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Stepfamilies

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Summary

- The stepfamily is one of the most common kinds of family in Australia right now.
- Everyone in a new stepfamily will have difficulties at some point.
- It takes time to adjust to all the changes of becoming a stepfamily. Children and young people might feel confused and upset at first.
- Patience, respect, commitment, open communication and time can overcome most difficulties faced by stepfamilies.
- Most children and young people who become part of a stepfamily end up liking it a lot.

Many divorced or separated people in Australia form new relationships within five years, making stepfamilies one of the most common types of family unit. Establishing a stepfamily or blended family can be challenging, but the challenges depend on the people involved and their circumstances. Generally, there are advantages and disadvantages to stepfamilies. Patience, respect, commitment and time are necessary to overcome any hurdles.

Becoming part of a stepfamily involves adjusting to a number of changes, both for parents and children. Young people of different ages tend to feel different things about this at first. They may experience a range of feelings, including anger, jealousy, hate, confusion, hurt and despair. These are all natural and part of the loss and grief process. They will pass, with support from caregivers. It is important not to blame a child if they are causing problems or feeling angry, sad or resentful. Instead, they need understanding.

There are many good things about having a stepfamily, like extra nurturing and security. There are problems too, but these problems can be solved with patience and plenty of talking to each other. Most children and young people who become part of a stepfamily end up liking it a lot.

Advantages of stepfamilies

Many children and young people feel confused and upset at first, but most end up happy that they're part of a stepfamily. Once everyone gets used to the changes and comes to know one another, there can be plenty of good things to like about the arrangement.

Some of the things that children say they like about being in a stepfamily include:

- It's good to have extra adults to care for them, as well as their parents.
- It's nice to be part of a two-parent family again.
- They enjoy a higher standard of living thanks to combined incomes.
- Having extra family members means more people to talk to and other kids to play with.
- It feels more secure and safe.
- It's great to see parents happy again.
- There are more presents at birthdays and Christmas.

Difficulties for parents in a stepfamily

Parents can face problems adjusting to their new family, including:

- One or both partners may bring hang-ups and unresolved feelings from their earlier relationship into the current situation.
- Disciplining someone else's child can cause resentment.
- There could be unexpected problems with child maintenance or access visits.
- The partners may have conflicting visions of family life or different rules for the home.
- One partner may not like the other partner's children.
- Even positive change can be stressful.

Children's behaviour in stepfamilies

It takes time for a child or young person to adjust to all the changes that moving into a stepfamily brings. It can be hard for the child to share a home with people they don't know very well and harder still if it involves moving to another house in a new neighbourhood.

Often, a child's reaction is not deliberately bad behaviour, but a sign that the child is not coping with the changes. It is important for this behaviour to be understood. The child needs to be comforted and assisted to feel loved, supported and secure. Being punished for their behaviour will only make them feel even more isolated.

Children act out their feelings through their behaviour. They may not be able to talk about how they feel about their new situation, but they will show you through

changes in their behaviour.

Confused feelings can manifest themselves through changes in behaviour such as:

- Difficulties in sleeping or settling at night, or nightmares
- Difficulties at meal times – your child may be disruptive or not eat
- Problems at school, especially if it is a new school where they need to make new friends. Schoolwork standards may drop initially
- Loss of interest in hobbies or sports
- Changing behaviour from quiet to throwing temper tantrums
- Nagging, whingeing and other attention-seeking behaviour
- Becoming withdrawn.

Difficulties for a child in a stepfamily

A child can face problems adjusting to the new family, including:

- They may be still mourning the break-up of their original family. Children generally want the return of the original family, even if it was not a happy family.
- They may have been hoping their parents would reunite, and the new relationship crushes their dream. The child may try to (unconsciously) sabotage the new family in an effort to regain their old family.
- Confusion and jealousy may arise if their absent parent establishes a new relationship and has their own ‘new’ family too.
- The decision to make a stepfamily is decided by the two adults and not the children, who may not want a new arrangement.
- The child may resent or even hate the new partner, at least for a while.
- Moving to a new home, new neighbourhood or new school can cause insecurity.
- They have to share a house with people they don’t know very well.
- They resent being disciplined by the new partner.
- They don’t get along with their step-siblings.
- They feel they don’t know their place within the family.
- They resent their change of place in the family.
- They feel left out and uncertain about the new family.
- They dislike having to share their parent with the other partner and stepchildren.

