

kid basics

Tips, tricks and answers to help
you care for your young child

bornlearning™



Well Visits

Every child needs to visit the doctor often during the first few years of life. The doctor will make sure your child is healthy and developing normally and will give immunizations. Below are some tips to help make the most of the visits.

Scheduling the Visit: Typically, well visits occur at:

2 - 4 days 2 months 4 months 6 months 9 months
12 months 15 months 18 months 24 months 36 months

Try to make your appointments ahead of time, before the most convenient time slots fill up.

Preparing for the Visit: During your visit, the doctor may ask you certain questions regarding your child's behavior and development. So, before each visit, you and/or your child's caregivers should pay attention to:

- **Sleep habits:** How is your child sleeping during the day and at night, and for how long?
- **Bowel movements:** How many does he have per day?
- **Feeding:** What is she eating and how often?
- **Physical development:** Is he rolling, sitting, crawling, standing, walking?
- **Language development:** What sounds does she make or what words does she say?
- **Social-emotional development:** Does he smile, laugh and respond to you? Does he play with you, by himself or with others?
- **Red flags:** Is there anything that concerns you about your child or her development?

The Day of the Visit: To make doctor's visits easier, bring with you:

- a favorite book, toy or stuffed animal.
- a snack or drink.
- extra diapers and wipes.
- a blanket.
- a list of any questions you may have for the doctor.
- your child's immunization card.

Born Learning™ is a public engagement and material distribution campaign that provides important information about what young children need every day to ensure quality early learning. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, Born Learning materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas.

For more information, visit us online at bornlearning.org.

Your Child

You can make sure you give your child the best possible start in life just by following these simple guidelines:

Take care of yourself so you can care for your child.

Provide a warm and loving environment.

Talk, sing and read to your child.

Create a predictable world for your child.

Understand and respond to your child's needs.



Infants need love and attention to learn to trust. Interact with your baby while tending to his physical needs, and help him learn about his environment by giving him things to touch, taste, smell, hear and see.



Young toddlers are beginning to explore the world on their own and act independently, so provide time and safe space to dance, read board books and work on feeding and dressing.



Older toddlers like to observe and imitate. Let them string beads, count objects, play matching games, color, paint and do dramatic play. Provide choices and set limits to help toddlers with impulse control.

Simple steps to connect with your child:

Take care of yourself so you can care for your child. Becoming a parent can be overwhelming. Unless you take care of yourself, it will be hard to take good care of your child. Don't be afraid to ask for help caring for your child.

Provide a warm and loving environment. Helping your child feel safe is the key to encouraging her healthy growth and development. Make sure you give her a lot of affection.

Talk, sing and read to your child. The young brain is especially interested in sounds — the building blocks of speech and language. You can form a deep emotional connection with your child just by talking to him.

Create a predictable world for your child. Providing routines teaches a child that you and the world around her are trustworthy. If your child understands this, she will spend less energy fussing over her needs and more time learning.

Understand and respond to your child's needs. You cannot spoil an infant, so go to him when he fusses or cries. By responding to your child, you teach him that you care and that he can trust you to read his signals.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

How to...

These “how-to’s” will provide some comfort to your child and make being a parent a little easier.

...help your child learn

Your child is born learning, and you are your child’s first and best teacher. Help his developing brain by:

- talking, singing and reading as often as possible, even to newborns
- exposing him to your everyday activities
- making special trips to a park or a museum
- encouraging healthy play and playing with him

...comfort your child

Comforting your child may not always be easy. Until you figure out what works to calm her, experiment with:

- walking
- singing
- feeding
- swaddling
- holding
- massaging
- swaying

...establish routines

Everyday activities like feeding, sleeping and bathing are perfect for starting routines. A bedtime routine might include changing a diaper, changing into pajamas and:

- singing a song
- playing with a mobile
- reading a book
- hugging goodnight
- talking to stuffed animals

...bond with your child

Give a child a lot of love and affection and help him experiment with his senses by:

- making eye contact—for newborns the ideal distance is about 8 to 12 inches away from the baby
- holding him close—carrying, hugging or sitting in your lap
- gentle motion—rocking in your arms, bouncing in your lap or tickling

Child Care

Your child needs high-quality child care. Here are some signs of a good child care setting:

Small groups of children

Consistent caregivers

Well-trained staff

Open-door policy

Clean, safe environment

Relative care

Pros: usually inexpensive; great to have a relative with the baby
Cons: defining the relationship can be hard; parents may get too much advice



Home-based care

Pros: less expensive, small groups
Cons: less likely to be licensed or regulated; no back-up if provider is sick



Center-based care

Pros: reliable; licensed; lots of social interaction; well trained
Cons: impersonal; few accept infants; closed on holidays



Quality matters the most when deciding on any type of child care program. Look for the following:

Small groups of children: Make sure your child gets some one-on-one attention. Groups should not have more than 6 to 8 babies or 6 to 10 toddlers for every two adults.

