

Bonding With Your Baby



What's Happening

Attachment is a deep, lasting bond that develops between a caregiver and child during the baby's first few years of life. This attachment is critical to the growth of a baby's body and mind. Babies who have this bond and feel loved have a better chance of developing into teens and adults who are happy, healthy and trusting of others. The affection and sensitivity you have towards your baby actually affects the development of their brain.

What You Can Do

No one knows your child like you do, so you are in the best position to recognize and fulfill your child's needs. Parents who give lots of loving care and attention to their babies help their babies develop a strong attachment. Affection energizes your child to grow, learn, connect with others, and enjoy life.

Here are some tips for bonding with your baby:

- Respond when your baby cries. Try to understand what he or she is saying to you. Are they hungry, soiled, or sick?
- You can't "spoil" babies with too much attention – they need and benefit from a parent's affection even when they seem inconsolable.
- Hold and touch your baby as much as possible. You can keep him close with baby slings, pouches, front carrier or backpacks (for older babies).
- Use feeding and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile, and talk to your baby.
- Read, sing, and play peek-a-boo. Babies love to hear human voices and will try to imitate your voice and the sounds you make.

How to soothe a fussy baby:

- **Swaddling** – tightly wrapping a blanket around baby to secure arms and legs, this recreates the feeling of being safely in mom's womb
- **Side/stomach position** - while holding your baby place her either on her left side to assist in digestion or on her stomach to provide reassuring support. Once your baby is asleep you can safely put her in her crib, on her back.
- **Shushing sounds** – can be made by making a whooshing sound or by playing a CD with "white noise"
- **Swinging** - rocking, car rides, baby swings and walking with baby in a stroller or sling/front carrier all can help calm your baby
- **Sucking** - can be accomplished with breast, bottle, pacifier or even a finger.

Taking care of a new baby is stressful. Here are some tips for when you feel overwhelmed:

- Place the baby in the crib or another safe place and leave the room. Take a 10 minute break to calm down and clear your head.
- Ask for help. Call a friend or family member. Call the 24 hour Parent Support Line at 1-888-281-3000.

What You Might Be Seeing

It is normal for babies to:

- Have brief periods of sleep, crying or fussing, and quite alertness many times each day
- Cry for long periods for no apparent reason
- Love to be held and cuddled
- Respond to and imitate facial expressions
- Love soothing voices and will respond with smiles and small noises
- Grow and develop every day; they learn new skills quickly and can outgrow difficult behaviors in a matter of weeks