Preschool children and stepfamilies

Some of the reactions of young children may include:

- Confusion because they are too young to understand what’s going on and why
- Worrying that the parent who has left the house won’t love them any more, because they don’t live together, or that it is their fault the parent has left
- Regression in behaviour – or acting younger than they are. Examples include reverting to thumb sucking or bed wetting
- Clinging to the parent they live with and wanting to be cuddled all the time
- Crying a lot.

Primary school children and stepfamilies

Children in primary school may understand what’s going on, but still feel upset and stressed by all the changes. Some of the things they might go through include:

- School grades slipping because they’re too upset to concentrate
- Not playing with their friends as much and wanting to be by themselves most of the time
- Becoming angry and getting into fights at school or arguing a lot
- Feeling ashamed that they have a stepfamily instead of a ‘normal’ family
- Wrongly blaming themselves for the break-up of their family and wondering if their parent left because of something they did.

Teenagers and stepfamilies

Adolescence is a vulnerable time for young people, as they are questioning every part of their existence – who they are, how they fit in, their body image and self-esteem. There are many pressures on them from both school and society.

Teenagers can really suffer with changes in their family circumstances at this time of ‘identity crisis’ in their own lives. To feel unstable in their own life and also have an unstable home life does not give them any secure place to feel safe.

Teenagers aren’t children any more, but they’re not quite adults either. Some of the things an adolescent might go through include:

- Feeling embarrassed about seeing their parents in new relationships
- Not trying to form a real relationship with their step-parent – preferring to talk to their friends instead
- Not liking the new arrangement of having another parent figure in the house, if the teenager was once part of a single-parent family
- Resenting being disciplined or told what to do by their step-parent
- Feeling torn between their ‘natural’ parents and thinking they have to choose loyalty to one over the other.

Further down the track, even a well-established relationship between step-parent and stepchild can be disrupted. It may need to be renegotiated as children reach adolescence.

Getting along with step-siblings

With new stepsisters or brothers in the house, a child or young person may not be sure of their place in the family. For example, they might have done certain chores or been used to certain routines. Having other people in the house means their usual day-to-day life has to change. However, in many cases, children and young people grow to like and even love their stepbrothers and stepsisters.

It is important to give children enough time to get to know their step-siblings. Some of the problems they could face in the meantime include:

- Thinking it isn't fair to have to share a house with strangers
- Having to share their bedroom and feeling annoyed about losing their space
- Finding themselves romantically interested in a step-sibling
- Feeling jealous of their step-siblings because they think the other children are getting a better deal
- Fighting a lot at first
- Feeling left out
- Feeling resentful about the whole situation and desperately wanting their original family back.

Working things out together in a stepfamily

The best way for family members to handle fights and problems is to sit down and talk about them. Yelling or sulking do not work and just make things tense.

Some suggestions for young people include:

- Explain how you feel as honestly as you can. Remember every family member has a right to their feelings. Start your conversation with 'I feel' – this allows your feelings to be heard and isn't blaming anyone else. This technique can allow others, who are also hurt and upset, to be better able to listen to you.
- Try to stay calm.
- Remember that you're trying to solve a problem, not win an argument.
- Be prepared to listen as well as talk.
- Once you've worked out what the exact problem is, try to find solutions together.
- Be reasonable. It's not always possible to get what you want – you may have to compromise.

The stepfamily is one of the most common kinds of family in Australia right now. A child or young person might feel like no one in the world could understand what they're feeling, but this isn't true. Lots of other people have had the same experience and got through it okay.

Children need to know that there are plenty of people they can talk to about their thoughts and feelings. It is also important that children and young people give themselves and everyone else time to adjust.

