

Baby's First Years

From One Parent to Another





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Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult your pediatrician or other qualified health provider with any questions regarding your child's health or wellbeing.



Welcome

Becoming a parent is one of life's most joyful experiences, and also one of the most overwhelming. In those first years, your baby cannot speak with words, but they are constantly communicating through tiny cues, expressions, and movements. Learning to understand them can feel like trying to read a secret language, and it's easy to second-guess yourself along the way.

I created this pocket guide to help you navigate those early, non-verbal years. It's based on research, but also on real-life experience as a parent of three little grownups.

Every page is designed to be simple, practical, and reassuring, whether it's decoding your baby's cries, understanding touch, or exploring play. My hope is that it gives you confidence, strengthens the bond with your little one, and reminds you that you're not alone in this journey.

From one parent to another, welcome to the adventure.

Mehru

Learning Your Baby's Language

Babies speak through their bodies. Learning to read their cues helps you respond with confidence and build a stronger bond. Here are key signals to get you started.

01 Feeding Cue

Signals your baby want to eat

Early Signs:

- Rooting (turning head toward touch)
- Sucking hands
- Smacking lips

Late Sign: Crying

Tip: Offer a feed before crying begins, it's easier for both of you

Ref: World Health Organization (WHO), Infant Feeding Guidelines, 2018



02 Sleep Cue

Signals your baby is tired and needs rest

Early Signs:

- Rubbing eyes
- Pulling ears
- Yawning

Late Signs:

- Jerky movements
- Turning head away from faces or toys

Tip: Lay baby down in a calm, quiet space before they become overtired

Ref: Mindell & Williamson, Sleep Medicine Reviews, 2018



03 Stress Cue

Body signals showing your baby is overstimulated and distressed

Signs:

- Stiffening body
- Arching back
- Crying harder when soothed
- Avoiding eye contact

Late Sign: Crying

Tip: Pause, dim lights, and cuddle quietly

Ref: Brazelton, Touchpoints, 1992



04 Attachment / Engagement Cue

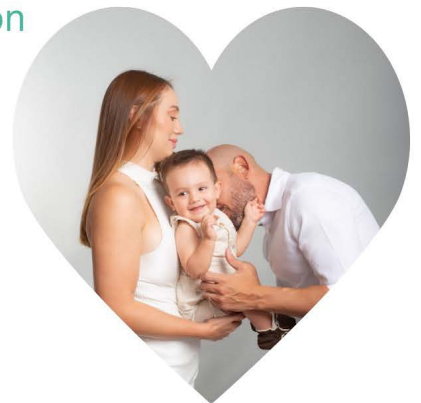
Signals your baby is seeking comfort and connection

Signs:

- Smiling
- Cooing
- Relaxed body
- Reaching arms toward you

Tip: Respond by smiling, talking, or mirroring their sounds, this teaches early "conversation"

Ref: Feldman et al, Developmental Science, 2011



Touch as Communication

Learning to read and respond to your baby's cues through touch and massage strengthens your bond, calms your baby, and helps them feel secure in their new world.

01 Why Touch Matters

Babies explore the world through their senses, and touch is their first language. Gentle, loving touch:

- Reduces stress for both baby and parent
- Helps regulate heartbeat and breathing
- Strengthens bonding and emotional security
- Supports digestive comfort: colic, constipation, and reflux

References:

Field, Infant Behavior & Development, 2010
Field, T., Infant Massage Therapy, Early Human Development, 2014

02 Types of Touch & Infant Massage

Babies need different kinds of touch at different times. A cuddle soothes distress, gentle strokes help with sleep, and playful massage builds connection during alert moments. Each type of touch sends a message of comfort, safety, and love, helping your baby feel secure as they grow.

