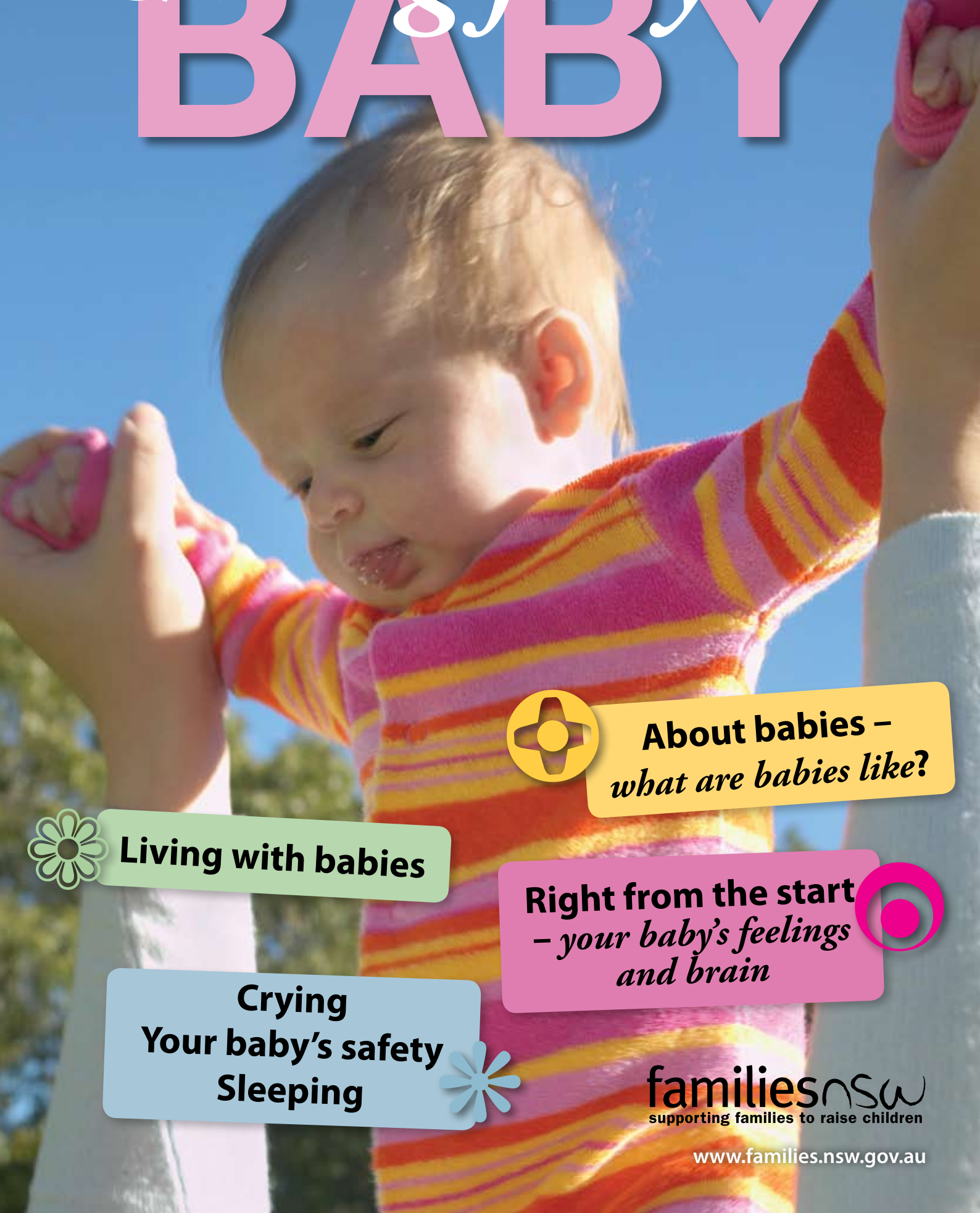


Caring for your **BABY**



**About babies –
*what are babies like?***



Living with babies

**Right from the start
– *your baby's feelings
and brain***



**Crying
Your baby's safety
Sleeping**



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In this magazine 'he' and 'she' is used in turn. Please change to suit your child's sex if you prefer.

