

Positive Parenting Tips: Infants (0–1 years)

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KEY POINTS

- As a parent you give your children a good start in life—you nurture, protect, and guide them.
- Learn about developmental milestones, including emotional and social development, for babies from birth to one year of age.
- There are many things you can do to help your baby stay safe and healthy.



Developmental milestones

Skills such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, and waving “bye-bye” are called developmental milestones. Most children achieve these milestones by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, behave, and move (such as crawling, walking, or jumping).

In the first year, babies learn to focus their vision, reach out, explore, and learn about the things around them. Cognitive, or brain development means the learning process of memory, language, thinking, and reasoning. Learning language is more than making sounds (babbling) or saying “ma-ma” and “da-da.” Listening, understanding, and knowing the names of people and things are all a part of language development.

During this stage, babies form bonds of love and trust with their parents and others shaping their social and emotional development. The way parents cuddle, hold, and play with their baby will set the basis for future interactions with them and others.

Positive parenting tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your baby during this time:

- Talk to your baby. They will find your voice calming.
- Answer when your baby makes sounds by repeating the sounds and adding words. This will help them learn to use language.
- Read to your baby. This will help them develop and understand language and sounds.
- Sing to your baby and play music. This will help your baby develop a love for music and will help their brain development.
- Praise your baby and give them lots of loving attention.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby. This will help them feel cared for and secure.
- Play with your baby when they're alert and relaxed. Watch your baby closely for signs of being tired or fussy so that they can take a break from playing.
- Distract your baby with toys and move them to safe areas when they start moving and touching things that they shouldn't touch.

Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally.



Parenting can be hard work! It is easier to enjoy your new baby and be a positive, loving parent when you are feeling good yourself.

Child safety first

When a baby becomes part of your family it is time to make sure that your home is a safe place. Look around your home for things that could be dangerous to your baby. Take the necessary steps to make sure that you are mentally and emotionally ready for your new baby. Here are a few tips to keep your baby safe:

- Do not shake your baby—ever! Babies have very weak neck muscles that can not yet support their heads. If you shake your baby, you can damage their brain or even cause their death.
- Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on their back to prevent [sudden infant death syndrome \(known as SIDS\)](#).
- Protect your baby and family from secondhand smoke. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home.
- Prevent your baby from choking by cutting their food into small bites. Also, don't let them play with small toys and other things that might be easy for them to swallow.
- Don't allow your baby to play with anything that might cover their face.
- Never carry hot liquids or foods near your baby or while holding your baby.
- Vaccines (shots) are important to protect your child's health from serious diseases. Talk with your child's doctor to make sure your child is up-to-date on their vaccinations.

Car Seat Recommendations for Children

Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat while they are riding in a car. This is recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Learn more:

[Car Seat Recommendations for Children \(National Highway Traffic Safety Administration\)](#) (PDF)

Healthy bodies

Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed your baby. Breast milk meets all your baby's needs for about the first 6 months of life. Between 6 and 12 months of age, your baby will learn about new tastes and textures with healthy solid food. However, breast milk should still remain an important source of nutrition.

- Feed your baby slowly and patiently, encourage them to try new tastes but without force, and watch closely to see if they're still hungry.
- Keep your baby active. They might not be able to run and play like the "big kids" just yet, but there's lots they can do to keep their little arms and legs moving throughout the day.
- Getting down on the floor to move helps your baby become strong, learn, and explore.
- Try not to keep your baby in swings, strollers, bouncer seats, and exercise saucers for too long.
- Limit screen time. For children under 18 months of age, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies do not use any screen media other than video chatting.
- Make sure your child gets the [recommended amount of sleep](#) each night: For infants 4–12 months of age, 12–16 hours per 24 hours (including naps).

Challenges with Breastfeeding

If you need help, you can call the National Breastfeeding Helpline at 800-994-9662. You can also call your local WIC Program to see if you qualify for breastfeeding support by health professionals, or [find an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant in your community](#).

[National Women's Health and Breastfeeding Resources](#)

For more information

[CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Program](#) has more details on how to track your child's developmental milestones, and what to do if you're concerned about your child's development.

[CDC's Parent Information \(Children 0–3 years\)](#) has information to help you learn how to give your child a healthy start in life.

[CDC's Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers](#) has ways you can help build a safe, stable, and nurturing relationship with your child.

[CDC's Breastfeeding Information](#) has answers to frequently asked questions about breastfeeding.

[CDC's Information on Infant and Toddler Nutrition](#) has tips for parents to help children maintain a healthy weight.

[CDC's Protect the Ones You Love](#) has information on how you can protect your child from drowning and other common causes of injury.

[CDC's Information on Vaccinations](#) View the immunization schedule for infants and children and find out if your child's vaccinations are up to date.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides information on health and nutrition, [My Plate for Infants](#) and [My Plate for Toddlers](#).

[AAP's Healthy Children website](#) provides information on feeding, nutrition, and fitness for all developmental stages from infancy to young adulthood.

[Just in Time Parenting \(JITP\)](#) has quality, research-based information to families at the time it can be most useful.

[Healthy Kids Healthy Future](#) has information on physical activity for young children and ways to keep them moving.

[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) has information on safety recalls and safety tips for children riding in motor vehicles, walking, biking, playing outside, waiting at school bus stops, and more.

[National Institute of Child Health and Human Development \(NICHD\)](#) Visit to learn how to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and safe sleep environments.

[World Health Organization Information on Infant Nutrition](#) has information to promote proper feeding for infants and young children.

SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities