

BONDING AND ATTACHMENT

The first minutes of a baby's life can be exciting and exhilarating for parents. Babies are born with the need to form close relationships with caring and responsive adults.

Bonding is a term commonly used to describe the relationship between parents and their child. It develops during the earliest contact together.

In fact, bonding begins during pregnancy. In the minutes, hours and days after birth mother and baby spend quite a bit of time getting to know each other.

When you're a new parent, it often takes awhile to learn the best ways to interact with your baby.

Bonding happens gradually. Your feelings for your baby will grow stronger over time. It can take hours, days, weeks or months to become fully attached to your baby.



Some bonding activities that both mom and dad can experience together include:

- reading or singing to your baby
- mirroring your baby's movements
- mimicking your baby's cooing and other sounds
- using a front baby carrier or sling during routine activities
- letting baby handle or touch you

Developing Attachment

Children who establish healthy bonds with their caregivers often perform better in school, cope with stress more easily, develop independence and curiosity, and get along better with other children. By always responding to and comforting to your baby, especially

when your baby is upset, hurt or ill, your baby learns that you are dependable. This will teach her that she can trust that her needs will always be met and help her to become a securely attached child.

Even if you aren't always able to stop her tears or relieve her discomfort, she recognizes that you are trying and feels comforted by your response.



If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

THE WAYS BABIES BOND

Scientists are still learning a lot about bonding and attachment. They know that the strong ties between parents and their children provide babies with their first example of intimate relationships and create a sense of security. The way parents respond their infant's signals can affect their child's development. In extreme cases, if there is no emotional attachment by parents, children can lose weight, stop growing and stop developing mentally and physically.

Healthy Tips

Here are some ways to help you build attachment and bond with your baby:

- **Hold him:** Hold your baby against your own skin when feeding or cradling. Touching helps promote healthy growth and development. Use these opportunities to get to know your baby.
- **Make eye contact:** Newborns see best about a foot away from their eyes. Their eyes can follow moving objects. They prefer human faces, especially the eyes. Eye-to-eye contact provides meaningful communication at close range.
- **Smile at her:** Babies respond to what they see. Your baby will try to imitate your facial expressions and gestures. You can use facial expressions as a way to connect with your baby.
- **Sing to him:** Babies prefer human voices and enjoy making sounds in their first efforts at communication. Your baby would rather hear your voice singing lullabies than the "music" made by many toys and devices.

It may take some time for you to learn what your baby is trying to tell you. Don't feel bad if you need to ask for help. Raising a child is one of the most challenging things you ever have to do, but also the most rewarding. If you are afraid you might hurt your child, call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-422-4453.



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