

# Parent Briefings™

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT - A CONTINUING SERIES

*A community initiative of the Australian Scholarships Group*

*Editorial*

## Welcome to Life!

The first three months of a child's life are an exciting voyage of discovery for both you and your child.

He will develop from a newborn baby with no experience or expectations to a settled and alert three month old babbling excitedly when spoken to or played with.

Your baby is finding out about the world he was born into, the world of human voices, colours,

feelings and smell, the world of milk and sound. Your baby is also finding out about himself and an inner world of sensations and primitive emotions.

Your baby has the most basic of needs; he needs to survive by being kept warm, by being fed and by being protected. But for his emotional and mental well-being he must be loved; he needs to be held closely in loving arms and to be nurtured with softly spoken words.

By the time he is a more settled, predictable and lovable small person he will have eased into his part of the world you have made for him. And what better start to life could you possibly give him than his own special place within your family.

If you already have children, you know about the work, rewards and challenges a baby brings. If this is your first child, you may be feeling excited yet apprehensive about your ability to cope with parenthood. You have now become a family with new responsibilities and fundamental shifts in priorities. And your priorities become your children.



*As a parent you are your child's first and most influential teacher.*

Today's families are well catered for when it comes to obtaining information regarding your baby and parenting. Use it. Talk to your maternal and child health nurse, well child provider, your family doctor, your community centres, your friends and family. Talk about your newborn, get tips and advice from other parents and join in the numerous activities that cater for families in your community.

But above all, spend the first three months of your child's life getting to know one another. Take it gently and let the loving bonds of affection weave you, the parents, and your child tightly together as a family. These passionate new feelings are unequalled for most parents and these deep attachments will become an anchor for the rest of your child's life.



**Kim McQueen**  
Editor

*PS: For ease of reading, I've referred to the baby as either male or female. Please read it as your baby.*

**S E R I E S O N E**

**THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS**

PART **1** of 12

**0 to 3 MONTHS**

Part 1 covers a full range of topics with articles and hints to help you through the first three months with your new baby.

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*Parent Briefings Series 1 - The Early Childhood Years. This 12 part series covers the development of children from birth to 3 years.*

*DON'T MISS PART 2  
JAM-PACKED FULL OF GREAT MATERIAL  
FOR YOUR 3-6 MONTH OLD.*

Kidslife Foundation

a community initiative of



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## TIPS & INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES HELPING YOU BECOME A BETTER PARENT

by Dr Michael Bernard

**Becoming a parent** does not bring with a 'how to manual'. All the wisdom and skills of parenting have to be learned.

**Children** of all ages become immune to yelling and spanking.

'**There is** only one pretty child in the world, and every parent has it'.

**Reading daily** to your children is one of the most stimulating things you can do for them. Start as early as six weeks old.

**Being a loving** parent is knowing which end of your baby to pat and when.

**Grandparents are a wonderful** and necessary resource for babies and children; let each enjoy the other and interfere as little as possible.

*Dr Michael Bernard is an educational psychologist, former Reader of Education at Melbourne University, and author of ASG's 'You Can Do It' programs.*

## Parenting

# Becoming Parents

“Birth feels like the climax to long months of waiting but it is not really a climax at all. You were not waiting to give birth, you were waiting to have a baby. Your labour has produced that baby and there is no rest pause between the amazing business of becoming parents and the job of being them. All three of you have a tremendous amount of adapting to do. The feelings and behaviour of today have very little to do with next month because by then all three of you will have changed. Your baby will have settled into life outside the womb and you will both have settled into parenthood.”<sup>1</sup>

Parenting does not come with a handbook. If this is your first child you are now treading on untouched land. Becoming good parents depends on experience, both past and present, on interaction with fellow parents, on research and reading. But most importantly parenting is about providing a loving and supportive environment in which your children may learn and grow to fulfil their dreams and expand to their fullest potential.