- **Skin-to-skin contact** - comfort after birth, soothing during stress
- **Soothing strokes** - calming during bedtime or fussiness
- **Tummy massage** - easing wind or mild discomfort
- **Hand and foot massage** - playful bonding during alert times
- **Back strokes** - gentle support during tummy time or winding down
- **Cuddle holds** - reassurance when baby needs closeness

References:

Moore E, et al. Cochrane Review, 2016 - Skin-to-skin contact
Field T. Infant Behavior & Development, 2010 - Soothing strokes
Underdown A, et al. Cochrane Review, 2013 - Tummy massage
Field T. Pediatric Nursing, 2001 - Hand and foot massage
McClure V. Infant Massage: A Handbook for Loving Parents, 2012 - Back strokes
Brazelton T.B. Touchpoints, 1992 - Cuddle holds



03 Parent Benefits

Touch doesn't just calm babies-it supports parents too. Gentle moments of holding, stroking, or massaging can ease stress and help you feel more connected and confident in caring for your little one.

- Reduces stress hormones in parents
- Encourages bonding and emotional closeness
- Boosts parental confidence in reading and responding to cues

References:

Field T. Early Human Development, 2014 – Touch and stress reduction
Stack DM, Muir DW. Developmental Review, 1992 – Bonding through touch
Underdown A, et al. Cochrane Review, 2013 – Parental confidence and infant massage



04 When to Pause

Touch and infant massage are usually safe, but pause if your baby is unwell, has a fever, or shows discomfort like stiffening, arching, or crying.

Extra care is needed for premature or medically fragile infants, or those recovering from surgery or with skin conditions.

Learning proper techniques first helps keep your baby safe and makes touch enjoyable for both of you.

Ref: Underdown A, et al. Cochrane Review, 2013 – Safety considerations for infant massage



Following professionals may be consulted to learn safe and effective ways to understand infant cues, touch, and massage techniques:

A **Paediatric Massage Consultant** (aka Pediatric Massage Consultant) has a background in child or health field, with advanced knowledge in tailoring programs for specific parent-infant needs and providing support to healthcare practitioners.

A **Certified Infant Massage Instructor** (aka CIMI) works with families to teach infant massage and support bonding through safe, effective touch.



A - Z of Baby Basics

This is a quick reference guide to common questions and answers about your newborn.



Reminder: The information provided is for general knowledge and informational purposes only, and does not constitute medical advice.

Body Features

Q Why does my baby's breathing seem so fast and sometimes pause?

This is completely normal. Newborns often breathe quickly, then pause for a few seconds. Their respiratory system is still maturing, and this pattern is a normal part of the process.

Q My baby's eyes look cross-eyed and watery. Is this a concern?

Cross-eyed or watery eyes are common in newborns. Their eye muscles are still developing, and their tear ducts may not be fully open yet. This usually improves as they grow.

Q My baby had a full head of hair, but now it's falling out. Why?

It's totally normal for babies to lose some or all of their hair in the first few months. This hair loss is a result of hormonal changes and will eventually be replaced by new hair growth.

Q What do I do about my baby's swollen genitals or breasts?

This is caused by hormones passed from the mother and is a temporary condition. The swelling will typically go away on its own within a few weeks without any treatment.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. Bantam.
Mayo Clinic. (2023). *Newborn Care*.

Skin & Crying

Q What's the deal with my baby's skin?
It's peeling and blotchy.

Peeling skin, red blotches, and even baby acne are common and generally clear up on their own. Newborn skin is adjusting to the world outside the womb.

Q My baby's skin and eyes look yellow.
Is this jaundice?

Mild yellowing of the skin or eyes is often a sign of jaundice, which is common in the first week. It often settles with regular feeding and growth.

Q My baby cries for what feels like hours.
What should I do?

Crying is how babies communicate, not a sign of manipulation. Cuddle and soothe them. The period of intense crying, sometimes called the "witching hour," often passes with time.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. Bantam
KidsHealth. (2023). *Newborn Skin: What's Normal?* The Nemours Foundation
National Library of Medicine. (2023). *Jaundice in Newborns (Hyperbilirubinemia)*. MedlinePlus

Care & Safety

Q How do I bathe my newborn baby?

Until the umbilical cord stump falls off, you can sponge bathe your baby. Use a mild, fragrance-free soap.

Q How should I take care of my baby's nails?

At first, use a soft nail file or baby mittens. Only trim their nails with baby scissors after they have hardened.

Q How do I care for the umbilical cord stump?

The stump usually falls off within 1-3 weeks. Keep it clean and dry, and fold your baby's diaper down to prevent irritation.