Families NSW is the joint responsibility of five Government agencies, working together to make a positive difference for children and families. These agencies are: NSW Health, NSW Department of Education and Training, NSW Department of Community Services, NSW Housing, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

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As a new or first time parent, you may not have had a lot of experience with babies.

While having a baby is one of the best things you'll ever do, it's also natural to feel overwhelmed, anxious, nervous or a bit scared.

You will probably have lots of questions about your baby.

Understanding what babies are like may help make it easier to care for your baby.

This magazine is full of good tips which will help you care for your new baby. It also has useful contact details for organisations that can help you.

Acknowledgements

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Models are used throughout the magazine unless otherwise stated.

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NSW Department of Community Services

www.community.nsw.gov.au

To report a child at risk of harm, ring the DoCS 24 hour Helpline **132 111**

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What are babies like?

At the start, it may seem a bit scary to look after a newborn baby. It can help if you understand some of the physical things about babies.

- * Babies do things automatically with their bodies. They suck things that are put in their mouth, they hold on tight to things in their hand and if they are upset they fling their arms out and throw their heads back.
- * Babies' heads can sometimes be uneven in shape after birth or because of the way they sleep. Don't worry about this – it will go away as your baby grows.
- * The 'soft spot' (fontanelle) on top of a baby's head is there so the baby fits through the birth passage more easily. This spot will close over in the baby's first year or so. The skin over the soft spot is strong and you can't hurt your baby by gently washing or brushing his head. Sometimes the fontanelle swells when the baby is crying and goes flat when the crying stops.
- * Cradle cap is crusty scales on the head. Rub it with olive oil or petroleum jelly to soften it one evening and wash it off the next day. Gently lift off the scales with a fine-toothed comb or fingernail. See your doctor if it does not get better within a week.
- * Some babies have sticky eyes due to a blocked tear duct. Ask your doctor how to manage this.
- * Some babies have little white lumps like tiny pearls in their mouth, especially on the gums. These are normal and go away when the baby grows.
- * Some babies spit up a little milk after feeds. If they are growing well and happy this is nothing to worry about. If your baby is bringing up milk in big spurts much of the time, see your doctor. If your baby is not putting on weight or is miserable a lot of the time, talk to your doctor or child health nurse.
- * Lots of babies have hiccups after feeds.
- * Babies are often born with puffy genitals and breasts (sometimes even 'milk' comes from the breasts). This is from the mother's hormones and it won't last long.
- * Most babies have spots on their faces and often on parts of the body in the first few weeks, which is a reaction to their skin being exposed to air rather than fluid in the womb. Sometimes the spots come when the baby gets hot or has been lying on their side. If they go away within an hour or so they are probably this kind of spot. It's not acne and does not need any treatment.
- * Very young breastfed babies do several 'pooos' a day. Even if baby seems to be pushing hard, the poo is usually very soft. After a few weeks baby may only have a poo every few days and it will still be soft.
- * Bottle fed babies might have firmer poods.
- * Babies sometimes get a lump underneath their belly button. It may swell if the baby is crying. This is a small gap in the 'tummy' muscle and nearly always goes away over time. It usually does not cause health problems or need treatment.
- * Babies usually start to get teeth at about six months and usually have all their baby teeth by the time they are three years old. Look after your baby's teeth by brushing them gently and don't give them bottles of juice or milk at bedtime. The sugars in these drinks stay in the mouth and can cause decay.
- * Some babies don't have any teeth until they are one year old. Occasionally a baby is born with a tooth.

If you have any questions or are concerned about your baby's health, see your doctor or talk to an early childhood nurse.