Consistent caregivers: Nurturing from regular caregivers builds your child's self-esteem and sense of security.

Well-trained staff: Providers should be trained in child development and willing to help as you develop your parenting skills.

Open-door policy: Settings that welcome parents' visits and involvement build trusting, open relationships between home and child care.

Clean, safe environment: Your child must be safe. If you spot dirty or dangerous toys and equipment in a child care environment, think again.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Child Care Checklist

Use this checklist when you look for quality child care. Make sure you ask all the right questions about all the important issues.

APPROACH

- Treats children with respect
- Gets on the children's level when speaking to them
- Accepts children's feelings and differences
- Encourages exploration while setting appropriate limits
- Provides every child with his or her own place for sleeping and storing belongings
- Uses appropriate limit-setting
- Helps children learn how to interact with each other
- Helps children learn how to take care of themselves

SAFETY

- Keeps all equipment in good condition
- Keeps dangerous things out of reach: cleaning supplies, sharp objects, medications, etc.
- Provides a clean and comfortable environment
- Encourages and models good hygiene — hand-washing, etc.
- Provides age-appropriate toys and activities

BACKGROUND

- Has experience with children
- Has a daily plan of activities
- Understands and respects different parenting styles

Sleep

Sleep periods develop as the brain matures. Day or night, the best times to soothe a child to sleep are during times of drowsiness.

Babies usually begin **nighttime sleep organization** at about six weeks.

Darkness and quiet adult behaviors serve as cues to sleep.

Day sleep organization happens between three and four months.

For naps, set aside quiet time and reduce outside stimulation.

How much sleep does my child need?

1 to 6 weeks

Enormous variation
Scattered sleep

6 weeks to 3 months

Naps scattered
Bedtime: 6 to 10 pm

3 to 8 months

Two to three naps
Bedtime: 6 to 8 pm,
plus night feedings

8 to 12 months

Two naps
Bedtime: 6 to 8 pm

12 to 21 months

One to two naps
Bedtime: 6 to 8 pm

21 to 36 months

One nap
Bedtime: 6 to 8 pm

16 hours

15 hours

14 hours

Good sleeptime practices will help your child be happier.

Be sensitive to a child's need to sleep. Put a child to bed at the first sign of drowsiness.

Establish a sleeptime routine. Regularly doing the same series of activities before going to bed helps a child understand that it is time to go to sleep.

Be consistent with your routine. Adjust your schedule so that you can do bedtime and naptime routines each day when the child needs to go to sleep.

Eliminate motion. While the motion of a swing or moving stroller might soothe and temporarily quiet a child, it may keep her from falling into a deep sleep.

Accept that a child may cry. "Protest crying" often occurs in the process of teaching a child 12 weeks or older to go to sleep on his own.

More information about sleep can be found in the book *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth, M.D.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

A Soothing Routine

The activities that make up your child's bedtime routine are for you to choose. Pick those that make you and your child comfortable, and do them consistently. Here are some ideas:

1. Make bathtime a routine.

A calming, warm bath is a good way to relax your young child. You also can use bathtime to prepare your child for bed by brushing his teeth and putting on his pajamas.

2. Have a quiet chat.

As you tuck your child into bed, talk to her about her day, your day and things for her to look forward to in the morning.

3. Read bedtime stories.

Reading to a child is a great pastime. Let your child choose a book and then read it aloud to him.

4. Sing a lullaby.

Singing the same song to your child each night can be a wonderful way to soothe her to sleep. Follow it up with a tape of familiar bedtime songs.

5. Say goodnight.

Once your child is ready for bed, say something like "Goodnight, sleep well, see you in the morning." Don't forget to tell him you love him.

Play

Play is a child's work, with benefits far beyond the obvious one: fun! Here are some ideas for playtime:

- Jump right in.
- Forget the rules.
- Think like a child.
- Let a child guide his play.
- Take a break.
- Participate enthusiastically.
- Watch out for over-stimulation.