Helping your child to adjust to a stepfamily

A child needs to feel their problems and feelings are taken seriously, no matter how trivial their complaint or worry may seem to an adult. Children are trying to tell you something through their behaviour. Rather than punishing them, try to understand.

Some suggestions to help your child to adjust include:

- Listen to your child when they want to talk to you. Make time to listen to them and make sure you won't be interrupted.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings or troubles.
- Don't try to force a relationship between your child and their step-parent or step-siblings.
- Establish a regular time for family-oriented activities, such as games or discussions.
- Have meals together.
- Set up regular routines to give your child a sense of security.
- Make time to spend with your child, one-on-one.
- Regularly reassure the child of your love and support.
- Discuss and resolve problems that affect the family as a whole, such as discipline, with everyone, including the children.
- Decide about new family traditions, such as how to celebrate Christmas or birthdays, as a family.
- Make sure your child gets some privacy, even if they have to share a bedroom.
- Encourage access and contact with the absent parent.
- Give your child time to come to terms with the changes, and don't expect adjustment to happen in just a few weeks or months.
- Seek professional help if you need it.

Helping the parents in a stepfamily

It is important for parents to look after themselves while the new family is forming. Parents' own needs can get lost as they look after their children's needs. Most parents find the transition into a stepfamily stressful and difficult. Seek counselling, attend a stepfamily group or join an online discussion group to share your problems with others in the same situation and seek advice.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Family and friends
- Other parents or step-parents
- Relationship counsellor
- School counsellor
- Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 55 1800
- Stepfamilies Australia Tel. (03) 9663 6733 – for information about one-to-one support, support in a group situation, counselling, education courses and online discussion groups
- Relationships Australia Tel. 1300 364 277
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 132 229

Things to remember

- The stepfamily is one of the most common kinds of family in Australia right now.
- Everyone in a new stepfamily will have difficulties at some point.
- It takes time to adjust to all the changes of becoming a stepfamily. Children and young people might feel confused and upset at first.
- Patience, respect, commitment, open communication and time can overcome most difficulties faced by stepfamilies.
- Most children and young people who become part of a stepfamily end up liking it a lot.

[References](#)

- Temke MW, 'Children in stepfamilies', Stepfamilyzone, Stepfamily Australia and the Stepfamily Association of South Australia Inc. [More information here.](#)
- Tip sheet: Teenagers in stepfamilies, Stepfamily Association of Victoria. [More information here.](#)
- Tip sheet: Children, Stepfamily Association of Victoria. [More information here.](#)
- Blended families, Women's and Children's Health Network, SA. [More information here.](#)

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Parenting basics

- [Children and health services](#)

[There is a range of subsidised and free health services, including services for mental health and dental health, available for children in Victoria...](#)

- [Family and child support services](#)

[There are many government funded family support services available to help parents and young people deal with family issues...](#)

- [Happy families](#)

[It might be valuable to occasionally evaluate the dynamics of your family to ensure that everyone is as happy as they could be...](#)

- [Healthy budget - tucker talk tips](#)

[You can buy more food if you spend most of your money on basic healthy foods like bread, cereals, fruit and vegies...](#)

- [Parenthood and your relationship](#)

[The birth of your first child can significantly change your relationship with your partner and may impact on other relationships...](#)

- [Parenting children through puberty](#)

[Puberty is a time of great change for your child, and for you as a parent too. You can help your child in many practical ways, mostly by being reassuring...](#)

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[A person can become a single or sole parent for many different reasons. You may have chosen to start a family on your own, you may be separated or divorced, or your partner may have died. As a...](#)

- [Parenting services](#)

[Parenting is one of the most important tasks we undertake but it doesn't always come naturally...](#)

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[Raising Children Network is an online parenting resource providing research-based information...](#)

- [Travelling with children](#)

[If your child is old enough, involve them in planning a trip so they can get excited about it...](#)

Family structures

- [10 tips for happier step-parenting](#)

[Give your undivided attention when your child asks for it ... 10 tips for happier step-parenting...](#)

