healthy brain development.

Babies have a number of basic needs

A baby's basic needs include good healthy food and being kept warm, dry and clean. If a new mum needs help with feeding, the midwife or health visitor are able to give the help and support needed. Visits to the clinic for regular weighing to ensure the baby is putting on weight and chats with the health visitor can be reassuring. If a baby struggles to put on weight there may be a simple explanation such as colic or reflux. Sleep is equally important and it is advised that babies sleep on their back in a safe sleeping environment with no fluffy blankets or toys in the crib or cot. Checks should be made to make sure that the baby is not too hot or too cold. Regular nappy changes and warm baths (be sure to check the temperature of the water) keep the baby comfortable and clean. A crying baby can often be comforted by a warm bath! Babies should not be left to cry as they do not cry without a reason. If there seems to be no obvious reason for crying and your baby is fed, warm and clean then they may be suffering a feeling of isolation and simply need the comfort of knowing that you are there. Touching, stroking or massaging a baby can be very comforting and playing soft music or singing can be soothing. You cannot spoil a baby. Responses to a baby need to be consistent especially when they are distressed.

During the first year a programme of vaccinations will be offered

The health visitor or doctor will give you information and you can also get advice or guidance from your local GP surgery

During the first year vaccinations are at;

2 months

5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine – this single jab contains vaccines to protect against five separate diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib, a bacterial infection that can cause severe pneumonia or meningitis in young children)

Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine

Rotavirus vaccine

3 months

5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine, second dose

Meningitis C

Rotavirus vaccine, second dose

4 months

5-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib) vaccine, third dose

Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine, second dose

Further information can be found on the following NHS UK website

(www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations)

Babies grow and change rapidly in the first year and all are unique and different and develop at different rates

Babies develop rapidly in the first twelve months and are all different and will reach key stages in their development in their own time and in their own way. For instance babies typically start to walk between 10 and 18 months but beginning to walk at 18 months does not mean that they will be less capable than those who walk at 10 months. As babies grow they will begin to want to move more in order to gain control of their arms and legs and eventually sit and crawl. Babies and young children should not spend prolonged periods in car seats and / or lie back in chairs as this can affect their physical development. Safe opportunities for movement need to be provided as brain networks and movement are interconnected so restricting movement is not good for the baby. Babies and young children are unique in all aspects of their development and although you may choose to seek advice from a medical professional if you seriously think that something is wrong, try not to measure your child against any other child. A list of stages of development can be found on the NHS UK website but use it only as a rough guide www.nhs.uk/Tools/developmental . Other helpful information can be found on the ‘Getting to know your baby’ app which is designed to help parents understand and respond to their developing babies. It is the first app to show videos of babies in each of the six different sleep / wake states and this will help mums and dads to interpret their own infants’ cues and signals.

Keeping your baby safe

Safety is first and foremost the responsibility of parents

Safeguarding is the way babies and children are protected from harm (i.e. abuse or neglect). There are simple things that you can do to make sure that your baby thrives. As the main carer or carers (mum, dad) you need to look after yourself and make sure that you take care of your own needs in order to be healthy and happy when looking after and enjoying your baby. Babies quickly pick up on stress which can have an adverse effect on brain development, so however difficult it may be in day to day living try to maintain a calm and conflict-free atmosphere when your baby is with you. Safeguarding becomes the responsibility of everyone in the family and community as babies and young children come into contact with more and more people.

Only leave your baby with someone you can really trust

Never leave a baby with someone that you do not know very well and trust implicitly and do not leave a baby with siblings unless you are sure they are as mature as an adult when it comes to caring for a baby. Never leave a baby outdoors alone.

A safe environment is essential

A safe environment is essential and it is a good idea to have a thorough look around your home before your baby is born to see if you can identify any hazards which may then be made safe. Check that furniture is safe (e.g. with no wobbly legs on chairs or tables) and that there is nothing around which may cause an accident whilst you are holding your baby. Fire guards and stair gates are useful safety furniture. Make sure that carpets and rugs do not present a hazard. Babies soon learn to wriggle and squirm and it is always safer to change a baby's nappy on a changing mat on the floor. A clean, safe home and getting organised as you gain experience i.e. having what you need easily at hand, will help to keep the baby safe .

Clean air is part of a safe environment

Part of a safe environment is the clean fresh air that your baby needs to breathe, free from cigarette smoke, alcohol fumes, humidity, dampness etc. Babies and other adults in the family especially need protection from passive smoking. Babies need to be outside regularly in the fresh air and sunshine in order to make vitamin D in their bodies but always protect your baby from harmful sun's rays with sun block.

Babies are fragile and vulnerable and they depend upon adults

Young babies are fragile and vulnerable and every possible precaution for their health and safety should be taken. Baby safety tips can be found on the following website (www.nhs.uk/conditions/babysafety-tips). Take great care when bathing your baby as babies can drown in very little water. Never leave your baby unattended or supervised by other children whilst in the bath. Always put your baby to sleep on his back (back for sleeping, stomach for playing) in a cot free of toys or fluffy blankets. (www.nhealthystart.org/downloads) Never leave items around which your baby can inhale or swallow. As babies explore they put everything into their mouth as the sense of taste is developing.

