

Passport to the Victorian Government's

baby bundle



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Welcome to your parenting journey

Becoming a parent is an exciting time. It can also be a time of big changes and new challenges.

As you and your new baby get to know one another, the Victorian Government is pleased 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 and settling, language development, parenting, child safety and early learning.

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

The booklet has been put together by the Raising Children Network and you can seek further information at raisingchildren.net.au.

Congratulations on your new baby and all the very best for the wonderful journey ahead.



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 when your baby is born.

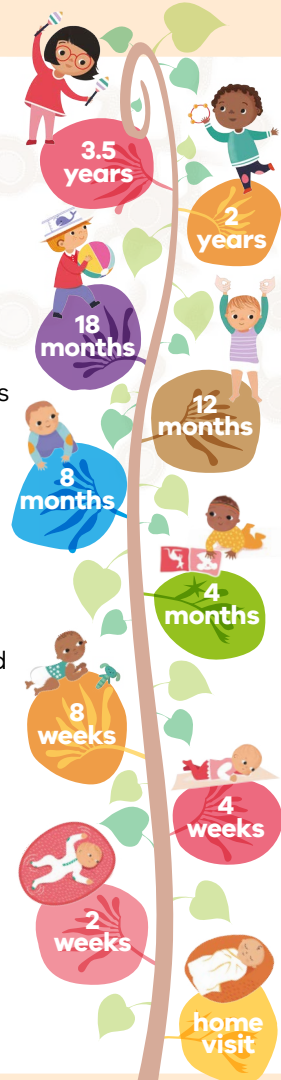
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1. Maternal and Child Health Service

The free Maternal and Child Health (MCH) primary health service:

- is available in local communities across Victoria
- helps every Victorian child to grow, learn, and thrive
- supports the health, wellbeing, and parenting journey of all parents, carers, and families
- is delivered locally by nurses who are also midwives and child and family nurses.

The MCH service welcomes families from all cultures, identities, and backgrounds, including First Nations families, multicultural families, and LGBTIQA+ families. All parents and carers, including mums, dads, grandparents, kinship or other carers, are all welcome to attend MCH appointments.



The universal MCH program provides 10 check-in appointments at key ages and stages of your child's development. The first visit will be scheduled within two weeks of your baby's birth or your baby arriving home.

Your MCH nurse can help you with:

- feeding your baby
- learning about baby cues, behaviour, bonding and attachment
- sleep and settling
- growth and development, including measuring and weighing your baby
- becoming a parent/carer and looking after yourself, including your mental health
- connection to other families through new parent groups.

Your MCH nurse can also link you with other supports in the community, such as referrals to Early Parenting Centres, parenting support and community groups such as playgroups.

If you and your family need some extra support your MCH nurse can help by making a referral.

Accessing your local MCH service

If you haven't heard from your MCH nurse within two weeks of going home with your baby, contact your local MCH service or Aboriginal MCH service. You can find your local MCH service by using the locator tool on the Better Health Channel.



If you need earlier support, you can contact:

- The **MCH Line 13 22 29** (telephone support available 24 hours, 7 days per week)
- Your local MCH service
- The hospital or maternity service where you had your baby
- Your local doctor
- Emergency department of your local hospital
- Urgent Care Clinic
- Virtual Emergency Department
- Other supports are also listed on the back cover of your My Health, Learning and Development Book (green book), which is given to you in hospital when your baby is born.

Your healthcare options

Everyday care

For everyday healthcare, Victorian families can visit their GP or pharmacist or get extra support by calling the free MCH Line.

MCH Line - Tel 13 22 29

The confidential, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week MCH Line provides over-the-phone information, advice and referrals to all families with young children (from birth to school age).

When you call, qualified MCH nurses can discuss your concerns about a broad range of child health topics, including nutrition and breastfeeding, as well as your own health and any early parenting queries.

Urgent care

Not sure if you should visit an emergency department? Do you or your child need urgent healthcare now, but it's not life-threatening? Help is available.

Get free help faster with Victoria's Urgent Care Services.

You can choose to get healthcare in three ways:

- Video call with **Virtual Emergency Care** delivered by the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department 24/7
- Phone **1300 60 60 24** for **Nurse-on-Call** 24/7
- Walk into an **Urgent Care Clinic**, open late and on weekends

Virtual Emergency Care

Virtual Emergency Care connects you to an emergency doctor or nurse from your computer or mobile. Adults and children can access the service from anywhere in Victoria. To use the service all you'll need is a device with a camera (mobile phone, computer, laptop or tablet).

Virtual Emergency Care is delivered by the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department. Pre-register today so when you need urgent care, it's only a video call away.

www.vved.org.au/patients

For more information about Victoria's Urgent Care Services, visit www.urgentcare.vic.gov.au

Emergency care

If your child is in a life-threatening situation and needs emergency care now, call **triple zero (000)** or visit your nearest emergency department.

2. Your baby's first weeks

What to expect



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

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

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

Your baby spends their first weeks of life adapting to their new environment. The outside world is very different from the womb, where 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.

Look after yourself too

This means eating well, and sleeping or resting when you can, 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.