- [Adoption](#)

[Adoption can give a secure family life to children who can't live with their birth family...](#)

- [Empty nest syndrome](#)

[The grief of empty nest syndrome often goes unrecognised, because an adult child moving out of home is seen as a normal, healthy event...](#)

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[Foster care is temporary care of children up to 18 years by trained, assessed and accredited foster carers...](#)

- [Kinship care](#)

[Kinship care is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child's social network when a child cannot live with their parents...](#)

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[If you don't approve of your child's reasons for moving out, try to keep the lines of communication open...](#)

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- [Parenting when you're a foster carer](#)

[As a foster carer, you are providing a safe and supportive home for a child or teenager who can't live with their family of origin. You may face challenges that affect you physically, emotionally and...](#)

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[After experiencing abuse, neglect or rejection, many children are slow to put their trust in anyone...](#)

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[In single-parent households, issues such as holidays or major family purchases are more likely to be decided with the children...](#)

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[Surrogacy is a form of assisted reproductive treatment \(ART\) in which a woman carries a child within her uterus on behalf of another person or couple...](#)

Communication, identity and behaviour

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)

[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [Body image and young people - staying positive \(video\)](#)

[The pressure on young girls and boys to be physically perfect is creating an epidemic of children and teenagers with low self-esteem and negative body image. Reporter Flip Shelton introduces us to the...](#)

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[Give your child opportunities to appreciate their body for what it can do, rather than what it looks like...](#)
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- [Eating disorders and adolescents](#)
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- [Immunisation – deciding which vaccines you need](#)
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- [No Jab No Play](#)
[No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...](#)
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[Children may feel stomach pain for a range of reasons and may need treatment...](#)
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[Growing pains may cause a lot of pain but they are harmless and can respond to simple treatments...](#)

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[Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers...](#)
- [Head lice \(nits\)](#)
[No product can prevent head lice, but regular checks can help prevent the spread...](#)
- [Hearing problems in children](#)
[The earlier that hearing loss is identified in children, the better for the child's language, learning and overall development...](#)
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[By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...](#)
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[Vaccinations are encouraged for all individuals living in the state of Victoria, Australia. The immunisation program in Victoria may be different than other countries, and individuals who have moved...](#)
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[If your baby is full-term and healthy, mild jaundice is nothing to worry about and will resolve by itself within a week or so...](#)
- [Lactose intolerance](#)
[Symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, gas, abdominal pain and diarrhoea...](#)
- [Male Circumcision](#)
[Male circumcision involves the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis...](#)
- [Melissa's story \(video\)](#)
[Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old...](#)
- [Meningococcal disease](#)
[Do not leave young adults alone if they suddenly develop a fever because they may become seriously ill very quickly...](#)
- [Nappy rash](#)
[Most babies get nappy rash at some stage, no matter how well they are cared for...](#)
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- [Obesity in children - causes](#)
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- [Oral conditions - young children](#)
[Oral thrush, mouth ulcers and cold sores are common oral conditions in babies and young children...](#)
- [Pain management \(acute\) - children](#)
[If you think your child is in pain, always see your doctor for diagnosis and treatment...](#)
- [Pinworms](#)
[Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection \(worms\) is relatively harmless and easily treated...](#)
- [Tooth decay - young children](#)
[Every child is at risk of tooth decay, but good feeding habits and oral care can help prevent decay in baby teeth...](#)
- [Whooping cough](#)
[The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound...](#)

Immunisation

- [Flu \(influenza\) – immunisation](#)

[Influenza immunisation is recommended for people in known high risk groups...](#)

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- [Pre-immunisation checklist](#)

[This immunisation checklist will help you prepare so you know what to expect and what information you will need to give your GP or clinic staff before your immunisation...](#)

- [Immunisation history statements for children](#)

[By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria...](#)

- [Childhood immunisation](#)

[Being immunised from an early age helps protect your child against serious childhood infections...](#)

- [Immunisation – common questions](#)

