

THE OXFORDSHIRE  
BABY  
& PARENTING  
GUIDE



OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL

Most babies learn best when  
they see, hear, feel, touch,  
taste and smell.



**Baby Sensory™**

Precious Early Learning for Babies



## Sneak a peek, it's all amazing!

Our multi-award winning classes will introduce you and your baby (or babies) to a world of sensory delights, where you can relax, spend quality time with each other and enjoy meeting other new parents.

Specifically designed from birth to aid your child's development, the programme is packed with an incredible variety of sounds, smells, sights, textures, music, dance, signing and massage – and you'll never experience the same class twice.

To find your  
nearest classes:

**Enter your postcode at  
[www.babysensory.com](http://www.babysensory.com)**

[www.babysensory.com](http://www.babysensory.com)

We've done the research; so you can enjoy the fun...

**Baby Sensory™**

Precious Early Learning for Babies

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# WELCOME

## Becoming a parent is a learning experience

On the one hand, you're welcoming an amazing little person into the world, which is both a wonderful and unforgettable achievement.

On the other, it can also be a bewildering time as you try to get to know the newest addition to your family. Why is your son crying? Is your daughter hungry? And how can anyone survive on such little sleep?

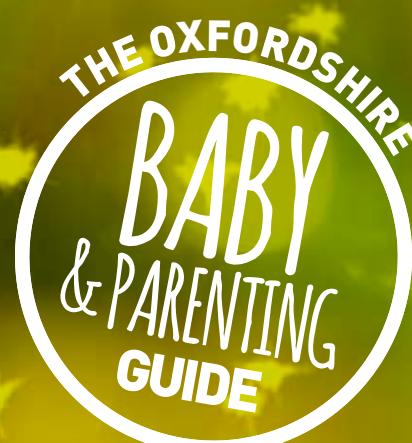
Everyone in this publication has been through the experience. We can share the joy of having a child and sympathise with the worries that being a parent naturally brings. After all, they do say that children don't come with instruction manuals so it's only natural to feel you're constantly finding your feet.

However, we hope that the features in this publication will help to provide you with appropriate information and support on some of the issues of raising a child, particularly in the first year.

You will find information if you have problems or if you just want to know how to make new friends and get out more.

Becoming a parent doesn't mean losing your life as you used to know it. It's just the start of a different and exciting stage. We hope this will help you to embark on that journey and beyond.

Alicja Gilroy  
Superintendent Registrar



# Make Time to Play



B R I T I S H  
T O Y &  
H O B B Y  
A S S O C I A T I O N

**From the very first moment that you meet your baby, play will form a huge part of your interactions with one another. Appropriate toys, repetitive rhymes and games and stimulating environments all perform a huge role in helping your child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.**

From birth to six months you will be your child's main playmate. Tickling fingers and toes, making funny faces, playing peek-a-boo and holding noisy conversations are all part of learning about the world. Being a 24/7 entertainer is pretty exhausting so providing appropriate toys can be a huge help. Their field of vision is pretty short, so mobiles and pram toys in primary colours are a great favourite. As strength and mobility increase you can introduce rattles, cloth books and soft toys. Those with a mix of colour, shape and texture are great for all round sensory development.

Between six and twelve months your baby will gain strength and consequently have a much greater control of their head, back and limbs. Kicking and grabbing will become part of their repertoire so it is a great time to introduce a baby gym or something similar to encourage movement. Brightly coloured balls, squeaky animals and toys with lots of noise and colour, particularly if they are just out of reach provide an incentive that will get your baby rolling over, crawling and cruising along the furniture.

This is also a great time for introducing larger board books, shape sorters and building blocks—activities that are more fun if you are sitting up.

Research suggests that playing with toys such as building blocks and puzzles improves children's spatial abilities. Deciding whether a block goes on top or under another block is the type of basic development skill which aids more formal learning and knowledge in science, technology, engineering and mathematical skills in later life. Stacking cups and rings aid dexterity and hand-eye coordination and are perennial favourites (and often can be taken in the bath for extra fun play!). Do remember though, that practically everything your baby touches will end up in their mouths, so do make sure there are no small objects left around, such as older children's toys that might have smaller pieces that could cause them to choke.

While babies do not really play with one another, getting together with other carers and their children will encourage their social development. Learning to share, taking turns and participating in group activities fosters skills that will be vital as they go into more formal education settings. Reading and musical activities in particular build the essential foundations of speech and language, therefore improving a child's communication.

As they get older and turn into toddlers who can walk, they should be physically active every day. Experts recommend a minimum of 180 minutes (3 hours) spread throughout the day. Some of the best examples for this are rolling and playing, jumping, running and standing up—which help children's balance and coordination.



**Children develop at different rates so don't worry if your baby's favourite toy is one marketed at a younger age range, but be careful if they are marked older for children under 3 – look for the 'not suitable for 0-3' age warning to be sure. Children develop natural preferences and favourite toys, so don't be in a hurry to discard them too early, not least because they will find inventive ways to incorporate simpler toys into their games.**



## Make Time 2 Play

In our very busy lives, and as the lives of children seem to get busier, it is sometimes difficult to make time in the day to play. The Make Time 2 Play campaign exists to help you do just this.

With regular activity ideas posted on social media, a website and free app full of hundreds of play ideas, this project aims to give you simple and enjoyable tips to make playing with your children even more fun! The campaign also focuses on the value of play. Contributions and research from leading play experts on the many different benefits of play, help parents and carers understand how play aids child development.

[www.maketime2play.co.uk](http://www.maketime2play.co.uk)

[www.facebook.com/maketime2play](http://www.facebook.com/maketime2play)



## Be safe!

Make sure you give your child's toys a regular check-up. Remove any broken or damaged toys and give them a quick wash where appropriate. If you have children of different ages, put those with smaller pieces on a shelf out of reach or a container with a secure lid to keep your baby safe. It sounds impossible but try to get older children to put their toys in a toy box - make it into a game or add it to a good behaviour chart to get them to tidy up at the end of a play session!

When choosing toys for the under three's always ensure you have checked the safety advice on the packaging. At this age, children put things in their mouths and toys that have small parts are dangerous as they can cause choking.

Avoid toys with a warning "not suitable for 0-36 months".

When buying toys, look for the Lion Mark. This is a sign that the company is a member of the British Toy and Hobby Association and they have signed up to a strict set of guidelines on safety, ethical marketing and manufacturing of toys amongst other things.

**For more information visit  
[www.btha.co.uk](http://www.btha.co.uk)**



Be aware when buying handmade toys that they may not have been made following the very strict quality and safety criteria that applies to mainstream manufacturers, or been subject to any testing with regards to flammability, chemical content or robustness.

The BTHA website has guidelines on passing used toys on safely. Do pay attention to age appropriate guidelines. These often relate to the hazards posed by small parts rather than your child's ability to play with a toy.

Where toys have batteries, remove them if there is a likelihood the toy will not be played with for some time. When replacing batteries do not mix old and new and keep any battery chargers well out of reach of inquisitive little people. Discard any burst balloons immediately and never allow your child to hold noisy toys close to their ears – or yours!

And finally – teach your children to put their toys away when they have finished playing with them. Leaving them lying on the stairs or on the kitchen floor can be the cause of a nasty accident.

# POSITIVE PARENTING

THERE IS NO SECRET TO RAISING A HAPPY AND CONFIDENT CHILD, IT CAN SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE AN UPHILL STRUGGLE! WE'VE COMPILED SOME POINTERS TO HELP YOU SET YOUR FAMILY UP FOR LIFE

## Was parenting always this hard?

Our parents never needed babycare manuals and 'idiots' guides' to raising children (although whether they should have consulted one is open to debate!) Parenting is supposed to come naturally but, as any mum or dad will admit, that's rarely the case.

There's no perfect parent (honest!) Being a parent is not about being perfect; it's about trying to get it right most of the time and learning from those times when we don't get it quite right...

MORE INFO

**Oxfordshire County Council:** there are pages devoted to children and families. Visit the home page [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) – click on 'Main Menu', then 'Children, Education and Families'.

**Family Lives:** a free helpline for anyone caring for children. call 0808 800 2222 or visit [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

**Family and Childcare Trust:** a national charity that aims to improve the wellbeing of children and families in the UK. visit [www.familyandchildcaretrust.org](http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org)

There are so many parenting programmes, books and websites that it's easy to start feeling even more stressed about the 'right' way to do things. While these sources of information can be helpful, there is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' family when it comes to the problems – big or small – that you will face. All you, and any parent, can hope to do is your best.

## Safe and sound

All children need to feel safe, secure and loved in order to thrive, and you can do this without spending huge amounts of money or doing mountains of research.

A home that has some structure, consistent boundaries and routine can help your child feel safe and secure.

## Great (but realistic) expectations

When deciding on the routine, consistent boundaries and expectations of your household, take a moment to reflect on whether what you're asking of yourself and others is actually realistic. For example, is it fair to expect a two year-old to sit for half an hour each day with a board book amusing themselves? Is it realistic for you to spring-clean the house each week with a newborn to look after?

Give yourself and others a break by setting achievable goals.



**School Readiness Leaflet:** [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/get-children-ready-school](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/get-children-ready-school)

**Home-Start:** a national charity with 16,000 trained parent volunteers supporting parents. For details: OXFORD

[www.home-startoxford.org.uk](http://www.home-startoxford.org.uk) or call 01865 779991.

SOUTHERN OXFORDSHIRE

[homestartso@btconnect.com](mailto:homestartso@btconnect.com) or call 01235 511152.

[www.homestart-southernoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.homestart-southernoxfordshire.org.uk)

BANBURY & CHIPPING NORTON

[info@home-startbanbury.org.uk](mailto:info@home-startbanbury.org.uk)

or call 01295 266358.

[www.home-startbanbury.org.uk](http://www.home-startbanbury.org.uk)

## **Be consistent**

Deciding on your routine is arguably the easy part, often the difficulties arise when implementing your routine. Once your child understands what is expected of them life starts to become a little easier.

When you're tired, in a bad mood or just not feeling up to par, it can be hard to see things through when your child is screaming the house down. However, short-term pain for long-term gain is the theory here. Once your child knows that a rule sticks they will eventually give up trying to break it.

## **Ignore some of the negatives...**

Many parents say that all they've done by the end of a day is shout "No!" at their child, which is tiring and depressing for everyone. There will be times when this is inevitable but to get out of an endless spiral of negativity let some of the smaller offences go and concentrate on the major misdemeanours.

## **The Power of praise**

Praise the positive things your child does such as time spent playing by themselves. Praise them for who they are too, their beautiful smile, kind heart, twinkly eyes.

Build their self-esteem and grow their confidence. When your child sees that they get lots of happy hugs and praise for being well behaved but little or no response when they are being naughty, they will soon realise what they need to do to get your attention in a way that makes everyone happy.

## **Talk... and listen**

With a young child, unable to fully voice their opinions and feelings, it is easy to just talk at them instead of to them. Undesirable behaviour can often be a symptom of unhappiness or insecurity, so make time to sit with your child to let them know that you can listen as well as talk.

This helps you to understand your child better, creates mutual respect and

encourages their rapidly growing language skills. For more information on how to talk to your child, turn to page 32.

## **Learn to let go**

Try to let go of your responsibilities now and then to have some fun! Let your child take the lead here and learn how to stop worrying to live in the moment. Play, sing, make a mess, and forget your inhibitions. You were a child once, after all, so it should come naturally (after a little practice!)



## **All you need is love (and laughter)**

The Beatles once sang that 'All you need is love' and this is certainly true for children. A child who knows that they are well-loved will grow in self-esteem and happiness and will return the affection that you give them. This is the foundation for the most rewarding lifelong relationship you will have and who could ask for more?

### **OPA: Oxfordshire Play Association:**

Promotes high quality play opportunities for children aged 0-16 across the County.

Call 01865 779474 or visit [www.oxonplay.org.uk](http://www.oxonplay.org.uk)

**OXonFIS:** Oxfordshire Family Information Service provides free information for parents about childcare and child-related services and activities.

[fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/parents](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/parents)

### **Oxford Health:**

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/parents/oxfordshire/health-visiting](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/parents/oxfordshire/health-visiting)

**OXPIP:** the Oxford Parent Infant Project helps parents and babies develop more loving and secure relationships through a confidential counselling service. Call 01865 778034, email on [info@oxpip.org.uk](mailto:info@oxpip.org.uk) or visit: [www.oxpip.org.uk](http://www.oxpip.org.uk)

**Oxfordshire County Council's Adult Learning:** contact Abingdon and Witney College.

**Netmums:** a national website that offers information on local activities, events and support sources: [www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

# ALL KINDS OF Parents

**Who is in your family is not as important as having health, happiness, love and mutual respect and support amongst all the members.**

There might be times when this becomes difficult but you're not expected to do things alone. Never feel frightened to ask for help – from family, friends, healthcare professionals and the charities mentioned in the box (below). There will always be someone there to see you through the roughest waters.

## Young mums

Young Women's Trust works with young mums each year to help them achieve a better standard of living for themselves and their babies.

The Trust's policy officer, explains: "Life can be extremely tough for many young mums. They are often prevented from finishing their education and people can be judgemental of them, dismissing them for their lack of experience.

But the women we deal with are determined to do well in life, not only for themselves but for their children too. Some say that having a baby has turned their lives around and they have a reason for succeeding. They just need the opportunities".

## One but not alone

According to single-parent charity Gingerbread nearly a quarter of UK families have a single parent.

Most of these will be women, with men making up 8% of the total. Being a single parent has its obvious challenges: you have the sole responsibility of your child(ren) which can be very tiring and the tough times can seem even harder.

However, being brought up by one parent has very definite advantages, including the development of very close relationships and bonds for life with your child or children and the cooperation and independence – for you and your child – that this brings.

