

# NIAGARA PARENT'S RESOURCE GUIDE



# Parenting

Birth - Two Years



Niagara Region Public Health  
is Here to Help on Your Parenting Journey

Connect with a public health nurse  
at [Niagara Parents](https://niagararegion.ca/parents)


**Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.**

Public health nurses are happy to talk with you about any parenting topic, including:

- Pregnancy
- Parenting and behaviour questions
- Newborn care
- Feeding your baby
- Child and parental mental health concerns
- Growth and development
- **Programs and services at Niagara Region Public Health and in the community**



Connect with a public health nurse  
at Niagara Parents

 905-684-7555 or  
1-888-505-6074 ext. 7555

 [parents@niagararegion.ca](mailto:parents@niagararegion.ca)

 Live Chat  
[niagararegion.ca/parents](https://niagararegion.ca/parents)

 [Niagara Parents](https://www.facebook.com/NiagaraParents)

Niagara Parents provides a variety of services  
to help you raise a happy and healthy family.

Learn more about pregnancy and caring  
for babies, children and teens at  
[niagararegion.ca/parents](https://niagararegion.ca/parents)

Niagara  Region

### Looking for more support?

Niagara Region Public Health offers free home visiting programs for pregnant women and new parents who would like more regular contact with a public health nurse and/or a child development expert to support your family.

Call Niagara Parents to find out about home visiting programs and other services offered by Niagara Region Public Health.

**Visit our website for information about our programs, classes and services at Niagara Parents.**

### Telehealth Ontario

Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential service. You can call to get health advice or information from a registered nurse or registered dietitian.

Toll-free: **1-866-797-0000** Toll-free TTY: **1-866-797-0007**

### Telehealth Ontario 24/7 Breastfeeding Supports

New and expectant moms have access to expert advice and support for breastfeeding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by phone. This free service is provided by registered nurses who have training in breastfeeding and lactation support. For more complex situations, lactation consultants are also available.

The service is provided in English and French with 24/7 access to telephone interpreters in more than 100 languages and a direct TTY number for those with hearing and speech difficulties.

Toll-free: **1-866-797-0000** Toll-free TTY: **1-866-797-0007**



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# Helpful Resources for New Parents

- Welcome to Parenting
- Helpful Resources for New Parents
- Social and Emotional Growth
- Finding the Right Health Information
- Government Documents and Child Benefits





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## Welcome to Parenting

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Throughout this guide we use the term “parent” to refer to anyone who is meaningfully involved in a child’s life. Whether you are a mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandparent, step-parent, friend or family member, you have an important role to play in a child’s growth and development. This guide is for you!

### You are important!

Having children to love and keep safe can be both hard and rewarding. It is an opportunity to be a role model in a child’s life. Your involvement can influence how a child will interact with other people later in life.

Mothers, fathers, uncles, step-parents, grandparents, and others have unique roles in parenting. Research shows that different adults may do things differently, and that is okay!

Because of this, children learn that people have different ways of dealing with other people and situations. When adults communicate differently, children learn more about language. When adults play differently, children learn a lot about different ways to act.

## Building a relationship with your child

In these early years, you can help your child build trust, and have safe, healthy relationships. You can do this through the ways that you interact with your child, how you respond to their behaviour, and by introducing them to the world around them.

As a parent, you have new opportunities each day to help your child learn social skills and handle emotions positively. As you are feeding your child, putting them to sleep, or playing with them in loving and safe ways, you are teaching them.

In every interaction with your child, keep these ideas in mind:

### Support them

- Babies and young children need to have adults in their lives who love, care, and accept them
- When you show your baby how much you love them, you are giving them the support they need to build a secure, healthy relationship with you

### Teach them positive values

- When parents show others that they care, babies develop positive thoughts about relationships
- Teach and **show your baby** how to set boundaries
- Introduce your baby to relatives, friends and neighbours that you know will welcome, protect and care for them
- When choosing a day care provider, look for someone who will give your baby positive attention

### Help them learn social skills

- Turn off electronics and limit screen time. This way, you can enjoy every moment of eye contact, echoing baby’s sounds and laughing together.
- Talk to your baby often about what is happening
- Try to regularly give your child your undivided attention
- Introduce your child to other people, but try not to overwhelm them. Watch and respond to their cues so they learn that relationships can be safe and enjoyable.
- As a parent, you are the key model for positive behaviour that is **not** violent

### Help them develop a positive identity

- Create an environment where your baby can develop positive self-esteem by giving them immediate and positive feedback as they learn new skills
- Give your child opportunities to practice new skills over and over again
- Be sure to model healthy ways of dealing with frustration and challenges



### Help them with their emotions

- Be consistent in how you respond to your child's needs. They will learn they can trust and depend on you.
- Respond calmly when your child is upset and give them words for their emotions
- Help your child calm down by comforting them. You may need to remove them from a stressful situation, or meet one of their needs (i.e., food, sleep, etc.).
- If you are experiencing major stress, depression, or other mental health concerns, it is important to seek help. Look for help from a professional and from friends and family. (See pg 63 - in "Feelings/Emotions as a New Parent" section\* for where you can get professional help.)

### What social milestones can I expect from my 0-2 year old?

- Your child will use smiles, cries, and other expressions to build connections with you and other adults. This is how they will communicate their wants and needs.
- Your child will imitate facial expressions and may even develop their smile by three months old
- Your child will respond to a change in people's facial expressions, behaviours, and emotions. This is how they learn to interact with others.
- Toddlers will play near other children, but not necessarily with other children

### What emotional milestones can I expect from my 0-2 year old?

- When your child wants less of something, they will turn away, cry or shut their eyes. When they want more of something, they will smile and giggle.
- Infants and toddlers use crying as their primary way to communicate when they need something. It is not a sign of misbehaviour or manipulation.
- Your child will learn to handle their feelings by seeing the adults in their life respond positively, be dependable, and show that they enjoy being together



For more information, visit [Keep Connected](#), [Search Institute](#) and [Best Start](#).

If you are a dad and are looking for resources about fathering, visit Dad Central. If you are a grandparent, step-parent, friend or another family member, visit Zero to Three for resources on how to make early connections with the child in your life.

# Helpful Resources for New Parents

## Breastfeed Anytime, Anywhere

Everyone has the right to feed their baby in **any** public place. It is a violation of a parent's rights to ask them to "cover up," move to another area, and/or to stop feeding their baby. This applies to all businesses, public spaces and public services.

In your workplace, talk to your employer about your breastfeeding needs. Work with them to accommodate time for breastfeeding or expressing milk while you are at work, as well as where you can store expressed breastmilk in the workplace.



For more information regarding your breastfeeding rights, contact:

- Ontario Rights Commission or 1-800-387-9080
- INFACT Canada or 1-416-595-9819
- [Bilingual Ontario Online Breastfeeding Services](#)
- [Best Start](#)



### Do you need help with breastfeeding?

Sometimes breastfeeding takes time for you and your baby to learn. We can help.



Talk to a public health nurse about any breastfeeding question



Book a free Breastfeeding Clinic appointment. A full hour, one-on-one with a breastfeeding expert.



Learn about drop-in Well Baby Clinics near you. Have your breastfeeding questions answered in-person by a public health nurse.



Connect with a public health nurse at Niagara Parents

905-684-7555 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7555

[parents@niagararegion.ca](mailto:parents@niagararegion.ca)

Live Chat

[niagararegion.ca/parents](http://niagararegion.ca/parents)

Niagara Parents

[niagararegion.ca/health](http://niagararegion.ca/health)

Niagara Region



### Telehealth Ontario Breastfeeding Support Service

Toll-free: 1-866-797-0000

Toll-free TTY: 1-866-797-0007

New parents can access expert advice and support for breastfeeding 24 hours a day, seven days a week through Telehealth Ontario. The service is free and confidential. Family, friends and caregivers who are supporting new moms are also encouraged to call if they have questions.

## Finding the Right Health Information



### Examples of credible health websites:

- [Health Canada](#)
- [Caring for Kids](#)
- [About Kids Health](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [Niagara Region Public Health](#)

When looking for health information for your family, it is very important that you choose trusted websites and sources. Credible sources base their information on evidence. Since anyone can post on the internet, it can be hard to tell if the information you find is accurate and up-to-date. Below are a few tips to think about when you are searching the web for health information.

- Who are the authors of the website? North American government agencies and public health units can be trusted.
- When was the website last updated? The more recent the date, the more likely the site is being monitored and updated regularly.
- Does the website contain broken links? Broken links are an easy sign that the website is not up-to-date.
- Is it easy to find contact information? Trusted organizations don't hide who they are.
- Avoid websites with advertisements or ones that are sponsored by corporations that make a profit
- Look for information that is based on facts and not opinion
- If you searched in Google or another search engine, make sure that you do not click on an advertisement. If you do, you may become connected to a certain product, brand or business

## Government Documents and Child Benefits

Every child born in Ontario must be registered with Ontario's Office of the Registrar General.

To register your baby's birth, visit [Register a Birth](#). You can complete one application to apply for your baby's:

- Birth Certificate
- Social Insurance Number
- Child Benefits

There are two types of birth certificates, a short form and a long form. The long form is necessary if you plan on getting a passport for your child in the future.



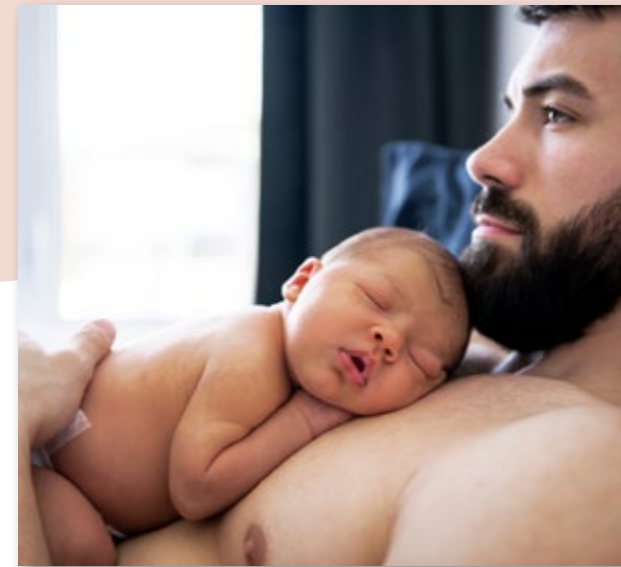


# Your New Baby

- Home with Baby
- Infant Feeding
- Normal Crying
- Newborn Care
- Tummy Time
- Sleep



## Home with Baby



**Skin-to-skin contact is important for both you and your baby.**



There are many benefits to placing your baby skin-to-skin on your bare chest or stomach. Skin-to-skin contact should start as soon as possible after birth. Put your baby skin-to-skin often during the first few weeks after birth and continue for as long as both you and your baby enjoy this time together.

### When held skin-to-skin:

#### Babies:

- May cry less and are more calm
- Latch and breastfeed easier
- Stay warmer
- Have a more stable blood sugar level
- Have a more regular heart rate and breathing rate

#### Parents:

- May find they have an easier time breastfeeding and may have improved milk supply
- Learn to recognize when baby is hungry
- Get to know baby
- Become more confident and relaxed

#### Skin-to-skin in four easy steps:

1. Leave only a diaper on your baby
2. Remove any clothing you have on your chest and stomach
3. Hold your baby against your chest or stomach, facing you. You may wrap a blanket around your baby's back if you wish.
4. Enjoy this time of closeness



# Infant Feeding

## Breastfeeding

The Canadian Pediatric Society and Health Canada both recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of your baby's life. At about six months, babies need iron-rich foods with continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond.

## Breastfeeding Resources



Breastfeeding Matters is a great breastfeeding resource and is available online for free at [Best Start](#). Or, visit the [Breastfeeding](#) page at [Niagara Parents](#) for a copy. Another great resource is [My Breastfeeding Guide](#) by Best Start.

## How can I tell if breastfeeding is going well?

- ✓ **I am not having any pain in my breasts or nipples.**  
If you feel discomfort or pain, reach out for help.
- ✓ **I know when my baby swallows.**  
Some babies make a soft “k” sound or their chin drops and pauses with each swallow.
- ✓ **My baby is breastfeeding at least 8 times in 24 hours.**  
Babies breastfeed when they are hungry. Some babies breastfeed every few hours and others more often.

### ✓ **My baby has wet and poopy diapers.**

Days Old	Wet Diapers	Dirty Diapers
1	At least 1	1-2 black or dark green
2	At least 2	
3	At least 3	At least 3 brown, green, or yellow
4	At least 4	
5+	At least 6	At least 3 soft, yellow, seedy

- ✓ **My baby is gaining weight.**  
Most babies lose weight in the first three days of life. By two weeks old, they should be back to birth weight and continue gaining weight.



## Need Help with Breastfeeding?

If you answer yes to any of the following points, connect with [Niagara Parents](#). You can talk to a public health nurse and learn about supports that are available.

- I am not sure if breastfeeding is going well
- I can't tell the difference between sucking and swallowing
- I am experiencing sore nipples/breast pain
- I am using/thinking about using a breastmilk supplement
- I am using/thinking about using a nipple shield
- My breasts remain hard and full after a feeding
- My baby is having less than three bowel movements in a day after day four
- My baby is having less than six wet diapers in a day after day four
- My baby is not swallowing consistently during a feeding
- My baby is sleepy and hard to wake for feedings
- My baby is feeding less than eight times in 24 hours



Breastfeeding takes time and practice - you and your baby are both learning! Niagara Parents can help. Connect with a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#) to ask any breastfeeding questions or to learn about ways to get more help.

If you need evening or weekend help, call [Telehealth Ontario Breastfeeding Support Service](#) and speak to a registered nurse at 1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007. This is a free service offered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

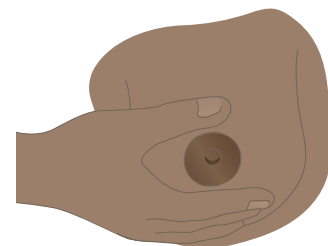
For services in French, visit [Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services directory](#). You can search by location, type of service, language and other criteria.

## Hand Expression

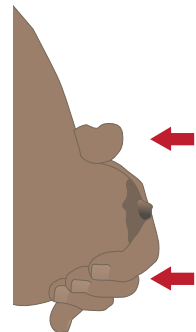
Hand express your breastmilk early and often, even when breastfeeding is going well. It is recommended to breastfeed, or express, or both, eight times every 24 hours.

### Hand expression:

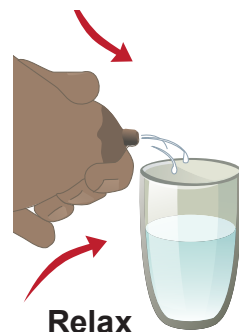
- Gives baby a taste of milk to keep them interested in feeding
- Softens the areola (dark or pink area) to help baby latch
- Lessens the discomfort of overfull breasts
- Provides a way to collect and store milk without the cost of a breast pump



**Press back**  
(behind nipple and areola)



**Compress**



**Relax**

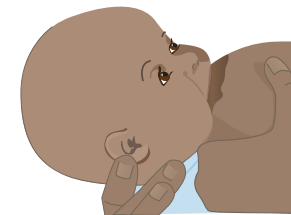
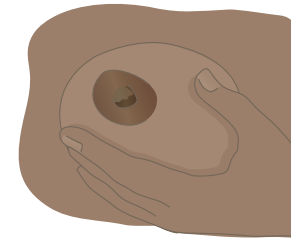
### 7 Steps of Hand Expression

1. Wash your hands
2. Gently massage your breast
3. Place your fingers and thumb behind the areola in a "C" shape
4. **Press back** towards your chest. **Compress** your fingers together and towards the nipple. **Relax** and stop compressing.
5. Collect drops of milk (e.g., cup, spoon, syringe) to feed your baby or store for later
6. Repeat (press back, compress, relax) and move around your breast
7. Switch breasts and repeat

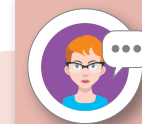
You may only get a couple drops of milk each time you express. A few drops are perfect for your new baby's tummy size. Your baby's tummy is only the size of a cherry for the first few days.

## Latching

It's important that you and your baby are in a comfortable position and well supported for a good latch.



1. With your free hand (the one you are not holding your baby with) support your breast
2. Cup your breast away from areola (dark or pink area)
3. Hold your baby tummy-to-mommy and skin-to-skin (if possible)
4. Place your hand behind baby's shoulders to support their neck instead of their head
5. As your baby's nose approaches your nipple let your baby explore the nipple and wait for their mouth to open wide
6. Place your baby's bottom lip and chin below the nipple and gently push the areola into their mouth
7. When you're feeding, your baby's chin should be pressed into the breast. Their nose should be free to breathe and their head will be slightly tilted back. Avoid pushing your baby's head into the breast.
8. Both your areola and part of the breast should be in the mouth



The LATCH acronym helps with knowing what to look for in an effective latch:

- L** - Lips flanged out (wide, gaping mouth to accommodate areola and nipple)
- A** - Asymmetric latch (more areola visible above the baby's top lip than below)
- T** - Tummy-to-mummy (baby's ears, shoulders and hips in alignment)
- C** - Chin touching breast (nose not touching and free to breathe)
- H** - Have a listen & watch (active suckling and swallowing indicating milk transfer)

Adapted with permission from Baby-Friendly Council of Newfoundland and Labrador.

# Breastfeeding Positions

## Lying Down



- Lie on your side with a pillow to support the weight of your head
- Your baby should be on their side with their whole body facing you (“tummy to mummy”)
- Your baby should be close to you but far enough away so that their head tips back to reach up to your nipple
- When your baby opens their mouth wide, bring them close so that their chin presses against your breast

## Football Hold



- Use a pillow behind your back and beside you to support your arm
- Scoop your baby up with your forearm and tuck them at your side, holding them beside you
- Your baby's legs and feet should be in the direction of your back
- Your hand should support your baby's shoulders and neck
- Hold your baby far back enough so that their head can extend into a sniffing position
- You can support your breast with your other hand

## Cradle Position



- Hold your baby in your arm, with their head near your elbow. Your hands hold their bottom.
- You can support your breast with your other hand if needed, or use this hand to help support your baby

## Laid-Back Breastfeeding



- This position is helpful when your nipples are sore, when your milk volume is high, or when your baby is learning to breastfeed
- Get comfortable with pillows to support your head and shoulders
- Place your baby tummy-down on your chest with both shoulders touching you, baby's leg pointing down
- Use your forearm to lightly support your baby's back and bottom
- When your baby is ready to feed they will lift their head, push their legs, and use their hands to explore your breast and find your nipple
- Give your baby time. After a while, baby will latch. You may need to adjust so that your baby has as much of the breast as possible in their mouth. Latch your baby on your breast in any position around the nipple.

## Cross-Cradle Position



- Hold your baby along their spine, supporting their back and bottom with your forearm
- You can support your breast with your other hand



For more information on positioning and latching, download the [Positioning and Latching resource](#) from Breastfeeding Resources Ontario or [Breastfeeding Matters](#) from Best Start.

To see a video example of positioning and latching, see the [Breastfeeding Position and Latch video](#) from Sick Kids.

## Vitamin D

If you breastfeed (or breastfeed and give formula), your baby should get a supplement of 400 IU of Vitamin D everyday until they are 2 years old. If you only give infant formula, you do not need to give a Vitamin D supplement. If you are not sure whether your baby needs Vitamin D, talk with your health care provider.

