

Bonding with your baby

The best foundation for life

Some parents feel an intense attachment within the first minutes or days after birth. For others, it may take a bit longer. Bonding is a process, not something that takes place within minutes and not something that has to be limited to happening within a certain time period after birth. This is important for both mums and dads.

Bonding and being close enables a child to feel secure and affects how they will interact, communicate and form relationships later in life. The bond you develop is a key factor in the way your baby's brain develops and influences their social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

Even in the first days of life, your baby picks up on your cues, your tone of voice, your gestures, and your emotions and sends you signals by crying, cooing, mimicking facial expressions, and eventually smiling, laughing, pointing, and even yelling. In return, you watch and listen to your baby's cries and sounds, and respond to their cues, at the same time as you tend to their need for food, warmth, and affection. Secure attachment grows out of the success of this communication process between you and your baby. With almost every touch your newborn is learning about life.

Pay attention to the kinds of movements, sounds, and environments your baby enjoys. Some babies are comforted by motion, such as rocking or being walked back and forth, while others respond to sounds like soft music, or a change of environment such as being carried outside. Many of your baby's early signs and signals are about the need for food and sleep.

Play and fun

Having fun, playing with, holding, and sharing happiness with your baby is really important. Smiles, laughter, touch, and interaction are important to a baby's development. Your body language, tone of voice, and loving touch are all ways of communicating with your baby.

When you see signs that your baby wants to play, try to relax and enjoy exchanging smiles, funny faces, and silly sounds with your baby. Toys, books, and music can provide a helpful starting point for play, but often all it takes is a game of peek-a-boo or a silly voice to invite your baby to play.

Your local Children's Centre may run activities such as baby massage that can support bonding with your baby.

<http://surestartchildrenscentresnhp.org.uk>
www.childrenscentres.co.uk

Enjoy reading and share books together or join the 'Busy Baby' baby and toddler bounce and rhyme sessions at Calderdale libraries.

www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/leisure-and-culture/libraries/libraries-children

If you have any concerns about your child's development or behaviour speak to your health visitor.

1

Watch your baby's facial expressions and body movements for clues about their needs.

2

For example, your baby may adjust body position or facial expression, or move their arms and legs in response to your voice, or to tell you they are cold or need to be cuddled.

3

Become familiar with the kinds of sounds your baby makes and what these sounds mean.