**MORE  
INFO**

### YOUNG MUMS

[www.oxme.info/cms/life/relationships-young-parents](http://www.oxme.info/cms/life/relationships-young-parents)

### SINGLE PARENTS

[www.gingerbread.org.uk](http://www.gingerbread.org.uk)  
[www.onespace.org.uk](http://www.onespace.org.uk)

### BEREAVED FAMILIES

[www.oxfordcruse.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcruse.co.uk)  
[www.seesaw.org.uk](http://www.seesaw.org.uk)  
[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

### STEP FAMILIES

[www.careforthefamily.org.uk/stepfamily](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/stepfamily)  
[www.ofm.org.uk](http://www.ofm.org.uk)  
[www.relate-oxfordshire.org](http://www.relate-oxfordshire.org)

### GRANDPARENTS

[www.grandparents-association.org.uk](http://www.grandparents-association.org.uk)



# THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A TYPICAL FAMILY THESE DAYS. WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES IN THE UK AND SHOW WHY THEY ARE SO SPECIAL.

## **Kirstie Grainger lives near Witney, with her two daughters. In 2011, Kirstie's partner died suddenly and unexpectedly.**

"Losing Gerry was extremely traumatic for all of us. Everyone's experience of grief is different, but here is some advice that I've found useful as a bereaved partner and parent.

### **1 Don't expect too much of yourself or your children.**

Grieving can be a long process. Accept that you will have good days and bad days - but life will gradually get easier.

### **2 Expect an emotional rollercoaster.** Give your children time and space to express their emotions, and let them see that you are grieving too.

Note that children's emotions can change very quickly. Mine would sometimes go from being desperately upset to asking what's for dinner, all in the space of a minute. Once, during a conversation about their dad's death, one of them cracked a joke. We all started laughing. I think that bit of light relief did us all good!

### **3 Talk about the person who has died.**

My children understand that Daddy is never going to come back, but they talk about him a lot. They have memory boxes (provided by Seesaw), where they keep special things that remind them of Daddy and we write down memories in a book as well.

## **Dealing with a death in the family**

**4 Get support.** Check out the organisations in the box. We have had invaluable support from Seesaw and Cruse, and from fellow members of WAY. Also let your family and friends know how they can help. Ask them to be specific - "Do you want me to look after the children on Tuesday after school?" is much more helpful than "Let me know if I can do anything."

**5 Look after yourself!** Look after your children but don't forget about your own needs. Make sure you have time to yourself to do things that you enjoy."

## **Old families and new ones**

According to the Care for the Family charity, stepfamilies are the fastest growing type of family in the UK - at least one in every three is one. If you are going through a divorce or separation, make sure that your children are given opportunities to talk about how they are feeling. Many children become unsettled by change of any sort, so take things one step at a time to avoid negative backlash and undesirable behaviour.

Try to keep things as friendly as possible with your previous partner and avoid making your children feel guilty. With time they will accept new situations but patience, love and understanding are paramount to any successful transition.

## **Grandparents**

Grandparents play a vital role in the upbringing of many children. They undertake childminding duties while parents are at work, they participate in family outings and holidays and they provide moral and emotional support to both parents and children.

Relationships between grandparents and grandchildren should be encouraged as much as possible to help bring more love and stability into a child's life, especially during times of change. If families separate, it is important to keep the connection going as circumstances change so that no one misses out.

## **Family grief**

Sadly, many families are affected by grief, either with the loss of one parent, brother or sister or of another close family member. The level of sadness can feel overwhelming for both adults and children, the latter of whom can grieve in different ways. Even if they seem OK it is always best to make sure that you give them enough time to check if they need to talk.

There are groups out there to help families come to terms with their loss and to ensure that parents give enough time, understanding and patience both to their children and to themselves.

## **A healthy parent means a healthy baby.**

As all babies learn from parents, creating a healthy role model is vital to ensure your baby gets a good start in life. This starts with you! It also means you're more likely to feel good and have energy, which will help when going through sleepless nights and more difficult times.

### **Healthy eating**

- Eating a healthy, balanced diet will make sure both parents have as much energy as possible. Eating well will also be demonstrated to your baby as he/she gets older
- If you are planning on having more than one baby it is important for mum to try to lose 'baby weight' between each pregnancy, so that you start your pregnancy in the best possible health
- Easy steps such as reducing sugar and salt intake and eating at least five portions of fruit and veg per day will all help
- If you would like assistance with losing weight speak to your GP. Referrals can be made to free group slimming programmes if you meet specific criteria
- Visit [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life) for more tips on healthy eating with a family.

### **Keeping active**

- Although you may not feel like you have enough energy to exercise, being active doesn't have to mean running a marathon! It can also help a woman's body to recover after giving birth
- Regular walks contribute to meeting your recommended amount of activity per week (150 mins per week, approximately 30 minutes per day). The fresh air will also be good for baby. Build up to gradually increasing your activity level. Doing things together as a family will help enjoyment
- It's also important to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting for long periods – get up and make a cup of tea, go for a walk – it all counts!

### **Mental health**

- Many parents feel a range of emotions, positive and negative, during this time.
- If either parent is struggling it's important to speak to someone. Talk to your health visitor, your GP, or use local support groups such as Oxfordshire Mind
- Having regular contact with other people is important, so you could consider joining a group at a local community-led group. There will be sessions for mums, dads and both parents.

# **HEALTHY PARENT**



### **GO Active**

GO Active is the county wide brand for physical activity opportunities. This includes women only sessions, buggy walks, exercise on referral and local free or subsidised activities. Ask your GP or midwife about recommending physical activity. More information: [www.getoxfordshireactive.org](http://www.getoxfordshireactive.org) [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/keeping-fit-and-healthy/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/keeping-fit-and-healthy/)



## Sexual health

- Sex may be the last thing on your mind after giving birth but unless you are planning your next baby immediately, thinking about contraception is important. It's also good for parents to know their STI and HIV status
- [www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk) has a range of clinic locations and opening hours across the county offering a full range of contraception choices as well as STI and HIV testing
- Ensuring you keep up to date with your cervical screening (smear test) is also important. It tests the health of the cervix and checks for abnormalities. Contact your GP surgery to make an appointment or to find out when your next one is due.

## Alcohol, drugs & smoking

- Limiting the amount of alcohol we drink is good for our physical health and mental wellbeing. Men and women are advised to drink no more than 14 units a week, and this should not be saved up, but spread over 3 or more days.
- Although abstinence is the ideal the reality is a breastfeeding mum may want to have an occasional drink and needs correct guidance to minimise risk. For current NHS guidance on alcohol and breastfeeding visit: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding-alcohol/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding-alcohol/)
- Any drug prescribed, over the counter or illegal drugs need to be discussed with your GP or pharmacist. For more information please see [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding-and-medicines](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/breastfeeding-and-medicines)
- If you would like support around alcohol or drug use telephone the drugs and alcohol information line on 01865 403261
- Smoking is not only harmful to yourself but also to your baby through second hand smoke. See the smoking advice on page 43 for more details.

MORE  
INFO

For more information on any of the above topics and services available within Oxfordshire visit:

**[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/publichealth](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/publichealth)**  
Turning Point Roads to Recovery  
**[www.wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/oxfordshire](http://www.wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/oxfordshire)**

**Ensuring your baby gets the best possible start in life is essential for all new parents. Here are some tips to help you both on your way.**

### **Introducing baby to solid foods**

If you're thinking of introducing solid foods discuss it with your health visitor. It is recommended that parents wait until baby is six months old before introducing solid food. Baby should be able to:

- Stay in an upright sitting position and hold head steady
- Co-ordinate hand and mouth movements so they can look at their food
- Be able to swallow food.

Choose foods that are low in sugar and salt, such as breadsticks, rice cakes, fruit or cooled steamed vegetables. Limit the amount of sugary foods you give baby to look after his/her health and teeth.

### **Drinks**

Water and milk are the healthiest choices for baby. Try to avoid offering sugary drinks and if you do, limit these to meal times.

**0-6months:** feeding bottles should only be used for expressed milk, infant formula or cooled boiled water.

**6-12months:** drinks should be offered in a non-valved, free-flowing cup. Honey should NEVER be given to infants under 12 months because of the risk of botulism.

**One year onwards:** discourage feeding from a bottle.

Oxfordshire's community-led groups and health visitors are able to offer specific parenting programmes around healthy eating, physical activity and emotional health.

### **Nappy sack safety**

Nappy sacks have caused infant deaths both locally and nationally. They are easy for babies (especially those aged under six months) to grasp and put in their mouth for exploration, increasing the risk of suffocation.

To prevent suffocation danger:

- Store nappy sacks away from the changing area, out of the reach of baby
- Only remove the nappy sack from the pack when you are ready to use it.

The Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents is working to ensure bags are produced with safety holes in the bottom of the bags and to raise awareness amongst parents using warnings on packaging.

# **ACTIVITY**

Being physically active every day is important for babies, toddlers and children. It will help their development both mentally and physically.

### **Babies**

Encourage baby to be active before they can crawl by reaching, pulling, pushing, rolling, supervised floor play and tummy time.

### **Toddlers**

Children who can walk should be active for 180 minutes per day, spread throughout the day. This should include light activity such as walking, rolling and playing and more vigorous activity such as skipping, running and jumping.

Active play is a great way of toddlers achieving their daily recommended levels of activity.

**HEALTHY BABIES**

## Oral Health<sup>1</sup>

Most babies begin teething when they are around six months old.

It is important to begin brushing your baby's teeth as soon as they appear and brushing before they come can help embed good habits and promote healthy gums.

Brush twice a day using a smear of toothpaste containing no less than 1000ppm fluoride.

Developing a good brushing routine from a young age can really help your child develop their own routine when they're old enough to brush their own teeth. Try to make brushing fun - turn it into a game, brush your own teeth at the same time, or sing a song/listen to music.

## Going to the dentist

Visiting an NHS dentist is free for children. Regular visits to the dentist from a young age can help get baby used to the smells, sounds and tastes.

Taking baby with you to your dental appointments can be a good first step.

## Immunisations<sup>2</sup>

There are a number of serious diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough - which are preventable through the vaccination of your child. These are quick, safe, free and extremely effective. Once your child has been vaccinated against a disease, their body can fight it more effectively. If a child isn't vaccinated, they remain at risk of catching the illness and of passing infection on to others.

There is a recommended timetable for routine childhood vaccinations. This timetable has been timed to give children the best chance of developing protection against these diseases safely and effectively.

If your child has missed an appointment or you delayed an immunisation, it is possible to continue the immunisation schedule without having to start again. Just make a new appointment at your GP surgery.

MORE  
INFO

**Sugar** For more information on sugar in food and drink visit [www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

**Dentists** To find a local dentist visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call 0300 311 2233.

**Immunisation** For more information on vaccination schedules visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations)

**Supplements** Please ask your health visitor or midwife about the use of vitamin supplements for your new baby and through their early years, especially in relation to Vitamin D supplements: [www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/vitamins-for-children](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/vitamins-for-children)

**Toilet training support** please visit [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk) (parents & carers)

## Health Visitors

[www.oxfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.nhs.uk)  
(0-5 years, public health)

All children should have a check at 10-12 months and 2-2.5 years. This is carried out by your local health visiting team and it will provide you with information about your child's development.

1 Information kindly provided by our partners Oxford Health Oral Health Promotion Unit [oral.health@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:oral.health@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)  
2 Information kindly provided by Public Health England, Thames Valley.

# BABY BLUES

WHY DOES BECOMING A PARENT SOMETIMES LEAD TO MORE THAN A CASE OF THE BABY BLUES. WE LOOK AT POSTNATAL DEPRESSION IN MUMS... AND DADS.

## **The birth of a baby is supposed to be a joyful time but this isn't always the case for new mums and dads, for various reasons.**

While half of all mums go through a normal phase of the 'baby blues' for a few days, some may suffer from perinatal mental illness which can occur during pregnancy or in the first year following the birth of a child. Perinatal mental illness affects up to 20% of women, and covers a wide range of conditions including antenatal and postnatal depression, anxiety, perinatal OCD, postpartum psychosis and perinatal PTSD.

## **Is it the baby blues or something more serious?**

Having a baby is a big life event and it's natural to experience a range of emotions and reactions during and after your pregnancy. But if they start to have a big impact on how you live your life, you might be experiencing a mental health problem.

Health Visitors can provide support for mild to moderate emotional and psychological difficulties often in partnership with other services such as your GP.

Health Visitors do offer screening for all mums at set times, but they will also be available to you at any time the symptoms may arise. Your GP and Health Visitor can help you decide what level of support will best facilitate a quick recovery for you, or anyone you

are worried about.

Friends and family can also be very effective and helpful in supporting the treatment and management of postnatal depression and further information can be sought at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Postnataldepression](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Postnataldepression)

## **What are the symptoms?**

Some of the symptoms you may experience are listed below:

- feeling sad and teary a lot of the time for no obvious reason
- lack of enjoyment in things that you previously looked forward to or enjoyed
- being on a short fuse with family members and others
- sleeping too much or not getting enough
- lack of appetite
- feeling tense, worrying obsessively about your baby's health and safety, panic attacks
- feeling a failure, that nothing you do is right
- feeling suicidal - this requires prompt medical attention.

## **Who's affected?**

Approximately one in every ten mothers suffers from perinatal mental illness, although the number could be higher as not all women seek medical help.

## **Can dads get problems too?**

Yes, and mental health charity MIND has estimated that as many as one in 25 are affected by the illness, often brought on by feeling left out

of the bond that their partner is forming with the baby, increased financial worries and struggling to cope with the way in which their relationship with their partner is going. Additionally, if a man's partner is suffering from anxiety and depression, his risk jumps from 3% to 7%.

## **What help is available?**

The help you'll need will depend on how serious your symptoms are.

Mild perinatal mental illness can often be overcome by support and TLC from your family and friends.

A more severe case will probably need your doctor's help and antidepressants may be prescribed. Health visitors are trained to look out for signs of perinatal mental illness and will routinely ask you how you are feeling at each of their contacts. There are several different screening tools that they can use to establish how you are feeling.

They can then offer you a series of supportive listening visits if relevant and can refer or sign post you to counselling services. Counselling can also work well to help you overcome the illness. It is essential to get help as soon as possible as the earlier the illness is caught and treated, the sooner you can start enjoying life as a parent.