## Pumping

### Possible reasons for milk expression:

- Physical separation from your infant (returning to work, infant in the NICU, surgery, illness, etc.)
- Your infant is preterm or unable to breastfeed directly
- You are taking a medication than cannot be taken while breastfeeding, and there is no safe alternative
- Blocked ducts, full breasts, mastitis, or breast abscess requiring you to regularly drain your breasts
- You need to increase your milk supply
- You have made an informed decision to partially or exclusively express milk and feed your baby by bottle

It is worth noting that hand expression can be as effective – or more so – than electric pumps for increasing milk supply.

### Types of pumps

#### Manual

Hand pumps are intended for people who experience brief separations from their healthy infant. They are convenient, lightweight, and small in size. They are not intended for people who are partially or completely dependent on pumping during any stage of breastfeeding.



#### Battery Operated, Small Electric

Battery operated, small electric pumps are intended for people who experience brief separations from their healthy infant. They are convenient, lightweight, and small in size. They are not intended for people who are partially or completely dependent on pumping during any stage of breastfeeding.



## Electric Personal Use Pumps

Electric personal use pumps are intended for when you are returning to employment or when you will be separated from your infant because of travel. They are smaller in size than a hospital grade pump. They are also efficient, effective, portable, and some models are hands-free. They are not intended for people who are partially or completely breast-pump dependent during any stage of breastfeeding.

## Electric Hospital Grade Pump

Electric hospital grade pumps are intended for when you are partially or completely breast pump-dependent during any stage of breastfeeding. They have maximum effectiveness and are highly efficient.

If you're thinking about using a breast pump, connect with a public health nurse at Niagara Parents.



## Safely Storing Breastmilk



For guidelines on safely storing expressed breast milk, please see the [Breastfeeding Matters](#) resource from Best Start.

## Cleaning/Sterilizing Your Breast Pump

For specific information about cleaning your breast pump and bottles, check the pump's instruction manual for the manufacturer-recommended method of cleaning.

## Breastmilk Sharing

Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society do not recommend sharing unprocessed breastmilk because of the potential health risks for babies. Getting breastmilk through milk sharing groups online or from someone you know (even family) may expose your baby to diseases, drugs and/or bacteria. In Canada, milk banks are the only way to access safe donated human milk. Donor breastmilk may be available in some circumstances, but should be discussed with your baby's health care provider.



For more information on breastfeeding, visit [Niagara Parents: Breastfeeding](#) or connect with a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#).

## Infant Formula

### Feeding Your Baby Infant Formula

If you have chosen to feed your baby infant formula, it is important to know how to safely prepare, use and store it. Talk with your health care provider and refer to [Unlock Food: Understanding Infant Formulas](#).

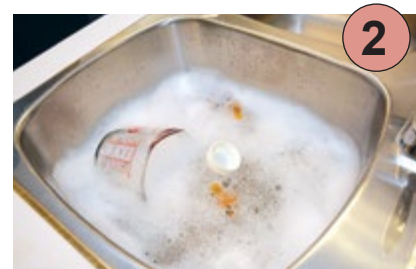
### Cleaning and Sterilizing Bottles and Equipment

Always sterilize all bottles and feeding equipment for babies of any age drinking infant formula.

Use glass bottles or Bisphenol-A (BPA) free plastic bottles.



Begin by washing your hands and work area well with soap and warm water.



Wash the bottles and feeding equipment with hot soapy water. This includes artificial nipples, rings, caps, utensils, glass measuring cup, can opener and tongs.



Use a long brush to scrub inside the bottles and nipples to make sure they are free of milk residue. Have a brush that is used only for infant feeding equipment, not other dishes.



Rinse well and allow the bottles and feeding equipment to air dry.



For more information, including:

- Safely storing formula
- Warming formula to feed your baby
- How to bottle feed your baby

Visit [Infant Formula: What You Need to Know](#). Or, connect with a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#).

### To sterilize the bottles and feeding equipment after washing:

- 1 Fill a large pot with water. Add the bottles, artificial nipples, rings, caps and utensils. Boil for two minutes without the lid on.
- 2 Use sterilized tongs to remove the bottles and feeding equipment from the water and allow them to air dry on a clean towel. If the items are not used immediately, cover and store them in a clean place.
- 3 Fit nipples, caps, and rings together. Place the nipple on the inside of the bottle to keep it clean until you are ready to use it.



Commercial home sterilizers including microwave sterilizers are safe to use, but be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions as it may not be safe for certain plastics or metals.

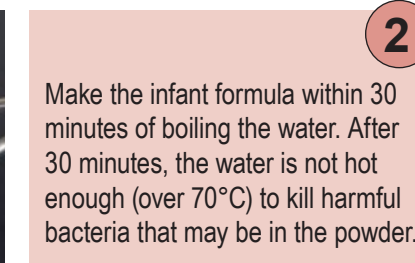
If using a disposable bottle system, wash all the parts, and then sterilize the nipples and caps. New liners are clean and ready to use.

### Preparing Powdered Formula

Powdered infant formula is not sterile, and in rare cases has made babies sick. It is important to make powdered infant formula correctly to reduce the risk of your baby becoming sick. It is best to make the formula fresh and use it right away. Always use sterilized hot water to make powdered infant formula.



Boil the water for two minutes.



Make the infant formula within 30 minutes of boiling the water. After 30 minutes, the water is not hot enough (over 70°C) to kill harmful bacteria that may be in the powder.



Pour the required amount of hot water into a sterilized glass measuring cup.



4 Measure the required amount of powdered formula. Use the scoop from inside the can.



5 Level the scoop with a sterilized knife.



6 Add powder to the hot water.



7 Mix with a sterilized utensil until no lumps of powder are left.



8 Pour amount of infant formula for one feeding into a sterilized bottle.



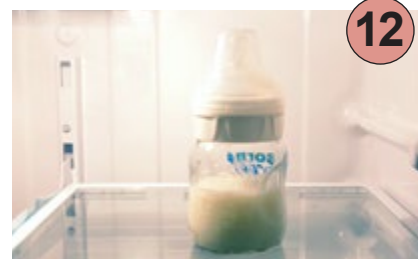
9 Use sterilized tongs to pick up nipples, caps and rings and put on bottles.



10 Tighten the rims with your hands. Make sure not to touch the nipple.



11 Quickly cool the bottle of infant formula under cold, running water or in a container of cold water.



12 If you are not feeding your baby immediately, place the bottle in the refrigerator. Use within 24 hours.



Check bottle nipples often. Replace nipples when they become cracked, sticky, torn, discoloured or if the hole gets larger and the formula drips out too fast.

**Note: dishwashers do not sterilize equipment**

For more information on infant feeding, connect with [Niagara Parents](#).

# Is Your Baby Hungry?

## Baby feeding cues (signs)

### Early cues – “I’m hungry”



Stirring



Mouth opening



Turning head  
Seeking/rooting

### Mid cues – “I’m really hungry”



Stretching



Increasing  
physical movement



Hand to mouth

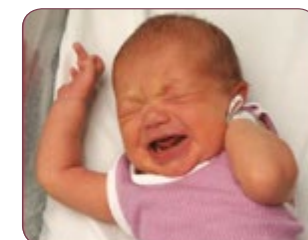
### Late cues – “Calm me, then feed me”



Crying



Agitated body  
movements



Colour turning red

### Time to calm crying baby

- Cuddling
- Skin-to-skin on chest
- Talking
- Stroking



## Pacifiers

It is recommended that using a pacifier be delayed until feeding your baby is going well. This may take up to six weeks or longer.

### Delaying or not using a pacifier will help you:

- Get to know your baby's feeding cues
- Understand your baby's unique way of communicating their needs to you
- Increase your milk supply by allowing your baby to feed often and as needed
- Establish a good latch at the breast, which decreases the risk of painful breastfeeding

### If you choose to use a pacifier:

- Check to see if your baby is hungry, tired or needs a diaper change before offering a pacifier
- Offer a pacifier only when your baby needs comfort. Using a pacifier all day long can affect your baby's ability to learn to talk and can cause problems with teeth. Older children should not crawl or walk around with a pacifier in their mouth.
- Follow the cleaning instructions found on the pacifier package before using a pacifier. The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends sterilizing pacifiers before the first use. You can sterilize pacifiers by putting them in a bowl of boiling water for five minutes. Then, keep pacifiers clean by washing it with hot, soapy water after each use. Make sure that the pacifier is completely cooled down before giving it to your baby.
- Do not "clean" a pacifier by sucking on it yourself. Placing a pacifier in your own mouth will spread germs from your mouth to your baby's mouth.
- Replace pacifiers at least every two months, or earlier if it looks worn or damaged. Throw a pacifier away immediately if you notice a change in colour, texture, or if it becomes sticky, cracked or torn.
- Don't give your baby a pacifier right after giving medicine (like a pain reliever, antibiotics or vitamins). Some medicine can cause the material in the pacifier to break down.
- If your baby begins to chew on the pacifier, replace it with a teething ring
- Never dip a pacifier into honey, syrup or any other sweeteners as this may lead to cavities, even before your baby's teeth have come through

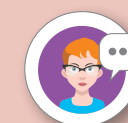


**Never tie a soother around a baby's neck, as it could cause serious injury or death.**

## Your Newborn Baby

### It is normal for a newborn baby to:

- Breathe faster and noisier at times compared to an older child or an adult
- Sneeze a lot
- Hiccup
- Have reddened areas on the forehead, eyelids, nose, or back of the neck. These are often called **stork bites**, and they usually go away in the first 18 months to two years.
- Want to suck. Sucking is a natural newborn reflex that provides comfort. Some babies develop a blister on the upper lip from sucking.
- Jerk and twitch when falling asleep
- Have two soft spots on his or her head; one on the top and one on the back of the head. These areas need to be handled with care and will usually close by 18 months of age.
- Still have an umbilical cord. This will dry up and fall off in the first couple weeks after birth. Be sure to care for the cord as you were taught in the hospital or by your baby's health care provider.
- Have some slight swelling of the genitals. This is a result of mom's hormones.
- Have a small amount of vaginal bleeding or spotting (female babies) in the diaper in the first few days after birth



**If at any point your baby seems unwell to you, or if you have concerns, call your health care provider. A health care provider should check your baby within the first 72 hours after leaving the hospital.**



**A baby's head and neck needs to be supported at all times. Always handle your baby gently.**



### Over the first few weeks, you may notice that your baby has:

- Small white spots on the face. These are called milia and they are normal. Be sure not to poke at or squeeze these white spots.
- A red, “bumpy” rash on their face, often called baby acne. It can appear in the first few weeks after birth. It is best to clean your baby's face with water only and avoid using creams or ointments unless prescribed by your health care provider.
- Areas of dry skin (often around their wrists, ankles and tummy). It is not necessary to use lotion on these areas.
- No tears when crying. At first, newborn babies do not have the capability to produce tears when they cry. This ability develops toward the end of the first month.

### Jaundice

Jaundice is a common condition in newborns. Jaundice refers to the yellow colour of a baby's skin and whites of the eyes. Jaundice is caused by too much bilirubin, produced by the normal breakdown of red blood cells, in the blood. Jaundice can cause your baby to sleep more, which could cause your baby to feed less. Jaundice needs to be monitored by your health care provider. If you have concerns that your baby has jaundice, call your health care provider.

### When to see a Health Care Provider for Your Baby



#### Regular follow ups:

- At 48-72 hours after leaving the hospital/birthing centre or after a home birth
- At one week old
- At two months old (to start immunization schedule)
- As recommended by your health care provider

#### See a health care provider if your baby:

- Is still having black stools at five days old
- Is very sleepy and always has to be woken up to eat
- Is hard to wake or seems very weak
- Has a fever
- Jaundice is getting darker or more intense
- Is breathing very quickly or has trouble breathing
- Has sunken eyes or the soft spot on top of the head is sunken
- Has a very dry mouth, lips, tongue, or nose
- Has pale, cold, and moist skin
- Is having a seizure (e.g., staring vacantly, whole body is shaking)
- Vomits large quantities or forceful (projectile) vomiting twice or more per day (spit-up or bringing up small quantities of milk is normal, even at every feed)
- High-pitched crying over prolonged periods and your baby has other symptoms like diarrhea or a fever. Note that babies can be extra-fussy late afternoon and evening hours.



For more information, visit [What to Expect in the First Three Months](#) by Best Start.



# Normal Crying



## FACT: Babies cry

### Crying is how your baby communicates

Crying is your baby's only way of letting you know that they are unhappy, uncomfortable, or have an unmet need. Some babies cry more than others do. It is important that anyone who cares for your baby understands that crying is normal.



### Most babies will:

- Start to cry more after two weeks of age
- Cry the most at two months of age
- Cry often and for 20 – 60 minutes at a time
- Cry for up to two to three hours per day
- Cry more at night
- Start to settle after two months and will begin to cry less

### Reasons why babies cry

- Hungry/thirsty
- Tired
- Waking up
- Too cold or too hot
- Need a diaper change
- Pain or discomfort
- Need to suck
- Need to be held
- Over stimulation
- **No reason**



**You cannot spoil your baby by picking them up when they cry. In fact, if you respond warmly and quickly, your baby will tend to cry less.**

## It is okay to feel frustrated.

Babies cry, and that's normal. Feeling frustrated and overwhelmed is also normal. However, if you ever feel like you might lose control, put the baby in a safe place and walk away or ask someone for help. **Never shake a baby.** Shaking a small child can cause brain damage, permanent disabilities and even death.

### How to calm yourself

- Take a deep breath and count to 50
- Ask your partner, a friend or a family member to help
- Go for a walk
- Watch television or a movie
- Take a warm bath

If you are concerned with how much your baby is crying, talk to your health care provider.



**Having a new baby can be very hard.**

**It is okay to ask for help.**

**If no one is available, please call a crisis line.**



### Distress Centre Niagara

St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and area:

**905-688-3711**

Port Colborne, Wainfleet and area:

**905-734-1212**

Fort Erie and area:

**905-382-0689**

Grimsby and West Lincoln:

**905-563-6674**

# Your Baby's Senses

## Sound:

- Your baby's hearing was most likely tested in hospital but may need to be tested again six to eight weeks after birth if recommended by a health care provider
- Hearing your voice is an important way for your baby to get to know you. Your baby loves to hear you talk and sing, and will learn to talk from the words and sounds that they hear right from birth.



## Sight:

- Your baby is able to see objects clearly at 30 to 40 centimeters (12 to 16 inches) and will often focus directly on your face
- You may notice that your baby looks cross-eyed for the first few months of age. This is common as they develop better eye muscle control.
- A baby's eye colour can change, but the colour is usually permanent by six months of age



## Touch:

- Your baby needs to feel close contact. Hold and cuddle them often.
- Babies learn about their world by touching everything. Be sure to offer a variety of age appropriate toys and books that have a different feel for your baby to explore.



## Taste:

- Your baby's sense of taste will continue to develop as they grow
- Your baby will enjoy a variety of tastes that come through breastmilk. Before ever tasting solid food, a breastfed baby will experience the flavours of the mother's diet through breast milk.



## Smell:

- Babies know their mother's scent from birth and prefer it to anyone else
- Babies will rely on their sense of smell more when they are very young. They will start to rely on their vision and hearing as they develop.



# Newborn Care

## Caring for the umbilical cord

By the time you are home from the hospital, your baby's cord will have started to dry. It should fall off within one to three weeks. Until then, you should keep it clean and dry.

Water is all you need to clean it. Do not pull on the stump, even when it starts to come off. It will fall off on its own. You can prevent your baby's diaper from rubbing the area by folding it over.

Contact your doctor if your baby has a fever (38.0° C or higher) or if the umbilical area:

- Appears red and swollen
- Oozes yellow pus
- Produces a foul-smelling discharge
- Bleeds significantly (a small amount of bleeding is normal and you may find a few spots of blood on the undershirt or sleeper)

## Bathing

- Babies do not need a bath every day. Wash your baby's face and hands with a warm, wet cloth between baths. Be sure to clean the genital area well after each diaper change.
- Begin a bath by washing your baby's face first with a clean washcloth using water only. A mild soap can then be used on the rest of the body. Be sure to rinse off all the soap.
- Do not forget to wash and dry the creases of your baby's neck, arms and legs. Dry your baby quickly so they don't get cold.
- Your baby's hair only needs to be washed once or twice a week.
- Some babies may develop a dry, flaky, crusty area on their scalp called **cradle cap**. This will go away on its own without being treated. Bathing your baby too often can make cradle cap worse. Brushing the hair and scalp gently with a soft bristled brush may help treat and prevent cradle cap.
- Baby acne is a red, pimply rash on the face. It usually starts when a baby is 2-3 weeks old and disappears within a few weeks. Baby acne can occur from the nipples up, but mostly on the face. **No treatment is needed.**
- **You do not need to use lotions and other products on healthy newborn skin.** If you have concerns about your baby's skin, talk with your baby's health care provider.
- Immediately after the bath is a great time for infant massage. Call your local **EarlyON Centre** to register for an infant massage class near you.



## Bath safety checklist

Have the room warm (around 22° C or 72° F) before you begin.

Set your hot water heater temperature to 49° C (120° F) or put an anti-scald device on your faucets. A baby's skin burns very easily.

Have everything you need for bathing ready so that you never have to turn away from your baby.

Always check the water temperature with your elbow or wrist before putting your baby in the tub.

Bathe your baby away from the faucets/taps and remove them from the tub or sink if you need to run the hot water again.

Always keep at least one hand on your baby during the bath.



**It is not recommended to use infant bath seats or rings as they have been linked to the drowning deaths of infants in Canada.**

## Nail Care

- Fingernails grow very quickly. In the first weeks of life, babies may need their fingernails trimmed often so they do not scratch themselves.
- You can clip your baby's nails with either baby-sized nail clippers, blunt-nosed toenail scissors, or file with a soft emery board (nail file)
- The easiest time to trim your baby's nails is while they are sleeping or soon after a bath while their nails are soft
- Toenails grow slower than fingernails and don't need to be kept as short as fingernails. They may only need to be trimmed once or twice a month.



**Never leave your baby unattended during bathing or changing, and be sure to keep one hand on your baby at all times.**

## Diaper Rash

A baby's skin is sensitive and can easily become irritated. A diaper rash is when the skin in your baby's diaper area becomes red and sore. The rash can be on the abdomen, genitals and in the folds of the buttocks and thighs. Diaper rash is often caused by irritation from urine and stool. Most babies develop a diaper rash at some time during the first year. Sometimes a diaper rash may need to be treated with a special cream or ointment. Consult your health care provider if your baby's diaper rash does not go away.

### To prevent diaper rash:

Change your baby's diaper often

Wash the area well with a mild soap and warm water, rinse, and let dry completely. You may want to expose your baby's buttocks to air for short periods of time after bathing or diaper changes

Use clean, warm washcloths or wipes that are unscented and alcohol free



**Baby powder and corn starch should not be used on a baby.**

Baby powder and/or corn starch can be harmful to your baby's lungs if inhaled. Do not use these products on or around your baby.



For more information on diaper rash, visit [Caring for Kids](#) or [About Kids Health](#).

# Tummy Time

Babies spend a lot of time on their back, so it is important to provide supervised “tummy time” while your baby is awake. Once the umbilical cord has fallen off, start with two to three minutes at a time, several times throughout the day. Gradually increase the time your baby spends on their tummy. At around three months of age, this time should increase to 15 minutes at a time.

Tummy time is not only important for your baby’s development, but can also help to prevent flat spots from developing on your baby’s head. Flat spots develop if your baby spends a long time sitting or lying in the same position. To prevent flat spots, hold your baby often, practice tummy time, only keep your baby in the car seat during car rides and avoid keeping him or her in seats/swings for long periods of time.