The sense of responsibility, particularly if the baby is a first child, is colossal. Your whole balance of life has changed and there is a tremendous amount of adapting to do. It is vital in these first few weeks to let yourselves as parents become all absorbed in your newborn baby and to let the day to day running of your lives take second place.

You have been handed a small human life and have embarked on a 24 hour, seven day a week job. You will get to know every intimate detail of your child just as he will get to know you.

For centuries parents felt they had accomplished a great deal if they managed to raise a child to adulthood. If their children survived disease, accidents and violence parents had succeeded at their job. Today, children have the benefits of modern medicine and technology. But today's parents have a more complicated vision. They want to raise children who are responsible and co-operative, courageous, happy and capable of enjoying life, successful, respectful of others' feelings and property, courteous and generous, honest, committed to love for home, family and self, able to get along with others, self reliant and able to see opportunities in difficulties.

From the moment children are born we, as parents, seek to shape and influence their behaviour. But there are certain traits in each child that are part of a unique individual makeup - traits which we as parents have little or no control over. These will be discussed in later *Parent Briefings* but for these precious first three months of your child's life just be confident, open your hearts and let your child's reactions guide you.

<sup>1</sup> Source: *Baby and Child From Birth to Age Five* Penelope Leach, (Penguin).

## When you're feeling down

**P**ost-natal depression is not at all the same as the temporary mood-swings of the first days after the birth. It can overwhelm you at any stage in your baby's first months and last for a long time.

Depression drains everything of joy and colour, saps your self confidence and energy and turns you in upon yourself. Even if you can find the drive to meet your baby's physical needs, depression will deny you your pleasure in him and therefore deprive him of being your joy as well as your responsibility. So, if you should suffer from post-natal depression, you will need medical, practical and emotional help, and quickly.

The question is; will you get it? If you are feeling worthless, you probably will not feel worthy of your doctor's time. If putting on your clothes takes superhuman effort, telling somebody how you are feeling will probably be beyond you. Partners, grandparents, family and friends should all be alert to the possibility of post-natal depression so that the second time they find themselves saying "do pull yourself together" they bite it back and suggest help instead. And if the mother cannot find the energy to seek help for herself, somebody must do it for her. Maternal and child care nurses and doctors all respond sympathetically.

Source: *Baby and Child From Birth to Age Five* Penelope Leach, (Penguin).

## Senses

## What is Your Newborn Capable of?

From the moment of birth each of your baby's senses are in working order.

In her book *Baby and Child*, Penelope Leach believes babies are born with the ability to use each of these senses. "What is lacking is experience, knowledge of what things look or sound like; how different things feel or smell or taste. All five senses are bombarded with stimuli as soon as the baby leaves the womb. Learning through the senses goes on from that moment."

### TASTE AND SMELL

All infants are born with the ability to communicate their taste preference to caregivers. When given a sweet liquid instead of water newborns use longer sucks with fewer pauses indicating they prefer sweetness. Bitter, acid or sour tastes make the baby screw up his face, turn his head away and/or cry. He can also differentiate accurately between plain, slightly sweetened or very sweet water. We assume that newborn babies have a sense of smell because we know they have a sense of taste and two are intimately linked.

### HEARING

Newborn babies can hear a wide variety of sounds from the moment of birth. They can sense and differentiate sound vibrations while they are still in the womb. Loud, sudden sounds will make your baby jump. The sharper the sound the more extreme his reaction. Just as clearly as he dislikes some sounds the baby is soothed and relaxed by

repetitive rhythmical sounds.

Newborn babies are particularly sensitive to the sounds of people talking. They have a built-in interest in voices. Infants special responsiveness to their mother's voice encourages the mother to talk to her baby.

### VISION

Babies can see from the moment of birth. They can best focus when an object is about 20 to 25cm away from them. At that distance he can see clearly but objects which are further away are blurred. Brightness and movement are the two things most visible to him. This fixed focal distance is exactly the distance which separates his face from yours when you hold and talk to him or when you are breast or bottle feeding. Faces are the most important things for him to look at and he is innately programmed to study them whenever he can. When they reach three months old babies can focus on objects just as well as adults.