## MORE INFO

To find out where your nearest community-led group is located, please contact the

### **Oxfordshire Family Information Service**

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

You can also find information here for Childrens Centres and SEND Toolkit (search Local Offer)

**Best Beginnings** (Baby Buddy app & Heads Together website - peer support to connect, support and empower those affected by perinatal mental health): [www.pndandme.co.uk](http://www.pndandme.co.uk)

**MIND** (National Association for Mental Health): [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

**The Association of Post-Natal Illness:** [www.apni.org](http://www.apni.org)

**The Oxford Parent Infant Project (OXPIP):** [www.oxpip.org.uk](http://www.oxpip.org.uk)

**Cry-sis:** [www.cry-sis.org.uk](http://www.cry-sis.org.uk)

**Family Lives:** [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

**Talking Space:** [www.talkingspaceoxfordshire.org](http://www.talkingspaceoxfordshire.org)

**Samaritans:** 01865 722122

## Will people think I am a bad mother?

Absolutely not! Many mums suffer needlessly in silence because

they are worried that healthcare professionals will think they are an unfit parent and will take their child away. The reality is that they will have dealt with other women with similar problems and will be keen to help you too. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.



### **POST PARTUM PSYCHOSIS**

This condition is very rare, affecting only one or two mothers in every 1,000.

A new mother may experience strange ideas and/or hallucinations in the early weeks following childbirth. An immediate appointment with your GP is required.

# DON'T FORGET!

... that you are not alone. PND is completely treatable, through talking therapies, medication or counselling. The only shame in this illness is that women still feel unable to ask for help, but remember that it is out there – all you need to do is ask.



**HAVING A BABY WITH A DISABILITY CAN BE A WORRYING PROSPECT BUT ARMED WITH THE BEST INFORMATION AND WITH A GOOD SUPPORT NETWORK IN PLACE, YOU CAN ENJOY PARENTHOOD WITH YOUR VERY SPECIAL CHILD.**

**According to the organisation Contact a Family, one child in 20 under the age of 16 has a disability in the UK, ranging from cerebral palsy and Down's Syndrome to behavioural problems and learning difficulties.**

#### **Knowledge is power**

Raising a child can be bewildering at the best of times but when faced with the additional challenges of a disability, parents can easily become overwhelmed.

Normally, it's less the medical side that's an issue and more the practical aspects, such as knowing what benefits

you're entitled to and where to look for special nurseries, schools and training.

However, there is a great deal of help and support available and on the following pages are a few examples...

**Oxfordshire resident Caroline Meek explains why she's so proud of daughter Chantel, who is excelling despite her learning disabilities.**

**Sandy Markwell, from The Wychwoods, explains how she and son Alex coped with his severe hearing loss**

The Code of Practice for SEN (Special Educational Needs) and Disability (2014) set out guidance on how the needs of children and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEN or disability (SEND) should be met. There is information on the Oxfordshire County Council web site about how this is done in Oxfordshire, gathering together in one place the information, advice and sources of support that parents, children and young people will find useful. This is called the Local Offer.

The information covers education, health and care services for these children and young people. Information can be found at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sen](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sen)

**When I was pregnant with Chantel I knew that I was at a high risk of having her early because my son was premature.**

Sure enough, Chantel arrived around 13 weeks too soon, by emergency Caesarean and only weighing two pounds. She was one of the first babies to survive at such an early age – a prototype, if you like! She was placed in the Special Care Baby Unit and relied on a ventilator to help her breathe.

Luckily there were no signs of physical disabilities, and when she first came home she seemed a normal, happy baby. It wasn't until she was nine or ten months old that we realised her development wasn't



**Alex was born with severe hearing loss after a very normal pregnancy and birth.**

There was no indication that there might be problems and there is no family history of hearing problems.

By the time Alex was three months old, my ex-husband and I both thought he might have hearing difficulties as he did not respond to some of the normal sounds in the home, such as the doorbell, the Hoover or the clatter of saucepans and dishes.

I phoned our health visitor and she made an appointment with a paediatric audiologist. After a couple of appointments, it became clear that Alex had a severe hearing loss and he was fitted with his first pair of tiny hearing aids.

on track. We discovered that she had a learning disability – she understands everything but she just has problems putting it all together.

Chantel didn't walk until she was 18 months old and she had hearing and speech difficulties. She went to a special nursery and to speech therapy and this helped her to go to a normal primary school and secondary school, although she had extra tuition. It was hard finding out what help and support we could get for her from the authorities and fighting for what she was due has been the hardest part of this experience.

Meeting other parents of children with disabilities, often at hospital clinics, has been wonderful. Through them I could dare to hope that Chantel would live a fairly normal life as

I heard how their stories turned out. They also could pass on tips about what to ask for and where to look for information.

Being Chantel's mum hasn't been easy. When she was first born, I was too scared to bond with her because I was terrified that she would die.

But when she was nearly two years old, the bonding process began and now you can't stop me talking about her! She won an award for 'best achieving student' after passing an NVQ in horse management at a specialist college and she's just taken a BTEC first diploma in horse care. It's been the making of her. I am so proud of what she has achieved and I will tell anyone who will listen to me what a wonderful and special young lady she is!



We were devastated at first that our 'perfect' baby had a disability – and I used to remove Alex's hearing aids when we went out because I didn't want other people seeing them. We had regular contact with the Radcliffe Paediatric Audiology Department and the Oxfordshire Hearing Support Service and both were great, although we had to pay privately for digital hearing aids (luckily these are now provided free on the NHS).

As Alex got older, speech and language therapy became important so we did a lot of research and came across The Oxford Auditory-Verbal Programme ([www.auditoryverbal.org.uk](http://www.auditoryverbal.org.uk)), which is a charity that helps children of all ages with their speech and language.

Alex now has a very busy life. He attends Windrush Valley School in Ascott-under-Wychwood and the small classes make a perfect learning environment for him. He also has singing and drumming lessons and has just been awarded his green belt for karate. To meet Alex, you'd have no idea that he has a severe hearing impairment.

Our experience overall has been positive. I've been determined throughout the whole process, never taken no for an answer if I felt there were alternatives and I've dug deep to look for those alternatives. We've had ups and downs and at times frustration and desperation, but now, looking back, I wouldn't have changed a thing.

**Healthcare providers.** Your GP, your health visitor and any other healthcare provider will often have the contact details of a number of charities that will be able to provide you with specific support and information, both on a national and a regional or local level.

**Websites.** The internet can be an amazing source of advice for parent, it goes without saying!

**Other parents.** The support of other parents who knew what they were going through can be invaluable.

The fact that someone else has experienced what

you are currently dealing with can be both reassuring and encouraging, plus they can pass on brilliant coping techniques and sources of help.

Search online to see what's in your area and look out for posters in doctors' surgeries, church halls and coffee shops.

MORE  
INFO

**Bliss** – information and support for babies who are born 'too soon, too small, too sick'.

[www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk) tel: 0808 801 0322  
email: [hello@bliss.org.uk](mailto:hello@bliss.org.uk)

**Carers UK** – support for people caring for disabled young children  
[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

**Contact a Family** – support, advice and information for families with disabled children, plus a service through which you can make contact with other families who have children with the same disability.

[www.contact.org.uk](http://www.contact.org.uk) tel: 0808 808 3555  
email: [helpline@contact.org.uk](mailto:helpline@contact.org.uk)

### Council for Disabled Children

[www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk)

**National Children's Bureau** – tries to positively influence policies that affect children with disabilities and special needs and their families.  
[www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk) tel: 020 7843 6000  
email: [enquiries@ncb.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ncb.org.uk)

**Oxfordshire FIS** - disability, SEN and additional needs:

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/disabilityinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/disabilityinformation)  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

## Help is at hand.

Two teams at Oxfordshire County Council are particularly useful for new parents:

### Oxfordshire Family Information Service (OxonFIS)

Free information on childcare and early education where, when and how much...

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

### The Public Health Department

Help with healthy lifestyles and making the best choices as parents...

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/publichealth](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/publichealth)



The Spread-Eagle Hotel is a 15th Century Coaching Inn owned by Art Hotels who operate Boutique Hotels in Oxfordshire & Berkshire.



The Hotel provides four different sized venues for Christenings for 10 to 200 people so is ideally suited for a joint or multiple person Christening.



The event team can provide a selection of menus and organise to meet your budget, specific tastes and dietary requirements.

The Cockpit is the smallest of our venues suitable for only 10 to 12 people or the AJR is a nice family affair for up to 20 people.

The Fothergill Hall can be used for various size groups from 30 to 200 people because of the ability to subdivide the room. The two local churches are only about 500 metres away.

Why not give us a call for a look around the various venues in the hotel to see what might best suit your family's needs!

01844 213661

[events@spreadeaglethame.co.uk](mailto:events@spreadeaglethame.co.uk)

16-17 Cornmarket,  
Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2BW

[www.spreadeaglethame.co.uk](http://www.spreadeaglethame.co.uk)

A SKILL THAT CAN BE LEARNED...

# Breastfeeding

**The vast majority of women who have a baby in the UK start breastfeeding – 83% at the last count.** National surveys show that women who get good help and support in pregnancy and in the early days and weeks after the birth, are more likely to carry on breastfeeding for as long as they want to. It comes as a surprise to many women that breastfeeding, whilst natural, is not instinctive – it is a skill that has to be learned.

Now you are home, the earlier you get breastfeeding going smoothly, the more likely you are to be able to continue for as long as you want.

- Use the 'What's in a nappy?' sheet that you were given to check that your baby is getting enough milk
- Use the back of the orange booklet 'Successful Breastfeeding' that you were given by your midwife, as a troubleshooting guide
- Contact your midwife or health visitor if you have any concerns; don't wait for your next scheduled visit
- Use the contacts and source of help you identified before the birth to support you, particularly while you are still in the 'learning phase'.

## Bottle feeding

If you do not plan to breastfeed or decide to switch over to bottle feeding, you will need to know what sort of milk to give your baby, how to prepare it and how to feed it.

First milk is the only food your baby needs for the first six months. After six months you can continue to give first milk as

you start to introduce solid food.

When your baby is one year old, you can start to give ordinary (full-fat) cow's milk. If you chose to use other types of milk, read the label carefully to make sure they are suitable for the age of your baby.

For further information and for guidance on how to bottle feed read: 'A guide to infant formula for parents who are bottle feeding'. If you are bottle feeding you should be shown how to sterilise equipment, make up and give a feed before you leave hospital.

If you haven't been shown – ask. Even if you think you know, check with a midwife or health visitor as some advice may have changed. You can also watch the DVD 'Guide to Bottle Feeding'.

## When to introduce solids

We now know that a baby's digestive system is not really ready for foods other than milk until about six months of age.

Your baby will let you know when this is. Babies who are ready for solid foods can:

- Stay in a sitting position and hold their head steady

- Co-ordinate their eyes, hands and mouth and look at food. They can pick up finger food and put it in their mouth all by themselves
- Swallow food. Babies who are not ready will push their food back out, so they get more round their face than they do in their mouths.

It is rare for all these signs to appear together before six months.

Waiting until your baby is ready will save you a lot of time too, as they will very quickly be able to feed themselves and with less mess than spoon fed purees. There is now some evidence those babies weaned through the baby-led approach are less likely to be overweight.

You can offer your baby finger foods such as: bits of banana, soft cooked broccoli and other veg, cooked pasta, slices of soft fruit etc. For further information you can read the 'Introducing Solid Foods' leaflet. You still need to give the first milk that you have been using, alongside other foods, until your baby is one year old.

- **NCT** (National Childbirth Trust) tel: 0870 444 8708
- **ABM** (Association of Breastfeeding Mothers) tel: 0870 401 7711
- **Breastfeeding** [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) (search Breastfeeding)
- **BfN** (Breastfeeding Network) tel: 0300 100 0210 [www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk)
- **LLL** (La Leche League) tel: 0345 120 2918 - ask for your nearest breastfeeding counsellor. There is also a DoH funded national helpline number 0300 100 0212. To find local sources of help, including your local Baby Café: [www.ouh.nhs.uk/infantfeeding](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/infantfeeding)
- **NHS** [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)
- **UNICEF** [www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly)

All the guides, DVDs and leaflets referred to in the article are available on the Oxford University Hospitals Trust website [www.ouh.nhs.uk/infantfeeding](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/infantfeeding)

MORE INFO

# RELEARN TO RELATE

In all the excitement and chaos that comes with having kids and being a family, it is easy to forget how to be a couple.

Marriage and family relationships experts Relate provide some top tips on how to make the most of each other.

**Making the change from being a couple to being parents isn't always easy.** It can be difficult to find time for yourselves, your sex life can change, you have to juggle the commitments of work and family and find a way of agreeing on how to bring up the children. However, there are steps you can take to make life easier and more enjoyable – for everyone. When you first bring your baby home and are learning how to be a family, try the following tips:

#### **Don't keep it all to yourself.**

Talk to your partner and other parents – you'll find that many are experiencing the same mixture of conflicting feelings.

#### **Work with your partner to support each other through it.**

Take turns with the baby. When it's not your turn, don't hover – get away from the noise for a while.

#### **Be kind to yourself and each other.**

Lack of sleep causes lowered tolerance and frayed tempers!

**Sleeping separately can help to keep at least one of you from falling apart, but don't do it for too long.** Sharing a bed is an important part of being a couple.

#### **Living with your new family**

A new person in the home, however small, impacts on everyone else who already lives there as well as on extended families. If you're aware of how things are changing, you can be sensitive to your partner's feelings and those of others around you. Some things to look out for are:

- is someone feeling left out in your family group?
- is someone intruding into your family set-up? How can you tackle this?
- is anyone's past experiences causing them difficulty in coping with the new situation?

#### **Time to talk**

If a new baby has upset your relationship, try to make time to talk – agree when and where. It needn't be for long, but choose a moment that suits you both, when you're not hungry or especially tired. Ensure you take turns to listen to each other for an agreed amount of time, say five or ten minutes, while the other listens carefully without interrupting. Then the other partner has an equal amount of time to do the same.

#### **Beware of blaming**

It's very important not to use language that blames or criticises the other person. The object is not to attack or undermine each other but to try and understand what the problems are. For example, say: "I feel abandoned when you go to the pub after work instead of coming home to me and the baby", rather than: "I'm furious that you spend so much time at the pub. You've never bothered to come home on time, and since we've had the baby things have got even worse".