## Ideas for tummy time

- Lie down on the floor and place your baby on your chest or stomach so that you’re face to face. Hold your baby firmly.
- Go down to eye level with your baby to encourage eye contact. Roll up and place a blanket under their chest and arms for added support.
- Let your baby have a few minutes of tummy time after a bath or each diaper change
- Place your baby face-down across your lap to burp or soothe them. A hand on your baby’s bottom will help steady and calm them.
- Carry your baby stomach down. Slide one hand under the stomach and between the legs. Snuggle baby close to your body.. This is sometimes called ‘football carry’.
- Give your baby toys to grasp onto and reach for during tummy time



**If you are concerned about the shape of your baby’s head, contact your health care provider.**



For great tips, videos and information on tummy time, visit [Pathways](#).

# Sleep

## Safer Sleep

Where your baby sleeps is important to keep them safe. Sadly, a small number of babies die in their sleep unexpectedly or by accident due to unsafe sleep spaces. Here are some tips to consider when creating a safe sleep environment for your baby.

## What To Do

- **Put your baby in a crib/bassinet/cradle** – Babies should be put to sleep in a crib, bassinet or cradle, and on a firm mattress. Use a tight-fitting sheet on the mattress, and keep the space clear of blankets, pillows, bumper pads, stuffed animals and toys. It is recommended that babies sleep in a Health Canada approved crib, bassinet or cradle in their parents’ room for the first six months.
- **Place your baby on its back to sleep** – Always put your baby on their back for every sleep, including naps. No special equipment or products are needed to keep the baby on their back. Always start the sleep by putting them on their back. Once they start to roll from back to front by themselves, you do not need to adjust their position unless they are upset in that position.
- **Breastfeed** – Exclusive breastfeeding lowers the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and sudden unexpected death. When breastfeeding during the night, have a partner or family member check on you. Or, set an alarm to avoid unintentionally falling asleep while you are feeding your baby. Be sure to put your baby back to sleep in the crib, cradle or bassinet.
- **Have a plan** – Plan ahead for safer sleep. Sometimes people fall asleep with their babies by accident, or without meaning to. This can be dangerous. Because every night is different, it is important to have a plan for your baby’s bed-sharing safety every night.



Visit [Niagara Parents](#) to enroll in an infant sleep class.

Visit Health Canada’s website to read a copy of the [booklet \*Is Your Child Safe? Sleep Time\*](#). For more information, visit the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and [Best Start](#).

## Bed Sharing

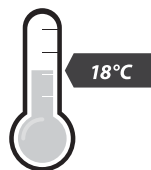
There are many things that influence where a baby sleeps. Some parents may choose to sleep with their baby for different reasons. Some parents choose to bed-share for breastfeeding in the night, for bonding, while staying overnight away from home, or because it is a part of their culture.



## What To Avoid



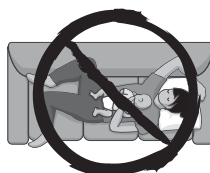
**Smoking** – Avoid smoking during pregnancy. Make sure to keep your home smoke-free before and after the birth of your baby. Try to stay away from smoky spaces when your baby is with you. Babies who are around smoke have a higher risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).



**Overheating** – Avoid overheating your baby. Keep the baby's room at a temperature that is comfortable for you and, instead of a blanket, use light sleeping clothing for your baby such as a one-piece sleeper. If you choose to use a sleep sack, make sure it fits according to the manufacturer's instructions. There is no need to swaddle your baby or put a hat on them while they sleep.



**Sleeping in car seats** – If your baby falls asleep in their car seat while travelling, take them out when you arrive. Then, put them to sleep in a crib, cradle or bassinet.



**Laying down with your baby on the couch or chair** – Never lie down or sleep with your baby on a couch, sofa or arm chair. If you fall asleep, your baby could slip between you and the cushions and not be able to breathe. Or, your baby could fall onto the floor. If you think you could fall asleep, set an alarm or have a cradle nearby to put the baby in. The risk of SIDS is much higher for babies sleeping on a sofa or armchair.



**Leaving your baby alone in an adult bed** – It is never safe to leave your baby alone in an adult bed, couch or armchair. Always place your baby in a Health Canada approved crib, cradle or bassinet to sleep.

Parents may choose to share their bed with their baby. Anytime you might share a bed with your baby, the following safety tips are recommended to lower risk of harm to your baby:

- Always put the baby to sleep on their back
- Do not swaddle the baby
- Have the baby sleep on the outside of the bed, not between two people
- Keep the baby away from pillows, duvets or blankets
- Do not allow other children or pets in the bed
- Make sure the mattress is firm (no pillow tops, featherbeds, waterbeds) and clean
- Keep the mattress as close to the floor as possible to reduce the risk of injury from falls
- Be sure there is no opportunity for the baby to get trapped between the mattress and the wall, or the mattress and the bedside table
- Make sure if either parent has long hair that it is tied back so it cannot get tangled around the baby's neck
- Ensure that both parents know that the baby is in the bed and are comfortable with this decision



## It is NOT recommended to share your bed with your baby if:

- Your baby was born before 37 weeks or weighed under 5 ½ lbs
- Your baby is under 3 months of age
- You or anyone sleeping in the bed smokes
- You or anyone sleeping in the bed has used alcohol or drugs (including over-the-counter medication that makes you, or anyone else sleepy), in the past 24 hours
- You smoked while pregnant

## Alertness Cues

Your newborn baby will cycle through different stages of alertness during the day. For more information, visit [About Kids Health](#). Different states include:



### Quiet alert state

Your newborn will first enter the quiet alert state, where they are getting used to their environment. During this stage, your baby might look like:

- Being cuddly and still
- Looking into your eyes and touching your hand
- Not moving their arms and legs much

### Active alert state

Your newborn will then enter the next state, which is active alertness. Fussiness sometimes follows this state. During this stage, your baby might look like:

- Moving their arms, legs, face or body
- Being less interested in faces and more interested in objects
- Looking around and making small sounds

### Crying state

Your newborn may enter the crying state if they are lonely, uncomfortable or hungry. You can respond to your baby by picking them up and holding them against your chest to sooth them. During this stage, your baby might look like:

- Moving arms and legs a lot
- Their face becoming red and contorted

### Drowsy state

Your newborn will reach the drowsy state before they fall asleep. During this stage, your baby might look like:

- Eyes that become dull, glazed and unfocused
- Droopy eyelids
- Moving a little, smiling or frowning

### Sleeping state

Your newborn will fall asleep. Quiet sleep might look like:

- Their body is relaxed with minimal body movements
- Their eyelids are still
- They have regular breathing and take a deep sigh every few minutes

### Active sleep might look like:

- Their eyelids may flutter as their eyes begin to move rapidly
- They may move their arms and legs
- Their bodies may twitch
- Their breathing is faster



For more information, visit [Niagara Parents: Sleep](#).

## Baby's Sleep: Birth to Six Months of Age

### Fast Facts

- Most babies younger than six months of age do not sleep through the night
- Babies may rub their eyes, yawn, cry and fuss to show you they are tired
- A baby's sleep cycle is about half as long as an adult's. This means a baby will wake up more often than an adult.
- Babies under six months of age need to eat often, even at night. This means they may wake up more often to eat during the night.

If you notice your baby is showing signs they are tired, prepare your baby for sleep:

- Try quieting and comforting your baby
- Speak softly to your baby



**The safest place for your baby to sleep is on their back, in a crib, cradle or bassinet. It is recommended that you share a room with your baby for the first six months of their life.**

### Your Baby: Under Three Months

- It is recommended that babies under three months of age sleep 14-17 hours in a 24-hour period. They should sleep a few hours at a time.
- Sleep patterns are irregular
- Babies spend a lot of time in light sleep. This means they may twitch, make small movements and sounds, and may startle easily.
- Babies at this age cannot tell the difference between day and night

### Your Baby: Three to Six Months

- Babies three to six months of age sleep 10-18 hours in a 24-hour period
- Your baby's sleep patterns will become more regular. They will begin to sleep for longer periods of time at night and stay awake longer during the day.
- Nap times are more regular. Most babies need three naps a day.



Safety is extremely important for your baby's sleep. Visit [healthcanada.gc.ca](https://healthcanada.gc.ca) and search "sleep time booklet" to learn more.

## What can I do to help my baby learn good sleep habits?

### For babies right from birth:

- **Have realistic expectations.** Babies are all different. Your baby's sleep patterns will change as they grow and develop.
- **Learn when your baby is tired.** Look for cues (e.g., rubs eyes, yawns) and prepare your baby for sleep. Acting on your baby's cues quickly will make it easier for your baby to fall asleep and prevent them from becoming overtired.
- **When your baby is sleeping, let natural sunlight in your home during the day and keep the lights low at night.** This will help your baby learn the difference between day and night.

### For babies two months of age and older:

- **Place your baby in the crib to sleep every time.** This will help them learn that this is the place to sleep.
- **Wait a minute to see if your baby is trying to settle to sleep in their crib, or if they need you.** Some babies may move around, put their hands in their mouth, cry a little or make noises as they try to settle to sleep on their own (self-soothe). Before you go to them, listen a minute to see if your baby can settle to sleep. If, after a minute your baby isn't settled or is crying more, tend to your baby's needs.

### For babies three months of age and older:

- **Have the same daytime routines such as regular feeding, play times and sleep times.** A shorter version of your bedtime routine can be used for putting your baby down for a nap.
- **Have the same bedtime routine.** Choose relaxing activities that your baby enjoys (e.g., bath, reading a book, gentle massage). A bedtime routine should last about 20-30 minutes.
- When possible, try to put your baby down to sleep in their crib when they are drowsy



### Take care of yourself!

Eat well, exercise and make time to relax.

Nap when baby naps. To catch up on sleep, you may need to change your sleep schedule to match your baby's.

Ask for help. Ask family and friends for help with tasks so you can focus on taking care of baby and yourself.

Give yourself a few minutes to rest when you need it. Put your baby in a safe place like the crib, and take a break.



## Baby's Sleep: Six to 12 Months of Age

### Fast Facts

- Babies need about 12-16 hours of sleep each day, including two naps as part of the daytime routine
- By six months of age most babies may be able to stay awake for longer periods during the day and have longer stretches of sleep at night
- By six months of age most babies may sleep an eight-hour stretch during the night
- Feeding, sleeping and awake times are more regular. Daily routines help develop your baby's sleep patterns.
- Most babies over six months of age may sleep for longer periods at night without a feed. Some babies may still need to feed, which is okay too.
- Your baby's brain is developing quickly. Sometimes sleep can be disrupted when your baby is working on a new skill, such as crawling. Think of it as progress.

### What are sleep associations?

These are things that your baby needs to fall asleep. Take a look at how your baby falls asleep. If your baby falls asleep one way, they will need the same things to fall back to sleep when they wake during the night.

#### Examples of positive sleep associations:

- Darkened room
- Their own crib environment
- Regular bedtime routine
- A loving goodnight saying (e.g., "Night, night. I love you.")



### How can I help my baby sleep?

- Same daytime routines. Have regular meal times and play times for your baby throughout the day.
- Same naptime routines. Keep naptimes at the same time every day. Skipping naps will make your baby overtired, and they will have a harder time settling down to sleep and will wake more at night.
- Same bedtime routines. Have a regular bedtime, (e.g., before 9 p.m.). Do and say the same thing every night. Use a similar, but shorter, routine before naps. End the routine in the baby's room.
- Avoid screens. Exposure to light from screens, like smart phones, tablets and TVs, can make it difficult for babies to fall asleep.
- Be patient. Your baby is learning new things. Growth spurts and new skills can disrupt your baby's sleep. Continue your routines and your baby will go back to good sleep patterns.

### Safety Tips

- Keep cribs away from window covering cords, lamps, appliances or anything else that could hurt a baby
- Remove mobiles and toy bars when baby begins to push up on hands and knees
- Do not use bumper pads of any kind. These limit air flow and your baby could use bumper pads to climb out of the crib.



If you are concerned that your baby has any illnesses that are interfering with sleep, is not getting enough sleep, or is sleeping too much, talk to your health care provider.



## Toddler Sleep

### Toddler Sleep Tips

- **Set regular nap and bed times**
- **Look for signs that your toddler is tired**
  - This may include fussiness when eating, whining, crying, demands for constant attention, clinginess, or clumsiness
- **Prepare your child in advance**
  - 30 minutes before the set bedtime, tell your child they will be going to bed soon.
  - This could also be the signal for the start of the bedtime routine
- **Create a positive bedtime routine**
- **Make sure your child has a safe and comfortable sleep space**
  - A dark, quiet, slightly cool room is important for helping a child fall asleep
- **Let your child fall asleep independently**
- **Use descriptive praise**
  - For example, praise your child for going to bed when asked
- **Reward positive behaviour**
  - For example, if the child stays in their bed after being tucked in, they get to put a sticker on the chart in the morning



### Safe Transition to a Bed

- Transition your child into a bed (e.g., toddler bed or mattress on the floor) when they are 90 cm (35 inches) tall or start climbing out of their crib
- Never place a child younger than two years old on a bed fitted with a portable bed rail



### Making a Bedtime Routine

A bedtime routine can provide structure and allow you and your child to have clear expectations of bedtime. The routine provides toddlers with a sense of security, by helping them know what to expect. Bedtime routines can look different for each family. Keep the routine short and start early, before signs of sleepiness. Consider including the following into a bedtime routine:

- Stories
- Bath
- Cuddling
- Talk about your day
- Brush teeth
- Change diaper/use toilet
- Put on pajamas
- Go through the bedtime checklist (try making a visual checklist with your child)
- Sing songs
- A loving goodnight saying (e.g., “Night, night. I love you.”)



## Taking Care of Yourself

- Nutrition for New Mothers
- Your Body After Giving Birth
- Recovering from a Caesarean Section (C-section)
- Sexual Activity After Giving Birth
- Quitting Smoking
- Feelings/Emotions as a New Parent
- From Partners to Parents
- Healthy Relationships



## Nutrition for New Mothers

Taking care of yourself will give you energy to keep up with your baby. Follow the tips in [Canada's Food Guide](#) including choosing water to meet your thirst. Try to eat at regular times and listen to your body's signals for hunger and fullness.

### Check out these quick and easy breakfast ideas:

- Yogurt topped with granola and peach slices
- Oatmeal or 7-grain cereal made with milk. Sprinkle with fresh or dried fruits or nuts.
- Breakfast burritos



### Lunch ideas:

- Turn a green salad into a meal. Mix in any chopped meat, beans, eggs, chicken, turkey, fish or tofu.
- Spread tuna salad over whole grain crackers. Add some fruit, vegetables and milk to make this a meal.

### Snack ideas:

- Red peppers and tzatziki
- Grape tomatoes and hummus
- Celery and peanut butter

## Caffeine and Herbal Teas/Supplements

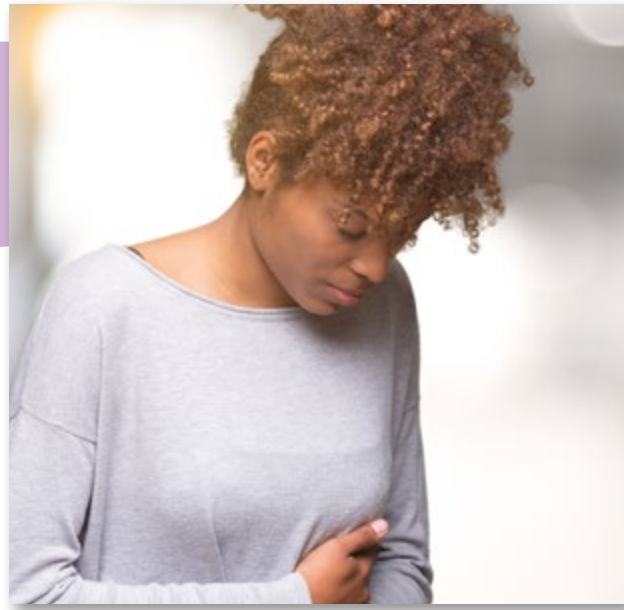
If you are breastfeeding, it's best to limit your intake of caffeine to no more than 300 mg a day (two to three standard cups of coffee).

Choose herbal teas carefully. Herbs in teas can act like drugs and can be harmful to the baby when passed through breastmilk. According to Health Canada, citrus peel, orange peel, rose hip, lemon balm and ginger tea are considered safe while breastfeeding, if taken in moderation. Learn more about [safe caffeine intakes](#) and [herbal teas](#) from the Public Health Agency of Canada website.

Herbal supplements are not recommended while you are breastfeeding.

If you are breastfeeding, it is recommended to take a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg (400 micrograms) of folic acid and 400 international units of vitamin D. It is recommended that the multivitamin/mineral supplement contain vitamin B12. However, speak to your primary care provider or registered dietitian about your specific dietary needs.

# Your Body After Giving Birth



## Cramps

After your baby is born, your uterus will continue to contract. Often called “after-pains”, these uterine contractions may feel like strong menstrual cramps. After-pains are most noticeable in the first few days after the birth of your baby. These cramps may feel stronger while you breastfeed and will usually disappear after the first week.

### To ease discomfort:

- Try the deep breathing and relaxation techniques you used during pregnancy and labour
- Put a heating pad across your stomach
- Take pain medication only as needed. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your health care provider. Some medications can be passed on to your baby through your breastmilk.

## Vaginal pain and care

If you had a vaginal birth, the area around your vagina and anus (perineum) may be sore, bruised and swollen. This soreness can last up to six weeks. If you have stitches you may feel more pain.

### To ease discomfort:

- Keep your vaginal area clean to avoid infection. Rinse with a clean peri-bottle or sit in a warm bath. A shallow bath can also relieve itching or pain caused by healing stitches.
- Take pain medication only as needed. If you are breastfeeding, talk to your health care provider. Some medications can be passed on to your baby through your breastmilk.
- Cool the area. Try wetting and freezing a clean maxi-pad and then placing it in your underwear temporarily.
- Sit on a soft cushion and put your feet up to relieve pressure on your bottom.

## Recovering from a Caesarean Section (C-section)



It usually takes six weeks to completely recover from a C-section.

### Here are some helpful tips for a healthy recovery:

- Take pain medicine as prescribed by your physician as needed, and do not share with family or friends. If you do not use all of the medication take the remaining pills to your local pharmacy to be safely disposed of.
- Avoid lifting anything heavier than your baby for the first six weeks, or until your health care provider says that it is okay
- Walk carefully so you don't stretch your belly, and have someone help you use the stairs
- Eating smaller portions more frequently, walking and drinking plenty of water will help with gas pain and constipation
- When breastfeeding, use a pillow under your baby to protect your incision. **Using the football hold position for feeding while lying down** may also be helpful during your recovery.
- Driving is not recommended during the first few weeks after delivery
- Have someone help you with baby care and housework
- Keep your incision clean and dry

For more information, visit [Ontario Prenatal Education](#).

### See your health care provider if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Increased abdominal pain
- Fever
- Redness, swelling, oozing or odour around the incision area
- Pain in your calves
- Vaginal bleeding heavier than a regular menstrual period
- Pain or burning with urination
- Anything else that worries you



For more information, see [What to Expect in the First Three Months](#) by Best Start.



### Contact your health care provider if ...

- You pass a clot larger than a loonie
- You soak a maxi-pad in less than two hours
- You notice that your discharge has a foul smell
- Discharge continues after five weeks

## Vaginal bleeding

After your baby's birth there will be bleeding and discharge from the vagina.