What your baby *can do*

All babies are different. While babies usually develop in similar ways, your baby might do things faster, slower or differently from other babies and this is usually fine. If your baby is doing things much more slowly or not doing some things at all, it is a good idea to check with your doctor to make sure that all is going well.

Here are some of the things your baby will probably be able to do.

Six or seven weeks

He can smile at you when you smile at him.



two months

She can hold up her head when you are holding her upright and lift her head up if she is lying on her tummy.



Three months

She will enjoy hitting toys that make a noise and she can hold a rattle for a short time.



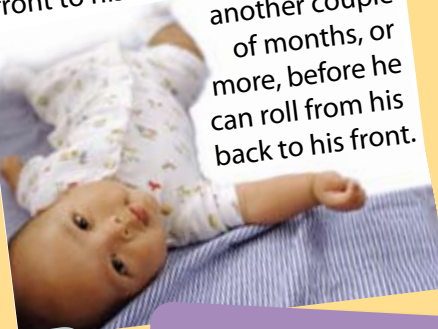
Seven months

He will be sitting up and might be starting to crawl.



Four months

He may be able to roll from his front to his back, but it may be another couple of months, or more, before he can roll from his back to his front.



Nine months

Many babies can pull themselves up to stand. Some babies take longer. It takes another two or three months or so before she can stand without holding onto something and then a few more weeks before she can actually walk.



Twelve months

Babies will 'talk' to you in their own language and may say one or two clear words – probably one of them will be "No!". Your baby will be able to hold something between her thumb and forefinger and play little games like wave goodbye and 'pat-a-cake'.



What your baby can see, hear, taste and feel

Newborn babies can see, hear, taste, smell and feel. They can move their arms and legs (though they cannot control the movements) and they can suck! They let you know how they are feeling and what they need by crying. Usually when a newborn cries, the best thing to check is if they are hungry or need their nappy changed and if they need to be held and comforted by you.

Seeing

✿ Your baby can see quite well at birth, especially things that are close.

✿ **She will be able to see your face and will soon learn to recognise you.**

✿ She will be able to see objects that are further away, but they will be blurred. Her distance vision will develop over the next few months.

✿ Babies can see different colours, but as they do not understand colours they may like simple shapes, each in one colour.

✿ In the first few weeks, a baby's eyes often cross, or wander in different directions some of the time.

✿ By the age of three months the eyes should be lined up so that they both look at the same object.

✿ If a young baby's eyes are turned in or out most of the time, or if a baby over three months old has turned eyes, the baby needs to have her eyes checked.

✿ Some babies and young children have turned eyes some of the time (more often when they are tired or unwell). These babies should also have their eyes checked.

✿ Babies' eyes may change colour and you may not know what colour their eyes will be for several months.

Hearing

✿ Your baby has been hearing since well before birth. She is familiar with your voice and the sounds of your household.

✿ **Soft noises often help calm babies while sudden, loud noises startle them.**

✿ Babies seem to like high voices and animated faces.

✿ Your baby can hear voices, but she cannot understand any words yet. Talking to your baby from the time that she is born will help her start to

understand that sounds make words and have meaning.

✿ Listen to your baby's noises and sounds and copy them. When you copy your baby it is like saying "I can hear you" and a way for you start to teach your baby to talk.

Smell and taste

✿ Babies are born with senses of smell and taste. They know the smell and taste of their mother's milk, and they may refuse to drink if the milk tastes different.

✿ Babies can tell different tastes such as salty, sweet, sour and bitter.

✿ They don't like unpleasant tastes such as some medicines.

✿ They do not need salt or sugar on their foods when they start eating solids.

✿ **Babies should never, ever be given any drugs or medications before checking with your doctor.**

Feeling

✿ Babies are sensitive to touch and can feel pain from the time they are born.

✿ Touch your baby in a gentle, caring way and they will feel loved and cared for – and settle better.

✿ Nappy rash is very painful for babies, and they will be quite unsettled.

Moving

✿ Most of a baby's movements are random and the baby is not able to control them at first. These are called reflexes.