Q What is the safest way for a baby to sleep at night

Always place your baby to sleep on their back on a firm, flat surface, such as in a crib. The crib should be empty of blankets, pillows, or toys.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. Bantam
American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Safe Sleep*
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2023). *Safe Sleep for Babies*

Other Basics

Q What should my baby's poop look like?

The first poops, called meconium, are black and sticky. They then turn green, followed by yellow if your baby is breastfed or brown if they are formula-fed.

Q My baby suddenly flings their arms out when they're startled. What is that?

That is the Moro reflex or startle reflex. It is a normal, involuntary response to a loud noise or sudden movement and typically fades by 4-6 months of age.

Q Is it normal for my baby to lose weight after birth?

Yes, it is. It is normal for newborns to lose a small amount of weight at first before their weight steadily increases as they begin to feed well.

Q My baby's hands and feet feel cold. Should I be worried?

A baby's hands and feet may feel cooler than the rest of their body. To check their actual temperature, feel their chest or back.

References:

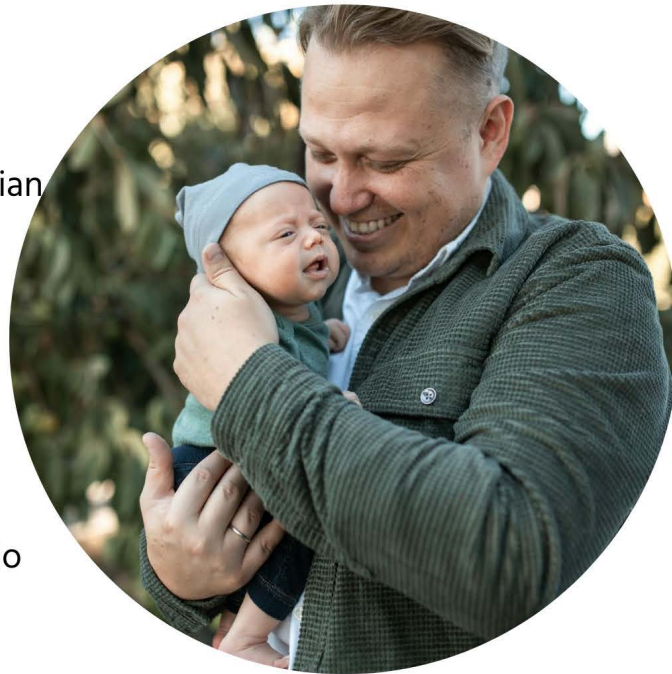
American Academy of Pediatrics. (2022). *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*. Bantam
KidsHealth. (2023). *Your Baby's Poop*. The Nemours Foundation
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). *Baby's First Year*

Your Journey Continues

You got this! This e-book is a simple guide to common newborn questions, but the most important resource is you. Celebrate the small victories, cherish the moments, and focus on the bond you're building.

Remember

- **Trust your instincts:** You know your baby best. If something feels off, don't hesitate to seek advice.
- **Seek professional guidance:** Your baby's pediatrician is your most important resource for health advice.
- **Embrace the learning curve:** Every day is a new opportunity to learn about your baby and about yourself as a parent.
- **Find your support system:** Connect with other parents, family, and friends. You are not meant to do this alone.



Next Steps

- **Talk to your paediatrician:** Use the information in this guide to prepare questions for your baby's check-ups.
- **Join a local parent group:** Your local hospital or community centre may have groups for new parents.
- **Relax and enjoy:** The most important thing you can do for your baby is to be a calm and loving presence.

This baby manual is my humble gift to parents who want to understand their baby's language, make sense of sleepless nights, and discover the joy hidden in everyday moments.

I am a Paediatric Massage Consultant and a Certified Infant Massage Instructor now. I also studied nutritional medicine in the past, not to practice clinically, but to better understand how to support my children's needs safely and effectively. Like every parent, I've navigated countless quiet doubts and celebrated joyful firsts.

Here I've hand-picked a few of my personal experiences as a parent, guided and supported by professional research, to benefit you and your baby in this guide. May you feel confident, supported, and connected as you navigate these early years with your baby.

If my open-source guide has helped you, pass it on to another parent. Together, we can spread reassurance and support.

Yours in parenting,



Mehru Roshan

*"You're
already
doing
better
than
you
think."*