### Bleeding and discharge:

- Can last anywhere from three to six weeks
- Is dark red with small clots about the size of a loonie in the first two to three days
- Should never soak more than one maxi-pad in two hours
- Should not have a foul odour
- Will slow down and look brown to pink in colour (similar to the bleeding during the last days of your menstrual period) before it stops completely

## Your period

- May not start again for months, or until you stop breastfeeding altogether. Your ovaries may produce an egg during this time, which means you could become pregnant before your period comes back.
- Usually returns within four to nine weeks if you are using infant formula to feed your baby. May be longer, shorter, heavier or lighter than before the pregnancy.
- Should return to what is normal for you after a few cycles
- If you do not want another pregnancy, take precaution and use a form of birth control that suits you. See the section on *Birth control options for new mothers* under *Sexual activity after giving birth* on page 58.

## Urination

Following childbirth, it may be hard to pass urine and/or tell when your bladder is full. It helps to empty your bladder at regular times to prevent your bladder from becoming too full. To help the flow of urine to start, try turning on the taps in the bathroom sink so you can hear the water. Later you may find you have to go more often, or that you have trouble knowing when the urine is going to start flowing. You may leak urine with a cough, sneeze, or when you exercise. This is caused by your pelvic muscles being stretched during pregnancy and childbirth. You can help strengthen these muscles by doing Kegels (pelvic floor exercises).



## Bowel Movements

Most women have a bowel movement within two to three days after birth. Your bowels may be slow because of the muscles in your stomach being stretched, a sore perineum, or if you took pain medication during or after your delivery.

### To ease discomfort:

- Drink plenty of fluids. Eat foods high in fibre such as bran muffins, bran cereal, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- You may choose to use medication to soften your stool. A stool softener made with psyllium or natural fibre (such as coarse ground flaxseed) can be bought at your local drug store.

## Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are often painful, itchy grape-like swellings around the rectum. Hemorrhoids may cause bleeding during a difficult bowel movement.

### To ease discomfort:

- You can help reduce the swelling by freezing a damp maxi-pad and then putting it in your underwear
- Choose to lie down rather than sit, as this will take the pressure off your bottom until you heal
- Try special creams, sprays or ointments, as recommended by your health care provider



### How to do Kegels:

1. Stand, sit or lie down with your knees slightly apart (lie down if just beginning)
2. Relax
3. Imagine that you are trying to hold back a urine or a bowel movement, or pretend to tighten your vagina around a tampon. Squeeze the muscles you would use to do that. Do NOT tighten your stomach or buttocks.
4. Tighten the muscles for five to 10 seconds. Make sure to keep breathing normally.
5. Now relax the muscles for about 10 seconds
6. Repeat 12 to 20 times, three to five times a day

## Breast Fullness

It is normal to start feeling breast fullness between two and four days after your baby is born. However, it is not normal to feel pain or experience severe engorgement of your breasts.



Please connect with a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#) if you are experiencing any breast/nipple pain, lumps or hard areas in your breast.

After hours, call Telehealth Ontario 24/7 Breastfeeding Supports at: 1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007.



### You can often prevent engorgement if you:

- Breastfeed whenever your baby wants to, at least eight or more times in 24 hours (day and night)
- Make sure your baby is latched deeply and feeding well
- Use both breasts at each feeding. If your baby will not take the second breast, and it feels very full, hand express enough milk from that side so that you feel comfortable. After a few days your breasts will feel more comfortable without you needing to express excess milk.
- Avoid using a pacifier

### If your breasts are engorged:

- Breastfeed your baby more often
- If your baby will not latch, express breast milk to soften the areola, then try again. Some breastfeeding parents find it more comfortable to wear a bra, and others prefer to go without. If you wear a bra, make sure it is not too tight and avoid underwires.
- Apply a wrapped ice pack or cold compress to your breasts between feedings
- Use reverse pressure softening before offering your breast to your baby (see information box)
- Gentle massage can help by loosening up the milk ducts and encouraging the swelling to move out and help the milk flow



### Reverse Pressure Softening

1. Place your fingers on each side of your nipple and push in towards your ribs
2. Hold for about one minute
3. Rotate your fingers around your nipple and repeat
4. If part of your area is still firm, continue to repeat

For more information, see [Breastfeeding Matters](#) by Best Start.

## Your Body

Your body has likely changed quite a bit during pregnancy.

Your stomach muscles have stretched and it can take time for them to slowly tighten back into their pre-pregnancy shape. While you were pregnant you slowly gained weight, so losing that weight takes time. It is not recommended to diet or exercise excessively. This may negatively affect your physical and mental health and possibly interfere with your milk supply.

### Tips to stay healthy and feel good:

- Try to eat at regular times and follow the tips in [Canada's Food Guide](#)
- Start exercising slowly once approved by a health care provider
- Take short walks of up to 20 minutes a day
- Find classes offered in your community. Many offer mommy and baby classes so you and your baby can spend time together while being active. These classes will also give you the chance to meet and talk to other new moms.
- Get as much sleep as possible so your body feels rested. Take time to rest when your baby is sleeping.



## Sexual Activity after Giving Birth

### When can I start to have sex again?

Each individual will have to decide for themselves when they feel comfortable and ready to resume sex. Some couples wait until six weeks (or more) have passed and the mother's body has healed from birth. Speak to your health care provider about when sex can be resumed.

### When will I feel like having sex again?

When there is a new baby in the house, couples may feel very close to each other. However, they may not feel they have the time, interest or the energy for sex. There are other ways to show love for each other besides sex. In the first weeks after baby, cuddling, kissing and mutual touching are some other ways to feel close.

### Will I notice any changes after birth?

A woman's vagina may be more dry, especially if breastfeeding. If you find that you are experiencing pain during intercourse because of dryness, there are jellies and creams that can be used to lubricate your vagina. You can also try changing positions to see if one is more comfortable than another. Speak to your health care provider if you have any concerns about pain or discomfort during sex.



## How soon after birth can I get pregnant again?

Your fertility can return as soon as two weeks after you have given birth. You may not know when you first ovulate after having a baby, which means you can get pregnant before your first period comes. Discuss your birth control options with your partner and health care provider.

## Birth Control Options for New Mothers

There are a number of birth control options available for new mothers. If you are breastfeeding and considering hormonal birth control it is important that you talk to your health care provider because it may decrease your milk supply. There are non-hormonal birth control options for new mothers including the Lactational Amenorrhea (LAM) method.

## LAM (Lactational Amenorrhea Method)

LAM can be an effective form of birth control, but only if you answer “**YES**” to **ALL** of the following and adhere regularly:

- o My baby is less than six months old
- o My monthly period has not yet returned (this is what amenorrhea means)
- o My baby breastfeeds at least every four hours during the day and at least every six hours at night
- o My baby is fully or nearly fully breastfed

“Fully breastfed” means that your baby gets all his food from your breasts. “Nearly fully breastfed” means that in addition to breastfeeding and Vitamin D, your baby is only receiving one or two mouthfuls per day of any other fluids or solids.



For more information, please visit [Action Canada](#).

If you are not planning a pregnancy and answered NO to any of the above statements, begin another form of birth control.

Visit [Sex and U](#) for birth control options.



## Quitting Smoking



The decision to quit smoking is a brave and healthy choice that you can make for yourself, your new baby and for the rest of your family. You are also not alone – more than 60 percent of Niagara residents who smoke want to quit. You will need support from your partner, family members and friends, so let them know.

**Quitting is hard, but you can do it and help is available!**

## Second-hand and third-hand smoke affects your children

Second-hand smoke (being near someone smoking) is especially harmful to babies and children. It is known to cause ear infections, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), asthma and other serious diseases. If smoking around babies stopped, it is estimated that one third of all SIDS deaths could be prevented. Children should also be protected against third-hand smoke, which is the smoke that gets trapped in furniture, carpet and clothing. It stays around long after people stop smoking in the room.

## Benefits of quitting:

- After 20 minutes: your blood pressure and heart rate return to normal
- After eight hours: you will have more oxygen and less carbon monoxide in your blood
- After 24 hours: your risk of having a heart attack decreases
- After 48 hours: your sense of smell and taste get better
- After two weeks: all the nicotine is gone from your body and it is easier to walk and exercise
- After one year: you cut your risk of having a heart attack in half

**Call Niagara Region Public Health’s Tobacco Hotline at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7393 to find out if you are eligible for FREE nicotine replacement therapy to help you quit, or for information on making your home smoke free.**



For more information and support, talk to your health care provider or call [Telehealth](#) at: Toll-free: 1-866-797-0000  
Toll-free TTY: 1-866-797-0007

# Feelings/Emotions as a New Parent

Life with a new baby is not always what you expect. Pregnancy and the birth or adoption of a baby brings physical, emotional and social changes. Adjustments to the new roles and relationships are not always easy.

## Baby Blues

Almost four out of five mothers will experience the baby blues.

### You may:

- Feel sad and tearful
- Feel irritable
- Feel exhausted
- Feel overwhelmed
- Have changes in your sleeping or eating pattern

**This is all normal.** It can start in the first week after the baby is born and will typically pass within two weeks with good physical care and emotional support.



For more information, visit [Best Start](#) or [Pregnancy Info by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada](#),

## Postpartum Depression and Postpartum Mood Disorders

Sometimes the baby blues do not go away. You may have also felt this way during your pregnancy or may feel this way later during your baby's first year.

### You may:

- Not feel like yourself
- Be sad and tearful
- Feel exhausted, but unable to sleep
- Have changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Feel overwhelmed and can't concentrate
- Have no interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Feel hopeless or frustrated
- Feel restless, irritable or angry
- Feel extremely high and full of energy
- Feel anxious – you may feel this as aches, chest pain, shortness of breath, numbness, tingling or a lump in your throat
- Feel guilty and ashamed, thinking you are not a good mother
- Not bonding or afraid to be alone with your baby
- Have intrusive and scary thoughts about harming yourself or your baby



**If you have had any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, seek help immediately. Do not wait.**



## Life with a New Baby

Postpartum Mood Disorders (PPMD) are real. One in five women and one in 10 men will suffer from some degree of postpartum mood disorders after the birth of a baby.

**There is help.**

**Remember: This is not your fault.**

**There is help for you and your family.**



## What you can do:

- Do not blame yourself; you are not alone in feeling the way you do. Do not feel ashamed or guilty for your thoughts and feelings.
- Remember that thoughts and feelings are not facts
- Ask for help. Talk to your partner, family, friends and health care provider.
- Take care of yourself. Try to rest, eat well and get some fresh air and exercise.
- Take time for yourself. Accept offers for help with household chores and baby care so you can have a break.
- Speak to a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#) about how you are feeling
- Get counselling. Attend one-to-one counselling sessions with a trained professional or join a support group.

## How partners, family and friends can help:

- Listen and support mom's feelings
- Encourage mom to find a compassionate health care professional
- Develop a relationship with the baby
- Ask mom how you can help
- Learn about postpartum depression and anxiety
- Encourage mom to take time for herself
- Find someone to talk to about postpartum depression and anxiety



# Coping with the stress of raising a baby

Life with a new baby is full of changes that affect your life and how you feel. You may feel joy and happiness as well as moments of stress, sadness and loneliness. Sometimes parents feel overwhelmed, anxious or irritable. The following tips can help you cope with the stress of parenting.

## NUTRITION

Eating healthy foods throughout the day will help you feel better and give you energy.

### Questions to ask yourself:

- Am I sitting down to eat three times a day?
- Do I take time to eat a snack if I am hungry between meals?
- Am I drinking enough water throughout the day?

### Tips:

- Carry water with you as you move around the house to stay hydrated
- Meal plan and prepare quick healthy snacks in advance so you can grab and go
- Accept help in preparing meals and snacks



## Where you can get help

**Mental Health Urgent Support Services** ..... 905-641-5222  
(Canadian Mental Health Association of Niagara) Mental health counselling available 11:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Monday to Friday in St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls

**Distress Centre of Niagara Region** 24-hour service/7 days/week  
St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Area: ..... 905-688-3711  
Grimsby, West Lincoln: ..... 905-563-6674  
Fort Erie and Area: ..... 905-382-0689  
Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Area: ..... 905-734-1212

**Family and Children's Services** ..... 905-937-7731  
Intake (24-hour access/7 days/week)

**Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)**  
(press "1" for COAST) ..... Crisis Line: 1-866-550-5205

**Mental Health and Addictions Access Line** ..... 1-866-550-5205

**If you feel you or your baby are in danger, call 911 immediately**



## EXERCISE/MOVEMENT

Regular movement can reduce stress, boost your mood and energy, can create feelings of relaxation, and promote a good night's sleep.

### Tips for moving around more:

- Choose an activity that works for you. You are more likely to stick to a plan if you choose activities that you enjoy and that fit your lifestyle.
- Be consistent. Short regular activities are better than occasional long exercise sessions.
- Take baby with you. Use a baby carrier, bike trailer, stroller etc. Try yoga together or go for a walk.
- Try the five-minute solution: start with five minutes of activity (e.g., walking or stretching). If after five minutes, you feel like you can keep going, add five more minutes.

## SLEEP AND REST

Sleep and rest are very important for your physical and mental health. Rest improves our mood and ability to cope with stress.

### Tips for getting some rest:

- Make your bedroom dark, quiet and somewhat cool
- Ask for help from a friend or partner to watch the baby while you get some sleep or rest
- Ask for help with chores

### Before bedtime:

- Avoid caffeine two hours before bed
- Try to stop any exercise at least two hours before bed
- Avoid being hungry or eating too heavily before bed
- Avoid screen time one to two hours before bed

## TIME FOR YOURSELF

Caring for and raising a baby, completing household chores, and nurturing family relationships is a lot to manage. Many parents put the needs of others before their own health and well-being. Taking some time to care for yourself helps to achieve a healthy balance and improves your mood.

### Tips for taking time for yourself include:

- Doing something that makes you happy. This is specific to you, such as watching your favourite TV show or just about anything that makes you happy.
- Crossing something off your "To Do" list
- Activities that give you a sense of peace and relaxation, such as breathing exercises that can help you focus on your breath



## SUPPORT

Finding or reconnecting with people who can support you is the best thing you can do for your mental well-being and happiness.

### Tips for different types of support:

- **Emotional support**
  - Someone to talk to openly about your worries and concerns. Someone that makes you feel valuable and reminds you of your strengths.
- **Practical support**
  - Someone to help you with errands, household chores and childcare.
- **Social support**
  - A group where you have a sense of belonging with others and feel connected. For example, a group of parents who also have young children.
- **Information support**
  - Someone who gives reliable information and advice, such as a health care provider



For more information, visit [BC Mental Health and Addiction Services](#).



## Becoming a Parent

Being a parent is one of the most important and challenging jobs many adults will have in their lifetime. You may notice many personal, daily activity and relationship changes as your family grows. It is important to respond to these changes in a healthy way in order to strengthen your relationships and provide a caring environment for your child.

Being a parent is not something that always comes naturally. It takes time to develop the knowledge and skills needed to help your child develop. Whether you are a single parent, in a two-parent family or part of a step-family, here are some helpful hints:

- Have realistic expectations of yourself, your partner and your child
- Enjoy your child and spend fun times together
- Look after your own needs and take care of your other relationships
- Avoid conflict in front of your child and show them how to solve problems calmly
- Get support from family, friends and community agencies
- If you have a partner share your parenting roles, work together as a parenting team and take care of your relationship
- Allow yourself to ask for help
- Rest and take breaks
- Take moments for yourself

# Healthy Relationships

It is every person's right to be in a healthy and safe relationship that is nurturing and supportive. A caring and positive environment plays an important role in your baby's health and development.

## Keys to building healthy relationships

- Be positive when communicating with family and respect each other's goals and opinions
- Make time to openly talk to each other about feelings and values
- Make money and family decisions together
- Learn to earn and keep each other's trust by communicating in a non-threatening way
- Have mutual respect for each other. Treat your partner how you expect to be treated.
- Support and respect each other's right to friends, activities and goals in life

## Signs you could be in an unhealthy relationship

### You:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Have family or friends that are concerned about you                          | • Have anxiety or ongoing stress                 |
| • Keep apologizing and making excuses for your partner's behaviour             | • Are nervous talking when your partner is there |
| • Believe you are the cause of problems in the relationship (blaming yourself) | • Are sad, lonely, withdrawn and afraid          |
|  | • Have feelings of helplessness                  |
|  | • Use alcohol or drugs to cope                   |



### Your partner:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Uses the children to make you feel guilty  | • Keeps you away from family and friends                      |
| • Shifts responsibility for their behaviour; does not take your concerns seriously | • Controls what you do, where you go, who you see and talk to |
| • Prevents you from getting or keeping a job; takes your money                     | • Makes you afraid by using body language, looks or actions   |
| • Controls or monitors means of communication (text messages, phone calls)         | • Treats you like a servant, making all of the big decisions  |
| • Makes threats or carries out threats to harm you                                 | • Threatens to harm your children, pets or personal property  |
| • Puts you down and makes you feel bad about yourself                              | • Does not take responsibility for their actions              |
| • Calls you names  | • Uses alcohol and drugs as an excuse                         |
|  | • Is jealous/possessive                                       |



It is important to talk to someone if you are concerned about your relationship.

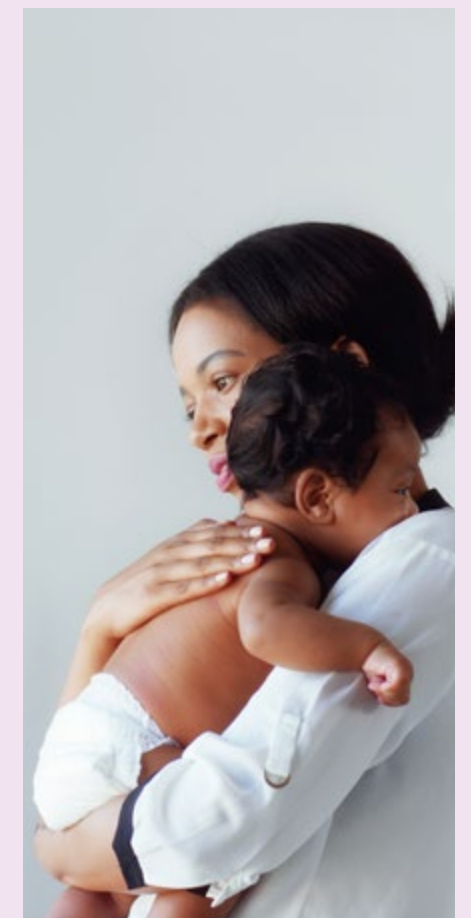
## Free Counselling

**Design for a New Tomorrow** .905-684-1223 ext. 1  
Support for individuals who have experienced abuse in adult relationships.

**Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Program** ..... 905-378-4647 ext. 45300  
Counselling for individuals who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence in the last two years.

**Family and Children's Services** – Family Counselling Centre ..... 905-937-7731  
Child protection, parenting support and counselling.

**Community Addictions Services of Niagara (CASON)** ..... (905) 684-1183  
CASON counsellors provide ongoing support in a number of programs available to people struggling with their own substance use or gambling behaviour. Services include individual counselling, a 4-week Day Treatment Program, referral to residential treatment and the Addiction Supportive Housing (ASH) program.





## 24-hour Crisis Support Lines

### **Victim Services Niagara** ..... 905-682-2626

Trained staff and volunteers that deliver crisis intervention, information and referral services to victims of crime and tragic circumstances 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **Emergency Shelter**

Counselling and a variety of services offered also on an outreach basis.