✿ Babies arms stretch out and their backs arch and their heads go back – this is the 'startle' reflex.

✿ Babies also grip things that are put in their hands – this is the grasp reflex. These reflexes decrease over the first few months as they get more conscious control of their movements.

✿ When something touches her face she will turn towards it (the rooting reflex) and she will suck on it. Sucking is a reflex too; your baby will suck on things that are put into her mouth. Some babies will even be sucking their thumbs when they are newborns. Babies need to suck so that they can survive.

✿ Babies also have a 'tongue thrust' reflex. When something is placed in their mouth, they will, in the early months, tend to push it out using their tongue. This often happens when they start on solids. It does not mean that they don't like the taste of the food; it is because they need to learn to control their tongue.

✿ **Most babies will start to smile by the time they are around six weeks old, and will be able to move their head a little.**

Reading

Reading to your baby a few minutes a day will help them grow and develop. Babies love being read to as they get to feel safe and close to you – they hear your voice and can start to look at pictures.

Quick tips

- ✿ Every baby is different – even in the same family.
- ✿ Watch and learn from your own baby.
- ✿ Babies grow and learn faster than they will at any other stage of life.
- ✿ Take time to enjoy the new things your baby is learning and doing.
- ✿ Always ask for help if you have any worries about your baby – check out the 'where to get help' section.

Right from the start

Recent research into how babies grow and develop shows that by caring for your baby and giving them positive experiences, you help build a strong foundation for their future.

When you have a baby you want to do everything you can to give your baby the best start in life. Learn how to make the most of your child's early years . . . right from the start.



Your baby's feelings and brain

Babies learn and respond right from the time they are born and a baby's brain grows more in the early months of life than at any other time. In fact,

unlike the rest of the body, the brain has done most of its growing by the time a child is five years old.

At birth a baby's brain has billions of brain cells and each expands and connects to thousands of others. These new connections and pathways are being laid down in the brain, so

that your baby's experiences in the weeks, months and early years are important to the development of the brain or the 'brain wiring'. Some connections may become strong, others may not be used and some are discarded as baby's brain develops.

Your baby will grow best if they feel close to you.

If you care and love your baby well from the very early months, your baby will learn to respond positively, trust and love other people.

The very first relationship that your baby has is with you – that's why these first relationships are so important.

Positive early relationships also teach your baby how to learn, to be curious about life and to be confident. This helps them learn better when they go to school.

Babies who have loving and caring early relationships are better able to cope with problems or difficulties and the stresses and changes that life brings.



When a baby has loving, caring experiences the connections in the brain for feeling good and learning are strengthened.

The same happens with the connections for talking, learning, exploring, thinking and all the other things babies will need.



When a baby feels unhappy or stressed a lot of the time, or has little stimulation (like not being touched, noticed or talked to very much) the unpleasant connections are strengthened.

If this happens, as babies grow they may be less able to learn and develop in the very best way.

What you can do

* Respond quickly to your baby's needs and signals – this will help them to trust you and know that the world is a safe place to be in. Knowing this will make it easier to learn all the other important things. (No one can learn new things easily when stressed, afraid or crying).



Crying is the only way that babies can tell you they need something.

* Try and make sure that most of the caring for your new baby comes from only a few people - babies get confused when they have too many people fussing over them.



* Spend gentle, loving time with your baby when he is awake.

* Talk softly and sing to him.

* Hold, cuddle and stroke him so he learns to feel safe and loved.

* Watch and listen so you learn his different cries and little signals and what they mean.

* Respond to his signals, when he looks as if he wants to talk to you, or smiles, or makes little noises, or cries.

* Copy some of your baby's little noises or gestures. This shows that you have heard his 'conversation' and you are replying. It is an important way to help him in the first steps of learning to talk and do things.

* Talk to your baby as you do things with him. Let him know what is going to happen next. Say the same words every time such as "I'm going to pick you up now" or "Here we go." Don't just pick him up without warning. Remember that new experiences (even things like a nappy change) can be stressful to a tiny baby.