### TOUCH

The sense of touch is obvious from birth. We know that babies react with pleasure by warmth and skin to skin contact. They enjoy being caressed and rocked. They grip to the feel of an object in their hand and they react with sucking reflexes to the soft stroking of their cheek. Similarly they react by crying, screaming or pulling away to pain.

## It's Never too Early for Music

You can nurture your child's interest and enjoyment of music by providing a variety of listening experiences. This nurturing should begin when the child is in the womb and if your own musical experiences were limited you will also benefit from any effort you make to encourage your child's interest in music.

Singing and humming by the members of the child's immediate family is the best way of encouraging your baby's interest in music.

At this early stage of your baby's development avoid making loud, sudden sounds. Choose songs and rhymes for bath time or changing the baby's nappy. Lullabies will be very useful. You can accompany your singing with stroking, patting and rocking movements. Gentle tickling can be introduced as the baby grows and becomes more aware of its surroundings.

Beware of over stimulating your baby. Choose a variety of music for listening, world music, classical and instrumental tracks. However do not expose your baby to constant noise - you will have to switch off your radio and give your child a rest. Babies are extremely sensitive to sound and or music that is too loud, aggressive or consistently lively, which will dull the child's sensitivity to sound and therefore restrict their development in this area.

For those parents keen enough, there are music groups that you can take your baby to in most capital cities. However, remember that babies of this age are totally unpredictable. You need to see the sessions as an opportunity to develop your skills and increase your repertoire as your baby will most likely be sleeping or feeding during its music session. The Nursing Mothers Association has a great book called *Merrily Merrily* with songs and rhymes for all occasions. There is also an accompanying tape which may not appeal to your ear but is the kind of tape you should choose for your children's listening as it has simple accompaniments.

Source: Jenny Fogarty, music specialist and Director of *Mini Maestros*, programs designed for young children to experience music.

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## ANYTIME IDEAS

- Get your baby out of the crib when sleep time is over so that you can enjoy each other's company, and so he can watch, listen and learn.
- Your baby loves to hear your voice so talk to him. Use his name and look into his eyes. Watch his face light up.
- Help your baby get used to other adults, babysitters, friends and family members. Let others hold him starting with only a few minutes at a time.
- Love helps your baby to feel secure. Give her lots of hugs and smiles. Say "I love you" and show you mean it.

*Cognitive Development*

## Helping your Baby Learn

Most babies senses function normally at birth. Babies see, hear, touch, smell and taste. They do not, however, arrive with an inborn sense of what things look like, how a voice should sound or how milk should taste. All of these things must be learned, and learning starts the moment your baby sees the light of the world.

Learning is not channelled through one ability at a time. Sight can direct movement, hearing can stimulate memory. At about five to six weeks, your baby first notices her hands but she can not yet control them and therefore does not yet use them for exploration. By the third month she has learned to grasp toys and has begun to look at her hands as she moves them. She soon discovers how to put her hands in her mouth. More and more, she is learning to direct her movements and to assess what effect they have.

## Helpful Books for Parents:

### What to Expect the First Year

Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Murkoff and Sandee Hathaway, the authors of *What To Expect When You're Expecting* (Angus and Robertson)

### Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five

Penelope Leach (Penguin)

### The Year After Child Birth

Sheila Kitzinger (Oxford University Press)

### Complete Baby and Child Care

Dr Miriam Stoppard (Viking)

### Complete Pregnancy and Baby Book:

**A Guide To Prenatal, Infant and Toddler Care** Vicki Lansky (Publications International Ltd)

### Babies: A Parents' Guide to Surviving

(and Enjoying) **Baby's First Year**

Dr Christopher Green, the author of *Toddler Taming* (Simon Schuster)

### Mother and Baby Care: A Practical Parents' Handbook from Conception to Three Years

Elizabeth Fenwick (Ken Fin)