[We answer some common questions about immunisation, including how immunisation works, why it's important and where you can be immunised...](#)

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[No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...](#)

- [Immunisations for older people](#)

[Immunisations are important for you as you get older, because your immune system can become less effective at protecting you from some diseases...](#)

- [Why immunisation is important](#)

[Immunisation saves lives. It protects you, your family and your community. And it also helps protect future generations by eradicating diseases...](#)

- [Immunisation – deciding which vaccines you need](#)

[Everyone's immunisation needs are different and are influenced by your health, lifestyle, age and occupation...](#)

- [How to find your vaccination records](#)

[If you've recently arrived in Australia or missed out on an immunisation for any reason, you may need catch-up doses...](#)

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[If you've recently arrived in Australia or missed out on an immunisation for any reason, you may need catch-up doses...](#)

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- [10 tips for secondary students on how to deal with immunisation](#)

[10 tips for secondary students on how to deal with immunisation...](#)

- [Immunisation – DTP, polio, hep B and Hib](#)

[A number of combined immunisations against diphtheria, tetanus and other infectious diseases are available to provide protection at various life stages...](#)

- [Immunisations for work](#)

[Some jobs have a higher risk of exposure to infectious diseases, so if your job is one of these, it's a good idea to check your immunisation status...](#)

- [Immunisation and pregnancy](#)

[Immunisation can protect a woman and her unborn baby against many infectious diseases...](#)

- [Dr Margaret's Story \(video\)](#)

[Access to vaccines has changed lives and protects our children from crippling diseases such as polio...](#)

- [Ros' Story \(video\)](#)

[Talk to a qualified medical expert like your doctor to find out more about immunisation...](#)

- [Caitlin and Liam's story \(video\)](#)

[Find out how important you and your child's immunisation is to the most vulnerable members in our community...](#)

- [Immunisations - vaccinations in Victoria, Australia \(video\)](#)

[Vaccinations are encouraged for all individuals living in the state of Victoria, Australia. The immunisation program in Victoria may be different than other countries, and individuals who have moved...](#)

- [Immunisation in secondary schools](#)

[Some immunisations are recommended for all Australian teenagers...](#)

- [Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men](#)

[Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health \(formerly Victorian AIDS Council\), the...](#)

- [Children and health services](#)

[There is a range of subsidised and free health services, including services for mental health and dental health, available for children in Victoria...](#)

Keeping yourself healthy

- [10 tips for happier step-parenting](#)

[Give your undivided attention when your child asks for it ... 10 tips for happier step-parenting...](#)

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)

[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [1300 60 60 24 - NURSE-ON-CALL](#)

[NURSE-ON-CALL is a free, confidential telephone helpline that provides immediate health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week...](#)

- [1800RESPECT](#)

[1800RESPECT is a national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service...](#)

- [Abdominal pain in children](#)

[Children may feel stomach pain for a range of reasons and may need treatment...](#)

- [Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service](#)

[The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing or recovering from family violence or sexual assault...](#)

- [About child, family and relationship services \(video\)](#)

[Services include parent education to maternal and child healthcare, child care, crisis support, child protection, family violence and relationship services...](#)

- [Adoption](#)

[Adoption can give a secure family life to children who can't live with their birth family...](#)

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- [Allergies explained](#)

[Allergy occurs when the body overreacts to a 'trigger' that is harmless to most people...](#)

- [Animals and child safety](#)

[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)

- [Anxiety and fear in children](#)

[You can help your child overcome anxiety by taking their fears seriously and encouraging them to talk about their feelings...](#)

- [Association for Children with a Disability](#)

[ACD works to change the lives of children with a disability through information, support and advocacy...](#)

- [Asthma, children and smoking](#)

[Exposure to second-hand smoke increases the risk of children developing asthma and provokes more frequent asthma in children with asthma...](#)

- [Asthma in childhood - triggers \(video\)](#)

[Parents and children talk about some of the factors that can cause a child's asthma to flare up...](#)

- [Asylum Seeker Resource Centre](#)