* Take your baby for a walk so that he can look at new things.

* Give your baby a rattle to play with and soft things to look at and touch.

* Give him some play time on his tummy on the floor (but never leave a baby alone on his tummy).



* Your baby won't understand your words at first but will learn from the tone of your voice and will be learning sounds as well. Even tiny babies can tell different sounds and they soon get to know the special voices of the people who care for them.

* Be sensitive to your baby - don't overwhelm him. If he yawns or looks away he may be saying to you that he needs a rest. Too much activity when he doesn't want it can be unhelpful as can too little activity.

* If possible keep him with you when he is awake because this is the time when babies enjoy company. Babies don't like being bored any more than adults do!



* Doing things in special ways is important and comforting for babies and young children. The same special toy at bath time, the same dish to eat from, the same way of being put to bed or saying "goodbye" is reassuring and will come to have special meaning for your baby.

* When someone else cares for your baby, show them what your baby likes and dislikes. Spend some time with your baby and the other person so your baby is with you both at first. This will help them to feel safe.

* If you must leave your child, although it can be difficult for both you and your child, don't sneak away. Give a cuddle, say you're going and say that you'll be back. Some babies and young children may cry and protest. It takes time to get used to you not being there and to learn that you will return. Try not to look unsure, anxious or sad even when your child is upset. It becomes easier as he learns to trust that you will return.



Your baby's safety

Babies are helpless and unable to protect themselves. They are totally dependent on their parents or carers to make sure they are safe. There are many things that can help keep babies safe.

What you can do

- * Always support your baby's head with your arm or hand as you lift and hold her. (A very young baby's neck muscles are not strong enough to hold up the head.)



- * Always put your baby to sleep on his back, with his feet to the end of the cot or bassinet so he can't wriggle down and get his head under the bedclothes.

- * Use a cot of safety approved design. New cots must have a safety standards label on them.

- * Make sure your baby is protected from pets (and pets are protected from the baby as she grows).



Don't sleep with your baby especially if you have taken drugs or alcohol.

- * Play gently with your baby. Rough games such as throwing up in the air are very dangerous for little babies and young children and can harm their developing brains.

- * Protect your baby from being frightened. Don't shout at your baby, play loud music near your baby or make sudden loud noises.

- * Babies can drown in only a few centimetres of water. Check all places where there is water, e.g. nappy bucket, ponds. Use gates and fences to keep baby safe when crawling.



- * As your baby gets older and starts to crawl, check your house is safe. Cupboards under the sink in the kitchen, bathroom or laundry containing cleaning aids, detergents and medicines are especially dangerous.

Never shake a baby. This can seriously damage babies' brains and bodies and can even cause death.

Always check on your baby regularly if they are asleep in another room.

For more ideas about safety go to Kidsafe website www.kidsafensw.org.au

Can I spoil my baby?

You can't spoil babies by responding to their needs.



If you tend to your baby quickly when he is distressed, he will settle more quickly and cry less in the long run. Soothe your baby when he cries and he will slowly learn to soothe himself.

Don't fuss over your baby – if you are anxious it's likely to make them feel even more anxious and unsettled.

Try not to stimulate a baby too much especially when they're tired– they don't really need it – most of the time, they just need a cuddle or some quiet time.

As you get to know your baby you will learn when he really needs you and what helps and what doesn't.

Caring for yourself

It's easy to find caring for a baby overwhelming, especially at first and it's easy to think no-one else can possibly be feeling like this. Many mothers say that they feel they are only 'just keeping my head above water' most of the time.

To care for a baby well, you need to care for yourself.

