

# Feeding your baby

Feeding your baby helps them to grow up healthy and happy. It doesn't need to be stressful or complicated.

## The first six months ...

For the first six months, your baby will only need breast or bottle milk. Breast milk is best for your baby, as it provides the right nutrition, protects against illness, infection and allergies, and promotes healthy growth and development. For more information and support with breastfeeding, talk to your early childhood nurse or visit the Australian Breastfeeding Association at [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au).

If you are bottle feeding, always check the quantity of the infant formula is right, bottles and teats are clean and sterilised, and the temperature of the milk is safe before feeding your baby.

## After six months ...

When your baby is six months old, you can start feeding them some solids, starting with baby cereal and mashed fruit and vegetables. Try one type of fruit or vegetable at a time and slowly increase the variety – often the best time to do this is when your baby is relaxed and not too hungry.

As your baby begins eating two to three solid meals a day you can reduce breast feeds or milk bottle feeds. If your baby is thirsty, try giving them cooled boiled water.

At eight months, you can introduce finger foods such as grated cheese, yoghurt, stewed meat, pasta and boneless fish.

## Choking

Sit your baby up when feeding to prevent choking. Make sure you avoid small pieces of food like lollies, raw apples, pieces of meat, chicken and fish, uncooked peas, popcorn seeds and stone fruits. Don't feed whole nuts to babies under five.

Feeding your baby can be messy! Keep a bib and face cloth handy.

## Teething

Your baby's first teeth may appear between six and 10 months. This may raise their temperature a little and make them cranky. Try using a teething gel or teething ring to soothe them and a clean face cloth to wipe their teeth and face.

Make sure you avoid feeding your baby honey, reduced fat milk, unpasteurised dairy products, salt, sugar or other flavourings, tea, fruit juice, soft drinks, goat's milk, soy milk and cow's milk. None of these are good for your baby unless advised by a doctor or health professional.

## Sleeping

Every baby needs different amounts of sleep as they grow. As they get older, babies need less and less sleep. Some babies sleep better where it is very quiet. Others seem to settle best with ordinary household sounds around. Some babies sleep better if they are wrapped in a sheet, others like their arms loose. Using a routine when you are putting your baby down will help your baby to learn about going to sleep. As he gets older you might try something like a song (or prayer), kiss everyone goodnight, find the dummy (if she has one) and then a special kiss from you with gentle words like, "I love you".

### Safe Sleep

It's very important that you help your baby to sleep safely.

Some of the safest ways are:

- ❖ make sure your baby sleeps on her back, not on her tummy or side
- ❖ sleep baby with her face uncovered (no doonas, pillows, bumpers or soft toys)
- ❖ keep your home and car smoke free
- ❖ look for the Australian Standards label when buying a cot, mattress and bedding
- ❖ sleep baby on a firm mattress - not a waterbed or bean bag
- ❖ a bassinet or cot next to your bed is the safest place for a baby to sleep



- ❖ don't sleep with baby in your bed if you have been drinking alcohol or are on drugs/medication that makes you sleep heavily.

## Bathing your baby

It isn't necessary to bath your baby every day if she does not like it. You can wash baby's face and bottom when you need to without giving her a bath. Usually babies enjoy baths when they feel calm, after a feed (rather than when they are hungry). Sometimes giving your baby a bath when she is unsettled may help her feel better and fall asleep more easily. Never leave baby alone in the bath and always test the temperature of the water.



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## Teeth and teething



Babies usually start teething at about six months. Your baby may become a bit more unsettled when they start teething – this is quite normal.

- ❖ If your baby has pain when teething, give her something firm to bite on (e.g. cold teething ring or dummy). Rusk can also be useful.
- ❖ If there is a lot of pain a teething gel may help.
- ❖ Some babies prefer mushy food while teething because it needs less chewing; others prefer something to chew.
- ❖ Sucking on a bottle of milk or sweet drink for long periods can cause early tooth decay. If your baby needs something to suck on between feeds (as long as she is not hungry), try cool boiled water in the bottle or a dummy without any sweetener (like honey) on it. It is best not to put babies to sleep with a bottle.

You can clean your baby's teeth gently with a soft cloth as soon as they come through.

## Discipline

Disciplining babies by punishing is not useful. They don't understand why they are being hurt and it is likely to make them afraid when they need to be learning to trust.

*It is very important not to shake a baby because it can cause brain damage. If you are feeling very angry, ask someone to look after your baby and take a break to take care of yourself or call someone until you can get back in control of your feelings.*



## Immunisation

Immunisation helps to protect your baby from very serious illnesses and infectious diseases. The first immunisation for hepatitis is offered just after birth in hospitals. More are due at two months of age. Ask your doctor or child health nurse for more information. These are also listed in your Baby's First Health Record.

# Crying



**Crying is the only way that a helpless baby can get their needs met. Babies cry to make sure they survive, so it is important we respond.**

As a new parent, you may get very stressed if your baby cries a lot. Sometimes it's hard to know why your baby is crying. It's normal to feel stressed, frustrated and even angry with your baby when they cry. Sometimes it seems nothing you do helps. You may even think that your baby is crying just to annoy you.

Tiny babies do not cry to make you come, because they are not old enough to remember you when you are not there. They cry because they need something, but they don't know what they need. If you go to your baby when they cry, they will feel comforted and will learn that the world is a safe place.