### **Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.**

Niagara Falls, Fort Erie & Surrounding Areas: ..... 905-356-5800  
Welland, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Pelham & Surrounding Areas: ..... 905-788-0113



**Gillian's Place** (St. Catharines): ..... Call or text 905-684-8331

**YWCA Niagara Region** ..... St. Catharines: 289-430-8183  
..... Grimsby: 289-235-8747  
..... Niagara Falls: 289-267-0411

### **Shelter Safe**

Shelters can provide you with the help you need from a safe place to stay, to counseling and referrals.

**Assaulted Women's Help Line** ..... 1-866-863-0511

Free and anonymous crisis counselling, safety planning and emotional support.

**Niagara Sexual Assault Centre** ..... 905-682-4584

Free and confidential counselling and support services for survivors of adult sexual assault and child sexual abuse.

**Fem'Aid (Francophone)** ..... 1-877-336-2433

Provincial Francophone helpline for women who have experienced violence in intimate relationships.

### **Ontario Online & Text Crisis Services**

**(ONTX)** ..... For text support, text SUPPORT to 258258.

For chat support, click on the CHAT NOW link at the top of the website.

If you are in distress, crisis or having suicidal thoughts, ONTX is here to help and support you 7 days a week from 2 p.m. to 2 a.m.



# Your Baby's Health



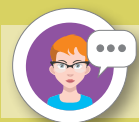
- Starting Solid Foods
- Sample Menus
- Feeding Tips
- Food Allergies
- Constipation
- Vaccinations
- Dental Health
- When Your Baby is Sick

# Starting Solid Foods

Health Canada recommends giving breastmilk or formula for the first six months. Breastmilk or formula is the most important food for your baby. As you start solid foods, continue to breastfeed and/or formula feed following your baby's cues.

## Why wait until six months to start solid foods?

- If you are breastfeeding, giving only breastmilk for the first six months lowers the chance of your baby getting infections
- Your baby's digestive system may not be ready
- Your baby will be better able to swallow solid foods safely
- If you start solids before six months, your baby may:
  - Not get enough protein, fat, vitamins or minerals
  - Breastfeed less, which may decrease your milk supply



Starting solids earlier does not help your baby sleep through the night.

Growth spurts are common at **about three weeks, six weeks and three months**. Your baby may want extra breastmilk or formula at these times. This is not a sign that your baby needs solid foods.

## Your baby is ready for solid foods when they can:

- Sit up in a highchair, lean forward and have good head control
- Open their mouth wide when food is offered on a spoon
- Turn their face away or close their mouth if they do not want food
- Pick up food and try to put in in their mouth

## If you wait beyond six months to give solid food, your baby may:

- Be slow to accept solid foods
- Have a hard time chewing foods
- Not get all the vitamins and minerals they need



## How to start solid foods

Start your baby with a variety of textures, such as pureed, mashed, finely chopped and lumpy foods. You can also give your baby soft finger foods starting right at six months, to help them learn how to feed themselves. [Unlock Food](#), run by the Dietitians of Canada, is a great resource to learn about nutrition, food and healthy eating. Below are some of Unlock Food's articles with more information about introducing solids:

[Introducing Solid Food to Your Baby](#)

[Safety Tips \(including choking prevention\)](#)

[Sample Meal Plans for Feeding Your Baby](#)

[Sample Meal Plan for Feeding Your Toddler \(Ages 1 to 3\)](#)

[All About Homemade Baby Food](#)

[Food Allergies and Babies](#)

[Parents' Influence on Children's Eating Habits](#)



For more information, see [Niagara Parents: Starting Solids](#).

# Sample Menus

Every baby is different. The amount that your baby eats can change from day to day. Your baby may also eat more or less than other babies. Use the sample meals as general guidelines only. Trust your baby to let you know when they are hungry or full. You are responsible for the foods that are offered, as well as when and where. Your baby is responsible for if they eat, and how much.

## Sample Meals for Baby: 6 to 9 months old

Early morning	Breastmilk or infant formula Vitamin D drops for breastfed babies
Breakfast	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Mashed fruit like banana or pears mixed with full fat plain yogurt
Morning Snack	Breastmilk or infant formula
Lunch	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Mashed vegetables (sweet potato, squash or carrots) Cooked ground beef, chicken, pork or fish Well-cooked chopped egg or silken (soft) tofu
Afternoon Snack	Breastmilk or infant formula
Dinner	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Cooked vegetables (pieces of carrots, green beans or broccoli) Cooked, minced chicken or turkey or canned or cooked legumes (beans, lentils or peas) Fruit like unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or pureed melon mixed with full fat plain yogurt
Bedtime snack	Breastmilk or infant formula

## Sample Meals for Baby: 6 to 9 months old

Early morning	Breastmilk or infant formula Note: If you are giving your child 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk, aim for 500 mL per day. Do not give more than 750 mL in one day. More than this can replace other healthy foods and could lead to low iron levels. Vitamin D drops for breastfed babies
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Breakfast	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Mashed fruit like banana or pears mixed with full fat plain yogurt
Morning Snack	Breastmilk or infant formula
Lunch	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Mashed vegetables (sweet potato, squash or carrots) Cooked ground beef, chicken, pork or fish Well-cooked chopped egg or silken (soft) tofu
Afternoon Snack	Breastmilk or infant formula
Dinner	Breastmilk or infant formula Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula or water Cooked vegetables (pieces of carrots, green beans or broccoli) Cooked, minced chicken or turkey or canned or cooked legumes (beans, lentils or peas) Fruit like unsweetened applesauce, mashed banana or pureed melon mixed with full fat plain yogurt
Bedtime snack	Breastmilk or infant formula

## Sample Meals for Baby: 9 to 12 months old

Early morning	Breastmilk, infant formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk Vitamin D drops
Breakfast	Iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula, 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk or water Full-fat plain yogurt, unsalted cottage cheese or grated cheese Cooked chopped egg Soft fruit (chopped banana, avocado, peach, seedless watermelon, cantaloupe, papaya, plum or kiwi) Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk
Morning Snack	Strips of whole-grain bread or roti Grated apple or chopped strawberries Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk
Lunch	Infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula, 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk or water Minced or chopped soft-cooked meat (lamb, pork, veal or beef) Cooked whole wheat pasta, rice or pita bread Cubed avocado or peeled and chopped cucumber Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk

# Feeding Tips

Afternoon Snack	Cheese cubes (full fat mozzarella, Swiss or cheddar) with pieces of unsalted whole grain crackers or toast Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk
Dinner	Infant cereal mixed with breastmilk, formula, 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk or water Diced or cut up cooked or canned flaked fish or pieces of firm tofu or chicken Cut up vegetables (soft-cooked green beans, okra, cauliflower, broccoli or carrots) Soft fruit (chopped banana, ripe peach or mango or quartered grapes) Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk
Bedtime snack	Small pieces of whole grain toast, bread, crackers or unsweetened dry O-shaped cereal Breastmilk, formula or 3.25% homogenized whole cow's milk

## Sample Meals for Toddler: 1-3 years old

Breakfast	Mini mushroom omelette Berries with plain yogurt Breastmilk or cow's milk in a cup (3.25% milkfat for children one to two years old, and 1-2% milkfat for children two to three years old)
Morning Snack	Apple slices with nut butter Cheese cubes Water
Lunch	Tofu Vegetable Soup Potato patties Ripe pear slices Breastmilk or milk in a cup
Afternoon Snack	Hummus with 100% whole wheat pita Cherry tomatoes (cut into quarters) Water
Dinner	Turkey or vegetarian chili 100% whole grain bun or roll Water
Bedtime Snack	Banana yogurt wrap Breastmilk or milk in a cup



See more information by visiting [Unlock Food](#).

## Drinking from a cup

- At six months, start teaching your baby to drink from a cup by offering small amounts of water in an open cup
- By 12 months, offer all drinks (e.g. water, milk) in an open cup
- By 18 months, babies should no longer be using a bottle. Babies who drink from a bottle beyond 18 months have a higher risk of tooth decay.
- Your baby does not need juice. According to [Canada's Food Guide](#), juice is considered a sugary drink that should be limited or avoided.

## Other tips

- Be a good role model. Your baby learns eating habits from parents and other family members. Rather than feeding your baby first, eat together and enjoy the same foods.
- It may take time for your baby to try and eat new foods. Be patient and offer new foods with no pressure to eat them. It may take several introductions of a new food before your baby will accept it.
- Babies learn about food using all of their senses. Touching and smelling food is part of the learning process.
- Let your baby decide how much to eat and whether or not to eat. Pay attention to your baby's hunger and fullness cues. Do not force-feed or refuse to give food to your infant.
- Talk to your baby's health care provider if you have questions about their [growth](#)



# Food Safety

## Food allergies

Allergies tend to run in families. A baby is at risk of having a food allergy if a doctor has diagnosed baby's mom, dad, brother or sister with an allergic condition. This includes food allergies, asthma, eczema or hay fever. Babies are at low risk if there is no family history of allergies.

Delaying the introduction of common food allergens does not prevent food allergy.

Common food allergens are:

- Eggs
- Milk
- Soy
- Fish and shellfish
- Wheat
- Peanuts and other nuts
- Sesame

These foods can be given to your baby as part of their first foods when they are six months or older. When introducing these foods, offer one at a time and wait two days before you introduce another common food allergen. Watch for signs of an allergy.

Once your baby has been introduced to a common food allergen, continue to offer the food often to help prevent a food allergy. If you have a family history of food allergy, talk to your baby's doctor about introducing common food allergens.

## Signs of a food allergy

Signs of a food allergy can range from mild to severe. Signs can appear within minutes or even hours after eating or touching the food.

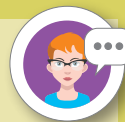
### Signs of a food allergy can include:

- Hives, eczema, rash, red itchy skin
- Stuffy, runny nose with itchy watery eyes
- Upset stomach, vomiting and/or diarrhea

### Signs of a severe food allergy can include:

- Swelling of the face, tongue, lips, eyes or throat
- Difficulty breathing, swallowing or talking
- Faintness, weakness or passing out

If you are concerned your baby has a food allergy, stop giving the food and talk to your baby's health care provider.



**Call 911 if you think your baby is showing signs of a severe food allergy.**



## Choose safe foods for your child

- Children younger than one year of age **should not eat honey**. It may contain a germ that causes infant botulism, a type of paralysis in infants, but not in older children and adults.
- Avoid unpasteurized milk and cheese products. Avoid unpasteurized fruit or vegetable juices, unless they were prepared from washed, fresh fruit or vegetables just before serving.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables well under running tap water, especially if you are serving them uncooked. Be especially careful with lettuce, spinach and other salad greens.
- Children should avoid eating raw or undercooked alfalfa, mung bean or other sprouts, because the seeds used for sprouting may have germs



For more information about food safety, visit [Caring for Kids](#) or [About Kids Health](#).



# Constipation

## What are normal bowel routines?

Bowel movements can be very different from one baby to another. What is normal for your baby depends on their age, as well as what they eat and drink. Breastfed babies who have not started solids yet usually have soft, yellow stool. Formula-fed babies can have yellow, green or brown stools. Stools can be mushy, pasty, soft or firm depending on the type of formula your baby is given.

How often your baby has a bowel movement can vary as well. Some babies have bowel movements every day. Others have bowel movements less often. Some breastfed babies do not have stools for several days or longer. It is important not to compare your baby with other babies. Your baby is not constipated if their stools are soft and pain-free.

## How do I know if my baby has short-term constipation?

Short-term constipation usually doesn't last longer than two weeks. It often clears up with eating more fibre and making sure enough fluids are offered. Your baby may have short-term constipation if:

- They have pain or strains while having a bowel movement
- Stools are small and hard
- Stools happen less often than they normally do. However, having fewer bowel movements alone does not mean your baby is constipated as long as stools are soft, pain-free and follow their usual pattern.

### Common causes of short-term constipation:

- When solids are introduced
- Changes in routine, for example, starting day care
- Weaning from breastmilk
- During or after illness with fever and vomiting



## Tips to help with short-term constipation

### For babies younger than six months old:

- There are no special dietary guidelines for constipation in babies less than six months old. Giving your baby solids before six months is not recommended.
- If you are breastfeeding, feed your baby whenever they seem hungry. If they have at least five wet diapers per day, they are getting enough breastmilk.
- If you give your baby formula, make sure that you prepare it with the right amount of water. Check with your health care provider if you are not sure if your baby is drinking enough formula.



### For babies six to 12 months old:

- Offer your baby a variety of healthy foods that are the right texture for their age
- Offer foods that are good sources of fibre. This includes whole wheat toast, infant cereals (oatmeal, barley, brown rice), cooked and mashed dried beans, peas and lentils, cubed or diced soft-cooked vegetables or soft fruits.
- Gradually add higher fibre foods to help prevent gas and stomach pain
- Offer water between meals and at regular feeding times (in an open cup)
- Juices such as prune, apple or pear may help make stool softer and easier to pass. Give no more than 125 ml (1/2 cup) of 100% juice per day while constipated.
- Prunes are commonly given to help constipation. Start with a small amount (15 ml or 1 tablespoon) and increase slowly. You can add pureed prunes to infant cereal, yogurt or minced meats.



**Call your health care provider if you think your baby may be constipated.**

Do not give your baby medications, laxatives, enemas, suppositories or herbal supplements without talking to your health care provider first.

# Vaccinations



[niagararegion.ca/vaccines](http://niagararegion.ca/vaccines)

Call the Immunization Report Line:  
905-688-8248 or  
1-888-505-6074 ext. 7425  
Fax 905-688-8225

Vaccines have many health benefits. For example, vaccines:

- Strengthen your child's immune system to prevent disease
- Protect your child from secondary infections (such as pneumonia or encephalitis)
- Protect other people from illness, including those who cannot get vaccines or have a weaker immune system

## Where to get your child vaccinated

Starting at two months of age, your child can get free vaccines at:

- Their health care provider
- Walk-in clinics

If you do not have a health care provider, your child can get vaccinated at one of [Public Health's General Immunization Clinics](#).

## Keep your child's vaccines up-to-date

If your child was not vaccinated as a baby or is not up-to-date with their vaccines, talk to their health care provider about a catch-up schedule. If your child does not have a health care provider, please contact the [Vaccine Preventable Disease Program](#) (contact information on next page).



## Useful vaccination resources:

- Your child's health care provider
- [The Vaccine Preventable Disease Program](#)  
905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7425 [niagararegion.ca/vaccines](http://niagararegion.ca/vaccines)  
Connect with a public health nurse about any vaccine topic, including:
  - Booking an appointment at a [General Immunization Clinic](#)
  - What vaccines your child needs and when
  - Which diseases vaccines protect your child from
  - Catch up schedule if your child has missed vaccinations
  - Questions about multiple vaccines at once, helping your child manage pain, or whatever is on your mind
- [A Parent's Guide to Vaccination](#)  
This guide provides great information on what vaccines your child will need and when. It also has information on the safety of vaccines and how to help your child with managing pain.
- [The Canadian Paediatric Society - Caring for Kids](#)

## Planning ahead for school

Children need to have certain vaccines, or a valid exemption, in order to go to licensed child care centres (Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014) and school (Immunization of School Pupils Act).

Parents are responsible for providing up-to-date vaccination information to public health. Remember to [report your child's vaccinations](#).



To learn more, visit the [Online Vaccination Reporting for Children 0-17 Years](#).

# Dental Health

## Tooth decay is the most common childhood disease

Baby teeth are important. Your baby's first teeth help them to eat, speak and smile. They also save space for their future permanent teeth. If cavities develop in baby teeth, the infection may pass on to their permanent teeth. Your child may have some of their baby teeth until age 12, so it is important to start healthy habits early.

## Fluoride

- Fluoride is a naturally-occurring substance. Fluoride helps to strengthen tooth enamel (the hard outer layer of teeth). When teeth are stronger they are less likely to get cavities.
- Fluoride is **NOT** added to Niagara's drinking water. **The fluoride levels in Niagara's drinking water are too low to prevent cavities.**
- As soon as teeth appear, brush your baby's teeth twice a day using a rice grain sized portion of fluoride toothpaste and soft bristled toothbrush. Be sure to rinse any remaining toothpaste from the mouth using water on the toothbrush.
- Too much fluoride from any source, including toothpaste, can cause dental fluorosis. Fluorosis is a cosmetic condition that appears as white chalky spots on the tooth surface. Children under three years of age should have their teeth brushed by an adult using a rice grain sized portion of fluoride toothpaste. Dental fluorosis is very uncommon in Niagara.
- Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that can be painted on a child's teeth to help reduce cavities. Fluoride varnish is safe and can be used on babies from the time they get their first tooth. If you would like more information about fluoride varnish, call Niagara Region Public Health's Dental Health Line at 905-688-8248 or toll free at 1-888-505-6074, ext. 7399.



A rice grain sized portion of toothpaste on a child's tooth brush is shown on the left. A pea-sized portion is shown on the right.

© 2010 Canadian Dental Association



**Children should visit a dental professional by one year of age, or as soon as their first tooth appears.**

## Early Childhood Tooth Decay

Early childhood tooth decay (ECTD) is a serious preventable dental disease which can destroy baby teeth. ECTD occurs when the teeth are not being cleaned regularly and any liquids (other than water) are left in the mouth for long periods of time.

### Babies are at an increased risk of ECTD if they:

- Take a bottle to bed
- Drink anything other than water from a bottle or sippy cup often throughout the day
- Fall asleep breastfeeding with milk still in the mouth
- Use a soother dipped in anything sweet

### ECTD can cause:

- Pain
- Infection
- Many cavities
- Ear and speech problems
- Trouble eating
- Crooked permanent (adult) teeth
- Poor self-esteem

### How to protect your baby's teeth from ECTD:

- Before teeth appear, wipe your baby's gums with a soft, clean, damp cloth twice a day
- Try to avoid letting your baby fall asleep with a bottle in their mouth or while breastfeeding. Gently clean your baby's teeth and gums after feedings.
- Avoid putting anything in your baby's mouth that has been in your mouth, including spoons, toothbrushes and pacifiers. Cavities can be caused by germs passed from adults.
- Do not let your baby constantly sip on liquids containing sugar. If you choose to offer these liquids, give them during meal times. Your baby produces more saliva (spit) while eating which can help to wash away sugars. Offer water, instead of other liquids, between meals.
- When your baby is six months of age offer liquids in an open cup
- Your baby's first visit to the dentist should occur by one year of age, or when the first tooth appears
- Follow the guidelines listed above



Early Childhood Tooth Decay



Advanced Childhood Tooth Decay



If you notice white or brown spots on your child's teeth, or changes to their gums, contact your dental professional or [Niagara Region Public Health](#) immediately. This may be a sign of ECTD.



## Teething

- Once teething starts, it continues for about two years
- Some babies seem to have no problem with teething while others may be fussy. You may notice your baby drooling, biting or gnawing. There may also be some swelling of the gums.
- Fever, rash and diarrhea are NOT symptoms of teething. Contact your baby's health care provider as these could be signs that your child is ill.

### How you can help relieve your baby's sore or tender gums:

Gently massage baby's gums with a clean damp cloth

Give your baby a clean, chilled (not frozen) teething ring to chew on

Do **NOT** use teething cookies. They contain sugar and may lead to cavities.

