

Passport to the Victorian Government's

baby bundle





raisingchildren.net.au

the australian parenting website

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Welcome to your parenting journey!

Becoming a parent is an exciting time but for new parents it can also be a time of great change and a challenging period of transition.



As you and your new baby get to know one another, the Andrews Labor Government is delighted to provide you with a baby bundle of essentials to help support you on your journey to parenthood.

All products meet Australian Safety Standards and have been sourced and approved by a panel of experts on sleep & settling, language development, parenting, child safety and early learning.

Your baby bundle also includes this booklet of important information about your baby's development in these first few weeks and months, child safety, enjoying books with your baby and emergency contacts.

It's been put together by the Raising Children Network and I encourage you to seek further information at [**raisingchildren.net.au**](https://raisingchildren.net.au).

Congratulations on your new baby and I wish you and your family all the very best for the wonderful journey ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Mikakos'.

Jenny Mikakos MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services

Welcome to your parenting journey



This guide is designed to help you navigate your baby's world, understand your baby's cues and build strong bonds and attachment in the early months.

In addition to this guide, please refer to your My Health Learning and Development green book, which is given to you in hospital when your baby is born.

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1. Your newborn's first week

What to expect



Your newborn spends their first weeks feeding, sleeping, and bonding with you.

You can bond with your newborn by spending time cuddling, talking and smiling.

While your newborn will sleep most of the time, it's likely to be a while before you see a pattern or routine of feeding and sleeping.

Your newborn spends their first week of life adapting to their new environment. The outside world is very different from the womb, where it's dim, the temperature is constant, and noise is muffled. You can help your baby get used to the outside world by giving them warmth, love, security, attention – and lots of cuddles and smiles.

If you're concerned about your baby, speak to your Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurse, GP, or paediatrician, or call the MCH Line 24/7 – 13 22 29 for advice.

Look after yourself too

This means eating well, and sleeping or resting when your baby sleeps, which will help you to feel less tired. When you feel ready, gently return to physical activity. It's OK if you need to ask family and friends for help too.

The first weeks

Feeding and sleeping

Your newborn will sleep most of the time, waking up every few hours to feed. Newborns can't 'sleep through the night'. They have tiny tummies, so they need to wake and feed often. Most babies need feeds every 2–4 hours (8–12 feeds every 24 hours).

Bonding and communicating

Your newborn recognises your voice – after all, they have been listening to your voice, and the voices of your family from inside the womb for the past nine months. You can communicate with your newborn using your voice, touch, sight and smell. Your baby will have their own ways of communicating with you – even though they can't smile just yet.

Crying

It's normal for newborns to cry, but it can be stressful if you don't know what your baby is trying to tell you. If your newborn is crying, you can try feeding them, changing their nappy, cuddling or gently rocking them, speaking or singing, or giving them a warm, relaxing bath.



Development



Your baby is learning a lot as you spend time together every day. Their brain is growing and developing as your baby sees, hears, smells and touches the world around them. Your baby will close their hands involuntarily in the grasp reflex and will startle at sudden loud noises.

Common health problems

Some common health problems include weight loss, sticky eye and rashes like cradle cap, nappy rash, heat rash, eczema, and dry skin. If something doesn't seem right and you're worried about your newborn, seek medical help. Contact your MCH nurse, the **MCH Line on 13 22 29** or your GP.

Baby check-ups

Your MCH nurse will visit you and your baby at home, usually in the first one to two weeks following birth. Your nearest MCH centre provides free check-ups for you and your baby. When you go for your check-ups, it's a good time to ask questions. Write a list of questions before the check-ups so you don't forget to ask the nurse anything you want to know. MCH support can also be accessed 24/7 through the **MCH Line on 13 22 29** and via the **MCH App**.

2. Baby body language

What's baby telling you?

If you watch what your baby does, it will help you understand baby body language and other baby cues.

Understanding and responding to baby body language

Babies might not use words to say what they want, but they certainly have their own way of telling you what's going on.

