
Maternal and child health services

Summary

- The **Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service** works in partnership with families to care for babies and young children until they start school.
 - The service is free for all Victorian families
 - You will visit MCH nurses at 10 key stages of your child's development. The visits focus on optimising child and family health, wellbeing, safety, learning and development.
 - Your MCH nurse offers additional visits, first time parenting groups, and links to local community activities and services when extra support is needed.
 - **Maternal and Child Health Line** - call **13 22 29** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Families with children from birth to school age can speak to an MCH nurse for advice and support.
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The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service works in partnership with Victorian families to care for babies and children until they start school. It is a free service which includes visits to a local maternal and child health nurse at 10 key ages and stages in your child's development. Additional visits are offered as well as first time parenting groups and links to local community activities and support services. Extra 24-hour telephone support is available from the Maternal and Child Health Line (Tel. 13 2229).

Maternal and child health centres throughout Victoria

Maternal and child health centres operate in local communities and are usually funded by state and local governments. Some centres may be managed by local councils while others are managed by health services. Centres are staffed by highly qualified maternal and child health nurses.

List of [Victorian Maternal and child health centres](#).

What maternal and child health centres provide

Maternal and child health nurses will work with your family to help you care for your child until they are ready to start school.

You will visit your nurse at 10 key ages and stages in your child's development.

These local centre visits will help identify any issues and concerns so that steps can be taken in early childhood to deal with them.

Maternal and child health nurses can:

- give information, support and advice on a variety of topics (including parenting, development and learning, child health, family health and wellbeing, safety, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning)
 - monitor your child's growth and development in a series of one-on-one consultations at specific times in your child's early years
 - help with sleeping, feeding and behaviour problems
 - organise parents' groups where you can get information and have the chance to meet other parents in the local area
 - tell you about other local support services
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- organise additional activities based on your family's needs (for example, arranging home visits when you are unable to visit a centre)
- help to contact specialist services if necessary (such as early parenting centres)
- offer additional support and services to families experiencing difficulties.

Your first contact with the service

Your local maternal and child health service will be a great source of support after your baby is born. The hospital will notify your local service and a maternal and child health nurse will contact you during your first days at home to arrange an appointment. This is usually a visit in your home.

During the home visit, the nurse will give you the location of your nearest centre, information about further visits and services, and how to contact a maternal and child health nurse at any time.

How often should I visit?

You will be asked to see your maternal and child health nurse at 10 key ages and stages in your child's health, learning and development. These include:

- following discharge from hospital (**home visit**)
- **two weeks**
- **four weeks**
- **eight weeks**
- **four months**
- **eight months**
- **one year**
- **18 months**
- **two years**
- **three and a half years.**

Families can access the service at other times by telephone or through a centre visit. Most centres offer a range of times when families can access the service. They typically operate through scheduled appointments, open consultation sessions and some after-hours appointments.

Don't forget your 'green book'

When your baby was born, you should have received a copy of ***My Health, Learning and Development – green book***. This book belongs to you and your baby and is full of information about early child development, and services and support.

Always take it with you when you visit your nurse, doctor's surgery or dentist, and get health professionals to complete entries after each visit. It should also be used to record immunisations.

Each time you see your maternal and child health nurse jot down any issues or concerns and fill out the sections on your child's growth and development. If you keep it up to date, it will become an important family record from birth to adolescence.

If you don't have a 'green book', let your nurse know.

Maternal and Child Health Line after-hours service

Victorian families can obtain extra support by calling the **Maternal and Child Health Line** (Tel. **13 22 29**). This is a 24-hour telephone service staffed by qualified maternal and child health nurses.

The telephone line provides over-the-phone information, advice and referral to all families with young children.

Interpreters are available through the **Translating Interpreter Service**. Hearing and speech impaired callers can connect to the **National Relay Service (NRS)**.

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Get the maternal and child health app on your phone

Download the **free maternal and child health app (MCH App)** to access all your child's health and information on your mobile device. Track your child's growth and get reminders about upcoming maternal and child health nurse appointments or immunisations.

Where to get help

- **Your local maternal and child health service**
- **Your GP (doctor)**
- **Maternal and Child Health Line** Tel: **13 22 29** – available 24 hours a day for the cost of a local call throughout Victoria
- **Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)** Tel. **03 9419 3000**
- **Parentline** Tel. **13 22 89**

- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)** Tel. **131 450** – available (24 hours, 7 days a week) for callers who speak other languages.

- **National Relay Service** (24 hours a day, every day) – Speak and listen Tel: **1300 555 727**, TTY Tel: **133 677**, SMS relay Tel: **0423 677 767**. **Captioned, internet and video relay calls are also available through this service.**

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Maternal and Child Health and Parenting

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