- * Don't expect to do everything 'right' - it's not possible.
- * Praise yourself for simple things.
- * Don't dwell on mistakes – learn from them.
- * Sometimes getting rest, or even just reading a magazine for 5 minutes of 'time out' is more important than doing the housework.
- * Be proud of the efforts you put in through the day, no matter how small the tasks.
- * Understand it's normal to feel swamped at times with a range of emotions.
- * Reward yourself with one thing a day that makes you feel good.
- * Make sure you have someone to talk to.
- * Make time for special moments with your partner or close friend.
- * Don't be afraid to ask for support and say "Yes" to offers of help.
- * Contact a professional person, e.g. doctor or health nurse if you feel that things are too overwhelming.

* Remember you are doing one of the most important things in life by caring for your baby!



Trust and believe in yourself

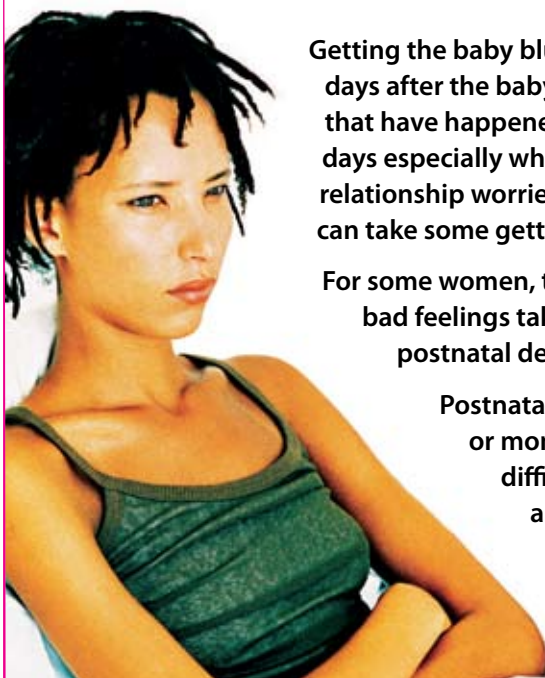
Many people give new parents advice and it's sensible to be open to ideas from others. Sometimes it can be difficult trying to work out what you think is best when family members have different ideas.

There is so much information available and it can often be confusing with different points of view.

Look at all the information, listen to other ideas and choose to do what feels right for you and your baby.

You know your baby best and you have the responsibility of making sure your baby has the best possible start.

The baby blues



Getting the baby blues can be common. Most women feel a bit weepy or blue a few days after the baby is born – this is normal and is caused by the enormous changes that have happened to your body. It's also normal for all women to have difficult days especially when you are tired, feeling overwhelmed, or have financial or relationship worries. Having a baby brings a huge change to your lifestyle, and this can take some getting used to.

For some women, these feelings become more than just a few bad days – the bad feelings take over and you may find it very difficult to cope. This is called postnatal depression.

Postnatal depression can occur soon after the birth or come several weeks or months down the track. It is very distressing and can make life very difficult but it can be treated and it is important to get support and help as soon as possible. If this is happening to you, talk to your doctor or health professional. If you urgently need someone to talk to, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Parentline on 132 055 – these lines are open 24 hours and are staffed by professionals who can help you.

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.

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.



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.



Attachment

The bond between you and your baby is called 'attachment'. Attachment happens in the first few months of your baby's life and helps them feel safe and secure so they grow up strong and confident. The more security you give your baby in the first few years, the more they will be able to cope with the challenges of growing up. If you don't look after your baby or neglect them or abuse them, this can affect their development in a very negative way.

Who do babies attach to?

- ❖ Babies attach to their carers in the first few months of their life.
- ❖ They can form attachments with more than one person.
- ❖ If the mother or main carer is depressed or maybe very distracted, the baby can attach to another caring person to help them grow.

If there are too many different people looking after a baby or there are lots of disruptions, babies can find it difficult to adjust and develop secure relationships.

How do babies attach?

- ❖ Babies and toddlers try to get comfort and protection from the people they are attached to. All human babies have this behaviour to protect themselves from danger.
- ❖ Smiling, cooing, crawling, following, holding out their arms, and crying are all things that your baby does to get your attention.
- ❖ Look at your baby, smile, give them a cuddle or a hug and they will feel safe and secure and then they are free to relax, play, explore and learn.