#### **Take time out**

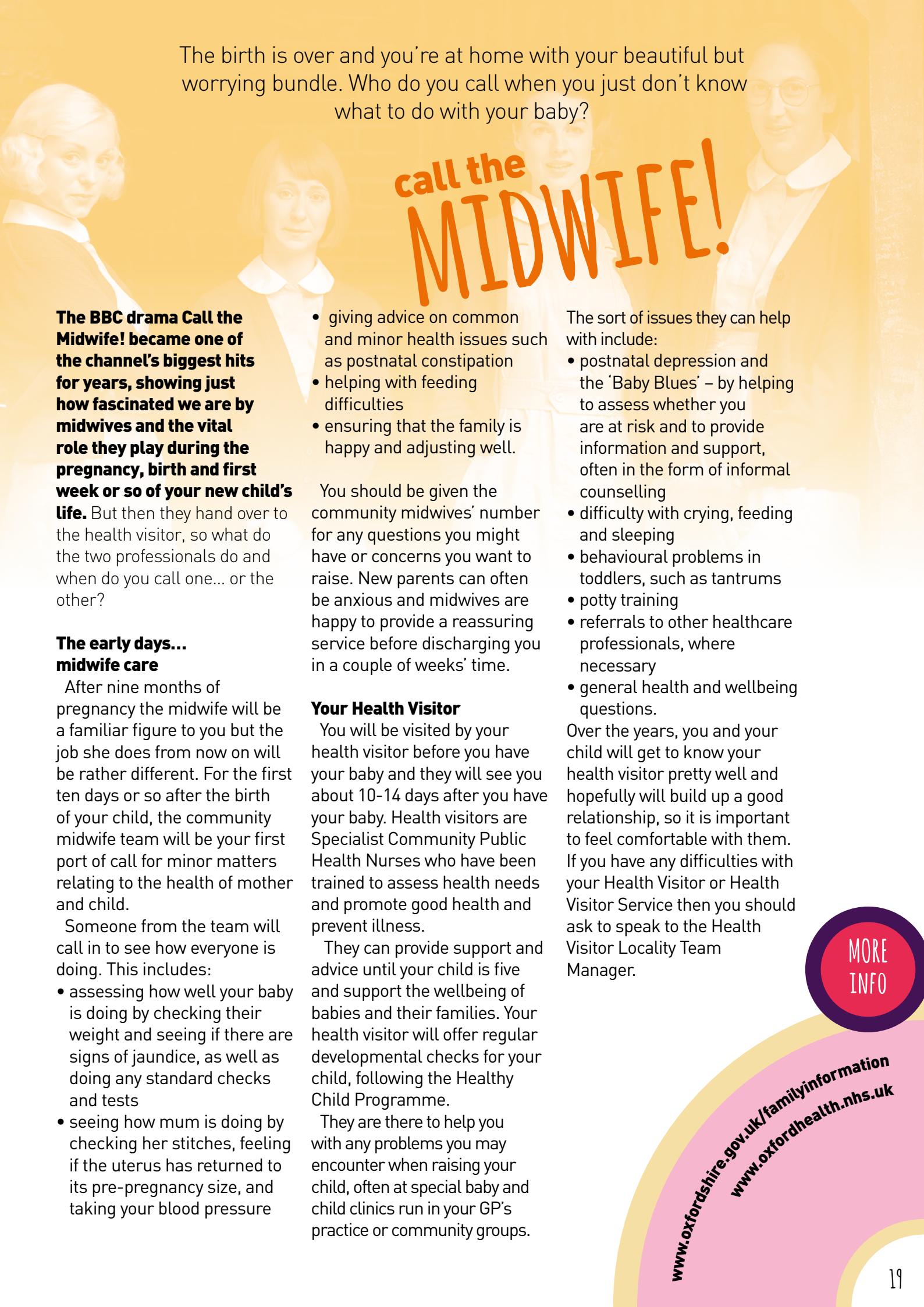
When you have heard each other, go away and think about what has been said. Your first reactions may be 'hot' thoughts: anger, resentment.

You might feel like crying. Let these feelings pass and focus on what your partner actually said, so that you end up with a clearer understanding of his or her feelings. Then, when you're ready, use your insights to talk the problem through again calmly. Try to move towards a solution that satisfies you both.

#### **Don't give up!**

It takes practice to learn to communicate better. Don't expect everything to be solved immediately, but keep at it and bit by bit you will start to see changes.

**Relate Oxfordshire** can help couples and parents make the most of their relationships. If you want a little bit of help, or if things do get tough at home, get in touch on: 01865 242960 or visit: [www.relate-oxfordshire.org](http://www.relate-oxfordshire.org)



The birth is over and you're at home with your beautiful but worrying bundle. Who do you call when you just don't know what to do with your baby?

# call the MIDWIFE!

**The BBC drama Call the Midwife! became one of the channel's biggest hits for years, showing just how fascinated we are by midwives and the vital role they play during the pregnancy, birth and first week or so of your new child's life.** But then they hand over to the health visitor, so what do the two professionals do and when do you call one... or the other?

## The early days... midwife care

After nine months of pregnancy the midwife will be a familiar figure to you but the job she does from now on will be rather different. For the first ten days or so after the birth of your child, the community midwife team will be your first port of call for minor matters relating to the health of mother and child.

Someone from the team will call in to see how everyone is doing. This includes:

- assessing how well your baby is doing by checking their weight and seeing if there are signs of jaundice, as well as doing any standard checks and tests
- seeing how mum is doing by checking her stitches, feeling if the uterus has returned to its pre-pregnancy size, and taking your blood pressure

- giving advice on common and minor health issues such as postnatal constipation
- helping with feeding difficulties
- ensuring that the family is happy and adjusting well.

You should be given the community midwives' number for any questions you might have or concerns you want to raise. New parents can often be anxious and midwives are happy to provide a reassuring service before discharging you in a couple of weeks' time.

## Your Health Visitor

You will be visited by your health visitor before you have your baby and they will see you about 10-14 days after you have your baby. Health visitors are Specialist Community Public Health Nurses who have been trained to assess health needs and promote good health and prevent illness.

They can provide support and advice until your child is five and support the wellbeing of babies and their families. Your health visitor will offer regular developmental checks for your child, following the Healthy Child Programme.

They are there to help you with any problems you may encounter when raising your child, often at special baby and child clinics run in your GP's practice or community groups.

The sort of issues they can help with include:

- postnatal depression and the 'Baby Blues' – by helping to assess whether you are at risk and to provide information and support, often in the form of informal counselling
- difficulty with crying, feeding and sleeping
- behavioural problems in toddlers, such as tantrums
- potty training
- referrals to other healthcare professionals, where necessary
- general health and wellbeing questions.

Over the years, you and your child will get to know your health visitor pretty well and hopefully will build up a good relationship, so it is important to feel comfortable with them. If you have any difficulties with your Health Visitor or Health Visitor Service then you should ask to speak to the Health Visitor Locality Team Manager.

**MORE  
INFO**

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)  
[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

# IN NAME THIS CHILD...

**If you're not religious but want to mark the birth of your child in a special way, why not hold a naming ceremony?**



## What are naming ceremonies?

Naming ceremonies are a chance for you to either celebrate the birth of your own child or to welcome adopted and stepchildren into your family.

Although traditional christenings or baptisms are still popular, people are

increasingly asking for an alternative, non-religious ceremony. Naming ceremonies are appealing because you can make the occasion as unique to you and your family as you want. You will work closely with a qualified celebrant

– the person carrying out the ceremony – to select from the options available and tailor a ceremony that suits you and your family.

Every ceremony is different, so you can create something that your family will remember and treasure.

## What are they for?

Naming ceremonies give you the opportunity to:

- celebrate the naming of your child/children
- express commitment, care and love for your child in front of family and friends
- welcome your child into the community and introduce them to friends and relatives
- choose mentors or supporting adults who will promise to help and support your child as he or she grows up within their community
- include grandparents in supporting you in the raising of their new grandchild.

## Who can arrange a naming ceremony?

Any parent, legal guardian or person who has parental responsibility of a child or children can arrange a ceremony and you don't have to be married to do so.

## Emma and Rod, of Abingdon, decided to have a naming ceremony in the Dexter Room, Oxford Register Office, for their son, Saul (18 months).

We don't go to church, so we didn't want to have a religious ceremony but we still wanted to welcome Saul to the family in some way. It was our ten-year anniversary, so we were planning a big party (kind of a non-wedding celebration) with our family and friends and decided to combine it with a naming ceremony.

Jonathan, our registrar, gave us plenty of guidance on the ceremony's content: we could decide how formal it was going to be, and who would say what.

We thought it would be best if we kept our bits to a minimum – all we had to do was say "we will" when Jonathan read out the vows. We also decided who was going to do readings and

sent them in beforehand.

The ceremony itself was nice and informal. Rod and I came in with Saul (to music that we'd chosen), and Jonathan read an introduction about the importance of names, and some of the history of naming. He then read the parents' vows and we responded.

## What happens in a naming ceremony?

Each ceremony is divided into sections to give you the chance to create something personal and special. The sections are as follows:

- **introduction and welcome**
- **naming of the child/ren**
- **parents' promises**
- **readings and music**
- **signing of the register and certificates**
- **presentation of gifts**
- **presentation of certificate**
- **closing words.**

You don't need to include every section in your ceremony and you can make each section as simple or as complex as you wish. A typical ceremony lasts around 30 minutes but this depends on the type of ceremony and the different options you choose.

## Readings and music

As with civil weddings and partnerships, you can include readings and music in your ceremony. For naming ceremonies these may be religious and spiritual as well as non-religious if you wish. Choose readings and music that mean something to you, be they a pop song or a hymn, or a Bible reading or a poem.

They don't have to be about birth if you don't want them to be. Instead they could be about

new beginnings, commitments, love, life, family... anything that sums up your feelings about the occasion.

## Where can naming ceremonies be held?

Naming ceremonies can be held in all of Oxfordshire's registration offices (for a full list, take a look at the Births, Deaths and Ceremonies section of Oxfordshire County Council's Registration web pages – [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/registration](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/registration)) and at approved premises within the county. They may be celebrated on any day of the week excluding Christmas Day.

However, ceremonies on Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Boxing Day or New Year's Day will be subject to staff availability.

If you would like to use a different venue, for example a village hall, this would need to be discussed beforehand. Ceremonies can also be held in private houses or gardens.

## How much will the ceremony cost?

The fee depends on the day and time that you choose. For a ceremony in approved premises, you will need to contact the venue of your choice regarding their availability and fees.

Next were the grandparents' vows, and Jonathan introduced Saul's mentors. Amongst this there were various readings.

At the end of the ceremony, my mum and Rod's dad lit candles and used these to light a third – which we kept to commemorate the day.

It was a nice way of symbolising the joining of the

two families in support of Saul. We then signed a register (not a legal formality, but a nice record of the day).

We had a lovely family lunch together and then, in the evening, celebrated our anniversary at a party at the Ashmolean Museum. Saul had a great time joining in with the speeches!



MORE  
INFO

For further information, please call the Registration Service helpline on **0345 241 2489** or visit Oxfordshire County Council's Registration web pages: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/registration](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/registration)

Please note there will be a fee to send out a celebrant to a venue.

## Cute clothes

Again, since this is your day you can choose how formal or informal to be in your naming ceremony.

Babies can be dressed in a traditional garment handed down over the years or a pretty dress or cute suit from a high street shop. Most people like getting a little dressed up for such occasions but you can still keep it fairly informal.

**'A GREAT WAY  
TO WELCOME SAUL  
INTO THE WORLD'**

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Jonathan helped to make it really special and we have very fond memories of the day.



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# your child is **UNIQUE**

**Every child is a unique individual with their own characteristics and temperament and they develop in their own ways and at their own pace.**

Development is continuous and involves a complex interaction of environmental and genetic factors: nature and nurture, if you like!

Every area of development – physical, cognitive, linguistic, spiritual, social and emotional – is equally important in this amazing process.

## **The Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children are vulnerable and can only become resilient and confident if they have the necessary support from others. Early experiences with their main carers will strongly influence how they develop, so nurturing relationships at home and in childcare settings are essential for a happy, healthy and inquisitive child.

The Early Years Foundation Stage government initiative has been created to help support children from birth to five, by:

- providing information on child development from birth to the end of their reception year in school
- describing how early-years practitioners will work with children and their families to support their development and learning
- defining how children should be kept safe and cared for and how everyone can work together to ensure that children achieve the most that they can in their earliest years of life.

# OXFORDSHIRE CHILDREN AND FAMILY CENTRES

Children and Family Centres support vulnerable families across all parts of Oxfordshire, and focus support on families in greatest need. Staff based at the centres will work closely with partner agencies to provide a range of services including some open access provision, such as stay play and learn and youth sessions, parenting programmes, support to families impacted by issues such as domestic abuse, early attachment, school readiness, access to education, employment and training.

“The children’s centre has given me a safe, organised place where I can take my baby. I can meet people from different backgrounds and cultures and we share information either through our own knowledge and experiences or by speaking with others. Most importantly, everyone is equal, regardless of background, culture or age”.



MORE INFO

To find out where your nearest community-led group is located, please visit: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) and search children's centres or contact the Oxfordshire Family Information Service via [enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk) Early Years Foundation Stage: [www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage](http://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage)

## The framework is based on four themes:

**1. A Unique Child:** every child is a competent learner from birth and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

**2. Positive Relationship:** children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with their parents and/or a key person.

**3. Enabling Environments:** a child’s environment plays a key role in supporting and extending their development and learning.

## 4. Learning & Development:

children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, so all areas of learning and development are equally important and interconnected.

### What you can do to help your child

Children do best when their parents and carers (whether family or professional) work together, as these are their first teachers.

Learning happens all the time when your child is with you, through:

- praise and cuddles
- reading things together
- playing games and singing nursery rhymes
- talking about what you can see in the park or on the street
- counting the stairs as you go up and down.

Children are sponges, eagerly soaking up whatever knowledge, experience and language you pass their way. If you use this time to encourage your child’s natural curiosity, you and your child will see the benefits in the years to come.

**Very few benefits and entitlements are paid automatically so it's important to find out what you are eligible for and put in your claim as soon as possible.**

### **Where to start**

The Money Advice Service is an independent body, set up by the government, to offer free and unbiased financial advice. Their website ([www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)) is an excellent place to start when investigating what support you and your family are entitled to.