Helping your baby learn

Talk to your baby from the beginning

Babies' brains develop rapidly and networks are forming which will play a crucial part in their future development. If you want to know more about your babies' brain development click here

www.babycenter.com/baby-brain-development

As soon as your baby arrives (and before is even better – babies hear in the womb) start to talk to them using positive facial expressions and eye contact. The fact that your baby cannot reply is not important as they will be listening and those all-important brain networks will start to grow and they will be absorbing and storing language. Tell your baby how beautiful they are, how you love such tiny fingers and toes, how much you adore their little nose and how well you are going to care for them. Think about what it is that makes your baby special to you and make sure you tell them. Keep up sustained conversations with your baby explaining your thoughts and everything that is happening. As the weeks and months pass continue to TALK. This is what is going to stimulate your baby's brain and promote potential intelligence. The world is new so try to explain every little thing. Tell your baby, "I am going to change your nappy now and make you feel clean and fresh. I will just lay you on your mat. Can you see high above you?" Become accustomed to keeping up a running commentary describing to your baby what you are doing and why. It is not difficult once you start. Ask baby questions such as "What do you think?" and make pauses even though your baby cannot talk they will start to respond with babbles and smiles. Use varied language as well as repeating language. The number and range of words your baby hears is important. Walk around the room describing to your baby what you see. Remember the world is brand new and your baby doesn't know about anything. Constantly explain what you are doing as you care for your baby and complete household chores. If there is more than one language spoken in the home then this is an advantage as hearing different languages results in more brain networks being produced. Respond to coos and babbles repeating the sounds back to assure your baby that their attempts to communicate are valued.

Show and tell

As babies become older and are able to raise their heads and sit up then you can begin to show things as you describe them. Show all kinds of everyday objects - fruits, vegetables, brush, comb, telephone and so on. Let the baby watch what you are doing, explaining all the while. "I am going to prepare tea now. I will make fresh chapattis. Look this is flour. It feels fluffy and light. I am pouring some into this big brown bowl.....I am rolling the chapattis out. Let's count how many we can make." Bring in colours and numbers and size and all kinds of relevant facts. Use rich vocabulary, tell your baby stories, play music and sing. Talk about things that are important to you, because if you are interested then your baby will be too. Your baby will not show you how much they have learned now but they will in the future. It is up to you to grow your baby's brain whilst it is at this most "impressionable" stage.

Nurture the baby's senses

Use a wooden spoon and tap objects around the home making different sounds. Encourage your baby to listen to the sounds and look where the sound is coming from. Encourage the sense of smell to develop by going outside to smell the grass or into the kitchen to smell newly cooked food. Continue to explain constantly what you are doing. Allow your baby to feel things on their skin like the rain or the bathroom shower and allow them to feel different textures, paper, rough and smooth materials, soft and hard objects explaining differences and similarities. Stimulate your baby's senses constantly by having experiences that are fun for both of you. Treasure baskets are a great way of developing all of your child's senses – click here for more information. www.netmums.com/activities/arts-and-crafts/treasure-baskets

Play with your baby and introduce books

As babies uncurl and want to stretch and move their limbs take off restrictive clothing and allow them to play on a blanket on the floor. Place toys nearby so that they can try to reach for them. Babies are often far more interested in safe household items rather than expensive purchased toys so collect things together which will be appropriate. A wooden spoon and plastic mixing bowl which can be tapped and thrown around are usually intriguing to a baby. Soft hair brushes, large wooden pegs, safe kitchen utensils such as sieves and whisks or draining spoons all make interesting objects. Never leave your baby to play unsupervised. Show your baby how to turn the pages of a cardboard book whilst you tell the story; touch ears and show them that they have two ears just like you have two ears; count fingers and toes on their hands and feet and yours; sing number rhymes and do the actions; make animal noises whilst showing the picture and most of all enjoy and have fun with your baby. Further information can be found at www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby

You are your baby's first teachers

Nothing should be pressurised in a baby's world and your baby should be able to awaken each morning looking forward to the exciting new day. Think about new experiences that you can give your baby, things that you can show them and tell them about. Parents are the role models which a baby will try to copy in their future life. Babies deserve the best role models that can possibly be given. Parents are the first and most influential teachers in their child's life. You are the ones who hold the key to your growing child's future potential and this is an enormous responsibility which can bring great rewards.

Children with disabilities may have a wider range of developmental milestones and so their needs may differ - always consult with your Doctor, Health Visitor, Nursery or Children's Centre who will be able to provide more information on supporting individual children's development.

Enjoy being with your child being at this age, as that is the best way to prepare them for the next stage of their learning and development !