- ❖ If you ignore or punish your baby, she will continue to be anxious or afraid and try to gain your attention – usually by crying even more. Sometimes if you continue to ignore her, she will give up – not because they feel better, but because she loses hope.

Baby's signals

All babies are different and will have their own ways of showing what they need.

Learn about your baby's signals so that you can give them what they need. This will help them feel safe and secure and they will grow into independent children and adults.

Your baby may try and 'talk' to you by making eye contact or little noises, smiling, copying your gestures and looking interested.

Sometimes when they have 'had enough' or perhaps need you to be more gentle with them, your baby may look away, shut their eyes, try to struggle or pull away, yawn, look tense, unsettled or cry.

What you can do

- ❖ Learn to know your baby's signals, what his messages mean and then respond – usually your baby will need to be held, fed or have their nappy changed.
- ❖ Be gentle with your baby – talk to them softly, don't startle them
- ❖ Be flexible – don't stick to a set routine if it doesn't suit you or your baby.
- ❖ Be prepared for changes e.g. just when you think you've worked



out your baby's routines his rapid growth means you need to respond differently to his changing needs.

- ❖ Remember babies like to play with anything within their reach, so place the cot away from heaters, power points, lights, hanging mobiles and curtain cords.
- ❖ Use only light bedding to avoid overheating (doonas, thick quilts and heavy blankets can make the beds too hot). Pillows are not necessary for babies.
- ❖ Large toys and pets can smother babies. Check that pets cannot get into the bedroom.
- ❖ Do not smoke inside your home, especially in the same room as your baby, or in the car, as the cigarette smoke is harmful to babies.
- ❖ Find out more about how babies grow and learn.
- ❖ Think about, treat, and talk to your baby as an individual with her own likes and dislikes.

Where to get support

FOR PARENTS

To find out more about Families NSW contact (02) 9716 2873 or alternatively e-mail families@community.nsw.gov.au You can get advice about parenting at any time by calling 13 20 55

For more information about parenting visit our website www.families.nsw.gov.au

To report a child at risk of harm, ring the DoCS 24-hour Helpline 132 111

Parent Line

1300 1300 52 (24 hour)
Advice and information for statewide (voice and TTY) parents with kids up to 18 years

Tresillian

02 9787 0855
1800 637 357
(freecall outside Sydney)
24-hour information and counselling for parents or carers of children under 5 years.

Karitane

02 9794 2350
1300 CARING
(freecall outside Sydney)
24-hour telephone parenting information and counselling

Aboriginal Medical Service Co-op Limited
02 9319 5823

Playgroup NSW
1800 171 882

Relationships Australia (NSW)
02 9418 8800
1300 364 277
(freecall outside Sydney)

Centacare Relationship Counselling
02 9390 5366

Lifeline
13 11 14 (statewide)

Salvo Care Line
02 9331 6000 (statewide)

Dial-a-Mum
02 9477 6777 (statewide)
Telephone counselling for anyone of any age

Domestic Violence Line
1800 656 463
1800 671 442 (TTY)

SAFETY & MEDICAL

Kidsafe
02 9845 0890
www.kidsafensw.org.au

Kids Careline
02 4921 2800
(Newcastle area)

Kidsnet
02 9845 0000 (statewide)

Poisons Information
13 11 26

Children's Hospital Randwick
02 9382 1111

Children's Hospital Westmead
02 9845 0000

SIDS and Kids NSW
1800 651 186

Early Childhood Centres (NSW Health)

To find your local Early Childhood Centre, look under 'E' in the Telstra White Pages. Find out about parenting courses by contacting your local Early Childhood Health Centre or Children's Hospital.

FOR KIDS

Kids Help Line
1800 55 1800
www.kidshelpline.com.au

In an emergency, ring **000** for ambulance, police and fire