Social Benefits of Play

- helps a child form meaningful relationships
- teaches communication, negotiation, cooperation and compromise
- helps a child experience trust, friendship and love

Emotional Benefits of Play

- helps a child express feelings, develop empathy and cope with difficult situations
- helps a child deal with emotions and regain a sense of control
- helps adults understand a child's feelings

Intellectual Benefits of Play

- provides ideas and problem-solving techniques
- fosters curiosity, creativity and intellect
- prepares a child for school
- helps a child make sense of her world and function successfully in it

Get the most out of playtime!

Jump right in. Playing with a child helps build the foundation for trusting relationships and helps him become a happy person.

Forget the rules. Encourage a child to explore and "make believe." Playing creatively with toys greatly affects a child's imagination and development.

Think like a child. Add to a child's play experiences by creating imaginative games and new ways to use her toys.

Let a child guide his play. Allowing the child to pick the activity and decide how it's played gives him confidence.

Take a break. Solitary play gives a child time to process everything that she has been doing. Watch — if she is happy, leave her alone. If she seems bored, re-direct her activity.

Participate enthusiastically. By becoming involved in a child's play and taking it seriously, you encourage his imagination and self-esteem.

Watch out for over-stimulation. Stop playing when your child has had enough — an infant will turn his head or start to fuss.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Cvitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Choosing Quality Toys

A rule of thumb: Less is more. The less a toy does, the more opportunity a child has to create and learn from it. Simple toys are easier for children to use, require less supervision and last longer.

1. SAFETY FIRST

Toys should match a child's developmental level and age and should not contain unsafe, toxic or flammable materials, sharp corners or small, detachable parts. They should also be clean.

2. DURABILITY

To survive a child's repeated handling, a toy must be made of sturdy, reliable materials.

3. EASY TO USE

A child must be able to work a toy by himself in order for him to enjoy it. Generally, simple toys are the easiest to operate.

4. ENTERTAINMENT VALUE

Ideally, a child should find a toy fun to play with now and as she grows. Look for toys that a child can experiment with in many ways.

5. EDUCATIONAL VALUE

Play teaches a child to think, create and imagine. Choose toys that allow for pretending, role-playing, problem-solving and practicing skills.

6. SOCIAL VALUE

Children learn important social skills, like cooperation, negotiation and compromise, by playing with other children. Choose toys that children can use with others.

Be sure to keep potential choking hazards —any toy or object small enough to fit through a circle this size—out of childrens' reach. Use a toilet paper tube to check.

Dads

Fathers who are more involved make a difference. Here are a few things men can do to be involved:

- Define roles.
- Create unique rituals.
- Take on responsibilities.
- Try to balance work and family.
- Be creative to overcome long distance.

Whether holding, teaching or playing, dads have a style moms can't replace.



...DADS
communicate more directly, e.g., "Go get the ball!"
are more active and physical
spend more time in impromptu, less-directed play
provide help indirectly, letting the child find answers

MOMS...
communicate more indirectly, e.g., "Do you want the ball?"
are more soothing and nurturing
provide more-structured, educational play
help more directly, pointing a child to the answers



To get involved, dads can:

Define roles. Dads can be playmates, diaper changers, bathers and soothers. The key is to play, hug and talk to a child as much as possible.

Create unique rituals. Turn basic activities into father-and-child traditions, like a once-a-week breakfast together.

Take on responsibilities. Directly caring for a child helps earn trust and appreciation from child and mom. And it builds a dad's confidence and self-esteem.

Try to balance work and family. Involvement is critical, but dads should not overdo it. Some personal time gives dads a chance to refuel.

Be creative to overcome long distance. Dads can use the phone, record a child's favorite bedtime story on tape, and send email, letters, pictures and surprises. Most importantly, he can schedule visits as often as possible.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Make the Most of “Fathertime”

An active and involved father can boost a child’s self-esteem and contribute to his sense of confidence. Here are some ways to make the most of fathertime:

Take responsibility for some everyday routines.

Choose activities that you will manage, such as getting your child dressed, bathing her or reading a bedtime story.

Read up. Learn about parenting basics, such as ages and levels of development, what toys help a child learn and grow or how to soothe a crying baby.

Read to children. Carve out a regular time slot when your child knows he can sit with you to read stories. Go to the library together to explore a variety of books.

Create a “dad’s morning.” Be in charge of all activities one morning each week. Both child and mom will look forward to this.

Run errands together. Ask about some of the errands mom does and do them for her. Bring along your children to spend time with them.

Tackle sleep issues. Take turns with mom handling issues that arise late at night. It’s a great way to comfort and connect with your child, as well as give mom a rest.