Your baby's body language tells you whether they are wide awake and ready to play, uncomfortable, fussy, hungry or at different stages of sleep.

Your baby might also use body language to show you when they want to connect with you and strengthen your bond.

Eye contact is one of the ways your baby tells you that they want your attention.



Turning their head and eyes toward you shows they want your attention.

Reaching out is another cue that shows your baby wants your attention.



Baby cues

Visit raisingchildren.net.au to view a video series that helps you recognise the cues your baby is giving and how to respond.

Videos include:

- Baby cues that say **'I'm tired'**
- Baby cues that say **'I'm hungry'**
- Baby cues that say **'I want to play'**
- Baby cues that say **'I need a break'**



3. Bonding with your newborn

Bonding and attachment

Bonding between you and your newborn is a vital part of development and gives them the foundation for emotional wellbeing.

Here are some ideas:

- Regularly touch and cuddle your newborn. Try gently rocking your baby or holding them against you, skin on skin.
- Respond to crying. You might not always be able to tell why your newborn is crying but by responding, you're helping your baby to feel safe.
- Make your newborn feel physically safe. Provide good head and neck support when you're holding your baby. Safely wrapping your baby recreates the secure feeling of being in the womb.



It's ok and normal if you don't feel an instant connection. Bonding and attachment can sometimes take weeks or months of getting to know and understand your baby.



Dads: video guides

Becoming a dad can be a steep learning curve. It might help to hear from other dads.



Ideas for bonding with your baby

You can bond with your newborn by giving them things to look at, listen to and feel. This gets your baby's brain working and makes it grow. Try these ideas:

- Talk to your newborn as often as you can in soothing, reassuring tones. Talk about what you're doing or tell stories.
- Sing songs. Your newborn will probably like the up-and-down sounds of songs and music, as well as rhythm.
- Look your newborn in the eyes while you talk, sing and make facial expressions.
- Stimulate your newborn's sense of touch. From birth, your newborn can feel even the gentlest touch. Try gently stroking your baby's feet with soft fabric while you're changing their nappy.

Bonding and attachment are about always responding to your newborn's needs with love, warmth and care.

When you do this, you become a special, trusted person in your baby's life. Bonding and attachment will help your baby grow emotionally and physically.

Sharing books and communicating

It's never too early to start communicating with your baby. Reading, storytelling, talking and singing with your baby helps them learn about sounds, words and language. This stimulates your baby's imagination and helps them learn about the world around them. It's a great time for you to bond and share time with your baby.

Sharing stories doesn't mean only reading with your baby. Even young babies can learn from the experience of sharing books with you. Your baby bundle includes four books that you can share and read with your baby as they grow. When sharing books:

- Look at the pictures together – name and point out familiar and new things your baby can see. The more words children hear, the more words they learn.
- Read slowly and spend time on each page. This lets your baby focus on the pictures.
- Change your tone of voice when you read. This lets your baby pick up on different speech sounds – helping them learn to make sounds themselves.

Visit raisingchildren.net.au and search 'language' for more information and videos on language development for your child.

4. Breastfeeding and bottle-feeding

Feeding your newborn

Newborns need feeding every 2–3 hours. Your baby will receive the best nutritional benefits from breastmilk, whether you choose to breastfeed, or bottle feed using expressed milk.

Breastfeeding

Breastmilk is designed by nature for human babies. It contains nutrients your baby needs for growth and development and protects your baby against infections and diseases. Breastfeeding is free and convenient and can promote bonding between you and your baby.

Bottle-feeding

If your baby can't always feed directly from your breast, you might choose to bottle-feed baby expressed breastmilk. This will keep up your milk supply and make sure baby gets the benefits of breastmilk. Or you might choose to feed your baby infant formula, which is the only safe alternative to breastmilk. When using formula, it's important to sterilise all bottle feeding equipment before you feed your baby. **Contact your MCH nurse or MCH Line on 13 22 29 for advice on bottle feeding.**

search on raisingchildren.net.au



Breastfeeding videos



Visit raisingchildren.net.au to view a video series providing extensive information on breastfeeding.