Do **NOT** use teething gels as they may numb baby's throat and cause choking

Extra love and patience will help your baby through the teething process

Talk with your health care provider about using pain medication



Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society warn against the use of amber teething necklaces/bracelets. They pose a significant safety risk for choking, suffocation and/or strangulation.

Upper Teeth	When Teeth Come In	When Teeth Fall Out
Central incisor	7-12 months	6-8 years
Lateral incisor	9-13 months	7-8 years
Canine (cuspid)	16-22 months	10-12 years
First molar	13-19 months	9-11 years
Second molar	25-33 months	10-12 years

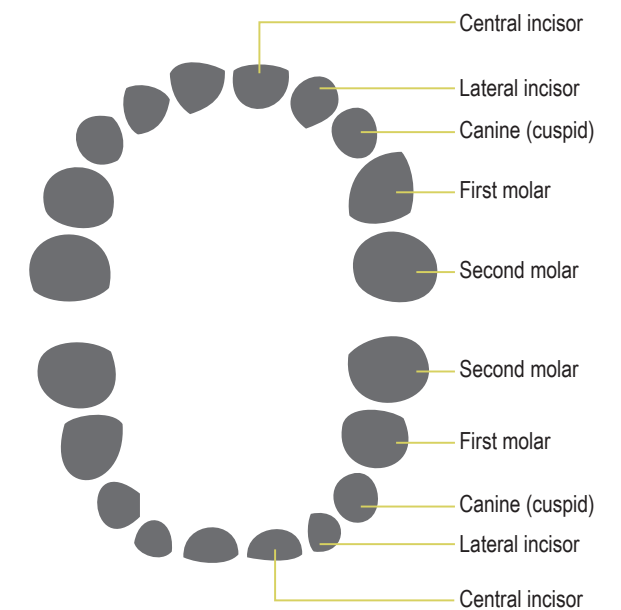
Lower Teeth	When Teeth Come In	When Teeth Fall Out
Central incisor	6-10 months	6-8 years
Lateral incisor	7-16 months	7-8 years
Canine (cuspid)	16-23 months	9-12 years
First molar	12-18 months	9-11 years
Second molar	20-30 months	10-12 years

Information courtesy of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Niagara Region Public Health provides access to FREE dental programs for **eligible** babies, children and youth (17 years and younger).

These clinics provide the following services:

- Dental screening
- Healthy Smiles Ontario
- Preventive clinics
- Dental health support and education



To see if your child qualifies, or for more information, please call the Dental Health Line at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7399 or visit Niagara's [Dental Health Clinics](#).



# When Your Baby is Sick

## Fever

- Fever is a symptom of an illness, not a diagnosis
- Fever is defined as a temperature greater than 38°C or 100.4° F

### If your child has a fever:

- Keep your baby comfortable and offer lots of fluids
- Remove extra blankets and some clothing so heat can leave their body, and help to lower body temperature
- Don't take off all of your baby's clothes as they may become too cold and start shivering, making more body heat and causing their temperature to rise again.
- Do not sponge bath your baby with lukewarm water or alcohol

### Call your health care provider or go to the hospital if your baby has a fever and:

- Is **less** than six months of age
- Appears unusually sick
- Doesn't get better within 48 hours
- Is more cranky or fussy than usual
- Seems sleepier than usual to you (i.e., lethargic or does not respond)
- Has a rash or any other signs of illness that you are worried about

### Thermometer Facts:

- A digital thermometer can be used for oral (under the tongue) or axilla (armpit) temperature taking
- Taking your baby's temperature in the armpit is the safest and easiest method
- Fever strips are **NOT** recommended because they do not give accurate readings
- Mercury thermometers are **NOT** to be used. If it breaks you and your baby may be exposed to toxic material
- To take your baby's temperature follow the instructions on the package



For more information, visit [About Kids Health](#) or [Caring for Kids](#).



Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000 TTY: 1-866-797-0007

Free Access to a Registered Nurse – 24 Hours a day, 7 days a Week.

Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service you can call to get health advice or general health information from a registered nurse. The nurse can assess symptoms and help you decide whether to take care of your baby yourself, make an appointment with your health care provider, go to a clinic, contact a community service or go to a hospital emergency room. You do not need to provide your health insurance number and all information is confidential.

### Speak to your health care provider and/or pharmacist about medications to use to reduce your baby's fever.

- **Acetaminophen and ibuprofen are medications that are commonly recommended to reduce fever and discomfort**
- Unless your health care provider says otherwise, give the dose as recommended on the package until your baby's temperature comes down
- Never exceed the recommended dose
- Do not alternate between using acetaminophen and ibuprofen as this can lead to dosing errors

**A child with a fever should NOT be given aspirin. Taking aspirin can increase the risk of Reye's Syndrome – a very serious condition that can damage the liver and brain.**

### How to protect your baby from illness:

- Wash your hands before picking up your baby, feeding your baby and after changing your baby's diaper
- Avoid sharing toys that may have been put in the mouths of other babies
- Try to keep away from people who are or may be ill
- Follow the vaccination schedule and get your baby vaccinated on time



For more information, visit the [Government of Ontario: Vaccines for babies and toddlers](#)

## Vomiting and Diarrhea

**Diarrhea** is defined as stools that are watery and more frequent than usual.

**Vomiting and diarrhea** can be serious if not taken care of properly as they can lead to dehydration. Call your health care provider or go to the hospital if your baby:

- Has diarrhea and is less than six months old
- Has blood in their stools
- Vomits two or three times or more in a row, in a day or over the course of a few days
- Has a fever
- Is going pee less (fewer than four wet diapers in 24 hours) with no tears, dry skin, dry mouth, dry tongue, sunken eyes, greyish skin or a sunken soft spot on top of the head

Continue to breastfeed your baby during illness.

Do not give your baby medications to stop vomiting or diarrhea.

Talk to your health care provider before you give your baby an oral rehydration solution such as Pedialyte. Avoid giving your child juice and/or sport drinks.

## Colds

Colds are a common and mild type of infection. Typical symptoms may include:

- Runny or stuffed-up nose
- Coughing and sneezing
- Watery eyes
- Fever
- Mild sore throat
- Mild tiredness
- Decreased appetite

A cold is usually caused by a virus that is found in the nose and throat. It will usually get better within five to seven days.

### Some things you can do when your baby has a cold:

- Continue to breastfeed
- Speak with your health care provider about the use of a rubber suction bulb and/or saline nose drops if your baby is having difficulty feeding due to nasal congestion
- For the relief of pain or fever, give infant's acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Always follow the directions on the package carefully.
- Offer extra fluids and encourage rest
- Encourage frequent hand washing for everyone in the household



Medications for cold symptoms and coughs are not recommended for children under six years of age. Talk to your health care provider before using any cough and cold medication for your child.

Colds can sometimes lead to **middle ear infections**. Signs may include rubbing and pulling at the ear, crankiness, vomiting, fever, and/or pus draining from the ear. Contact your health care provider if you think your baby may have an ear infection.

**Chest colds** can be more serious for young babies. Your baby should see their health care provider if they:

- Seem to have difficulty breathing or have noisy breathing
- Are coughing up mucus
- Have a cough that causes them to vomit
- Show changes in colour around their lips

**Croup** is a harsh, barking (like a seal) cough or cry that becomes worse at night time. Croup can occur with other cold symptoms and may cause your baby to have difficulty breathing. Seek immediate medical attention if you think your baby has croup.





# Your Baby's Safety

- Keeping Your Baby Safe at Home
- Children's Products
- Choking
- Sunscreen and Bug Spray
- Car Seat Safety



## Keeping Your Baby Safe at Home

Babies change a lot in their first year of life. With every new skill comes a new danger. Many injuries can be avoided by supervising children carefully and by making their surroundings safer.



Did you know? Falls around the home are the leading cause of head injury for infants and toddlers.

### How to keep my baby safe

Children are naturally curious and do not easily recognize and avoid hazards. Think ahead - what will my baby do next? How can my baby be hurt? How can I plan for their safety? Use the chart below to get started.

When my baby can...	This means my baby can...	To keep my baby safe I can...
Roll around	Fall from places like change tables, couches and beds	Keep a hand on my baby when placed on furniture
Put things in their mouth	Choke or be poisoned	Keep medicine, vitamins, make up and cleaning supplies locked up and out of reach
Pick up small things with their thumb and finger	Choke on anything small enough to fit in a toilet paper roll	Get down at my child's level and put out of reach anything small (e.g., corner of milk bag, small toys, batteries, buttons, coins)
Crawl	Fall down the stairs	Install hardware mounted gates at the top of the stairs and pressure gates at the base of the stairs. Remove them when my child's chin is in line with the top of the gate or when they are two years old. Stay close and teach my baby how to go up and down the stairs safely using the handrail.
Pull to stand	Reach hot things on tables and stoves	Put my baby in their crib or highchair while I make meals

"Out of reach" means that my baby shouldn't be able to touch anything when reaching, crawling, standing or climbing. Little hands can reach into places adults usually can't.

My "child's level" is everything my child sees or touches while lying, sitting, standing or climbing.

# Children's Products

There are some baby products available in stores or online that may seem safe but could be dangerous for your child. Be sure to read information from the manufacturer for any product for your child. Look for the age recommendation and all safety-related information.

Health Canada has easy-to-understand health and safety information on [product safety](#) and [product recalls](#).

## Choking

It's important to keep choking hazards away from children under three years of age.

### Small objects

You can use an empty toilet paper roll to test for choking hazards in your home. If an item is small enough to pass through it, it's a choking hazard.

#### To protect your baby:

- Vacuum often and don't leave small objects within your baby's reach
- Avoid toys that have small, loose or breakable parts that your baby could swallow or inhale
- Don't use amber 'teething' necklaces. Your baby can choke on the beads or be strangled by the necklace.
- Latex balloons are a choking hazard and should not be used
- Keep magnets, especially toy magnets that are small enough to be swallowed, away from your baby



For more information on child safety and preventing injuries, visit:

[Caring for Kids – Keep your baby safe](#)

[Caring for Kids: Feeding your baby in the first year](#)

[Parachute: Choking](#)



### Food

Young children don't know how to chew food into tiny pieces. Foods most likely to cause choking are small, round or cylindrical in shape like hot dogs, whole grapes, carrot slices, seeds and hard candy.

#### To protect your baby:

- Always supervise them while they are eating
- Make sure your baby is sitting down to eat
- Grate raw vegetables such as carrots
- Cook hard fruits and vegetables to soften them
- Remove pits from fruits
- Slice round foods such as hot dogs, grapes or blueberries lengthwise
- Chop or scrape stringy meat and add broth to moisten it
- Spread sticky foods like nut butters thinly on a cracker or toast rather than bread
- Don't feed your baby whole nuts, popcorn, gummy candies, hard candy, or fish with bones



To be able to react confidently in an emergency, consider taking an Infant and Child CPR course. Training is offered through [Heart Niagara](#) and the [Canadian Red Cross](#).



## Sunscreen and Bug Spray



For more information, see Health Canada's [Sun Safety Tips for Parents](#).



### Your baby and the sun

Keep babies under one year out of direct sunlight. Never let them play or sleep in the sun. When your baby is over six months of age, use a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with SPF 30+.

Apply sunscreen to your baby 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two to three hours and after swimming or sweating. More ways to protect your baby from the sun include:

- Avoid being in the sun from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., when the rays are their strongest, or any time of the day when the UV Index is 3 or more
- Seek shade from natural or artificial sources (i.e., trees, shade structures, buildings)
- Always wear a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection

**You may see sunscreen labelled BABY or INFANT. Health Canada does not recommend applying sunscreen to infants under the age of six months unless advised by a health care provider.**

### Bug spray

- Do not use Icaridin/Picardin and avoid bug sprays with DEET for babies less than six months of age
- You may use a small amount of a lower concentration of DEET spray/creams (no more than 10% DEET, up to once a day) on babies six months to two years of age
- If using sunscreen and bug spray, apply the sunscreen first and wait 20 minutes before applying the bug spray
- Do not apply to your baby's face or hands, and be careful not to get it in your child's eyes



More information is available at [Caring for Kids](#).

## Car Seat Safety

By law, children must be buckled up in a child restraint appropriate for their weight, height and age while travelling by car.

During the first year a rear-facing car seat will support your baby's neck in a sudden stop or crash. By installing the car seat in the back of the car, rear-facing, it will allow your baby to be far from the front air bags if there is a crash.



### Choosing a Car Seat Checklist:

Your baby must fit the weight and height limits of the car seat

Buy your car seat in Canada so that it meets the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS)

Car seats purchased in the United States do not meet CMVSS requirements

The car seat must be installed properly in your vehicle. Check both your car owner's manual and the child seat user guide for more information.

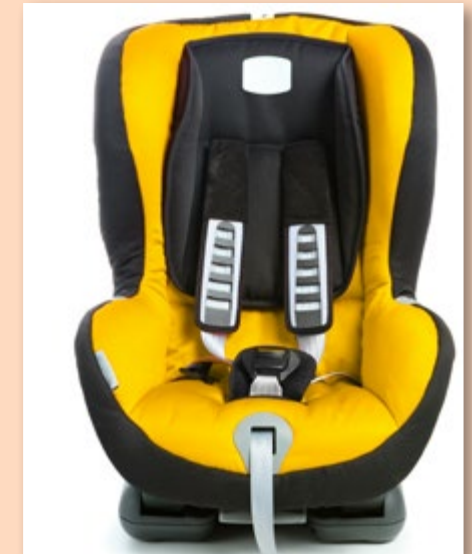
Be aware of the car seat's expiry date

Know the history of a second-hand car seat Has it been in an accident or experienced any recalls?

Send in the product registration card after you buy the child seat so you will receive notice of any recalls

**It is recommended that children remain rear-facing in a car seat for up to two years**

**Items that did not come with your new child seat such as liners, head huggers, tray or comfort straps may not be safe to use. Contact the car seat manufacturer and ask if these items are safe to use.**



## Types of Car Seats

### Infant-Only Car Seats

Use infant-only car seats from birth to 10 kg (22 lbs).

- Keep rear-facing for as long as the height/weight limit of your car seat allows
- Once your baby outgrows the infant seat, use a larger, rear-facing seat
- Always place in the back seat, rear-facing
- Ensure the base of the car seat is attached and is anchored properly to the vehicle seat
- Pull anchoring belt tight so that the car seat moves no more than 2.5 cm (1 inch) forward or sideways
- Harness straps must lay flat and snug so no excess strap can be pinched at the collarbone. Harness straps must be at or slightly below the shoulder.
- Move chest clip to armpit level
- Place carrying handle in position recommended by manufacturer



### Infant/Child Car Seats

Infant/child car seats can be used as a rear-facing or forward facing car seat.

#### Rear-Facing

- Birth up to 20 kg (45 lbs)
- Keep rear-facing for as long as the height/weight limit of your car seat allows
- Always place in the back seat, rear-facing, at a 45 degree angle
- Ensure the base of the car seat is attached and is anchored properly to the vehicle seat
- Pull anchoring belt tight so that the car seat moves no more that 2.5 cm (1 inch) forward or sideways
- Harness straps must lay flat and snug so no excess strap can be pinched at the collarbone. Harness straps must be at or slightly below the shoulder.
- Move chest clip to armpit level

#### Forward-Facing

- Minimum requirement by law: use when child is over one year of age, over 10 kg (22 lbs) and walking without help
- By law, attach tether strap to the anchor in the car to reduce head and neck injuries in a crash
- Pull seat belt anchor strap tight so that car seat moves no more than 2.5 cm (1 inch) forward or sideways and place harness straps at or above shoulder
- Some car seats are available up to 29.5 k (65 lbs)



#### Booster Seats

Use booster seats from 18-36 kg (40-80 lbs). Some seats are available up to 50 kg (110 lbs).

- A booster seat helps position the vehicle seat belt properly over the child's body
- Ensure lap belt is low across the hips and ensure shoulder belt lies flat across the chest
- A no-back booster seat can only be used when the middle of the child's seat is not above the back of the vehicle seat or head rest



Watch a video on how to install car seats at [Parachute Canada](#).

For more information about car seat safety: [Ontario Ministry of Transportation](#) or [Transport Canada](#)



## Your Growing Baby

- Growth and Development
- Healthy Baby Healthy Brain
- Serve and Return
- My Dad Matters
- Development
- Reading Together
- Learning Through Play
- Physical Activity
- Positive Parenting
- Limit Setting for Your Older Baby
- Managing Misbehaviour
- Taming Toddler Tantrums
- Learning to Use the Toilet
- New Addition to the Family
- Child Care
- Breastfeeding your Older Baby



## Growth and Development

Every baby is unique. Watching your baby grow, knowing what to expect next and learning about how to help your child develop important skills is one of the most rewarding parts of being a parent. To track your baby's development, Niagara Region Public Health recommends using the [Looksee Checklist](#).

### What is the Looksee Checklist?

- The Looksee Checklist is a checklist to help parents keep track of their baby's development
- There is a different checklist for each stage, from one month to six years of age
- Each checklist includes a list of activities you can do with your child. The activities are appropriate for their age and will help them with their development.
- You can complete the Looksee Checklist at home and take it to the doctor for your child's regular check-ups. Talk to your doctor if you have any concerns with your child's development.
- Please see the Appendix for an example of an 18-Month Looksee Checklist.





If you have questions about your child's development, contact [Niagara Parents](#). Some services that may be available to you include:

- [Infant and Child Development Services](#)
- [Niagara Children's Centre](#)
- [Contact Niagara](#)
- [Speech Services Niagara](#)

## Enhanced 18-Month Well Baby Visit

Eighteen months is a milestone in a child's development. A visit to your child's health care provider at this time is **very** important. These are called well baby visits, and they are a chance for you to talk to your health care provider about your baby's development. The 18-month enhanced well-baby visit may take a little longer than normal as your health care provider will:

- Have you complete an 18-month [Looksee Checklist](#)
- Talk to you about the checklist results and any concerns you may have
- Discuss speech development and the importance of reading with your child
- Suggest supports that may be helpful to you
- Complete a routine assessment and immunizations



For more information on the Enhanced 18-month well baby visit and useful links, visit [MacHealth](#).

# Healthy Baby Healthy Brain

Your baby's early experiences help shape the way they will learn, think and behave for the rest of their lives. Parents and caregivers play an important role in their baby's brain development.

## Relationships and early brain development

Building a healthy relationship with your baby influences their physical, social and emotional wellbeing as they grow.

**Building a strong relationship happens when a baby's physical and emotional needs are responded to quickly and warmly. This is especially important when a baby is ill, hurt or upset.** Your baby will develop a special relationship with you when you respond to their needs and when you share happy, playful times together. Your relationship with your baby will influence how they feel about themselves and how they interact with people in the future.

## What you can do

### Be warm, loving and responsive

Babies are born with a need for human contact and stimulation. Play with your baby and hold and cuddle them often to promote healthy brain development.

### Respond to your baby's cues

Studies show that crying newborns who receive a quick, warm response tend to cry much less and sleep more at night. You cannot spoil your baby by comforting them when they cry.

### Talk, read or sing to your baby

Babies are learning language long before they speak. By reading stories and singing songs to your baby, they will find it easier to develop their language skills.



## Establish routines and rituals

Daily routines, such as a bath and a song at bedtime, are reassuring for babies. This helps to provide them with a sense of security. Babies learn what to expect from their environment and how to understand the world around them.

## Take care of yourself

When you take good care of yourself, you are being a positive role model and are better able to give good care to your baby. If your own needs as an adult are being met it is much easier to be patient, consistent and available to your baby.