As a new parent with significant demands on your time it is good to know that there's a place where all the information relevant to you is brought together. The Money Advice Service site provides a good overview of the various sources of financial help that are available; it breaks down who is eligible to receive each benefit and then provides clear information on how to go about claiming.

### **Changes to be aware of**

UNIVERSAL CREDIT - is a single monthly payment for people in or out of work, which merges together some of the benefits and tax credits that you may be eligible for. See [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)

THE BENEFIT CAP - will limit the total income you can get from a range of benefits when they are added together.

# **BENEFITS**

## **WHAT BENEFITS YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ENTITLED TO**

**Many families are entitled to cash from the government, but working out which benefits you qualify for and how to claim can be complicated.**

**MORE INFO**

- Child Benefit
- Free prescriptions and NHS dental treatment
- Child Tax Credit.

### **If you're working**

- Working Tax Credit for help with childcare costs
- 15 hours free two year old child care entitlement.

### **If you're on a low income**

- Health Start vouchers for milk, fruit and veg and free vitamins
- Sure Start maternity grant
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction.

### **If you're studying**

- Care to Learn – help with childcare costs
- Discretionary Learner Support
- Childcare Grant – help with childcare costs
- Parents' Learning Allowance – help towards course costs.

### **If you or your child has a disability**

- Disability Living Allowance.

### **If you're a widow(er) or guardian**

- Widowed Parent's Allowance
- Guardian's Allowance.

For the latest information

[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/families](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/families)

For an overview and impartial advice

[www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

For childcare support

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/payingforchildcare](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/payingforchildcare)

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/twoyearoldfunding](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/twoyearoldfunding)

# BABY ON A BUDGET

## Having a baby doesn't mean breaking the bank

Most newspapers would have you believe that you have to spend more than £180,000 to raise a child from birth to 21 years. No wonder many people say they can't afford a baby! But there are many ways you can save money and still have nice things. Here are some ways to save...

**"WE USED EVERYTHING TWICE"** "My family always teases me about my first child because we had no money whatsoever so when Luke was getting too big for the babygrows, I would cut the feet out and put socks on him and get longer use out of them. My last two children are only 16 months apart so we used everything twice".

Karen Collins

## Think: do you really need it?

Baby items are cute by nature but unfortunately this can lead parents into spending more money than they originally intended so ask yourself if you really need it. It's hard to know what will be essential first-time round, so ask friends and family with children what items were worth the money.

## Sort out a shopping list

A good way to avoid impulse buying is to do your shopping on the internet, as it's easier to walk away from the computer for a while than it is in a shop. There will be certain items that you'll want to see and try out before you buy, such as pushchairs and cots.

But before heading to the shops, decide on your budget and stick to it!

## Used can be as good as new

You don't always need to buy everything new when you have children. A great way of getting goods you can trust is from accepting used baby equipment from friends and family.

## "THERE ARE GREAT SECOND-HAND CLOTHES OUT THERE"

"Local sales are an amazing way to pick up everything you might need for a new baby, from clothes to equipment. Newborns grow at such an alarming rate that clothes in perfect condition can be picked up extremely cheaply and you might even come across some brand new things which were never worn".

Katie Paxton-Doggett

## "DON'T BE DRAWN IN BY ADVERTISING"

"With my first baby I wanted everything available and all new. With my second baby I realised that a huge amount of things that we had bought the first time were a waste of money as we never used them. They were just gadgets that cluttered the house. The second baby had nothing but hand-me-downs. We used charity shops for our children's clothes as they were often of very good quality. My tip to new parents is to not be drawn in by advertising".

Lynn Banerji

Once you've announced your pregnancy, you'll find people are only too happy to pass on their items to future parents, and you can carry on the tradition yourself at a later date!

## Suss out nearly-new sales

Nearly-new sales are a wonderful way of getting hold of baby equipment, clothes and toys. Village halls often run sales and you could also check out what's on offer at car boot sales and in charity shops. One word of warning, though: be careful about the quality and safety of the items you pick up. Check out our article on safety to see what you need to look for.

**Safety First!** Cot, crib and bed mattresses and car seats must always be bought new. Check that any old nursery equipment is not decorated in lead-based paint, which is toxic. If in doubt, don't buy it. Bottles can be re-used but always buy new teats.

MORE INFO

**Ebay:** [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)  
**Freecycle:** [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)  
**NCT** (National Chilbirth Trust):  
tel: 0300 330 0700 [www.nct.org.uk](http://www.nct.org.uk)

# CHILDCARE OPTIONS

FINDING GOOD CHILDCARE COULD COST YOU AS MUCH AS 25% OF YOUR SALARY ACCORDING TO A...

## Family

Many families choose to leave a child with a grandparent or other relative and you can rest assured that they will get the love, care and attention that you would give them.

**Pros:** Your children will be looked after by someone that they love – and who loves them – in familiar surroundings. Many family members will not charge for their help.

**Cons:** Tensions can arise if there is disagreement on how to look after your child when you're not around.

Some family carers complain of being taken advantage of, either because they are not paid (or not enough), or because they are working more hours than initially agreed.

You cannot claim tax credits for childcare if the childcare is not registered.

## Registered childminders

Many Ofsted registered childminders are parents themselves and the care will be in the 'family' home. Some can offer the government-funded early education for two year olds or three to four year olds.

You can use their services alongside a place at a preschool, playgroup or nursery that offers early education sessions. You can get a list of childminders from the Oxfordshire Family Information Service on [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation) [fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Childminders can make the most of local parks, playgrounds, toy libraries, drop-in groups and community-led groups.

**Pros:** Childminders must be registered and inspected by Ofsted and you can read their last Inspection report on OFSTED website. Costs are mainly lower than in nurseries. There are fewer children being looked after at any one time.

**Cons:** If your childminder is unwell, there may be no one to cover for them as there would be in a nursery setting, so you may have to take time off work.

## Nannies

Nannies provide childcare in your home, as well as other housekeeping and cooking duties that involve your child. They can be very expensive for one child but get 'cheaper' the more children they look after, so some parents do a 'nanny share' together. Most nannies are qualified either professionally or by experience.

**Pros:** Nannies can register on the Voluntary register. Your child will be looked after at home. Nannies are also more experienced than au pairs. Nannies may be particularly appropriate for some disabled children as the care is in the child's own home.

**Cons:** As the nanny's employer you will be responsible for paying not only their salary but also tax and National Insurance.



RECENT SURVEY...

...SO YOU WANT TO FIND ONE THAT BOTH SUITS YOUR CHILD AND YOUR POCKET.

MORE  
INFO

To search for a list of childcare providers, see **Oxfordshire Family Information Service** visit: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation), or email [fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
To find out how you can get financial help, visit: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/help-paying-childcare](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/help-paying-childcare)

## Au pairs

Au pairs are normally young women (and very occasionally young men), aged between 17 and 27, who want to come to the UK from another country to learn English and earn some money. You will provide them with board, lodging and a small salary in exchange for help with your children and some light housework for a maximum of 25 hours per week in the daytime, as well as babysitting for one or two evenings. They are entitled to two free days a week and at least one free weekend a month.

**Pros:** Your children will be looked after in their own home. It's fairly cheap.

**Cons:** Au pairs are not usually trained to work with children so are generally considered inappropriate to care for a young baby.



## Day nurseries

Day nurseries take children up to the age of five. They may be run by individuals, community groups, partnerships, Montessori organisations or commercial companies. All supervisors and managers must hold a full and relevant level-3 qualification.

And, half of all the other staff must hold a full and relevant level-2 qualification (as defined by the Department for Education). Day nurseries have their own admission policies and should give you a copy of the policy if you ask. Day nurseries usually offer care from 8am until 6pm, but some may offer longer hours.

They are open all year, except possibly for a week or two in the summer and at Christmas. However, you will have to pay for any time your child goes there which is over the basic government-funded limits for three to four year olds of 30 hours for 38 weeks per year. Children who go full-time receive snacks and at least one meal a day.

The nursery may provide this for a charge or your child can bring food from home. If the nursery provides your child's meals, they must be varied and nutritious.

The nursery should respect your wishes and provide special meals for cultural and religious reasons.

**Pros:** Nurseries are regularly inspected by Ofsted to ensure they meet the required standards and offer a good range of activities relevant to your child's age group. They will also be able to cover staff illness.

**Cons:** Some parents don't like the 'institutional' culture and some nurseries are very expensive.

DID YOU  
KNOW?

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progress check at 2½ - 3  
years old and share it  
with you.**

# CHILD CARE OPTIONS

... Our parent panel share what working arrangements they made after their children were born..

## 'OUR WORKING ARRANGEMENTS'

### "STAYING HOME WITH MY GIRLS WAS THE BEST DECISION"

"With my first daughter I returned to work part-time and she went to a university nursery. I thought that this was the best option as nurseries encourage sociability and aren't too expensive. However, I didn't really want to return to work and hated leaving her there. I soon became pregnant again and when my second daughter was born she went to the same nursery. Both children were there for a very short time but when we had a problem with the nursery and the care provided we took them both out and I have stayed at home with them since. This was the best decision for all of us; my only regret is that I didn't do it from the start".

Lynn Banerji

### "MY CHILDMINDERS ARE NOW MY CHILDREN'S GODMOTHERS"

"My children went to a childminder when they were babies as I liked the one-to-one relationship and home atmosphere. It is essential to find someone that you like as a person, whose parenting approach is similar to your own. Perhaps I was lucky but both of the childminders I used are now godmothers to my subsequent children!".

Katie Paxton-Doggett

### "THE NURSERY STAFF WERE CARING, LOVING AND FULL OF WARMTH"

"I worked part time after having my children and they went to a private nursery which was fairly expensive but fantastic. The staff were wonderful, caring, loving and full of warmth for the children. The food was excellent too, all organic and nutritious. It really helped prepare my two for school as they were already used to the structure of the day and being with lots of other children. We still keep in touch with the staff and visit them from time to time".

Karen Collins

### Before choosing, think hard about what type might suit your child best. Is your baby a sociable soul or a retiring wallflower?

In the case of the former, a nursery might be ideal, whereas a shyer child might thrive in a quieter setting. Sometimes it can be hard to gauge this in advance so be prepared to keep an open mind and possibly change your childcare if it isn't working out for you and your child.

#### What to look for

In most childcare settings the following are indicators of whether the provision is good:

- Is the nursery welcoming and friendly?
- Are staff helpful and approachable?
- Do the children relate well to their carer (both in nurseries and at the childminder's)?
- Do the children seem happy and busy?
- Can any friends or workmates recommend somewhere or someone? Don't be afraid to visit more than once and to ask to see their certificates and registrations. You are also within your rights to ask for references from other parents.

### Be prepared to reassess the situation

Most children get a little teary when their parents leave them for the first time (so do the parents!) and it can take a few weeks for things to settle down. However, if the crying continues and your child seems distressed in any other way, discuss your worries with your childcare provider to see if you can help your child to settle.

If nothing works, then be prepared to reassess your plans.



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**Baby and toddler groups are a great way for you to socialise with other parents and for your baby to get used to being around other children.** There are too many groups to list here but check out the activities section on [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

Additionally, local health centres, libraries, community centres and shops often have details of groups in your area.

### **Tumbling tots**

Very young babies obviously aren't very mobile but from six months onwards the range of activities you can do together increases. Special baby gym classes can be a good place to get them interested in playing and moving. Tumble Tots run classes in activity centres around Oxfordshire, where children from six months upwards can move around in a safe environment and learn to play alongside other babies.

### **Dedicated to dads**

Toddler groups welcome both mums and dads but since they are often dominated by women, men can feel a little outnumbered. If that's the case, why not try out Saturdads, a special group targeted at dads (and all male carers) and their young children aged 0-5, as well as their older brothers and sisters. The sessions are run at various community-led groups

in Oxfordshire. Dads can also ask for advice or support on any aspect of parenting. To find out more contact Oxfordshire Family Information on 0345 241 2487 or visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

### **Make some music**

Music is wonderful for babies. It soothes them (and parents!), it improves language development and most importantly, it's enjoyable.

So why not encourage your budding Beethoven by attending a music group?

There are many sessions in social clubs, village halls, and community centres and franchises of national organisations such as Monkey Music also offer classes tailored to specific age groups.

Not only will your baby love the sounds they make and hear but you'll both make new friends too. That's definitely something to make a song and dance about.

### **Be cool in the pool**

Babies are naturals in the water so taking them swimming can be an excellent way of keeping everyone entertained.

You can either go to a special 'aquababes' class run by various council-run pools or by private organisations or

just pop along to your local swimming pool and let them splash in the water.

NHS recommends swimming at any age but mums may need to wait until vaginal bleeding has stopped.

[www.cogges.org.uk](http://www.cogges.org.uk)

[www.cogges.org.uk](http://www.cogges.org.uk)

# OUT AND ABOUT



### Walking maps for families

To have fun with your baby you don't need to pay lots of money and attend loads of classes. Oxfordshire County Council has launched a new series of walking maps to encourage families to go outside and get walking, whatever the weather.

Areas covered include Barton, Rose Hill & Littlemore, Blackbird Leys, South Abingdon and Bretch Hill in Banbury. The maps have been developed through a partnership between Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and the local community-led group with input from parents, who have enjoyed exploring their local communities together.

Walking maps are available free at local health centres, libraries and community-led groups and online at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

They can also be obtained by contacting Oxfordshire Family Information Service.

“I realised early on that babies don't need a great deal of entertaining: just your time, love and attention. It is my belief that half an hour of good quality parental time is worth more than any toddler group or bought toy”.

Lynn Banerji

“We bought a few activity centres, we sang nursery rhymes, coloured, built things and played lots of board games as a family. We also have a trampoline with a safety net in the back garden which they love and are on it all summer and any other time it is dry and fairly warm! They were a little expensive but they have been worth their weight in gold. We also have swings, a slide and climbing frame in the back garden and they love going out there and playing all the time”.

Karen Collins

“I've always enjoyed going along to toddler groups with my children. While the girls play, I get the opportunity for a sit down and a chat with other mums as well as a slice of cake”.

Katie Paxton-Doggett

To find out where your nearest community-led group is located, please contact Oxfordshire Family Information Service.