Videos include:

- How to breastfeed:
getting a good attachment
- How to breastfeed:
breastfeeding positions
- Common breastfeeding questions:
spitting up, eating special foods
- Common breastfeeding questions:
challenges, getting help



Your MCH nurse and the Australian Breastfeeding Association can give you further helpful information on breastfeeding.



Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum
1800 686 2 686

5. Newborn sleep

Daily care

Your newborn is programmed to sleep differently from you. Here's what you need to know.

- Newborns will usually sleep for around 16 hours in every 24 and wake 2–3 times a night for feeds.
- A newborn doesn't know that people sleep at night. Your newborn sleeps in short bursts through the day and night, in blocks of up to four hours.
- When newborns are awake, they're usually feeding. After feeding, your baby will probably want to go back to sleep. This means that 'playtime' at this age is very short.
- By the time your baby is around three months old, they might have started to settle into a sleep pattern of around 4–5 hours at night. Remember, up to six months of age, many babies still need feeds at night and help to settle.

If your baby is premature or low birth weight, your MCH nurse, GP or paediatrician might recommend that you let your baby sleep for only a certain amount of time at night before you wake them for a feed.



6. Crying

Daily care

Crying is your baby's main way of communicating.

It is important to remember that all babies cry. Crying usually peaks at around 6-8 weeks of age and then starts to get better.

If you are concerned about your baby's crying, please discuss this with your MCH nurse, GP, paediatrician, or call the MCH Line for advice 24/7 on 13 22 29.

If your baby is crying, try this checklist:

- **Is baby hungry?** Newborns need feeding every 2-3 hours.
- **Does baby need comforting?** Try holding baby in a cradle position, gentle rocking, walking, whispering or singing.
- **Are they tired?** Try safely wrapping baby gently but firmly. Then put baby down to sleep in a safe place.
- **Do they need a nappy change?** Change the nappy, and if baby has a rash, rinse their bottom with clean water, gently pat dry and use a nappy cream.



- **Does baby need a burp?** Try holding baby upright and patting their back gently.
- **Is baby sick?** Take their temperature. An average temperature is 37 °C. Talk to your GP if you are worried.

Sometimes babies just cry for no obvious reason and it's always ok to ask for help. If you feel you can't cope, put baby in a safe place such as in their cot and take some time out until you feel calmer. You can ask someone else to hold baby, or call the **MCH Line on 13 22 29**.



Settling strategies

Here are some helpful strategies to try when your baby is crying:

- Put your baby in a pram and go for a walk.
- Try a relaxing, warm bath for your baby. Ask a friend or relative to help at the times of day when your baby cries the most.
- If you're not too tired, you could go for a drive. Even if your baby doesn't stop crying, it's sometimes easier to cope with when you're on the move.
- If you're feeling overwhelmed, put your baby somewhere safe and take a five-minute break. Letting your baby cry for a few minutes won't hurt them, and it can help you get things under control.



7. Safety

Safe sleeping

Put babies to sleep on their backs. This is the safest position for healthy babies to avoid the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

Once your baby can roll over (at around 4-6 months), keep putting them to sleep on their back, but let them find their own sleeping position.

- Make sure your baby's head or face can't get covered while they're sleeping.
- Put your baby low down in the cot, so their feet are near the bottom end.
- Tuck in the bed sheets securely.
- You could use a safe infant sleeping bag like the one provided in your baby bundle instead of blankets. Sleeping bags with a fitted neck and armholes and no hood are the safest.
- Use a cot that meets current Australian Safety Standards and a well-fitting mattress.
- Keep soft toys, pillows, doonas, sheepskins and cot bumpers out of the cot.
- Have your baby in a cot in your room for the first 6–12 months, if you can.

Safe wrapping

Wrapping soothes some babies.

Wrap your baby from birth until they can roll onto their tummy (4–6 months). If your baby just doesn't like to be wrapped, try a safe infant sleeping bag instead. Once your baby starts rolling, you should no longer wrap them to sleep.