*These books are available from major bookstores. If unable to obtain locally, contact Family Planning Victoria's Options Bookshop, 901 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill 3128. Tel 03 9257 0146  
 Email: jaron@fpv.org.au Web: www.fpv.org.au  
 Write, visit or call for a free catalogue.*

## Learning from Day One

In the past, we generally believed infants were passive creatures who spent most of their time sleeping and eating. They were not seen as problem solvers and active explorers of their environment. The daily parent - infant contacts such as nappy changing, feeding and bathing were rarely considered anything more than necessary baby care. As it turns out, these simple contacts are vital to a baby's mental development.

Today we know babies are keen observers of their immediate environment. From the first day of life, your baby starts to learn and build a foundation of knowledge that continues to grow with each new experience. He looks around, sucks, listens attentively to his parents' voices. He twists and turns to find out what is going on in his small world. His senses supply him with information, and gradually his developing mental and physical abilities begin to interpret that information. He learns to draw

conclusions, to think, and to understand the world he lives and acts in.

When, at a few weeks of age, your baby wriggles with delight when he sees your face, he will be unaware that he is learning to differentiate among faces. When he stops crying because he hears your voice, he will not know that he has linked your voice with comfort. But your affectionate and informed observation will tell you that your baby is not only assessing and storing information but solving problems and reasoning.

Later he will start to understand concepts and categories; and later still, when speech is added to his other skills, he will be able to express in words what he is doing and what he is thinking. Speech is one of the skills that divides humans from other animals, but so also are thought, judgement, reasoning and the ability to understand abstract ideas. The growth of these abilities is called **cognitive development**.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Choose the right kind of mobiles for your baby's cot or playpen.
- Move a colourful ball into her field of vision. She will turn her head to follow its movement and will stop at the midpoint of her body.
- While her hands are still fisted, up to five or six weeks, put your finger into her hand so that she can practise grasping it. She will also be exercising her muscles as she grasps.
- Put different objects into her hands so she starts to understand about different textures.
- When she puts her hands into her mouth do not pull them away; this is a natural form of exploration. Her mouth is her most effective and available tool. If you discourage her from using it or constantly keep it occupied with a dummy, you will prevent her from effectively exploring other objects.
- When she starts to swipe at things, change her mobile. Give her some toys that make a noise when she moves them. Let her grasp a rattle.
- Talk and play with her, and sing to her as you rock her.
- Prop her so she can watch the family and look around.
- Let her kick her legs without obstructions such as clothing to exercise her muscles.

*Source: Under Three; A Comprehensive Guide to Caring for your Baby and Toddler. Edited by John S. O'Shea.*

## Sleep

## You Can Encourage Sleep Patterns

Your baby's sleep pattern is a topic every parent discusses with their maternal and child health nurse on a regular basis during these first three months. If you are one of the small percentage of lucky parents whose child sleeps at predictable intervals and for considerable lengths of time then thank your lucky stars.

Sleep deprivation is almost inevitable once becoming new parents and is one of those situations that just cannot be avoided, at least for a few months. But there are things you can do to guide your child to become better sleepers. But remember this, although the first three months of being new parents may

feel like an eternity, about half of all three month olds are sleeping through the night.

In the first few weeks of life the average baby sleeps between 14 and 20 hours each day (but many sleep less than this). But this is taken as a series of shorter naps ranging in time from 30 minutes to six hours. When a baby is born there is no preference for day or night but rather sleep is taken randomly throughout a 24 hour period. It is the art of teaching a baby that the day is for being awake and the night is for sleeping that can make the difference between a well adjusted mother or a sleep deprived wreck.

## Tips You Can Use

Establishing good sleeping patterns and rituals from the very beginning can make the difference between good and bad sleepers. I have used these tips on both of my children and, despite a few hiccups, have had great success.