**Oxfordshire Family Information Service:**

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/familyinformation)

**Tumble Tots:** [www.tumbletots.com](http://www.tumbletots.com)

MORE  
INFO



# EVERY CHILD IS A TALKER

## Did you know that your baby will have known your voice from inside the womb?

During those amazing nine months it will have grown to identify your voice and that of your partner's so it's unsurprising that, after arriving in the world, they will have a huge desire to talk to you.

### It's good to talk

Adults are pretty skilful at knowing how to talk to babies too – that weird, sing-song voice they use has been given an official name by researchers – 'parentese'. We normally don't even know we're doing it but this tone of voice is naturally designed to grab the attention of little ones.

However, some people feel very uncomfortable talking to a baby, thinking that they surely cannot understand a word they say. While this is understandable, the way babies learn is by copying so establishing early communication is vital to their intellectual and emotional development. True, they won't understand much of what you say at first but they pick things up amazingly quickly and will be able to tell much about how you're feeling by your tone of voice.

### Make it routine

If you feel a little stuck about what to talk about, just use your daily routine as a prompt.

Talk to your little one when you get them up in the morning, at mealtimes and during play. Describe what you are doing – for example, shall we change your nappy now and put a nice dry one on? You can emphasise words by pointing to the objects you're referring to, and repeating their name holds their attention.

### Say what?

Not all communication is by words. Every day we all use non-verbal communication to replace words – e.g. a nod of the head for "yes" – or for emphasis when we do talk – simple hand gestures are an example. Facial expressions sometimes can say more than words – think of those raised eyebrows when someone doesn't believe you, or a happy smile that melts your heart.

### Crying, cooing and babbling

Babies are sociable beings and crying is one way they use to communicate and don't worry you will soon start to understand what different ones mean.

They will also start to copy your facial expressions and learn what they mean. If you don't believe this, try a simple experiment. Hold your baby close to your face and stick your tongue out... then watch as they try to copy you.



### Baby bonding

Talking to and communicating with your child shouldn't just be about increasing their intellectual abilities.

More importantly, it also gives you special time to bond with your baby and develop a relationship that will last for life. Have fun and the learning will come!

### Sing when you're winning

Another great way to communicate with your baby is through singing. Little ones love music and a song or two will grab their attention. You don't need to be brilliant (think of all those X Factor competitors!) – you just need to be ready to let your hair down and have fun. Any music will work but traditional nursery rhymes, with their associated actions, particularly please babies and toddlers. It can be difficult remembering these from when we were kids, so try popping down to your local library and borrowing a book or CD to spark your memory.

Alternatively, check out your local community-led group or noticeboards in your local shops to see what baby and toddler music sessions they run. This gives you and your baby the added benefit of meeting more people.

## TOP TIPS

**Speech and language therapists have come up with the following tips to get your baby – and you – talking.**

- Babies just a few minutes old will look at faces. Try sticking your tongue out – your baby may copy you!
- Hold your baby close so they can see your face
- Your baby will know your voice from the womb. Each time you talk, your baby will listen
- Use your daily routine as prompts. Talk about getting up, changing their nappy, mealtimes, walks – anything
- Dummies can stop children from talking so try to limit them to bedtimes and nap times
- Games are fun ways to communicate with each other. Try 'This little piggy' with their toes or tickling games

- Try not to let the TV take over. Half an hour a day for under-twentys is enough. Turn the set off if no one is watching it
- Always look at your baby when you talk to them and give them time to respond
- Sing to your baby. They will love the sound, even if you don't!

MORE  
INFO

- [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)
- [www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby)
- [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)
- [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries)
- [www.aimh.org.uk/getting-to-know-your-baby](http://www.aimh.org.uk/getting-to-know-your-baby)

# make your baby a BOOKWORM



**JANE MASON, READER SERVICES DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, AT OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S LIBRARIES, SAYS IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO SHARE A BOOK WITH YOUR BABY.**

**Sharing books with babies and children helps them learn to talk and read, as well as being a wonderful and intimate experience for both of you.**

Don't worry if you're not used to reading aloud: it's your voice that counts as your child loves the sound of it. Point to pictures on a page and experiment with different voices and sounds as you read. This makes the experience all the more fun for both you and your child.

Children quickly learn about books and will soon be turning the pages and perhaps learning to talk and read for themselves. Your child will love to hear the same story over and over again and while you may find this a little tedious, repetition is important both for your child's sense of security and also for their language skills. You'll be amazed at how quickly they improve.

## **What your local library can offer you**

At all of our libraries, you'll find lots of board books and picture books to share with your baby, as well as stories on CD, and children's DVDs to hire. But did you know you can also find out information on playgroups and support groups?

Additionally, many libraries run regular rhyme times for you and your child to join in.

Look out for special story times and activities in school holidays.

Every library also has computers with internet access, which you can use for free – all you pay for is printing. Children love the internet as it's a great way to keep in touch with friends, look for information for homework, or research their interests. It's also a vital tool for communication, information and entertainment and is critical to your child's development in today's world.

To keep your child safe, we have special computers for the under-15's that have filtered access to the internet, but we'd always recommend you keep an eye on them to ensure they're safe.

## **Bookstart**

Bookstart is a national programme that gives free books to all babies and young children at 6-8 weeks and three years old, which inspire, stimulate and create a love of reading. Each Bookstart pack contains two books, information about sharing books with your child, and library information. The table opposite shows you what you can expect and when.

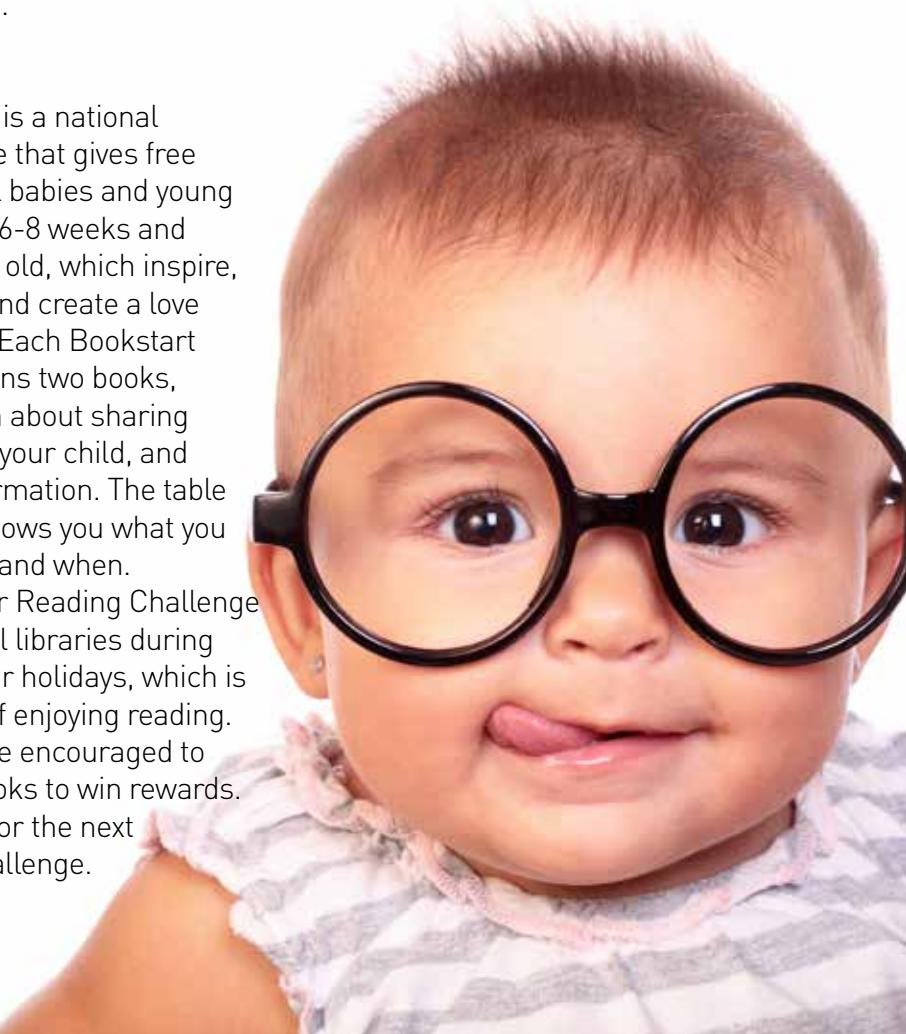
A Summer Reading Challenge is held in all libraries during the summer holidays, which is a fun way of enjoying reading. Children are encouraged to read six books to win rewards.

Look out for the next exciting challenge.

## **Get signed up!**

Joining the library is fast, free and easy. To find your nearest branch and for information on how to join, visit the Oxfordshire County Council's website at: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries)

Your baby is eligible for their own library card and the earlier they start using it the better. They can borrow up to 20 books for three weeks and the good news is that there are no overdue fines for under fives. We know that accidents can and do happen so children are not charged for damage to their books.



## Reluctant reader?

If your child isn't as interested as you'd hoped in books, try not to make an issue of it. Some are more reluctant than others but in time they may be bitten by the reading bug. One way in which you can try to stimulate is by reading novelty books together.

These have something unusual about them, perhaps flaps that your child has to lift to see what's underneath or wheels to turn, or tags to pull. This encourages them to participate in the story and therefore helps to attract their interest.

## What a story!

Kim Pickin, director of the Oxford Story Museum, says there's nothing quite like reading: "Stories help to develop children's language and reasoning, empathy and imagination. They help children make sense of the world.

They help them think, communicate and relate to others. They are something different generations can enjoy together and as a recent study showed, enjoyment of reading has a greater impact on educational attainment than any other factor, including parental education and income".

# TOP 5 BOOKS FROM BIRTH

**CHECK OUT FIVE FANTASTIC BOOKS YOU AND YOUR CHILD CAN ENJOY FROM BIRTH:**

- 1. Dear Zoo** – Rod Campbell, Macmillan Children's Books
- 2. Where's Spot?** – Eric Hill, Frederick Warne Publishers Ltd
- 3. The Very Hungry Caterpillar** – Eric Carle, Puffin Books
- 4. We're Going on a Bear Hunt** – Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, Walker Books Ltd
- 5. Doing the Animal Bop** – Jan Omerod, and Lindsey Gardiner, Oxford University Press

## Our parents and their children love reading...

### "I read to them while they were in the womb"

"Our whole family loves to read and is excited about books. I even started to read to my three babies when they were still in the womb! I don't remember a time when we haven't read to our children. At the moment their favourite books are Charlie and Lola, The Pirate Penguins (hilarious) and, of course, the old traditional fairy stories.

We read at any time, but always at bedtime – no matter what we are doing or where we are".

**Lynn Banerji**

### "Our favourite books are funny ones"

"We adore reading and have a story most nights and now the children are reading well, they read to me sometimes. We have read to our children since they were tiny and they love it. They're book mad! We also encourage them to read signs, bus destinations, etc. Our favourite books are funny ones, such as The Gruffalo and A Squash and a Squeeze".

**Karen Collins**

Pack	Age group	Where to get it
Bookstart Baby Pack	Up to 12 months	Ask your health visitor
Bookstart Treasure Bag	36-47 months	Ask at your Early Years setting or library
Booktouch	Up to 4 years	For blind or partially sighted children. Ask at your Early Years setting, health visitor or library
Bookshine	Up to 4 years	For hearing impaired children. Ask at your library
Bookstar Star	3-5 years	For children who have disabilities that impact on or delay the development of their fine motor skills

MORE INFO

### Oxfordshire County Council

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries)

### Oxford Story Museum

[www.storymuseum.org.uk](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk)

### Bookstart

[www.bookstart.org.uk](http://www.bookstart.org.uk)

For further information on BookStart, please email [libraries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:libraries@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

A range of dual language books are also offered. Information can be found here.

All reading packs can be requested through the Bookstart Co-ordinator or libraries who will forward the request.



Stephen Giles is an author and playwright. He has a daughter, two sons and lives in North Wales. He has written seven books, including *From Lad to Dad* and *You're the Daddy*, his funny and personal accounts of fatherhood, as well as more recently *The DIY Pocket Bible* and *The Dad's Pocket Bible*.

# DIVIDE AND CONQUER

**Once you get beyond the birth you can expect to launch into a whole new incredible whirlwind of shared emotion, including joy, relief and trepidation about what lies ahead.**

But work returns all too soon and then other pressures creep back in ... who takes on the childcare? What do you do about sleepless nights and division of labour? How do you support each other and still ensure a good wage is coming in?

## Let sleeping dads lie ... or not

One area in which you may feel you can't bend is the subject of sleep. There's precious little of it anyway and if you're heading back to work you might justifiably want to be

focusing on getting your eight hours. But while this attitude is understandable, it's just not workable, especially if your baby isn't sleeping well. Your partner simply won't be able to cope with such a serious burden and no one can be expected to stay awake night after night.

The best option is to devise a sensible plan to share the night feeds that allows you to get a workable amount of sleep but which also allows your partner to rest at the right time too.

## Work it out

Heading back to work brings its own challenges. When a friend of mine went back to work after the birth of his first son he tried his

best to be professional in the office. Sadly, no one told his colleagues about this, and they spent hours bombarding him with requests for photos, offers of second-hand trikes and burp cloths, and general reminiscences about their own experiences of parenthood.

Whether or not office life returns to normal for you, it is time out of the house and away from the routine of baby care. You'll need to ensure your partner has some time off to break her routine with the baby – maybe the occasional afternoon out, or a night on the tiles with friends; something that will reassure her that life isn't moving on without her.





## Author and father Stephen Giles gives indispensable advice to dads on how to survive the first six months...

### **Parenthood is to be enjoyed, not endured**

- In summary, maintain your share of the responsibilities, keep everyone's sleep levels as high as possible, get friends and family to help out, trust your partner's postnatal support network, try to take some time out for just you and your partner and don't forget that her role caring for the baby is a full-time job as demanding and exhausting as your own. **And don't forget to enjoy it!**

MORE  
INFO

For further information visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) - search dads

### **Something for the weekend**

Weekends are another potential flashpoint, as they were once relaxing after a busy working week, but will now be filled with the many jobs that your partner simply can't hope to manage in your absence.