Spend time at home, especially when caring for a baby. The first weeks of a baby’s life are crucial in terms of bonding as a family. Save vacation time to use after the baby’s birth.

Communicate with the child’s caregiver. Dads can learn a lot about their child from her caregiver. Keep connected with simple questions: How much did my child eat? How long did she nap?

Discipline

When you discipline, you are helping your child understand what the world expects of him. Here are a few steps to follow:

- Praise good behavior.
- Be a good role model.
- Set clear expectations.
- Ignore small incidents.
- Give second chances.
- Be consistent.

When disciplining, you should always consider a child's developmental level.

For infants: Discipline is never appropriate. Infants do not have control of their actions and therefore cannot be held accountable for them.



For crawlers, cruisers and new walkers: Around the time a baby learns to crawl, he is beginning to explore limits. It will take a while, though, for him to understand what those limits are.



For toddlers (two years and older): A toddler is starting to understand expectations and consequences.



By encouraging a child's good behavior, you will spend less time disciplining him.

Here are ways to encourage your child to behave:

Praise good behavior. Let your child know when he acts appropriately and help him feel good about it.

Be a role model. Children learn from example, so act the way you want your child to act.

Set clear expectations. Make sure your child understands the rules and enforce them consistently.

Ignore small incidents and accidents, such as spilled milk. Just give a reminder to be careful next time and let the child help clean up.

Give a child the opportunity to correct misbehavior by offering a warning or a second chance.

Be consistent. Lessons must be repeated over a period of days or weeks before they are learned. Only set rules you are willing to enforce.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Is your approach to discipline in check with the experts?

Infants: Discipline at this age is never appropriate. Instead of thinking about discipline, a parent should spend time simply caring for her baby.

Show an infant with love and affection — you can't spoil an infant.

Be patient.
Discipline can be difficult for everyone. Take a deep breath or count to ten before you react to your child.

Read and respond to an infant's needs.

When he cries, try to determine why. Is he hungry, wet, tired?

Crawlers, Cruisers and New Walkers:

Begin to set limits by focusing on safety.

Get ready to set limits. Does your baby look to see if you are watching her? She is now aware of the "forbidden."

Introduce "no" only for safety issues — if a child hears "no" too commonly, it will not have any meaning to him.

Stay one step ahead. Distract or redirect a child from unsafe objects or activities.

Use non-verbal communication. Give a stern or firm look for small misdeeds.

Never use spanking or other physical punishment.

Toddlers (two years and up): Set clear rules and enforce them consistently.

Create consequences that relate to the behavior. For example, remove a child from the store if he misbehaves.

Don't delay the consequences. If you threaten or leave the consequences until later, a child is less likely to understand what she did wrong.

Feeding

Breast milk or formula should be your baby's main source of nutrition for the first year. Babies usually begin eating solid food when they are between four and six months old.

Signs that your baby is ready for solid foods:

- Has control of head
- Can sit up with support
- Wants to breastfeed more than eight to ten times during a 24-hour period
- Gets enough breast milk or formula but is still hungry after feedings
- Can take food from a spoon and swallow



0 to 6 months
Liquid

Provide breast milk or formula.



4 to 6 months
Smooth

Begin with rice cereal, then add single-ingredient foods.



6 to 8 months
Mushy

Expand and combine the flavors of soft, pureed food.



8 to 15 months
Soft

Offer easily digested foods that your baby can pick up by herself.



15 months and up
Small Pieces

Serve most table foods.

Is your baby ready for “real” food?

Check with your child's doctor, then follow these guidelines:

Begin with rice cereal. Mix plain infant rice cereal with breast milk or formula.

Serve one meal a day until eating abilities improve.

Don't feed cereal or other foods through a bottle.

After your baby has adjusted to cereal, add **pureed fruits and vegetables**. Introduce new single-ingredient foods one at a time to identify food allergies.

Make sure your baby sits up when he eats to prevent choking. A high-chair is always recommended.

If your baby is very hungry, **start his meal with a little breast milk or formula.**

Feed your baby directly from the jar only if you're going to use it all at once. This prevents bacteria growth in the jars.

Put down the spoon and **try again later if your baby cries** or turns away.

Try re-introducing foods in a few days if your baby does not like a flavor.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Meal ideas for children six months and up

Use these simple suggestions to introduce new foods, boost your child's appetite and encourage a balanced diet.

Eating habits will vary from child to child. These tips are general guidelines and you should ask your child's doctor any specific questions.