- Try to establish day and night rituals from the very start. During the day place baby to sleep in different places. Don't make special efforts to keep the noise down otherwise your baby will come to expect silence when sleeping and this is not always possible during the day. Don't make the room especially dark. Darkness is for night time sleep.
- From day one establish night time rituals. What they are is up to you and your baby but it must be the same thing every night, for example bathing the baby, dressing him in pyjamas, feeding then sleep. Keep night-time feeds quiet

sombre affairs. Keep the lights and television down low, keep discussion with your baby to a minimum and always a whisper. Don't prolong the event, once the feed is over and the burping done, place the baby back in the cradle to sleep.

- Keep a night light in his room so you don't have to turn on bright lights to change him during the night.
- Make sure the room temperature is right and the baby is dressed comfortably with the right amount of blankets.

Of course there are many reasons why some babies wake in the night or won't go to sleep including colic, food allergies, temperature changes, soiled nappies or other internal and external disturbances.

Seek professional advice if you have concerns.

## Sleep Baby Safely

The incidence of SIDS 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome' has decreased by about 70% since 'Reducing the Risk of SIDS' program was introduced. The cause of SIDS is still unknown, but research suggests there is a way to create a safer sleeping environment for babies and young children. SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies between one month and one year of age. Most babies who die from SIDS are under six months. More babies die of SIDS in winter than in summer.

To reduce the risk of SIDS:

- Put baby on the back to sleep, from birth
- Sleep baby with face uncovered
- Cigarette smoke is bad for babies
- Check that:
- The cot meets the Australian standard
- The mattress is firm, clean and well fitting
- Baby is tucked in securely or is in a safe sleeping bag which has fitted neck and arm holes
- Doonas, quilts, duvets, pillows and cot bumpers are not in the cot

Remember 1999 out of 2000 babies will not die from SIDS.

*If you have any questions about how to reduce the risk, talk to your doctor or child care nurse  
Or call SIDS on 1300 308 307  
Or visit the website [www.sidsandkids.org.au](http://www.sidsandkids.org.au)*

## Massage Your Baby

Here are a few tips to get you started.

- Enjoy yourself - do it in a spirit of calmness and love.
- Start very gently with light strokes for short time.
- Keep your baby warm and be seated so you are comfortable too
- Take your cues from how the baby is reacting.
- Babies have very sensitive skin. Start by stroking their limbs and back with their clothes on, or when they are wrapped in a towel after their bath and while you are holding them close.
- Take two minutes for the massage of a newborn infant, working up to a minimum of 10 minutes for a full massage with a baby of a few months of age or more.
- Talking, singing and smiling all add to the communication.



*Motor Development*

## Look Forward to These Milestones

Although every baby is unique all babies change at similar intervals and at a similar rate. But no two babies learn to walk or smile or talk at the same age. The following is a general indication.

### BIRTH TO 1 MONTH

- Sleeps most of the day and night.
- Shows reflexive movements. For example when a cheek is touched he turns to that side; when an ear is touched he turns away; when he hears an unexpected noise his arms and legs extend and retract rapidly.
- Clenches fingers tightly most of the time.
- Thrusts arms and legs in play.
- Lifts head briefly and adjusts body position when held against your shoulder.
- Becomes quiet when held.
- Responds to the sound of a rattle or bell by becoming quiet or moving whole body.
- Cries & makes some throaty sounds.

### 2 MONTHS

- Holds head at midline when lying on back.
- Lifts head when placed on stomach.
- Rolls from side to back.
- Often clasps hands together.
- Holds a rattle briefly.
- Glances from one thing to another.
- Smiles when someone smiles at him.
- Squeals, coos and laughs.

### 3 MONTHS

- Kicks legs actively in a bicycle motion.
- Looks at fingers and hands.
- Laughs or coos when happy.
- Grasps and holds onto a small rattle and shakes it.
- Holds head erect and steady when held in a sitting position.
- Lies on tummy propped up on fore-arms, head up and looking around.
- Turns head towards sounds or voices.
- Brings things to mouth.
- Keeps fingers unclenched when arms are at rest.
- May suck thumb.
- Excited to see food coming.
- Eyes are bright and alert.