She has the upper hand here – your work is just five days a week, hers is seven, so you've got to bend on weekends.

At least it's a good opportunity for bonding: you'll be surprised at how motorsport can grab the attention of a three-week-old.

### **Get stuck in**

This leads us nicely on to the most important element: your relationship with your baby. No matter how busy you are, it's worth building some kind of 'ring-fenced' quality time.

Whether it's at breakfast time, bath time or bedtime is up to individual circumstances but it's crucial to have some one-to-one interaction each day that doesn't feel like a chore or an obligation.

When you do get more time together – at weekends or holidays, for example – you can bond with your baby through simple, stimulating activities and games.

Everything seems a little daunting at the beginning. But if you get stuck in and do as much as you can as early as possible, you will build your confidence as a father and spend more quality time forging a relationship with your child. Playing a full part also means you can really support your partner if things get tough.

### **Don't feel anonymous**

And that brings us on to another key piece of advice – don't neglect your relationship with your partner. Everyone can feel anonymous when the baby is in charge over the first few weeks so when life starts to return to normal it's vital to create the time and space to recall what brought you all together in the first place.

Try to handle the six months after the birth as you managed pregnancy. Make sure you've got some leave saved back, so you can attend your baby's six-week (or thereabouts) check at the doctor. Get to at least one health visitor session and to the parent-and-baby clinic if there is one near you.

# PLAY IT SAFE

**More than one million children under the age of 15 are taken to A&E each year following accidents in or around their home.**

According to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), your child is most likely to have an accident in the living or dining room but the most serious injuries occur unsurprisingly in the kitchen and on the stairs.

The good news is that most of these accidents are entirely avoidable.

Read on to see how you can help prevent mishaps at home....

## Go on a crawl

Children learn by exploring so the best way to discover the hidden dangers at home is to get down on your knees and seeing your house from your toddler's viewpoint. Keep an eye out for heavy, delicate and dangerous items that might topple over from shelves and lighter objects that could easily fall over if pushed.

Always ensure that you have securely fixed stairgates at the top and bottom of staircases.

### Be careful of burns

The most common cause of burns in children under the age of five is hot liquid; a hot drink can still scald a child 15 minutes after you've boiled the kettle, while hot bath water causes the most fatal and severe scalding injuries amongst young children. To keep your child safe **don't:**

- hold a hot drink and your child at the same time
- leave your child alone in the bathroom, even for a few seconds
- leave hot drinks within easy reach
- run hot water into a bath first - always start with cold
- use the front plates on your stove unless necessary
- leave curling tongs, a hot iron or hair straighteners in easy reach.

### Top Toys

Most toys are age-labelled but it's good to know what to look out for, just in case. Remember:

- babies put everything into their mouths so avoid small things that they could either swallow or choke on, such as buttons, coins, stones, etc
- check that teddies and dolls don't have easily removable parts
- look at the labels on toys to see that they are suitable for your child's age
- very noisy toys could damage your baby's hearing.

IT IS BOTH A SAD AND SCARY FACT THAT MOST FATAL AND NON-FATAL ACCIDENTS THAT BEFALL CHILDREN DO SO IN THE HOME. HOWEVER, THERE ARE EASY WAYS TO KEEP YOUR LITTLE ONES SAFE AND SOUND.

### Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

[www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)

### Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards Department

[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards)

### Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service

[www.365alive.co.uk](http://www.365alive.co.uk)

### Child Accident Prevention Trust

[www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

**Emergency family first aid** - 2 hour courses held in local communities in Oxfordshire: [www.thamestraining.co.uk](http://www.thamestraining.co.uk)

### Electrical Safety First

[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk)

MORE  
INFO

## Don't play with fire

Fires of all sorts pose one of the greatest risks to children so never leave matches and lighters in easy sight and reach and fix a fireguard in front of any open fireplaces.

To avoid accidental fires, ensure cigarettes are completely extinguished and fix at least one smoke alarm on each floor and check them regularly. For extra safety, decide on an appropriate escape route in case of fire.



## Watch out for rock and roll

Newborns learn to roll very quickly so never leave a baby alone on a bed – even if they are in the middle of it and far away from the edges – as they can roll off and risk concussion, or worse, from the fall to the floor. Similarly, never leave your baby alone on a nappy changing table, even if the sides are high.

## Button batteries

Button batteries and lithium coin batteries are the small, round batteries you find in lots of toys and everyday objects. They can be extremely dangerous for children if swallowed – especially lithium coin batteries, and can kill within hours.

Most button batteries pass through the body without a problem. But if a button battery, particularly a lithium coin battery, gets stuck in the throat or gullet, energy from the battery can make the body create caustic soda which can burn a hole through the throat and lead to serious internal bleeding and death. All button batteries are very dangerous if they get stuck in a child's nose or ear.

Keep products with batteries well out of reach if the battery compartment isn't secured with a screw. Keep all spare batteries out of children's reach and sight, ideally in a high-up, lockable cupboard.

If you suspect that your child has swallowed a button battery act fast and take them to A&E at your nearest hospital or dial 999 for an ambulance

<http://capt.org.uk/safety-advice/keeping-children-safe-button-batteries>

## Amber Necklaces - teething aid

Trading Standards advises against giving your child an amber necklace as a teething aid, as they may break, causing a potential choking hazard from the beads or a strangulation hazard from the necklace itself.

## Window of danger

If a baby or small child gets their head caught in a blind cord, due to their muscular control not yet begin fully developed, they may be unable to free themselves if they get tangled and could strangle themselves.

To reduce the risk:

- Install blinds that do not have a cord, particularly in a child's bedroom
- Do not place a child's cot, bed, playpen or highchair near a window
- Pull cords on curtains should be kept short and kept out of reach
- Tie up cords, or use one of the many cleats, cord tidies, clips or ties that are available
- Do not hang toys or objects that could be a hazard on the cot or bed.

## Magnetic putty

Watch out for magnetic putty. Tests showed that the small, button shaped magnet, included with the toy, could be easily swallowed causing a risk of perforating or blocking the intestines if it comes into contact with another magnet or magnetic material.

# PLAY IT SAFE

## Tumble Dryers

As a new parent, you may find that you are using your tumble dryer more. Tumble dryers are a useful addition to any household - but only when they're used safely. With the recent safety notice issued for 4.5 million Hotpoint, Creda, Indesit, Proline and Swan appliances (and only 810,000 confirmed repairs) there's never been a better time to brush up on tumble dryer safety and learn what to look out for.

## Safety First

Always register a new appliance with the manufacturer. That way you can be contacted easily if a safety recall is required. While the chances of a faulty product causing serious damage are small, the risk is still there and returning a faulty product or ordering its repair is very easy to do. To register all your appliances, regardless of age, visit [www.registermyappliance.org.uk](http://www.registermyappliance.org.uk)

## Safe Maintenance

- Clean out lint and fluff from the filter and around the door after every use.
- Watch out for scorching or burn marks, and check for loose or worn wires.
- Have your dryer serviced annually by a qualified engineer.

## Liquid Laundry Capsules

Children have been admitted to hospital because of the ingestion of liquid detergent from capsules. Doctors have also raised awareness of the risk of injury to young children who get liquid detergent in their eyes.

A key phrase ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) wants parents to remember when it comes to storage of cleaning products is keep them up, keep them closed, keep them safe.

## Safe Use

- Never overload – take large or bulky items such as duvets to the dry-cleaners.
- Always allow each drying programme, including the “cool down cycle”, to complete fully.
- Don't stop the dryer before the end of the cycle unless all items are quickly removed and the door is left open to dissipate heat.
- Leave clothes contaminated with combustible substances such as solvents, grease, oils or fats out of tumble dryers.
- Don't leave dryers, dishwashers and washing machines on overnight. If possible, unplug or switch off appliances at the socket overnight and when going out to avoid the risk of an electrical fault causing a fire.

## Taking photos of your new baby on your phone or tablet?

Sub-standard and counterfeit electrical chargers can be deadly. Our buyers guide will show you what to look out for.

We are seeing an increase in the number of incidents being reported about faulty electrical goods, particularly fake, cheap and unbranded chargers - many of which fail to meet UK safety regulations and can lead to electric shock, injury and cause fires.

With that in mind, it's important to be aware of the risks when buying a plug-in charger. To help you know what to look out for, Electrical Safety First has developed the following safety points:

### THE 3-POINT SAFETY CHECK

#### 1. Plug pins

Check that there is at least 9.5 mm between the edge of the pins and the edge of the charger (9.5 mm is about the width of a ballpoint pen). If the distance between the edge of the pins and the edge of the charger is less than 9.5 mm, there is a risk of electric shock when plugging in and unplugging the charger from a socket.

Plug the charger into a socket but don't switch it on or connect it to your appliance.

Does it plug in easily? If the charger does not easily plug into a socket, the pins may be the wrong size or length, or the distance between the pins may be wrong. If pins do not fit properly into the socket, overheating, arcing and mechanical damage can occur to both the socket and the charger, which can be dangerous.

#### 2. Markings

Look for a manufacturer's brand name or logo, model and batch number.

#### Check for a CE mark

Check that the output voltage and current ratings marked on the charger and your electrical device are the same.

Do not rely on a CE mark alone as a guarantee of safety – it's simply a declaration by the manufacturer that the product meets all the safety requirements of European law, but they can be easily forged.

#### 3. Warnings and instructions

Adequate warnings and instructions must be provided. As a minimum, user instructions should provide information on conditions and limitations of use, how to operate the charger safely, basic electrical safety guidance and details of how to safely dispose of the charger when it is no longer required.

## Baby Bling

“Baby Bling” refers to the latest craze of accessorising items such as dummies, clips and bottles with stuck-on beads, gems and other decorations to add a touch of “bling” to a baby’s look.

Bling dummies, clips and bottles are of great concern to Trading Standards officers. While many of these products are manufactured by legitimate companies in accordance with the highest safety standards, other companies have been known to buy these products and glue on gems, beads and other decorations. The decoration can become stuck in the throat of a child or can be ingested and cause internal problems. Parents should not take the view that these products are safe because they regularly monitor their children - this is simply not possible every second of the day.

## Car Seats

Make sure you choose the correct car seat for your child. ROSPA has a good checklist for buying a car seat

[www.childcarseats.org.uk/choosing-using/buying-child-car-seats-checklist/](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk/choosing-using/buying-child-car-seats-checklist/)  
[www.childcarseats.org.uk](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk)

Taking regular breaks when driving long distances is also recommended. As well as giving a baby a chance to move out of their car seat, it will also help keep the driver alert and reduce the risk of accidents.

Latest research also recommends that it may be a good idea to rethink leaving a baby in a car seat for prolonged periods when they're not travelling.

## Fancy/Braided Cot Bumpers, knots or pillows

Trading Standards has seen an increase in fancy cot bumpers, knots and pillows being sold on the Internet. These can mould around a baby's face and potentially cause suffocation. The best advice from ROSPA is to remove any “clutter” from a baby's cot to prevent suffocation.

**We get such horrid winter weather that it's no surprise that we want to spend every second in the sun when we do actually see it.** Children's skin in particular is very delicate and can be easily burnt and damaged by the sun, even if they appear to tan easily. Those at most risk have fair or red hair, pale eyes and freckles, and babies six months and under should be kept out of direct sunlight altogether, especially during the hottest time of the day.

### **Sunsmart advice**

Cancer Research UK's Sunsmart Campaign advice to protect people from burning and the dangers of burning is:

- Avoid the sun at its strongest (11am–3pm)
- Sit or play in the shade as much as possible
- Be extra careful with babies' and children's skin
- Cover up with cool, loose-fitting clothes
- Never use a sunscreen lower than SPF15 on yourself or your child
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection to protect your face, neck and shoulders
- If there are any unusual changes in your skin or your child's see a doctor as soon as possible
- Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and eat ice lollies to keep hydrated.

### **Sunscreens - the facts**

Sunscreens help protect us from the sun's harmful rays if you use them properly:

- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going out in the sun
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours and after getting wet, even if the bottle says it's waterproof
- Apply a teaspoon for a baby or a dessert spoon for a child
- Cheaper sunscreens are just as effective as long as they have the required SPF protection and protect against UVA and UVB rays
- Gentler and unscented brands are perfect for delicate skins
- Apply sunscreen on the shoulders, nose, ears, cheeks and the tops of feet. They are easy to overlook but they burn very quickly.



**NO ONE WANTS TO STAY INDOORS WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING SO MAKE SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO STAY SAFE IN THE SUN WITH YOUR LITTLE ONE!**

# **HAVE FUN IN THE SUN**

### **Take care with clothing**

Always cover up during the hottest time of day and when you feel your skin has had enough.

- Choose loose-fitting cotton or linen clothes, which are cool and comfortable to wear
- Children should wear baggy clothes that have a close weave
- Lighter-coloured clothing reflects the sun's rays away from you and is cooler than darker colours
- Clothes can stretch when wet and lose up to 50% of their UV protection, so always put dry clothes on your children when they're not in the water
- Wraparound sunglasses offer great protection as they protect the eyes from all angles from the sun. You don't need to buy an expensive brand either: just ensure that whatever you choose offers proper UV protection.

**MORE  
INFO**

**Cancer Research UK's Sunsmart Campaign:**  
[www.sunsmart.org.uk](http://www.sunsmart.org.uk)

## Did you know that if you smoke around your children, they can inhale the equivalent of 150 cigarettes per year?

Or, if you smoke or are exposed to second-hand smoke whilst pregnant, the harmful chemicals will be passed on to the unborn child? This makes for serious reading but it's important to know that most second-hand smoke is invisible and odourless, so even though you can't see or smell it, it is still there. When you smoke inside your home or car, everyone else in there is also inhaling your harmful second-hand smoke. Even your pets!

# SECOND-HAND SMOKE

### Surprised?

Second-hand smoke contains 4000 toxic chemicals which are dust-like particles too small for the eye to see. These linger in the air, quickly spreading to other rooms in the house even if a door or window is open.

They stick to clothes, walls, hair, carpets etc. People who breathe in second-hand smoke are at risk from the same diseases as smokers. Babies and children are more sensitive to this risk because their lungs are not fully developed, plus they breathe faster and take in more toxins than adults.