Use a lightweight cotton or muslin wrap. Wrap firmly, but not too tightly, so your baby can fully stretch out their legs.

In warm weather, your baby just needs a singlet and nappy underneath the wrap. Overheating has been linked to SUDI, so try to keep baby cool and comfortable while they sleep. In cool weather, dress your baby in a lightweight jumpsuit under the wrap.

Don't let the wrap cover your baby's head, ears or chin. Wraps that are too high can block baby's breathing and cause them to overheat.

Dress your baby in clothing that's warm, but not hot.

Keep your baby's head uncovered indoors – allowing your baby to stay cool and not overheat. Don't worry if your baby's hands and feet feel cool – that's normal.

Red Nose Safe Sleeping Room Thermometer Guide



Safe Sleeping Room Thermometer

< 16c 18c 20c 22c 24c 26c >

Cool / Cold*

Mild / Warm*

Hot / Hotter*

* Weather and Room Temperature

| | 14c | 16c | 18c | 20c | 22c | 24c | 26c+ |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 0.2/0.3 TOG | | | | | | | |
| 1.0 TOG | | | | | | | |
| 2.5 TOG | | | | | | | |
| 3.5 TOG | | | | | | | |

red nose
saving little lives

- Nappy only
- Singlet
- Short sleeved body suit (no legs)
- Cotton full body suit
- Flannellette Pjs

red nose
saving little lives



Red Nose recommends following our six evidence-based recommendations to sleep baby safely and reduce your risks:

What is a TOG rating?

TOG stands for thermal overall grade. It is a rating system given to baby sleep bags according to the warmth they provide. The lower-rated bags are used in warmer weather, and higher-rated bags used in colder weather.

1. Sleep baby on back
2. Keep head and face uncovered
3. Keep baby smoke free before and after birth
4. Have a safe sleeping environment night and day
5. Sleep baby in safe cot in parents' room
6. Breastfeed baby

www.rednose.org.au

Disclaimer: this thermometer is only intended to be used as a guide

8. Teething

Dental care

Good dental care should start even before those first baby teeth arrive.

For most babies, teeth begin to appear between 6–10 months. As each baby tooth gets to the surface of the gum, the gum opens up to show the tooth.

You can start cleaning and caring for your baby's gums well before the first tooth appears. Just wipe their gums gently twice a day using a clean, damp face washer or gauze.

To help provide comfort to a teething baby, you can try:

- Gently rubbing your baby's gums with a clean finger – make sure to wash your hands first.
- Giving your baby something to bite on, such as a cold (but not frozen) toothbrush, dummy or teething ring, like the one provided in your baby bundle.
- Giving your baby something firm, like a sugar-free rusk, to suck on.

If your baby still seems unhappy or uncomfortable, it may be time to see your MCH nurse or GP. Teething might not be the problem.

Caring for first teeth

As soon as teeth arrive, you can clean them twice a day (in the morning and before bed). Wrap a clean, damp face washer or gauze around your finger and wipe the front and back of each of your baby's teeth.

If your baby doesn't mind, you can introduce a small, soft toothbrush designed for children under two years like the one provided in your baby bundle. Use only water on the toothbrush until your baby is 18 months old.

After that, you can use a pea-sized amount of low-fluoride toothpaste on the toothbrush.



9. Heat health

Sun safety

Shade, clothing and hats are the best way to protect babies less than six months of age, as sunscreen is not recommended for this age group.

Hats: A hat protects your child's face, neck and ears from the sun's UV rays. Bucket, broad-brimmed and Legionnaire hats give the best protection, such as the sunhat provided in your baby bundle.

Look for a soft hat so that your baby can still lie down comfortably while they are wearing it. Remember that you should protect yourself too – if you wear a hat your baby will learn to copy you.