## How your Baby Develops

### POSTURE & LARGE MOVEMENT

At three months your baby's movements will be smoother and more continuous than before.

She will wave her hands symmetrically with his hands loosely open. She will kick vigorously with her legs alternating or occasionally together. Pulled to sit she will have little or no head sag and when held sitting her back is straight except in the lumbar region. Her head holds erect and steady for several seconds before bobbing forward. If held standing with her feet on a hard surface she will sag at the knees.

### VISION AND FINE MOTOR MOVEMENTS

Your baby will be visually very alert particularly preoccupied by nearby human faces.

She can move her head deliberately to gaze attentively around her and will follow adult's movements within her available visual field. She watches the movements of her own hands and engages in finger play. She will begin to clasp her own hands pressing the palms of her hands together.

She will recognise the breast or her feeding bottle and makes eager welcoming movements as it approaches her face.

### HEARING AND SPEECH

Sudden loud noises will distress her provoking blinking, screwing up of her eyes, crying or turning away.

She will quieten down or smile to the sound of her mother's voice before she touches her but not when screaming. Vocalises delightedly when spoken to or pleased and also when alone. But she will cry when uncomfortable or annoyed. She may turn her eyes and/or head towards a sound-source; brows may wrinkle and eyes may dilate. She may move her head from side to side as if searching for a sound source. She may also show excitement at the sound of running bathwater, footsteps or the sounds of approaching voices.

### SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & PLAY

Your baby's eyes will fixate unblinkingly on your face when feeding with a contented purposeful gaze.

She will begin to react to familiar situations showing by smiles, coos and excited movements that she recognises preparations for feeds, baths etc. She will respond with obvious pleasure to friendly handling especially when accompanied by playful tickling and vocal sounds.

*Source: From Birth to Age 5 by M. Sheridan. Published by ACER, Private Bag 55, Camberwell Vic 3124 Tel: (03) 9277 5555 www.acer.edu.au*

## Activities you can do to help

### FROM 0 TO EIGHT WEEKS

Your baby does not need toys to play with. But practise on focusing his eyes on things is good for him (his best focusing distance is 20 to 25cm) and faces are the most interesting objects to him. Since you and your baby spend a lot of time changing nappies make the change table area a learning centre also. You can hang a peg board next to the change table at your baby's eye level and tape one brightly coloured picture to it (pictures cut out from magazines will do). Every morning change the picture and eventually hang more than one. When your baby is about 10 weeks old he will start to reach out to the pictures.

### FROM ABOUT TWO TO TWO AND A HALF MONTHS

Take your baby out with you to do the shopping. Many supermarkets now have infant carriers attached to the trolleys or

use a baby sling (with proper head support). Wait until your baby is awake and alert and you will be surprised at what gets your baby's attention such as a lighted display, active children playing or the colourful flower stand.

While it is important to place your baby on his back to sleep, it is also to give him 'tummy time' when he is awake. This helps him develop head control and use muscles that may otherwise not be used.

### FROM TWO AND HALF TO THREE MONTHS

Most babies now watch their hands while they play with them. Things to swipe at are ideal toys for this age. A rattle or soft ball can be hung above his cot, from a branch above his pram or a cradle gym placed over him on the floor. The objects should be about 25cm from his face enabling him to swipe at them.

## Safety

## Your Baby's Safety Begins with You

Safety begins the day you bring your child home from hospital. Accidents often happen unexpectedly because adults are unaware of what children can do and how quickly they develop new skills. Understanding a child's development will assist in

planning ahead for safety.

- Never leave your baby alone on a bed, couch or change table as she may roll over unexpectedly.
- If the baby is in a bouncinette it should be on the floor.
- Avoid handling hot food or drinks

if you are carrying or nursing a baby.