Sometimes it can be hard to know why your baby is crying. As you get to know your baby, you will learn what some of their cries mean.

## Why do babies cry?

Babies cry when they are:

- ❖ hungry or thirsty
- ❖ too hot or too cold
- ❖ needing comfort
- ❖ sick
- ❖ needing a nappy change
- ❖ needing to be held by you
- ❖ having pain (eg tummy ache or earache)
- ❖ feeling frightened, bored or lonely.

## You can help settle your baby by:

- ❖ making sure he is not hungry or uncomfortable
- ❖ picking him up and holding him close to you
- ❖ holding him upright against your shoulder
- ❖ rocking or pushing him in the stroller
- ❖ giving him a dummy to soothe him
- ❖ playing some soothing music
- ❖ watching for what settles him.

## Babies over 6 months

Older babies may cry when they feel uncomfortable or hungry, or because they remember you when you are not there and they want you. This is sometimes called separation anxiety. It is normal and a part of their love and trust in you. They gradually learn that you are there for them and you won't leave them for long, so they start to feel safe without you but this takes time to learn. Often babies at this age will wake at night or are harder to put to bed because they miss you and they don't yet understand that you always come back.

## You can help by:

- ❖ always letting your baby know when you leave him - wave goodbye - and let him know when you return
- ❖ playing little games such as peek-a-boo to help him get used to your coming and going
- ❖ leaving him only with people he knows well and feels safe with
- ❖ putting a bed in his room or putting his cot in your room so you can get some sleep as well.

## *Taking care of yourself when your baby cries*

At times you may feel so upset when your baby cries (when nothing you do seems to stop your baby's crying) that that you feel like hurting your baby or leaving. If this happens, make sure he is safe and then leave the room until you feel better: sit quietly, scream into a pillow, play some music, make a cup of tea or ring someone who understands. You may find putting your baby in a stroller and walking out in the fresh air helps. Know yourself – do whatever helps you to feel less stressed.

Karitane and Tresillian offer services to help you in settling your baby. Contact Karitane on 02 9794 2350 or 1300 CARING. Contact Tresillian on 02 9787 0855 or 1800 637 357.





## Games

Babies enjoy little games from the time they are very young. Games are a fun way to play with your baby and help them learn.

Some games to try with your baby:

- ❖ mimicking games, e.g. baby pokes her tongue out and you do it back (leave plenty of time for baby to take her turn)
- ❖ simple songs and rhymes while you rock or gently jiggle your baby on your knee
- ❖ brightly coloured mobiles that move in the breeze for your baby to look at; these can be easily made by hanging coloured shapes from a coat hanger and changing them from time to time



- ❖ a walk outside in the stroller to look at leaves or grasses moving
- ❖ time on the floor on her tummy to kick (always supervised) helps her to develop muscles for crawling and head control
- ❖ things that they can hit or push that make a noise.

Never play 'rough' games with babies such as throwing them up in the air, lifting or pulling them by an arm or playing loud music. These things can really hurt your baby.

## Reading

Read to your baby – even just a little bit and they will feel close to you, and learn through sounds and pictures. Sharing a story with them can be lots of fun – and really good for their future development.



## Your feelings

**Your feelings are important too! As a new parent you may feel lots of different things. As well as feeling happy and excited, you may feel:**

- ❖ 'down', weepy, tired and irritable. This is commonly called 'baby blues' and many women have this 'let down' feeling after the enormous physical and emotional experience of having a baby. These feelings usually don't last very long. Get as much rest as you can, take care of yourself and ask for support
  - ❖ disappointed in the sex of your baby or resentful if you didn't want another child
  - ❖ that it's hard to care for your baby, especially if you are coping with a premature baby, a baby with a disability or a multiple birth
  - ❖ worried that there isn't much time to keep your home tidy or to be with your partner or catch up with your friends
  - ❖ worried about how you will be able to afford all the extra costs that come with having a child.
- What you can do:**
- ❖ get support. All new parents need support and if you are a single parent, this is even more important. Don't be ashamed to say 'Yes' when someone offers to help you
  - ❖ talk to your partner or a close friend
  - ❖ take care of yourself – make sure you eat well, get a little bit of exercise and try to rest (when you can!)
  - ❖ take some time out for yourself and to do some things with your partner or a friend
  - ❖ if you find you are feeling 'down' and irritable most of the time, talk to your doctor, someone at your local community health centre or a person you trust
  - ❖ join a mother's group or playgroup – make friends with other new parents.

## Key Tips

- Going to babies when they cry does not spoil them, it is the best thing you can do for them.
- Never shake a baby - it can cause brain damage.
- Babies are likely to cry less later on if you respond quickly when they are young.
- Remember babies do not sleep all the time and they sleep less during the day as they get older.
- Babies like company, just as we do, when they are awake – talk to them.
- Watch for and enjoy the little changes as your baby grows and learns.
- Take care of yourself. Make sure you do some things you enjoy regularly. Get some exercise and eat well.
- You might get different advice from all sorts of people. If it feels right for you and if your baby is happy it is probably okay. If you're in doubt ask someone who knows about babies.
- Don't be ashamed to ask for and accept help from people around you. Everyone needs help sometimes and having a new baby is one of these times.