If you're concerned about your baby, or your own physical or mental health, call the MCH Line for free, confidential 24-hour telephone support 7 days per week (13 22 29), or consult your GP or paediatrician, or call PANDA on 1300 726 306.

The first weeks

Feeding and sleeping

Your baby will probably sleep most of the time, waking up every few hours to feed. Newborns have tiny tummies, so they need to wake and feed often. Most newborns feed every 2–3 hours (around 8–12 feeds every 24 hours).

Bonding and communicating

Your baby 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 9 months. You can communicate with your baby by gently touching, cuddling, smiling, talking and looking into their eyes. You'll also start getting to know how your baby communicates with you using body language and other baby cues.



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 baby 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 in a tight fist and 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 baby, seek medical help. Contact your MCH nurse, the **MCH Line on 13 22 29** or your GP.



3. Baby body language

What's baby telling you?

Your baby's body language can tell you how they're feeling and what they need from you.



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 might also use body language to show you when they want to connect with you.

When you notice your baby's body language and respond to it, your baby feels safe and secure.

This strengthens your bond. Your baby might be **hungry** if they make sucking noises or turn towards the breast. Your baby might be **ready to play** if they look you in the eyes, smile or reach their hands to you. Your baby might **need a break** if they turn their head away from you, squirm or kick.

Baby cues



Scan this QR code 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'**



4. Bonding with your baby

Bonding and attachment

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

Here are some ideas:

- Regularly touch and cuddle your baby. 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 baby is crying but by responding, you're helping them to feel safe.
- Make your baby feel physically safe. Provide good head and neck support when you're holding them. 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.



Ideas for bonding with your baby

You can bond with your baby 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 baby as often as you can in soothing, reassuring tones. Talk about what you're doing or tell stories.
- Sing songs. Your baby will probably like the up and down sounds of songs and music, as well as rhythm.
- Look your baby in the eyes while you talk, sing and make facial expressions.
- Stimulate your baby's sense of touch. From birth, they 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 baby'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

You can start communicating with your baby early – the earlier the better. 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 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 babies and 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.



Scan the QR code to learn more about reading with your children and baby.



5. Breastfeeding and bottle-feeding

Feeding your baby

Newborns need feeding every 2–3 hours. Your baby will receive the best nutritional benefits from breastmilk. If breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk is not possible, you can feed your baby infant formula which is the only safe alternative. Breastmilk or infant formula are all your baby should be fed until around 6 months.

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 many conditions. Breastfeeding is free and convenient and can help you bond with your baby.



Scan the QR code to see some helpful breastfeeding videos.



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



Breastfeeding Helpline
1800 mum 2 mum
1800 686 2686

Bottle-feeding

If your baby can't always feed directly from the breast, you might choose to bottle-feed with expressed breastmilk. This will keep up your milk supply and make sure your baby gets the benefits of breastmilk. Or you might choose to feed your baby infant formula, which is the only safe alternative to breastmilk. It's important to sterilise all bottle-feeding equipment before you feed your baby.



Scan the QR code for more information on bottle-feeding.



Scan the QR code to learn more about preparing formula.



6. Newborn sleep

Waking and sleeping

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

- Newborns will usually sleep 14–17 hours in every 24 hours, waking several times a night for feeds.
- Your baby sleeps in short bursts throughout the day and night.
- 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 3 months old, they might regularly be having a longer sleep at night – for example, around 4–5 hours. Remember, up to 6 to 12 months of age, many babies still need feeds at night and help to settle.

If your baby is premature or low birth weight, or has other health or growth concerns, your MCH nurse 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.



7. Crying

Why babies cry

Crying is your baby's main way of telling you what they need or how they feel.

It is important to remember that all babies cry. Crying usually peaks at around 6–8 weeks of age and then gradually lessens.

If you are concerned about your baby's crying, call the MCH Line – 13 22 29.

If your baby is crying, try this checklist:

- **Is your baby hungry?** Offer the breast or a bottle. Or your baby might just want to suck.
- **Is your baby upset?** Try holding them in a cradle position, gentle rocking, walking, talking or singing. Reduce light and noise.
- **Is your baby tired?** Try safely wrapping baby gently but firmly. Then put baby down to sleep in a safe place.
- **Does your baby need a nappy change?** Change the nappy, and if they have a rash, rinse their bottom with clean water, gently pat dry and use a nappy cream.

- **Is your baby uncomfortable?** Hold your baby upright, and pat or stroke their back. Also check your baby isn't too hot or cold.
- **Is your baby sick?** Take their temperature. Seek immediate medical attention if your baby is 0–3 months and has a temperature higher than 38 °C – they have a fever. If your baby is older with a fever and other signs of illness, see a GP.

Sometimes babies cry for no obvious reason and it's always OK to ask for help. If you're feeling overwhelmed, put your baby in a safe place such as in their cot, and take a quick break. You can ask someone else to hold your baby, or call the **MCH Line on 13 22 29**.