- Keep small articles out of reach as these may become choking hazards.
- Avoid baby clothing with ties, ribbons and bows which may catch on objects and pull tight.

## How to Make Your Nursery Safe & Sound

Buying nursery furniture is an exciting and essential part of becoming parents. Products are numerous and glossy packaging entice new parents wanting the best for their baby. But there are things to look out for when choosing what is the best product for you.

### NURSERY FURNITURE

- smooth rounded edges
- splinter free timber
- rounded bracing bars

### BASSINETTES

- The larger and deeper the better.
- A stronger basket is essential if the bassinette is to be used as a carry basket as well.
- A bassinette liner should avoid draughts but allow plenty of ventilation.
- Full length flowing bassinette linings and covers are a fire hazard.
- If fly-netting is used outdoors, a green shade is preferable to reduce glare.
- Pillows are unnecessary for children under two-years. They may cause suffocation.
- If the bassinette is a swinging type, check to see that it can be secured.

### BOUNCINETTES

Bouncinettes should always be placed on the floor. If they are put on a table or worktop the bouncing baby may cause the bouncinette to fall off the edge.

### CHANGE TABLES

- When using a change table never leave the baby alone. The baby may wriggle out of the restraining strap (if there is one) and fall onto the floor. This can happen in the few seconds you turn away.
- To prevent head or limb entrapment it is recommended that there be no gap at the top of change table, or, if there is a gap that this be between 50 and 85mm.

- All edges should be smooth and the change table must be sturdy.

### COTS

Today many parents are placing their newborn children in cots rather than cradles to minimise costs. Cots come in a variety of forms and are an essential piece of nursery furniture. However, there are a number of things to keep in mind when shopping around for your cot.

- Only buy cots that comply with the mandatory product safety standard. Australian Standard for cots for household use (AS/NZS 2172).
- The space between the cot bars must be 50mm minimum, 85mm maximum to prevent the baby's head or limbs being caught between the bars.
- The depth of the cot (from the top of mattress to the top of the cot) must be a minimum of 500mm to prevent the baby from toppling out when she learns to stand.
- The cot must be stable.
- Dropside cots must be fastened with special cot latches, not bolts. Check for security and ensure fingers cannot get caught easily.
- Avoid small decorative knobs on the cot uprights. These could catch clothing and pull tight.
- Look for smooth round edges and splinter free timber.
- The mattress should fit snugly and firmly.
- Ensure baby cannot slip a foot between the base of the cot and the dropside.
- If the base is not slatted, ensure plenty of ventilation holes for adequate circulation of air. This will prevent mildew through collection of moisture under mattress.

- Wooden slats on the base are preferable to metal. Slats should be no more than 85mm apart.
- Solid ends on the cot prevent draughts.
- Do not place the cot within reach of drawstring curtains or blinds. The baby may play with the cord and twist it around her neck.
- Keep the cot clear of heaters and power points. Heaters can cause bedding to burn and little children may poke objects into power points and risk electrocution.
- Avoid cot-mobiles. They have caused injuries by falling on babies or from toddlers choking on the small parts.
- Electric blankets should not be used in a cot because bed-wetting could cause electrocution.
- Decorative transfers should not be applied to any surface inside the cot. This is to avoid the risk of a child swallowing or inhaling pieces of the transfer.
- Avoid leaving toys or other articles in the cot that the child may use to help climb out.

Once the height of the side rail is less than three quarters the height of the child it is time to move the child into a bed or leave the cot side down at all times so the child can climb out rather than fall over a raised side. Children generally move from a cot to a bed between 18 months and two years of age.