[The ASRC is committed to upholding the human rights of all people seeking asylum...](#)

- [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#)

[The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency \(AHPRA\) implements the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, which oversees 14 national health practitioner boards including the Chinese...](#)

- [Autism spectrum disorder \(ASD\)](#)

[ASD is a complex disorder that affects a person's ability to interact with the world around them...](#)

- [Autism spectrum disorder - tips for parents](#)

[Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong condition, but you are not on your own and there are plenty of professionals and groups who can help...](#)

Children with special needs

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[ASD is a complex disorder that affects a person's ability to interact with the world around them...](#)

- [Autism spectrum disorder - tips for parents](#)

[Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong condition, but you are not on your own and there are plenty of professionals and groups who can help...](#)

- [Disability and sexuality](#)

[Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support...](#)

- [Disability - schooling choices](#)

[If your child has a disability, you need to consider extra issues when your child starts school...](#)

- [Down syndrome and family support](#)

[For a person with Down syndrome, being included in all aspects of family life can lead to a successful life within the community...](#)

- [Down syndrome and health](#)

[There are a number of significant health and medical issues that are more common in people with Down syndrome...](#)

- [Down syndrome and learning](#)

[You should focus on what your child with Down syndrome can do, rather than what they can't do...](#)

- [Intellectual disability and sexuality](#)

[People with intellectual disability can express their sexuality in satisfying ways...](#)

- [Sex and chronic illness](#)

[Sexuality is a key part of human nature. Expressing sexuality in satisfying ways is important for everyone, including people with a disability. Some people with disability may need additional support...](#)

Child safety and accident prevention

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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)

- [Bicycle safety and children](#)

[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety and become safer road and bicycle users...](#)

- [Body image – tips for parents](#)

[Give your child opportunities to appreciate their body for what it can do, rather than what it looks like...](#)

- [Bullying](#)

[Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions...](#)

- [Child safety and injury prevention](#)

[By making a few practical changes to your home, you can dramatically reduce the risk of injury to your child...](#)

- [Child safety – at home](#)

[The best way to reduce the risk of injury to children is to remove a potentially dangerous item or add a safety product...](#)

- [Child safety in the car](#)

[Taking care to restrain children correctly while travelling in a car is the best way to prevent injuries...](#)

- [Farm safety – children](#)

[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)

- [Hot weather and child safety](#)

[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)

- [Internet safety for children](#)

[A child's digital footprint can be as easy to follow as their real footprints...](#)

- [Mobile phone safety for children](#)

[Teach your child strategies for responding to mobile phone bullying...](#)

- [Playgrounds and child safety](#)

[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)

- [Poisoning and child safety](#)

[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)

- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)

[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users...](#)

- [Water safety for children](#)

[Toddlers are most at risk of drowning because they are mobile and curious but don't understand the danger of water...](#)

Child protection and family violence

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[Parents can help with bullying by supporting their child and involving the authorities to find solutions...](#)

- [Child Protection Service](#)

[Child Protection provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children from harm caused by abuse within the family...](#)

- [Family violence - tips for children](#)

[Kids are not to blame for violence at home, it's not your fault and it's not a special secret...](#)

- [Parenting support to help prevent abuse](#)

[There is a range of non-government agencies available to help families under stress in caring for their children...](#)

- [Recognising when a child is at risk](#)

[Too many children are physically, sexually and emotionally abused and when this happens, it is up to adults to speak up...](#)

- [Sexual abuse - helping your child](#)

[As a parent, you have an important role in helping your child recover from sexual abuse...](#)

Grief and trauma

- [Death of a baby](#)

[Miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death is a shattering event for those expecting a baby, and for their families. Grief, relationship stresses and anxiety about subsequent pregnancies are common in...](#)

- [Grief and children](#)

[It can be difficult to talk to a child about death, but it is important to be honest with them...](#)

- [Grief – support services](#)

[People who have support from family and friends are less likely to suffer poor health after bereavement and loss...](#)

- [Recent arrivals, asylum seekers and family support services](#)