Unfortunately, their immune system is less resistant to the infections caused by breathing smoke.

### What can you do?

The main places where people are exposed to smoke are in the home and the car. By making these smoke-free, you will immediately reduce your family's risk of some of the following:

SECOND-HAND SMOKE IS YOUR FAMILY'S INVISIBLE ENEMY. SO BEFORE YOU NEXT LIGHT UP, TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK: WHO IS SMOKING WITH YOU...

Smoke free life Oxfordshire provide a 12 week stop smoking program FREE of charge across Oxfordshire. This can consist of support and advice via community clinics, video chat, telephone, text or download New Quit with Bella app. All Nicotine replacement therapy is FREE of charge. Please visit one of our clinics where one of our advisors will be happy to help or if you would like more information [www.smokefreelifeoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.smokefreelifeoxfordshire.co.uk)  
You can also call 0300 123 1044

MORE INFO

- Coughing and wheezing
- Meningitis
- Asthma
- Behavioural problems
- Cot death
- Lung cancer
- Pneumonia
- Learning difficulties
- Ear infections.

There are even more benefits:

- Your children are less likely to miss school due to ill health
- Your children are less likely to start smoking
- You are giving your family a very powerful message that you care about their health ... and your own!
- Both your home and car will be cleaner and fresher
- Your pets will be healthier and live longer
- You are less likely to have a house fire.

### What can you do if other people want to smoke in the house or car?

Understand their need to smoke but be firm about your children's right to grow up in a

smoke-free environment and your responsibility to protect your children's health.

Explain to family and friends that you value their friendship but not their smoke – and ask them to smoke outside, well away from doors and windows.

It is illegal to smoke in a car or other vehicle with anyone under 18. This is to protect children and young people from the dangers of second-hand smoke.

### What if you can't stop smoking just yet?

If you are really struggling to give up smoking, there are still other things you can do to make things safer:

- When you go outside to smoke, make sure your children are safe
- If your children are too young to be left alone, let them play outside where you can see them
- Be a role model - don't smoke in other people's houses even if they do.

# DOMESTIC ABUSE

## Domestic abuse is a crime – and not always against women: some men are victims too.

Worryingly, nearly a third of domestic abuse begins in pregnancy and often, where there is domestic abuse, you can be certain that there will be child abuse. However, victims often do not report it for a variety of reasons, including:

- guilt - they feel they are to blame
- love - they love their partner so much that they hope they will change
- fear - they worry their partner's violence may become worse if they report them
- homelessness - they fear they will be forced to leave their home
- finances - they worry about not managing financially without their partner's income.

## Why does it happen?

There are all sorts of reasons why domestic abuse happens but usually it is because the abuser needs to feel that they have power over the other family members. This could be because they were abused themselves when they were a child or at least witnessed it happening at home. There is help and support out there for those at risk of becoming abusers.

## Warning signs

Women often don't know that they are – or are at risk of being – abused because of general lack of knowledge.

National charity Refuge has come up with some helpful warning signs that you can look out for, in your relationships or in those of friends or family for which you are worried.

The key issue is the woman (or man) must change the way in which they behave because they are frightened of what might happen otherwise.

## Other clues

- If the abusive partner:
  - acts in a jealous and possessive manner
  - attempts to stop her from seeing friends and family
  - can be very nice one minute and threatening the next – sudden mood changes
  - says what she should wear, who she should see, and how much money she can spend
  - frequently insults and criticises her in front of other people
  - tries to frighten her to make her do what he wants
  - always puts her down and says she can't do anything without him
  - threatens to hurt other people close to her if she leaves or tells anyone.

You can read more about the signs and what to do at [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk).

MORE  
INFO

### Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service Helpline:

tel: 01865 965055  
[www.reducingtherisk.org.uk](http://www.reducingtherisk.org.uk)

**Childline:** tel: 0800 1111  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Men's Advice Line:** (for male victims of domestic abuse). tel: 0808 801 0327  
[www.mensadviceline.org.uk](http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk)

**National Domestic Violence 24-hour Helpline:**  
 tel: 0808 2000 247  
[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Domestic Abuse**  
[www.gov.uk/](http://www.gov.uk/) (search domestic abuse)

### Oxfordshire Safeguarding

#### Children Board:

tel: 01865 815843  
[www.oscb.org.uk](http://www.oscb.org.uk)

**Police (non-emergency):** 101

**Police (EMERGENCY):** 999

**Refuge:** tel: 0808 2000 247  
[www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

**RESPECT:** (for potential abusers seeking help)

tel: 0808 802 4040 [www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

If you have immediate concerns about a child call the **MASH** Tel: **0345 050 7666**

## Children suffer too

Unfortunately the longer you stay in an abusive relationship, the greater the psychological and physical damage not only to you but to your children. Even if they are not experiencing physical violence against them they will be hurt by what they are seeing and hearing in the home. Typical signs of distress amongst younger children include:

- fearfulness
- bedwetting
- violent behaviour
- inability to concentrate (e.g. at school)
- behavioural problems.

If the pattern of abuse continues a child potentially could also show the following:

- lack of self-confidence
- feeling over-protective of the victim of abuse
- losing respect for a parent
- depression and other mental health disorders

- inability to form relationships with friends
- running away from home.

These effects don't just stop at childhood either. They can carry on into their adult lives, profoundly affecting their relationships with others, either turning them into victims or abusers, thereby continuing the cycle of abuse.

They will have learnt, from experience, that violence is how problems are resolved, that people cannot be trusted (even – or perhaps especially – those closest to them), and that they are responsible for any violent act that happens in their lives.

## What you can do

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, or know someone who is, then it is essential that you seek help as soon as possible. It can be difficult and frightening to do so, especially if you are being abused; many

victims leave several times but return again until they realise they need to get away for good.

A good idea is to start talking to people you trust – your GP, health visitor, friends and family if possible.

Inform your child's school of what's going on.

Make a safety plan which you can use if you need to get out fast.

Speak to local women's refuges for advice and support. In an emergency, call the police.

**HANDLE WITH CARE,  
BABIES ARE FRAGILE  
AND PRECIOUS**

## NEVER SHAKE A BABY

Rough handling, especially shaking, is dangerous and can cause serious injuries. But remember, injuries caused by shaking don't happen accidentally during normal play. So this advice shouldn't stop you cuddling, playing and doing all the things your baby really enjoys.

Some parents or carers may lose control and shake their baby in a moment of anger or frustration, especially if the baby cries a lot or has problems feeding. Even if your baby seems to have stopped breathing, don't shake them.

Doctors advise flicking the soles of the feet, rocking the cot or picking up the baby, with the neck supported.

Many don't realise the damage that shaking can do, and some may even think that it is better than smacking.

### **Remember, it is never ok to shake or smack a baby.**

Shaking can cause blindness, deafness, fits, learning difficulties, brain damage or even death.

The danger is greatest for babies under 12 months, but shaking can cause the same serious injuries in older babies and toddlers. If the crying ever feels too much to bear:

- Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Put your baby down in a safe place like a cot or pram and go into another room, but go back to check your baby if they become quiet
- To calm yourself down, sit for a few minutes, perhaps with a cup of tea and the TV or radio to help take your mind off the crying. Once you feel calmer, go back to your baby
- Ask a friend or relative to take over for a while
- Try not to get angry with your baby as this will only make the crying worse
- Talk to someone about how you are feeling. Contact your Health Visitor for advice and local sources of support.

All babies and toddlers (and parents!) need their sleep but sometimes things happen that make this difficult. New parents need to have realistic expectations of sleep as babies wake frequently.

### **Bedtime blues**

Babies and young children spend much of their time asleep... or at least they should! However, sleeping problems often occur, even with the most laid back child.

Usually there is a reason for the disruption and the following steps should help get things back on track:

- **Get into a routine:** most babies thrive on routine and a special one for bedtime can help get them to wind down.

- **From as young as six weeks of age, you can implement the three B's** – bath, breast/bottle and bed – a tried and tested method and throw in a story or two to help them drift off happily.

- **Light up at night:** if your child is scared of the dark then a small nightlight will help, as will a few of their favourite toys in the cot.

- **Trust yourself:** sometimes, the above technique takes a little while to take effect. Keep practising it and trust in your own abilities to do it and to know if your child is crying from illness, hunger, or is just objecting to the new routine.

### **Toddler troubles**

One of the major sleeping problems toddlers face as they grow older is bedwetting (and sometimes soiling) – at a rough guess, 25% of three year-olds and one in six five year-olds wet their bed regularly.

Why they do this is not exactly clear – some children just take longer to stay dry at night while others might be worried about something. The key to dealing with this successfully is not to get angry and stressed as this will only make things worse for everyone.

- Ask your child to try to go to the loo before bedtime
- Talk to them to see if anything is bothering or worrying them
- Keep relaxed (even though it's hard!) – a stressed parent will only add to the problem
- Praise your child when they do make it through a night without bedwetting
- If you are worried at any time, book an appointment with your GP or health visitor to discuss the situation.

# SWEET DREAMS

- **Get some sleep if possible:** ask a good and trusted family member or friend to look after your baby so you can catch up on your sleep. You're important too!

- If you think that your child might not be sleeping as expected and the family is becoming unhappy and regularly disrupted, then talk to your GP or health visitor for advice.

THANKFULLY COT DEATH (OR SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME), WHICH CAN AFFECT BABIES UP TO SIX MONTHS OLD, IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY RARE AND THERE ARE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO FURTHER PREVENT IT FROM OCCURRING.

# SAFER SLEEPING



- 1 Always lie your baby down on his or her back to sleep
- 2 Place baby 'Feet to Foot' – i.e. feet at the foot of the cot
- 3 Ideal room temperature should be 16–20°C, ideally 18°C: overheating is an identified cause of cot death
- 4 Never let anyone fall asleep with your baby in their arms, or place them on a beanbag, sofa or chair
- 5 Keep the cot clear of plastic sheets, bumpers, ribbons or anything that your baby can get tangled up in
- 6 Ensure that mobiles are hung high enough not to get caught in
- 7 Use rubber sheets covered in cotton, not plastic, as the latter can cause suffocation. Tuck all sheets and blankets safely and securely under the mattress
- 8 Pillows, throws or quilts shouldn't be used until your child is one year old. Use lightweight blankets which you can add to or take away depending on the temperature of the room
- 9 Keep your baby's head and face uncovered at all times when they are indoors
- 10 Never let anyone smoke in your home.

If at any time your baby seems unwell seek medical advice early and quickly.

The Department of Health advises that the safest place for your baby to sleep is on their backs in their own cot in a room with you for the first six months.

Co-sleeping is not advised and should be avoided if you and/or your partner smoke, have recently drunk alcohol, take medications that make you sleep more heavily or feel very or unusually tired.

MORE INFO

## The Lullaby Trust

tel: 0808 802 6869

Email: [info@lullabytrust.org.uk](mailto:info@lullabytrust.org.uk)  
[www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

**BASIS** for information on infant sleep:  
[www.basisonline.org.uk](http://www.basisonline.org.uk)



**COGGES**

## FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY



Events and admission prices at  
[www.cogges.org.uk](http://www.cogges.org.uk)

01993 772602

Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 3LA  
Reg Charity No: 1141906

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There is more focus than ever on making choices that reduce our impact on the environment, and it may seem like there is an overwhelming number of decisions to make and an ever-increasing range of baby products claiming to be eco-friendly.

In recent times more and more Oxfordshire parents are choosing to use real(cloth) nappies as a better option than disposables for the environment and their baby. Studies have shown that if real nappies are washed efficiently, dried without using a tumble dryer and used on more than one child the carbon savings compared to disposable nappies are significant.

Many parents find that other benefits include fewer instances of nappy rash and earlier potty training. Plus they come in a range of beautiful designs?

For more information or to find your nearest real nappy advisor visit:- [www.oxfordshirerecycles.org.uk/realnappies](http://www.oxfordshirerecycles.org.uk/realnappies)

# REAL NAPPIES

## a real alternative to disposables

Modern washable cloth nappies come in a range of gorgeous designs, are easy to use and can save you money. With more and more people trying to reduce how much plastic they use, ditching disposables can make a big difference!

Baby Oliver loves his washable nappies! Mum Rachel from Abingdon tells us how she got on with an Oxfordshire Real Nappies trial pack:

"Before we had our son I thought using Real Nappies might be hard work, but I wanted to give it a try for the environmental benefits and to save money. The trial pack was great as it helped us decide which nappies worked for us. They looked so much more comfy than disposables and seemed a lot better for Oliver's skin. We bought a pack of 20 which means I only have to wash them a couple of times a week and they dry so quickly, even in winter, that it isn't really any extra effort at all. They look so much better than disposables and I would recommend them to anyone".



Free or very low cost trial kits are available so you can give real nappies a go before you invest in a full set. Advisors will be on hand to show you how they work and answer any questions you may have.

For more information call 01865 816043,  
email [waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
or visit [www.oxfordshirerecycles.org.uk/realnappies](http://www.oxfordshirerecycles.org.uk/realnappies)

Oxfordshire recycles



## About Make Time 2 Play

The Make Time 2 Play campaign promotes the importance of play for healthy child development. Make Time 2 Play provides hundreds of free play ideas plus tips and research on the many different benefits of play.

Through play, children learn the skills they need for life; from building relationships and improving communication through games like role play, to developing their spatial awareness and mathematical skills when playing with building blocks and puzzles, all whilst having fun!

## Download the FREE app!

The Make Time 2 Play app provides parents and carers with more than 400 FREE play ideas for a variety of play situations. Tailor the activities to your needs choosing between location, children's ages, time periods and number of children. As well as discovering the play benefits children will receive from each idea! Available to download on iOS and android devices.



## Join the Make Time 2 Play community



[maketime2play.co.uk](http://maketime2play.co.uk)



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Twitter: [@maketime2play](http://@maketime2play)



Instagram: [@maketime2play](http://@maketime2play)



[youtube.com/maketime2play](http://youtube.com/maketime2play)



Download our app for free

Research is constantly changing and whilst every effort is made when producing this guide to ensure the information is accurate and up to date, parents should be encouraged to seek the advice of their midwife, health visitor or GP if they have any concerns.

[www.studiobambino.co.uk](http://www.studiobambino.co.uk)



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