## Encourage safe play and exploration

As babies grow and are able to crawl and walk they will begin to explore and learn about their world. Encourage this exploration by making sure play areas are safe for your baby. Try following their lead in play.

## Use limit-setting and boundaries as teaching opportunities

Limit-setting is an essential part of love. As babies get older they will test the rules and boundaries you set. As toddlers explore their world they need limits and consistent, predictable, adult supervision. If problem behaviour occurs it is important to get close to your child, gain their attention, and say no in a firm, calm voice. Tell your child what you want them to stop doing and tell them what to do instead. Praise or thank your child if they do as you ask – this encourages them to behave well. Praise your baby when they do something right and they will want to do it again.

## Recognize that each child is unique

Your baby is different than others. By being sensitive to your baby's unique cues, you will help them to develop good feelings about themselves.

## Choose quality childcare and stay involved

It is not only parents who have an effect on their baby, but also anyone who is involved in your baby's care. Make sure that the people who care for your baby are able to provide a loving, nurturing and safe environment.



## Helping Your Baby Develop

Key aspects of being a positive parent include providing a safe and interesting environment, as well as promoting your baby's development. Some key steps to ensure this include:

- Talking and reading to your baby
- Giving your baby safe things to touch, look at, taste and explore with their mouth
- Putting your baby on their tummy for short periods of time
- Encouraging your baby to be active
- Taking your baby on outings to help them learn about the world
- Encouraging your baby's curiosity and imagination
- Providing activities that will stimulate your baby and promote their development



For more information on healthy brain development, visit [Healthy Baby Healthy Brain](#).

## Serve and Return

Serve and return works like a game of tennis or volleyball between a child and caregiver. The child “serves” by reaching out to you – with eye contact, facial expressions, babbling, gestures, or touch. You will then “return the serve” by speaking back, playing peekaboo, or sharing a toy or laugh.

This back-and-forth helps your child’s early brain development. It also helps your child learn how to cope with stress, handle their feelings, and learn important skills for later in their development.



### 5 Steps for Serve and Return

1. Notice when your child is “serving” and where your child is focusing their attention. Notice when your child has discovered something and is pointing, making a facial expression or sound, or moving their arms or legs. That is their serve!
2. “Return” the serve by being supportive and encouraging. To be supportive and encouraging you can play with your child, acknowledge them, hug them, help them, or comfort them with gentle words.
3. Name it. You can return a serve by naming the object your child is seeing, feeling or discovering. For example, you can say, “Yes, that is an apple!” to help make language connections in their brain.
4. Keep the serve and return interaction going. Once you return, give your child time to respond. This will help keep the serve-and-return going.
5. Practice endings and beginnings. Your child will let you know when they are finished an activity and ready to move onto the next. Watch for their cues – they may start to fuss, walk away, or tell you they are all done.



For more information, visit the [Alberta Family Wellness Initiative](#) or [Centre on the Developing Child](#).

## Development



### Speech

Language development and communication starts long before your baby says their first word. Here are some easy and fun ways you can interact with your baby to develop their communication skills:

#### Talk with your baby

- Hold your baby close when you are talking to them
- Use a happy, soothing voice
- Make eye contact. When you say your baby’s name, look at them and attract their attention
- Your baby loves to hear you – imitate their sounds and actions
- When your baby shows interest in an object, repeat the name of it – this is how babies learn best
- Encourage your older baby to use gestures and to express their wants and needs. For example, waving goodbye and shaking their head no.

## Play with your baby

- Play together using toys that make sounds such as rattles and drums
- Use gestures such as blowing kisses, nodding your head when saying yes and encourage them to do it back to you
- Remember what your baby likes and encourage them to laugh
- Follow your baby's lead with one or two games such as "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," "This Little Piggy," and play them over and over again. This will help him or her initiate play as they grow.

## Hearing

Every newborn in Ontario has their hearing tested. However, it is still important to look for any problems as your baby grows.

Call your health care provider if your child shows any of these symptoms of hearing problems:

- Does not pay attention or react to loud noises around the house (e.g., doorbell, telephone)
- Does not react to sound or make some sounds when looking at toys or people by three to four months of age
- Does not turn toward spoken words by nine months of age
- Has had frequent colds, ear infections and/or fluid draining from the ears
- Does not say single words by 12 months of age



If you have any concerns about your child's speech, language, hearing or reading, contact [Speech Services Niagara](https://www.speechservicesniagara.com) 905-688-1890 ext. 110.

## Vision

It is important that your health care provider checks your baby's eyes at least once from birth to three months of age, and again between six and 12 months of age.

Eye examinations for children are fully covered by OHIP once every 12 months until the age of 19.

**Call your health care provider if your baby shows any of these symptoms of vision difficulty:**

- Eyelids are swollen or encrusted
- Bumps or sores around the eyes
- Drooping eyelids
- Does not make eye contact with you and/or does not watch or follow an object with their eyes by three months of age



To learn more about children's vision and to find an Optometrist, visit the [Ontario Association of Optometrists](https://www.ontariooptometrists.com).

# Reading Together



Your baby's language and early reading skills begin at birth and develop over time. It's never too early to start reading with your child.



## Encourage your baby to love reading by:

- Talking and playing with your baby
- Reading together every day
- Letting them explore and play with age appropriate books
- Reading favourite books over and over again

## How to choose books for your baby

### Birth to six months:

- Pick books with large simple pictures or designs with bright colours
- Board, cloth or vinyl books are best because they are durable and can go everywhere your baby goes

### Six months to nine months:

- Look for board books with flaps, pockets, different textures, clear pictures and simple sound effects
- Washable cloth books are easy to cuddle with
- Pick short, simple stories with colourful pictures



For more information on books that are appropriate for your child's age, visit [Zero to Three](https://www.zerotothree.com). For information on reading milestones, visit [Caring for Kids](https://www.caringforkids.com).

### Nine to 18 months:

- Choose board books with simple stories
- Look for stories with phrases that repeat and have rhymes
- Choose books with photos of other babies or familiar objects (e.g., a ball, a car)

### 18 to 24 months:

- Begin reading longer stories with more complex plots
- Choose books with humour and silly rhymes

### When you read with your child, remember to:

- Use funny voices and sounds
- Let your child choose the book
- Repeat, repeat, repeat new words – and wait. Give your child time to try and imitate you.
- Stop when they want to stop

A great place to access free books is at your local library. Many libraries also offer free programs for you and your baby to enjoy together.



## Learning through Play

As babies grow they are always learning through **seeing, hearing, touching, tasting** and **smelling**. It is important to play with your baby throughout the day and offer many opportunities to learn through their senses.

### Here are a few ways to help your baby learn through play:

- Sing, read and talk to your baby even if they don't seem to be listening
- Hold your baby, smile and tell them you love them
- Take your baby for walks around your neighbourhood or go to a park – talk about the things you see and hear
- Play music and gently move your baby's arms and legs to the beat
- Secure brightly coloured objects near your child – mobiles, mirrors, pictures
- Offer age appropriate toys that your baby can grasp and hold
- Play during bath time – gentle splashing, floating toys, and cups
- Play simple games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
- Offer larger toys in bright colours and ones that move or can be pushed and pulled
- Play with your baby on the floor and encourage him or her to crawl by placing a favourite toy just out of reach
- Provide time for both structured and unstructured play





Screen time is not recommended for children under two years of age. This includes TV, computers, tablets, smartphones or any other electronic devices. To learn more, visit [Caring for Kids](#).



**Unstructured play** is also known as free play, and is a great source of discovery for your child. This play just happens, depending on your child's interest at that time. Free play is not planned and lets your child use their imagination and move at their own pace. It allows your child to try out new life skills, problem solve and develop creativity. Examples of unstructured play might include exploring new play spaces like cupboards, backyards, or parks, imaginative games like playing dress up, or creative play alone or with others.

#### Play ideas for children:

- Building blocks
- Digging in the dirt
- Kicking a ball
- Moving to music
- Playing dress up
- Playing house or school
- Riding toys



For more information, visit [Caring for Kids: Playtime with your baby: Learning and growing in the first year](#) and [Your busy toddler: Games, toys and play in the second year of life](#).

**Structured play** is different than unstructured play. It is more organized and happens in a set space or at a set time. It is often led by a grown-up. Examples of structured play include storytelling in groups for toddlers, dance lessons, family games, or water classes for toddlers.

#### Ideas for structured play:

- Finger painting and colouring
- Hopping and singing games
- Nature walking
- Throwing and catching
- Visiting an EarlyON Centre



## Active Living

### Being active is important

Regular physical activity provides many health benefits, even for babies. Active play in the early years improves your baby's movement and overall health. It also makes it more likely that they will stay physically active later in life. To encourage physical activity, try not to keep your child in strollers, high chairs and car seats for long periods of time. **Your baby should be physically active several times a day. The best place for active play is on the floor, playing with you and playing with toys.**

#### Physical activity:

- Makes the heart and lungs stronger
- Increases flexibility
- Improves coordination
- Helps your child keep a healthy body weight
- Helps early brain development

- Develops self-confidence
- Provides the foundation for how to run, jump, kick, throw and climb as your child grows and develops new skills
- Improves learning and attention

### Being active as a child means:

- Climbing stairs or moving around the home
- Playing outside and exploring the environment
- Crawling, walking, running, or dancing

**The love of moving needs to be taught and encouraged, similar to the way children are taught and encouraged to read.** Help your child learn to enjoy being active at home or in child care.

It is never too early to get your child moving. Offer toys that encourage children to move their muscles. Provide building toys, riding toys, balls, beanbags and other tools to get your child moving.

Be a role model for how to enjoy physical activity in your own everyday life.

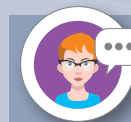


For more information and activity ideas, visit [Active for Life](#).

## EarlyON Child and Family Centres



**EarlyON**  
Child and Family Centre  
**ON y va**  
Centre pour l'enfant et la famille



EarlyON Child and Family Centres are located across Niagara for parents and children from birth to six years of age.

### The centres offer:

- Fun activities – reading, storytelling, sing-alongs, games and more
- Friendly staff that are trained in early childhood development
- Access to other community resources you can benefit from
- Connection to other families/caregivers with young children
- Caregiver programs, such as infant sleep and breastfeeding classes

Children must be supervised by their parent or caregiver at all times at an EarlyON Centre, as they are not a child care centre. However, all services are free. They are staffed with individuals who have a range of expertise in early childhood development, including trained early years professionals and volunteers.



For locations, hours of operation and each centre's monthly calendar of events, visit [EarlyON Locations and Hours in Niagara](#).

# Positive Parenting

Being a positive parent involves helping your children learn to handle their feelings and behaviour. Giving your baby positive attention and encouraging them in everyday situations helps them learn to do their best as they grow. Positive parenting means just that: responding positively when your child is doing something right, and reinforcing the behaviour you want to see.

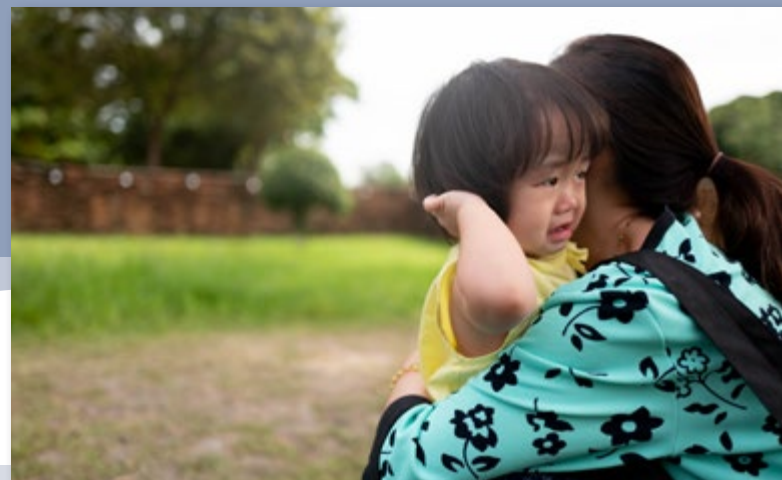
There are five key steps to positive parenting that are helpful to remember:

1. Create a warm, loving, safe environment for your child
2. Use positive strategies to encourage your child's learning
3. Begin to use **assertive discipline**. This helps your child take responsibility for their actions as your child gets older (about 18 months to two years).
4. Have reasonable expectations of both your child and yourself
5. Take care of yourself by looking after your own needs. If your own needs are being met it is much easier to be patient, consistent and available to your child.



What is assertive discipline? It is about being consistent, acting quickly when children misbehave and teaching them to behave in an acceptable way.

For example, when parents use strategies like preparing in advance, setting ground rules, giving clear and calm instructions and praising good behaviour, they are more likely to be successful than when they resort to yelling, name calling, threatening or spanking as forms of discipline. Assertive discipline works best when both parents or caregivers support each other and use the same approach.



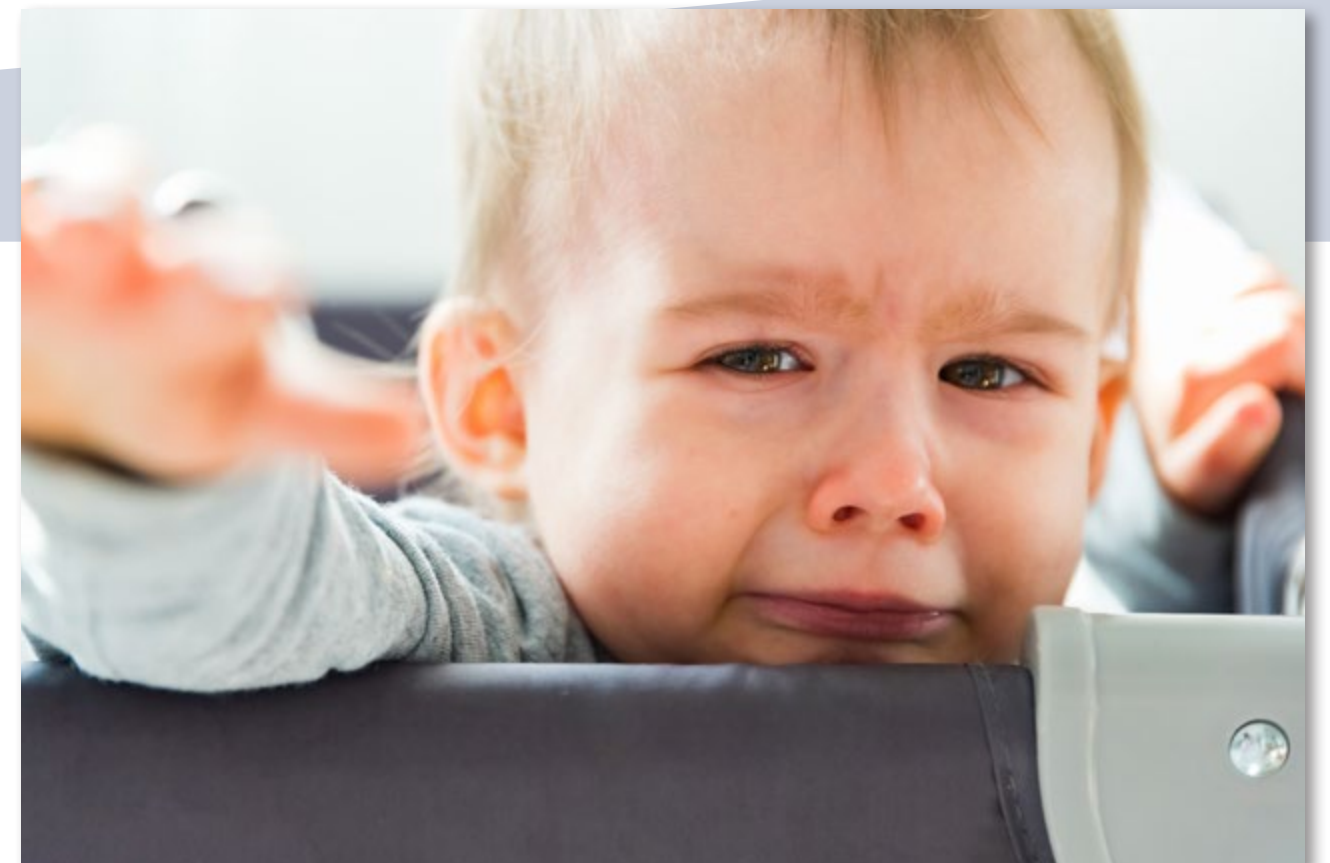
You can learn more about positive parenting through the Positive Parenting Program offered by Niagara Region Public Health. Visit [Niagara Parents](#) to register.

## Separation Anxiety

Most infants go through a stage when they react with fear or hesitation to people they don't see every day. Separation anxiety is a normal part of child development, and may begin around seven to nine months of age. Here are some tips to help your infant feel more secure:

- Spend quality time with your child
- Avoid unnecessary separations. When possible, stay in your child's view.
- Let your family and friends know what to expect
- Give your child time to become familiar with new people and places
- Respond to your child if they are upset
- Praise your child for smiling at and approaching others
- Give your child chances to be around family and friends
- Develop a consistent routine for when you must leave your child
- If you need to be away from your child, use a caregiver your child is familiar with

As your child gets older and learns that you always come back to them, they will learn how to calmly separate from you and be around others.



## Limit Setting for Your Older Baby



To keep your baby safe and help them develop positive behaviours, start setting limits for your baby once they begin to crawl and explore their environment. Babies need to be able to explore and learn in a safe, stimulating and positive home environment. Here are a few tips to guide you:

- Setting limits for your child under age two, which often involves redirection and distraction. If your older baby is doing something that you do not want them to do, guide their attention to something else.
- Be prepared to get up and go to your baby to remove them from whatever you don't want them to be doing. Then, try providing them with a new activity.
- Be consistent and persistent. Babies and toddlers need a lot of repetition as they do not understand the difference between what is okay and what is not okay.
- It is important to be positive with your baby. They need your gentle guidance. Praise your child when they do something right and they will want to do it again.
- Body language and tone of voice are important - get down to your child's level and speak gently



**Spanking and other types of physical punishment are not effective forms of discipline.**

### Spanking can:

- Lead to anger and resentment
- Cause children to lose trust in their caregivers and feel unsafe
- Teach children that hitting others is okay

**Never spank, slap, pinch, push or hit your child.**

## Encouraging Behaviour You Like



If you pay attention to and praise your child when they are behaving well, they will behave well more often.



1. **Spend time together**
  - Spend small amounts of time with your child often
  - Stop what you are doing and pay attention to your child
2. **Talk with your child**
  - Talk about things they like
  - Ask questions and show them you are listening
3. **Show affection to your child**
  - Show affection in ways you and your child are comfortable with
  - Hold hands, give cuddles, kisses, hugs and high-fives
4. **Praise your child**
  - Notice when your child is behaving well, and praise them for it
  - Tell your child what they did that you liked
  - Be clear, and mean what you say
5. **Give your child attention**
  - Show your child that you notice when they are behaving well
  - Give them a smile, wink, nod, thumbs up or just watch them
6. **Give your child lots of things to do (have interesting activities)**
  - Having lots of things to do keeps your child busy and helps them learn
  - Busy kids are less likely to get in trouble
  - Give them toys and activities, both at home and when you are out
  - Toys and activities don't have to be expensive

# Helping Your Child Deal with Their Feelings

Dealing with children's feelings can be very hard on parents. Here are some way to help your child have good feelings about themselves and others:

1. **Give your child some things to feel good about:**
  - Talk about what you are thankful for
  - Talk about and create happy memories
  - Help your child feel okay with things they can't change
2. **Help your child have positive thoughts:**
  - Teach your child positive self-talk:
    - "I can do this!"
    - "I've got this!"
3. **Talk with your child about their feelings:**
  - Use words to describe their feelings, such as sad, happy, angry
  - Read books and talk about the character's feelings
4. **Teach your child to ask for help and be there for them when they need it**
5. **Help your child before they become too upset.**
  - Get down to their level, and see what they need.
  - Distract them with a different activity if you are able.
6. **Teach your child how to calm down before they become too upset**
7. **Practice with your child:**
  - Take slow, deep breaths – pretend to blow bubbles
  - Relax muscles – pretend to go limp like a rag doll



# Parenting Your One to Two Year Old

## One Year Olds

Babies need comfort from their parents. They need to know the world is a safe place. The most important thing you can do is respond to your baby and figure out what they need. This will make your baby feel loved and calm them.