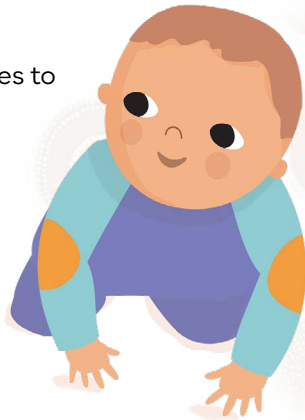
Scan the QR code to learn more about newborn crying.



Settling strategies

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

- Gently rock your baby in your arms, place them skin to skin or carry your baby in a baby carrier. Use the QR code below to learn about carrier safety.
- 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 feeling overwhelmed, put your baby somewhere safe and take a 5-minute break. Letting your baby cry for a few minutes won't hurt them, and it can help you get things under control.



Scan the QR code for information on using carriers safely.



8. Safety

Safe sleeping

Wherever and whenever your baby sleeps, they must be able to breathe easily. This reduces the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

Here's how to make sure your baby is sleeping safely:

- Always put your baby on their back to sleep.
- Keep your baby's head and face uncovered.
- Use a cot that meets current Australian Safety Standards and a well-fitting mattress.
- Put your baby's feet near the cot's bottom end.
- Use lightweight coverings, tucked in securely at your baby's chest level. Or use a safe infant sleeping bag like the one provided in your baby bundle. Sleeping bags with a fitted neck and armholes and no hood are the safest.
- Keep soft toys, pillows, doonas, sheepskins, cot bumpers and mattress padding out of the cot.
- Have your baby sleep in your room for the first 6–12 months, if you can.



Scan the QR code to learn more about sleep safety.



Safe wrapping

Wrapping soothes some babies.

Wrap your baby from birth until they start trying to roll onto their tummy, usually around 3–4 months.

Use a lightweight cotton or muslin wrap. Wrap firmly, but not too tightly, so your baby can fully stretch out their legs. If your baby doesn't like to be wrapped or is trying to roll, try a safe infant sleeping bag instead.

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

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



Early Parenting Centres (EPC) are another great free service that can help parents with more intensive support with sleep, feeding, child behaviour, child learning and development, and parent and child health and wellbeing. Families can self-refer to their nearest EPC.



How to create a Safe Sleep space for baby

A safe sleep space is one that is clear of any soft or loose items.



Place baby on their back in their own safe space, on a firm, flat, fitted mattress



Keep baby from overheating, use light weight bedding with light layers



Make sure blankets are tucked in firmly



No bulky or weighted blankets



No soft or loose items in sleep space, no bumpers, toys, pillows, lambswool, doonas, nests or position devices



Once baby shows signs of rolling make sure their arms are free and transition from a bassinet to a cot

Scan the QR code below for more information & resources



rednose.org.au

Red Nose acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands in which we work, live and visit.

Red Nose Safe Sleep Advice Hub
1300 998 698 [during AEST/AEDT business hours]
rednose.org.au/safesleep

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education@rednose.org.au

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nose
saving little lives

9. Teething

Dental care

Good dental care can 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.

Once your baby is about 3 months old, you can 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 toothbrush, dummy or cold but not frozen 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's time to see your MCH nurse or GP. Teething might not be the problem. Remember, teething does not cause a high temperature.

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 2 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.



10. Heat health

Sun safety

Shade, protective clothing and hats are the best ways to protect babies less than 6 months of age, as sunscreen is not recommended for this age group.

Hats: A hat protects your baby's face, neck and ears from the sun's UV rays. Bucket, broad-brimmed and legionnaires 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 children 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 and your child need shade and sun-protective clothing too.

In hot weather, make sure your child's drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. For children under 6 months, offer extra feeds. For children 6 months and older, offer more water.



11. Parenting and relationships

Looking after yourself

Raising children is an important job, and looking after yourself helps you do the job well.

That's because looking after yourself gives you the energy you need to help your child grow and thrive. Looking after yourself involves looking after your relationships, your health and your wellbeing.

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.

It's also important to be kind to yourself as you navigate the challenges of raising children. This is a time of transition, and the most important things are getting to know your child and your new role as a parent.



Scan the QR code for tips on managing conflict.



12. 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 plv.org.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.



13. 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

MCH 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
Nurse-on-Call (24 hours)	1300 60 60 24
1800RESPECT (24 hours)	1800 737 732
ForWhen (Perinatal Depression and Anxiety Helpline)	1300 242 322

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

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



Scan the QR code to access more information on the above organisations.



This guide is also available in community languages:

عربي

Arabic

دری

Dari

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

Punjabi

ខ្មែរ

Khmer

فارسی

Farsi

Tiếng Việt

Vietnamese

简体中文

Simplified Chinese

Español

Spanish



Scan the QR code to download a PDF copy of this guide in your language.



Maternal and Child Health Line



13 22 29

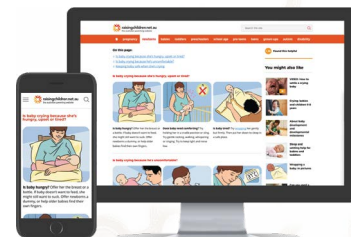


www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mchline

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



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.



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Tell us what you think of your baby bundle!

Scan the QR code to
fill in a short survey

