

Early Thoughtfulness

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

The Baby's arrived:
your first year together



BOOKLET 2



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It can take time to get used to the idea that you are a parent and to get to know your baby.

Love might come instantly or such feelings might take time to grow. Some parents have found that any of these things can help you to feel connected to your baby:

- the baby sucking at the breast
- skin to skin cuddles
- massaging your baby between feeds
- holding and stroking
- having eye to eye contact
- having peaceful time alone with your baby to relax and chat

Q. What helps you and your baby to feel close to each other?

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What can your new baby do?

It's amazing what your new baby can see, hear, feel and do.

Babies' brains are ready to start learning right from birth. The more you can talk, play and be with your baby, the happier they will be and this will help their development.

Their 5 senses are well developed at birth. Did you know that some babies are alert enough to copy you within the first hour after birth?

Sight – babies focus best at 8 to 10 inches – the distance from your face to your baby's while feeding.

Hearing – before birth babies can hear inside the womb. At birth they recognise music they heard when in the womb and their parent's voice and will turn towards them. All of these sounds will help your baby's development.

Smell – babies can tell the unique smell of their own mother's milk and body, especially if they are breastfed.

Taste – all babies can distinguish between the 4 tastes eg. sweet, salt, sour and bitter. Even before birth, the baby has an experience of tasting the mother's milk and her odour through the amniotic fluid.

Touch – babies are extra sensitive to touch, especially around their mouths, and they generally love stroking: you might feel closer to them too.

Q. How do you think your baby will tell you how he/she is feeling?



Immediately after birth, babies can communicate with their parents. Watch your baby and follow their lead.

- look at your baby
- smile at your baby
- talk to your baby and leave time for their response; this this will help them develop their communication skills
- give your baby your full attention – waving arms or legs can be baby's way of answering you
- all babies are individuals and will develop different skills in their own time

Q. How can other people help you when you feel upset?

What does this tell you about what your baby may need when they're upset/crying?

Crying:

- all babies cry
- babies never cry to annoy you
- crying is a baby's way of communicating their needs
- the quicker you can respond in the early days, the more secure your baby will feel
- you can't spoil your baby
- to begin with, your baby's main reason for crying will probably be hunger. Feeding on demand is easiest in the early days

Other reasons why babies cry:

- too hot or cold
- needing a nappy change
- wanting a cuddle
- over stimulated and needing to be laid down quietly
- bored and in need of company (they could be put in a sling for a short time)
- illness – if crying seems unusual or is accompanied by a high temperature or not wanting to feed, always check with your GP or your Health Visitor



Your baby loves you and you are the centre of their world. This can be difficult and exhausting. To meet your baby's needs, it is important to look after yourself.

To look after yourself perhaps you can try to:

- eat well
- have relaxing baths
- rest when the baby is asleep
- get a parent, friend or a partner to give you breaks if possible
- talk about negative feelings about the birth or being a parent with your partner, friend, family, health visitor or midwife
- keep other stresses to a minimum

Q. WHO can help you out? How?

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Most/all new parents feel a bit down and overwhelmed in the early days. You may:

- feel exhausted
- miss your old life
- struggle to make time for each other
- worry that you are never going to be a good enough parent
- think you are the only new parent who feels like this and that everyone else finds it easier
- struggle with the changes to your sex life

Most women feel tearful and upset – it’s called the “baby blues” and often takes place about 4 to 10 days after birth, and may be due to the birth, new responsibilities and hormonal ups and downs. Some mothers feel down for longer, feeling very sad or guilty, being unable to sleep.

Q. Can you write down how you have been feeling?

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Q. Who could you talk to about your worries about you and your baby?

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It is important for both parents to take some time to get to know their baby by cuddling, chatting and watching his/her responses. To avoid feeling left out, get involved right from the start. You can give baths, support with feeding, walk and rock your crying baby and change nappies. Your support can make a difference to your partner coping well and feeling good about themselves.

Partners who are involved right from the birth have the best possible relationship with their babies.

Even if parents don't live together, it is important they both do all that they can to develop their relationship with their baby.

Q. How can you and your partner best support each other as parents?

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Our own experiences as children influence how we are as parents. If your parents did a great job, you may be hoping you can do as well as them. Or, you may feel that your parents didn't do such a great job and so you might be determined to do things differently.

Q. What sort of parent would you like to be?

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If you would like further support with your relationship with your baby, please discuss with your health visitor/midwife.

If you would like more information about becoming a parent and understanding your baby you can find some really helpful videos and information here: <https://aimh.org.uk/getting-to-know-your-baby/>. Please use the rest of this booklet to note down any other thoughts and feelings linked to this booklet.

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**Have a look at this excellent website about
'Getting to know your baby'.
<https://aimh.org.uk/getting-to-know-your-baby/>**



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