[Provides an overview of family support programs and health services available to refugees and asylum seekers living in Victoria...](#)

- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)

[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

- [Trauma and children - newborns to two years](#)

[Babies and toddlers can be as affected by trauma as any other family member...](#)

- [Trauma and children – tips for parents](#)

[Tell your child the facts about a distressing or frightening experience using language they can understand...](#)

- [Trauma and children - two to five years](#)

[Preschoolers may not have the words but will show their distress at traumatic events through changes in behaviour and functioning...](#)

- [Trauma and families](#)

[When a family is affected by trauma, everyone will react in a different way...](#)

- [Trauma and primary school age children](#)

[Children look to their parents or carers to judge how to deal with a crisis...](#)

- [Trauma and teenagers - common reactions](#)

[A teenager may be deeply upset by a traumatic event, but not share their feelings with their parents...](#)

- [Trauma and teenagers - tips for parents](#)

[Teenagers may turn to friends rather than parents for support in times of trauma and distress...](#)

- [Trauma - reaction and recovery](#)

[It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions after a distressing or frightening event, and help is available...](#)

- [Youth suicide – the warning signs](#)

[All suicide threats are serious. You don't have to be a trained professional to help a person contemplating suicide...](#)

Support for parents

- [About child, family and relationship services \(video\)](#)

[Services include parent education to maternal and child healthcare, child care, crisis support, child protection, family violence and relationship services...](#)

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[There is a range of subsidised and free health services, including services for mental health and dental health, available for children in Victoria...](#)

- [Community health centres](#)

[A community health centre is publicly funded and offers a range of health services to local residents...](#)

- [Early support for a child with disabilities](#)

[For children diagnosed with a disability, getting the support they need as early as possible will give them the best chance of minimising the long-term effects of the disability...](#)

- [Family and child support services](#)

[There are many government funded family support services available to help parents and young people deal with family issues...](#)

- [Foster care, permanent care and adoptive parent support services](#)

[Provides an overview of the financial and family support services available to foster carers, families providing permanent care and adoptive parents...](#)

- [Maternal and child health services](#)

[Your local maternal and child health service will be a great source of support after your baby is born...](#)

- [Parenting centres support families](#)

[Early Parenting Centres help families whose children have sleep, feeding or other difficulties...](#)

- [Parenting children through puberty](#)

[Puberty is a time of great change for your child, and for you as a parent too. You can help your child in many practical ways, mostly by being reassuring...](#)

- [Parenting on your own](#)

[A person can become a single or sole parent for many different reasons. You may have chosen to start a family on your own, you may be separated or divorced, or your partner may have died. As a...](#)

- [Parenting support to help prevent abuse](#)

[There is a range of non-government agencies available to help families under stress in caring for their children...](#)

- [Phototherapy at Home](#)

[Jaundice is very common in newborns, so it's nothing to be too worried about. Treatment is very easy and safe. It all happens using blue light from a special blanket that you wrap your baby in. The...](#)

- [Recent arrivals, asylum seekers and family support services](#)

[Provides an overview of family support programs and health services available to refugees and asylum seekers living in Victoria...](#)

- [Relationship support services](#)

[You may need outside help to resolve problems and ensure your relationship stays healthy and strong...](#)

- [Year 12 exams - managing stress](#)

[Help your child manage stress during exams by getting them to use good study habits, eat well, exercise, relax, sleep and keep things in perspective...](#)

Related Information

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- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

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- [Permanent care](#)

[After experiencing abuse, neglect or rejection, many children are slow to put their trust in anyone...](#)

- [Kinship care](#)

[Kinship care is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child's social network when a child cannot live with their parents...](#)

- [Moving out of home – tips for parents](#)

[If you don't approve of your child's reasons for moving out, try to keep the lines of communication open...](#)

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Related information on other websites

- [Parenting SA – Blended families](#)
- [Raising Children Network – Raising a stepchild](#)
- [Relationships Australia – Stepfamilies are different](#)
- [Stepfamilies Australia – Tip sheets](#)
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