

# Building a strong relationship with your baby

The deep emotional bond that you share with your baby is called **attachment**. When you care for your baby and respond to his needs consistently, he learns that you are a source of love, comfort, and protection. This is called **secure attachment**.

## Understand what is normal for your child

- All babies need to develop an attachment with a person who cares for them. It is especially important that you build an attachment with your baby in his first year of life. This attachment with your baby will continue to develop throughout his life.
- When you have a secure attachment with your baby, your baby is more likely to become an adult who:
  - feels confident and good about himself
  - enjoys being with others
  - has trusting, lasting relationships
  - can solve problems and conflicts
  - is less aggressive
- The best way to build a secure attachment with your baby is to respond sensitively to your baby's needs.

## Look at your child and his surroundings

- Your baby tells you what he needs by the sounds and faces he makes, and the ways he moves. These actions are called cues. By learning to recognize your baby's cues, you will know his needs, likes, and dislikes. For example:
  - Look at your baby's face. Is he smiling or frowning?
  - Listen to the sounds your baby is making. Does he sound happy, excited, or upset?
  - Look at what your baby is doing with his body, hands, and feet. Is he reaching for something or pushing something away?

As you spend time with your baby, you will start to learn what his cues mean. For example, when he is interested, your baby will turn towards sounds and look at faces. When your baby needs a break, he will turn away or fall asleep.



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- Look for signs that your baby needs more attention from you, for example, when he is hurt, upset, or sick. Some signs to look for are changes in:
  - your baby's crying  
For example, does your baby's cry sound different than normal?
  - your baby's eating or sleeping  
For example, is your baby sleeping less or more than usual?
  - how your baby normally behaves  
For example, is your baby more quiet than normal?

## Respond sensitively to your child

- It is important to respond to your baby's cues. Play or cuddle with your baby when you see him showing interest in you, for example, looking at you or reaching for you.
- It is especially important to respond sensitively to your baby when he is hurt, upset, or sick. In these situations:
  - respond quickly and calmly
  - meet your baby's immediate needs, for example, feed him, change his diaper or go to the doctor
  - talk, sing, or hum to your baby in a soothing voice
  - comfort your baby by holding him or gently touching him
- Make every effort to respond to your baby every time he cries. You will not spoil your baby by picking him up. It teaches him that he can trust you to care for him when he needs you.
- There may be times when you are not able to respond to your baby right away. For example, if you are caring for an older child, you might not always be able to go to your baby right away. What is important is that you sensitively respond to your baby as soon as you can most of the time.

## Grow as a parent

- Learning your baby's cues and what the cues mean can be challenging. Be patient with yourself.
- If you are having a difficult time building a relationship with your baby, talk with a health care provider such as your doctor or a public health nurse for support. You can speak to a public health nurse by calling Health Connections at 905-546-3550.