*This information is from the Victorian Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre, Royal Children's Hospital, Flemington Rd., Parkville, Vic. 3052. The Centre includes a home safety shop, sells safety products, a telephone advisory service, safety seminars, first aid courses, a national child safety library and product and design consultants. Tel: 03 9345 5085. [www.childsafety.com](http://www.childsafety.com)*

Safety

## Choosing Prams & Pushers

When you purchase a pram or pusher for your baby check the following points:

- Prams should not be used for babies under six months unless the backrest reclines at an angle of more than 135 degrees to the seat.
- Prams and strollers should have shoulder straps as well as cloth straps and waist straps. The harness should be adjustable to fit closely and comfortably with a fastening that you, but not the child, can undo.
- Brakes should be easy to use and out of reach of the baby. Brakes should hold on a 9 degree slope with a baby in the pram. If the front wheels can swivel, brakes should be linked on both back wheels.
- Stability: take care not to overload the pram. Avoid hanging shopping from the handles as this may cause the pram to tip over. Choose a pram with a deep tray underneath.
- Folding and unfolding: ideally this should be possible with one hand. Two separate locking devices prevent the pram folding accidentally. A device to lock a folded pram in position prevents children opening the pram when not in use, causing themselves injury.

### BEFORE PURCHASING CHECK:

- the pram will fit in the car
- there are no sharp edges, finger traps or nuts which the older child could unscrew
- size and comfort
- easy lifting and carrying
- the handle is a comfortable height for you.

### BABY SLINGS

Very young babies need to have their heads supported. Slings should have wide straps over both shoulders to spread the weight of the infant and not damage the parents spine. It is better for the parent to hold the child on the back rather than the front for prolonged carrying. It is better to hold the child fairly high on the back as the sling will put strain on the spine if too low.

## Travel Safe

Babies must be restrained correctly when travelling in the car. There are two main types of restraints available for young babies.

- Each year hundreds of children are needlessly killed or injured because they are unrestrained or are not restrained correctly.
- Taking the care to restrain your children properly is the best thing you can do to prevent injury in a car crash.
- The safest place for a child restraint is in the centre of the back seat.
- Your children need to be restrained even when travelling at a low speed or a short distance because most crashes happen within 10km of home.
- Even if your children are in the back seat they are not safe if they are not restrained.

### CHOOSING AN INFANT RESTRAINT.

- Will the restraint fit in your car without pushing against the front seat?
- Will passengers in the front seat be comfortable with the restraint in place?
- Is there enough head room in the car to allow you to lift the baby in and out of the restraint easily or the restraint in and out of the car?
- Is the seat belt in your car long

### Parenting Hints

## New Born's Needs

- wrap her warmly
- hold her closely
- handle her slowly
- feed her when she is hungry
- talk to her when she looks at you,
- wash her when she is dirty&
- give her peaceful time to come to terms with life.

Your baby will soon come to realise that she will get what she needs when she needs it and know the world is a good place to be alive in.

enough to attach the restraint in the position you want to use?

- You will be using the restraint frequently and it must be used correctly. Check how many steps are needed to get it fitted and adjusted properly every time you use it.

### HOW TO USE AN INFANT RESTRAINT.

An infant restraint must be correctly installed in your vehicle and adjusted properly to fit your child. If it's not, the restraint may not protect your child at all in a crash. All infant restraints are rearward facing so the baby faces the rear of the vehicle. Rearward facing is the safest way for a baby to travel in a motor vehicle. Infant restraints use the car seatbelt and have a tether strap which attaches to the car by an anchor bolt or anchor fitting.

- Every time you use an infant restraint you must check that the body band or harness is adjusted properly to fit the baby as snugly as possible.
- If you use a bunny rug put it on the baby after you have fastened the restraint.
- You will need to adjust the body band or harness as the baby grows, the manufacturer's instructions tell you how.
- The shoulder straps should come from slots level with or just above the baby's shoulders. They should not be below the baby's shoulders.

## Bridge Over Troubled Waters

Feelings of weariness, bewilderment and even downright unhappiness are not uncommon in new parents. One of the surest ways of coping with boredom and depression is to acknowledge their existence. It takes time to learn to become a parent, but a supporting kinship exists among parents. Make friends through local organisations, playgroups and classes of people in the same situation as yourselves, a whole new world of knowledge and interest will be opened up to you.