6 to 8 months

Introduction of proteins: pureed meats, cottage cheese, yogurt or mild cheese

Combinations of different flavors: apples with sweet potatoes or pureed chicken with rice

Two or three meals a day in addition to breast milk or formula

Tip: Don't offer foods that could cause choking, such as whole grapes, popcorn or uncooked carrots.

8 to 15 months

Finger foods: soft cheeses, noodles, waffles or steamed vegetables

Bite-size pieces that are big enough to pick up yet small enough to swallow, like Cheerios

Soft pieces that a baby can "gum," like banana slices

Tip: Avoid foods that may cause allergic reactions, such as peanut butter, egg whites, honey, nuts, fish, strawberries, wheat and orange juice. Talk with your doctor about when it is best to offer these foods.

15 months and up

Manageable pieces: sandwiches, pizzas or hamburgers in miniature sizes

Creative presentation: multi-colored pasta or fresh fruit in Jell-O cubes

Healthy snacks to refuel: apple slices, steamed carrots, or rice cakes with cheese

Multiple small meals a day

Early Literacy

Words, sounds, storybooks, songs and nursery rhymes: these are the building blocks of literacy.

You can give your child a head start by beginning now.

Read together every day.

Ask questions.

Use play to introduce language.

Teach new words.

Sing songs and nursery rhymes.

	Reading	Listening and Talking	Singing	Writing
Babies... 	...like to look at pictures of familiar things, listen to short stories and touch the pages.	...learn by listening to you talk. They imitate you by moving their mouths and making sounds.	...enjoy listening to your voice as well as the calming rhythms and playful beats of music.	...start their writing skills by grasping at objects.
Toddlers/Pre-schoolers... 	...can sit and listen to a story, turn pages and talk about pictures.	...share their thoughts and can have a conversation.	...have favorite songs and like to sing along with you.	...learn by scribbling, drawing and pretending to write.

Help your child explore language and learning by following these simple steps:

Read together every day, starting at birth. You can read right from the book, simply talk about the pictures, or make up your own stories based on what you see. When you read together, you help your child learn to love books — and you!

Ask questions and pay attention to their responses. Even before your child can speak, ask “Where’s...?” and “What’s...?” whenever you can — at the store, on a walk, while looking at pictures or reading stories.

Teach new words anytime you can. Talk to your child about what you see around you and what you are doing. The more you speak, the more you build your child’s vocabulary.

Use play to introduce language. Give your child books, musical instruments and other toys. When you interact with your child in a playful way, you introduce new words, sounds and concepts.

Sing songs and nursery rhymes over and over again. Add songs and rhymes into all of your routines, sing “Rock-a-Bye Baby” at bedtime, “Rub-a-Dub-Dub” at bath time or “Pat-a-Cake” at mealtime.

Adapted from the book *Understanding Children* by Richard Saul Wurman and Cvitas, ©2002. All rights reserved.

Tips to Boost Your Child's Language Development

These ideas offer ways to build your child's literacy skills, preparing her for success in school and beyond.

Reading

Babies

- Provide your child picture books with simple objects or faces.
- Give him board or cloth books with pages that turn easily and won't tear.
- Offer him books with soft, rough or bumpy textures to touch and feel.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Have your child point to numbers, colors, letters and familiar objects.
- Choose books about topics of interest like animals or trains — and big events like toilet training or a the birth of new sibling.

Talking and Listening

Babies

- Talk to your child about what you see and what you are doing.
- Listen as she communicates with coos, smiles, laughs and cries.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Have conversations where each of you has a chance to talk and to listen.
- Play hide-and-seek, talking about what you are seeing as you look. Your child will listen closely as she waits to be found.

Singing

Babies

- Play music and watch as your child bounces and babbles to the beat.
- Sing favorite songs over and over again.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Teach your child songs that have hand movements.
- Teach him simple sing-along songs like "Ring Around the Rosie."

Writing

Babies

- Encourage your child to hold soft toys or rattles, which help develop grasping skills.
- Play with puzzles that have oversized numbers and letters.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Let your child play with and trace magnetic letters and numbers.
- Allow her to draw freely and creatively.

Born Learning™ is a public engagement and material distribution campaign that provides important information about what young children need every day to ensure quality early learning. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, Born Learning materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas.

For more information, visit us online at bornlearning.org.



This Civitas tool was adapted from the book *Understanding Children*, a joint venture by Richard Saul Wurman and Civitas, for the Born Learning campaign.

Civitas thanks Parents as Teachers, an international early childhood parent education and family support program, for their ongoing support.

© 2005 Civitas