Sunscreen: For young children and babies aged 6 months or older use a sun protection factor (SPF) 30 or higher, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen on your child's face, hands and any other parts of their skin that aren't covered by clothes. Sunscreen filters UV radiation, but doesn't completely block it out. You need to seek shade and put your child in sun-protective clothing too.

In hot weather, offer babies frequent feeds and provide children with extra drinks of water to prevent dehydration.



10. Parenting and relationships

Family life

Parenting doesn't always come naturally. All parents are working it out as they go along. All parents can make mistakes, and learn through experience.

Parenting requires observation, understanding, persistence, imagination, patience, honesty and energy!

Family relationships

Family relationships are the biggest influence on your child's development; good family relationships help children feel secure and loved. Conflict is a natural part of relationships between partners, and developing strategies for managing stress and conflict is good for you, your relationship and your children. For tips on managing conflict see raisingchildren.net.au.

Don't expect too much from yourself or your relationship in the first 6-8 weeks after your baby is born. This is a time of transition, and the most important things are getting to know your child and 'surviving' sleep deprivation!

11. Fun activities for families

- **Victorian Public Libraries** – Storytime sessions at your local public library are free for children aged 0-6 years, providing opportunities to meet other families, share tips, develop friendships and enjoy time in your community space. Libraries are free to join and borrowing books encourages a love of reading. A replica library card has been included in your baby bundle. To swap this for a real library card to borrow books, visit publiclibrariesvictoria.net.au to find your local public library.
- **Toy Libraries** – provide quality educational toys covering all stages of your baby's growth, development, and imagination at a low cost to families. Find your local toy library here: toylibraries.org.au/find-a-toy-library.
- **Playgroup Victoria** – Playgroups bring young children, parents and families together to help your baby learn and develop through play. It's free to join a playgroup, see playgroup.org.au for details on how to join.
- Visit **local parks and playgrounds**, where there are lots of things for your child to see, do, and explore.
- Visit your **local council** website to access information on family events in your area.



12. Emergency and useful contacts

| | |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Ambulance/Police/Fire | 000 |
| Poisons Information Centre | 13 11 26 |
| Child Protection Crisis Line | 13 12 78 |
| Lifeline | 13 11 14 |

Useful contacts

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) | 13 22 29 |
| Australian Breastfeeding Association | 1800 686 268 |
| PANDA (Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Association) | 1300 726 306 |
| Beyond Blue | 1300 224 636 |
| Red Nose | 1300 998 698 |
| Telephone Interpreter Service | 13 14 50 |
| Parentline | 13 22 89 |
| Nurse-on-Call (24 hours) | 1300 60 60 24 |

The following organisations provide useful information and resources that you may want to access:

- The Royal Children's Hospital Kids Health Info
- Kidsafe
- The Royal Children's Hospital Community Information Team
- Red Nose
- Australian Breastfeeding Association
- PANDA
- Playgroup Victoria



Please see betterhealth.vic.gov.au/babybundle to access more information on the above organisations.

This guide is also available in community languages:

عربي

دری

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

ខ្មែរ

فارسی

Tiếng Việt

简体中文

Español

Go to betterhealth.vic.gov.au/babybundle to download a pdf copy of this guide in your language.

Maternal and Child Health Line



13 22 29



www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mchline

Families can speak to an MCH nurse for advice from pregnancy to children starting school. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A free app from Victoria's Maternal and Child Health Service.

THE MCH APP

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mchapp



Your complete and trusted online parenting resource



raisingchildren.net.au provides free, reliable, up-to-date and independent information to help your family grow and thrive together. We're funded by the Australian Government, reviewed by experts and trusted by parents.

Designed for busy families and full of tips and tricks for you to try, raisingchildren.net.au content is easy to find and easy to digest with the answers to hundreds of parenting questions, where and when you need them.

raisingchildren.net.au articles, videos and interactive resources are tailored to different ages and stages, taking you from nurturing your newborn to raising a confident, resilient teen – and helping you to look after yourself as a parent too.



raisingchildren.net.au
the australian parenting website

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Go to

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/babybundle

and follow the link to
fill in a short survey.