Here are some tips on how to parent your one year old:

1. **Create a safe environment for your baby.** One year olds need to explore their environment to learn about the world. Your role as a parent is to make sure your baby's environment is safe to explore.
2. **Discipline means being there for your baby.** For children as young as one, your baby needs you to consistently be there for them. When you are right there with your child every step of the way, you have the opportunity to teach them what the expectations are in their world. They learn what they are allowed to do and not allowed to do.
3. **Do not yell at your baby.** Yelling and insults encourage violence. If babies are yelled at, they may become hesitant to explore and learn. What you say matters to them.
4. **Comfort your baby when they are crying.** Respond to your baby's distress with comfort. This might mean moving to your baby, picking them up, being close to them and holding them. You can calm your baby physically with comfort and with words. Doing this helps your baby learn how to handle their emotions later on.
5. **Distract them.** If your baby gets into something you do not want them to (i.e., they are pulling on the curtains), you need to say very clearly, "you need to stop pulling on the curtains." Avoid saying "no" – babies do not understand what this means. Then, try distracting your baby with something else that will be just as interesting as what they were doing.





6. **Provide the nutrition and sleep needed for health.** When your baby is well fed and rested, it will help them avoid reaching the point of being overwhelmed. Sometimes, you might find that your baby gets very overwhelmed. Their behaviour can be overwhelming to you as a parent.

**When this happens, it is important that you stay calm.** If you get upset, your baby will become more upset.

By modelling how to stay calm and using that calmness to soothe and comfort your baby, your baby will learn how to handle their own feelings and emotions.

## Two Year Olds

By the time your child is two years old they are learning how to handle their emotions better, beginning to understand the idea of rules and limits, and they have a stronger sense of self as a separate person from you. They are also more verbal so they are able to express themselves using words rather than just their actions or behaviour.

Two-year-olds are learning to be more independent, but still need a lot of guidance. They may not always be able to explain what they need and may not know what will happen when they do certain things. With some guidance, your child can learn to solve some problems and manage frustrations.

### Here are some tips on parenting your two year old:

1. **Be right there with them.** In play and every aspect of their world, you want to be right in there with them, guiding their behaviour and having conversations about the world they are seeing and experiencing.
2. **Talk to them about how they are feeling about their world**
3. **Talk to them about what behaviour is appropriate and what is inappropriate.** Start pointing out things that are safe and things that are dangerous. Through these conversations, and by spending time playing and talking with your child, you are influencing your child's behaviour through every interaction.
4. **Use routines.** Making sure daily events (brushing teeth, going to daycare, reading a book, eating dinner, etc.) happen in a predictable way every day will help your child feel more secure. They will know what you are expecting from them next.

5. **When your child has a temper tantrum, calm yourself first.** If you get upset, that is likely going to upset your child even more and it will be an even more difficult situation to deal with. Try counting to 10 first to calm yourself down.
6. **Be there physically close to your child to help them calm down when they are upset.** When your child has a temper tantrum, they are overwhelmed by what they are feeling. They need you to step in and help them make sense of those emotions.
7. **When your child misbehaves, move into a space with your child, have them calm down and begin to have the conversation about what happened.** Talk about what they did that was inappropriate or created an issue, and what they could do differently. Then, return to play with them and **praise them when they are behaving well.**
8. **Use distraction.** For example, "I know you want to do that, but instead let's think about some-thing else we can do instead."
9. **If your child is being physically aggressive (hitting, biting, pinching) you need to step in immediately, stop the behaviour, remove the child and help them calm down.** Help them find the words so that you can understand what your child was feeling in that moment. When your child returns to play, remember to praise them when they are behaving well. This will reinforce the behaviour you want to see.



A temper tantrum is when emotions are so overwhelming that your child is lost and does not know what to do. It's their way of shouting out to you or anyone who is in their world that **"I need some help with what I am feeling. I do not know what to do with it."**

You might find you're seeing more aggressive behaviour from your two-year-old. This is typical in terms of their development. They do not have the language yet to express their emotion,

so for them using physical aggression (hitting, biting, pinching) is how they know to get what they need or want.



For more information, visit [Children See Children Learn](#).





## Learning to Use the Toilet

This time can be challenging, so it is important to stay calm and be positive.

### Fast Facts

- Many children may start to show signs of being ready to use the toilet around 18 months to two years of age
- If your child can sit regularly and is comfortable, they can learn to use the toilet with encouragement
- Having accidents is completely normal. Be prepared.
- Do not force your child to use the toilet
- Be consistent and follow the same bathroom routines each day
- Teach by example. Allow your child to watch how you use the toilet.
- Teach boys to use the toilet by having them sit first
- Teach girls to always wipe from front to back
- Most children will be fully day trained anywhere from two-and-a-half to four years of age, and trained throughout the night by eight years of age



### Signs that your child is ready to start using the toilet or potty:

- Telling you when they are wet, soiled or that they need to use the toilet
- When they can stay dry in their diaper for at least two hours
- They want to do things on their own like pulling their pants up or down
- They show an interest in using the toilet
- They have regular bowel movements

### Helpful Tips

- Replace diapers with underwear
- Dress your child in easily removable clothing (e.g., elastic waistbands, skirts, etc.)
- Allow time without clothing or diapers.
- Encourage your child to sit on the toilet:
  - Immediately upon waking in the morning and after naps
  - After meals and snacks
  - Whenever he/she normally poops
  - Every two hours during the day
  - Before bath time

### Rewards

- Praise is the best reward:
  - Hugs and kisses
  - Smiles
  - Words (e.g., "Good job!", "You can do it!")
- Limit material rewards as they can lead to feelings of failure and low self-esteem when your child is unsuccessful





## New Family Members

Having a new baby can be a big change for families. If you have other children at home they may be very excited about this new time. They may want to help with comforting and caring for their new brother or sister.

However, sometimes older children may tell you that they do not like the baby or may act like a baby again. You might notice that your older children respond to a new baby by being disobedient, moody and clingy. They may act jealous or aggressive toward the new baby. Your older child may resist bedtime, refuse meals or have problems using the toilet.

### If you are expecting a new baby:

- Talk to your child about what to expect when the baby comes home. Tell them about what they were like when they were a baby and show them pictures.
- Don't tell them that the new baby will be a friend to play with, because they will be disappointed when the new baby is not ready to play as soon as you come home
- Be ready for lots of questions about where the baby is going to come from. Seek out appropriate age information on sexuality and childbirth.
- Make necessary changes to routines and sleeping arrangements well before the baby comes

### To build positive relationships when you bring your baby home:

- Acknowledge your older child's feelings in a positive way. Try to avoid making them feel guilty about any negative feelings they may be having. For example, you may say, "I know it is not always fun to have a new baby in the house. I really love the baby but also find some things hard, like having to get up with the baby in the middle of the night."
- Don't be too concerned if your child does not want to hug or cuddle you when you are first home with baby. When they are ready, be there to hug and kiss your older child and give them some undivided attention.
- Avoid giving your child the impression they are being replaced by the baby. For example, avoid saying things like "You're a big girl now so it's time for you to sleep in a big girl's bed."
- Use your new baby's name when encouraging your older child to help you with the new baby. This will help your child realize that the baby is a person just like them, rather than a 'thing' that has been brought home.
- Be careful not to accidentally reward poor behavior. Avoid giving too much attention to babyish behaviours. Don't punish your child if they slip back a little in their development. Instead, give lots of praise and encouragement when they behave well.
- If serious misbehavior occurs, such as hurting the baby, act quickly to let children know that such behavior is not okay
- Make sure your older child has a safe place to play without interruptions and away from the baby each day
- Provide your older child with some of your focused attention everyday



Visit [Triple P Ontario](#) for more information on bringing your baby home. You can also find tips on how to handle specific behaviour problems and how to help with your child's development.

Niagara Region Public Health offers free Positive Parenting Programs. Visit [Niagara Parents](#) to register.



# Child Care

## How to find and choose the right child care for your family

It is important to choose a child care provider that will help your child learn and grow in a safe and happy environment. Choosing a licensed child care centre or a home-based child care provider is something you must do early. It takes time to find the right place for your child.



### 1. Think about the type of care your family needs and wants for your child

Consider the following:

- Do you need to find a program that is close to your home, work, or school?
- How many hours each day, and each week, will you need child care?
- Do you need help paying for child care?
- Does your child have any special needs that the child care provider has to meet?
- Do you want your child in a home-based program or in a child care centre?
- Do you want your child to be in a program with other children of the same or different ages?

### 2. Find at least three programs to consider

Visit [Parent Direct Niagara](#) for information and links to programs, services, and resources for children and families in Niagara.

### 3. Interview each program you're considering

- Call each of the child care providers you are considering
- Ask to speak to someone in charge and have your questions ready

### 4. Visit each option

- Talk with the caregivers
- Watch the children and staff and how they interact
- Look at the physical setting of the child care centre. Be aware of the condition of the building, the play equipment available and the indoor and outdoor space.

## Registering for Licenced Child Care: One List

One List is the [Niagara Region Child Care Registry Site](#). This online waitlist takes away the need to contact multiple child care providers to complete multiple applications. The site allows you to register for any of the licensed child care, school age and nursery school programs in the Niagara Region.



### What is the Difference Between Licensed and Unlicensed Child Care?

**Licensed child care** can be home-based or centre-based. Licensed means that the child care is government regulated, it is inspected, and certain standards of care need to be met. Staff members at licensed child care centres include professionals with training in early childhood education.

**Unlicensed child care** means it is not regulated. Since unlicensed caregivers are not inspected by the Ministry of Education, they are not required to meet provincial standards.

For more information about child care options in Niagara, visit [Parent Direct Niagara](#).



## Financial Assistance



For more information about financial help with child care, visit [Children's Services](#).



Breastfeeding is not just for newborns. You can continue to breastfeed even if you are planning on returning to work or school. By the time your child is one year old, most of their nutritional needs are being met from a well-balanced diet of solid foods. However, your baby receives many health and emotional benefits if you continue breastfeeding. As long as your baby continues to breastfeed, there are important vitamins and minerals that your baby will receive. This may help to keep them healthy and lower the risks of infection.

## Breastfeeding and returning to work or school

You are able to continue to breastfeed even if you are planning on a return to work. To help you create a breastfeeding plan, contact a public health nurse at [Niagara Parents](#).

When returning to work, after your baby is born, connect with your employer to address any needs you have for breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk at work.



For more information about your breastfeeding rights, contact:  
[Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)  
[INFACT Canada](#)

## Looksee Checklist Example: 18 Months

The Looksee Checklists can be downloaded from [lookseechecklist](#) and are available from one month to six years old.

### Get Started

#### 1 Choose the nearest age

Choose the checklist that matches your child's age. If your child falls between two ages, use the earlier age (if child is 4½ years old, use the 4 year checklist). If your child is 3 or more weeks premature, determine the appropriate checklist at [lookseechecklist.com/premature](#)

#### 2 Answer the questions

Answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you are not sure, try the question with your child. Any examples are only suggestions. You may use similar examples from your family experience. Language and communication items can be asked in the child's first language. Items marked with \*\* may not be common to all cultures.

#### 3 Follow-up with a professional

If you answer "no" to any question or have any concerns about your child's development, follow-up with a health care and/or child care professional.

### When you're done

Follow the parenting tips beside the checklist to help your child grow. These tips may be a bit more challenging than the checklist. If you have questions, contact a professional. The tips are organized into the following developmental areas:

- Emotional
- Fine Motor
- Gross Motor
- Social
- Self-Help
- Communication
- Learning & Thinking



LIMITATION OF LIABILITY: NICCS has created and provides the Checklists to assist parents, health care and child care professionals (users) with a convenient and easy to use method of recording the development and progress of infants and children within certain age groupings. The Checklists are not meant to be a substitute for the advice and/or treatment of health care and child care professionals trained to properly and professionally assess the development and progress of infants and children. Although the Checklists may help users to determine when they need to seek out the advice and/or treatment of health care and child care professionals, users must still consult with competent health care and child care professionals for advice and/or treatment regarding specific children and their particular needs. Users should bear in mind the following when using the Checklists: (i) The needs of each individual child are unique. Each individual child will develop differently and as such, any perceived limitations in development must be reviewed by a health care and/or child care professional to be properly assessed; (ii) While every effort has been made to make the Checklists as culturally, economically and geographically neutral as possible, it must be understood by users that they may still reflect some cultural, economic or geographic prejudices. As such, these prejudices may affect a specific individual child's results in a Checklist without actually reflecting a developmental limitation. Again, users should contact a health care and/or child care professional to review the needs of an individual infant/child; (iii) The Checklists cannot contain every possible indicator of developmental limitations or goals to meet. As such, the Checklists are not designed for and should not be used to diagnose or treat presumed developmental limitations or other health needs. NICCS makes no representation or warranties, express or implied. This includes, but is not limited to, any implied warranty or merchantability of fitness for a particular use or purpose, and specifically disclaims any such warranties and representations. NICCS expressly disclaims any liability for loss, injury or damages incurred or occasioned as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use of the Checklists. The Checklists are sold with the understanding that NICCS is not engaged in recording health care, child care, medical or other professional services. NICCS PRODUCT LICENSE: The Checklists are the copyright of NICCS Intellectual Property Association and are subject to copyright and other intellectual property laws. By purchasing the Checklists, the user agrees to be bound by the terms of the following limited license: (i) Each page of the Checklist shall only be used in relation to an individual infant/child; (ii) When a Checklist page has been used for an individual infant the completed Checklist page may be copied for archival purposes only, or in order to provide a copy to a health care and child care professional in order to assist in the advice or treatment given by the respective professional for the individual infant/child; (iii) Except as provided in (ii) above, the user shall not copy, modify or remove any of the trademarks, trade names or copyright notices of Nipissing from the Checklists, either in whole or in part; (iv) The user does not acquire any proprietary or other interest in the Checklists; (v) The Nipissing and NICCS are trademarks of NICCS Intellectual Property Association, used under license. All rights reserved. NICCS © 2018. NICCS Intellectual Property Association. All rights reserved.



A checklist to monitor your child's development from 1 month to 6 years of age with tips to help them grow.

<b>1</b> Identify pictures in a book? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>2</b> Use a variety of familiar gestures? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>3</b> Follow directions using "on" and "under"? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>4</b> Make at least four different consonant sounds? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N
<b>5</b> Point to at least 3 different body parts when asked? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>6</b> Say 20 or more words? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>7</b> Hold a cup to drink? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>8</b> Pick up and eat finger food? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N
<b>9</b> Help with dressing by putting out arms and legs? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>10</b> Walk up a few stairs holding your hand? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>11</b> Walk alone? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>12</b> Squat to pick up a toy and stand back up without falling? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N
<b>13</b> Push and pull toys or other objects while walking forward? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>14</b> Stack three or more blocks? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>15</b> Show affection towards people, pets, or toys? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N	<b>16</b> Point to show you something? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N
<b>17</b> Look at you when you are talking or playing together? <input type="radio"/> Y <input type="radio"/> N			

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Always talk to your healthcare or childcare professional if you have any questions about your child's development or well-being. NDCS. © 2019 NDCS Intellectual Property Association. All rights reserved.



# Resources

## Health Advice and Information

- [Niagara Parents](#)
- [Telehealth Ontario](#)

## Credible Health Websites

- [Niagara Region Public Health](#)
- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care](#)
- [Health Canada](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

## Credible Child Health Websites

- [Niagara Parents](#)
- [Caring for Kids](#)
- [About Kids Health](#)
- [Best Start](#)
- [Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society](#)
- [Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health](#)

## Building Relationships and Social and Emotional Growth

- [Keep Connected by the Search Institute](#)
- [Pathways](#)
- [Healthy Baby Healthy Brain](#)
- [Looksee Checklist](#)
- [Zero to Three](#)

## Best Start

- Dads**
- [Dad Central](#)

## Parenting

- [Triple P: Positive Parenting Program](#)
- [Children See Children Learn](#)

## Infant Feeding

- [Best Start](#)
- [INFACT Canada](#)
- [La Leche League](#)
- [Niagara Region Public Health](#)
- [Unlock Food](#)

## Child Safety

- [Parachute Canada](#)
- [Child Safety Link](#)
- [Transport Canada](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Transportation](#)

## Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

- [Active for Life](#)
- [Unlock Food](#)
- [Canada's Food Guide](#)

## Development: Speech, Hearing, Vision, Behavioural and/or Emotional

- [Niagara Children's Centre](#)

[Ontario Association of Optometrists](#)

[Contact Niagara](#)

[Infant and Child Development Services](#)

## **Infant Sleep**

[Pediatric Sleep Council](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[Best Start](#)

[Health Canada](#)

## **Vaccinations**

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[Caring for Kids](#)

## **Community Services**

[Ontario 211](#)

[Parent Direct Niagara](#)

[EarlyON Child and Family Centres](#)

[Children's Services: Financial Assistance,  
Child Care](#)

[Brighter Futures](#)

[Local Housing Programs and Services](#)

[Local Food Resources](#)

## **Sexual Health**

[Sex and U](#)

## **Postpartum Health**

[Society of Obstetricians and  
Gynaecologists of Canada](#)

## **Mental Health**

[Best Start](#)

[Pregnancy Info by the Society of  
Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of  
Canada](#)

[Niagara Region Mental Health: Mental  
Wellbeing](#)

[Canadian Mental Health Association of  
Niagara](#)

[Distress Centre of Niagara](#)

[Crisis Outreach and Support Team](#)

[Mental Health and Addictions Access  
Line](#)

## **Counselling**

[Design for a New Tomorrow](#)

[Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence  
Treatment Program](#)

[Family and Children's Services: Family  
Counselling Centre](#)

[Community Addictions Services of  
Niagara \(CASON\)](#)

## **24 Hour Crisis Support**

[Victim Services Niagara](#)

[Women's Place of South Niagara](#)

[Gillian's Place](#)

[YWCA Niagara Region](#)

[Shelter Safe](#)

[Assaulted Women's Help Line](#)

[Niagara Sexual Assault Centre](#)

[Fem'aid \(Francophone\)](#)

[Ontario Online & Text Crisis Services  
\(ONTX\)](#)



## Connect with a public health nurse at Niagara Parents



905-684-7555 or  
1-888-505-6074 ext. 7555



[parents@niagararegion.ca](mailto:parents@niagararegion.ca)



Live Chat

[niagararegion.ca/parents](https://niagararegion.ca/parents)



[Niagara Parents](https://www.facebook.com/NiagaraParents)

Niagara Parents provides a variety of services  
to help you raise a happy and healthy family.

Learn more about pregnancy and caring  
for babies, children and teens at  
[niagararegion.ca/parents](https://niagararegion.ca/parents)