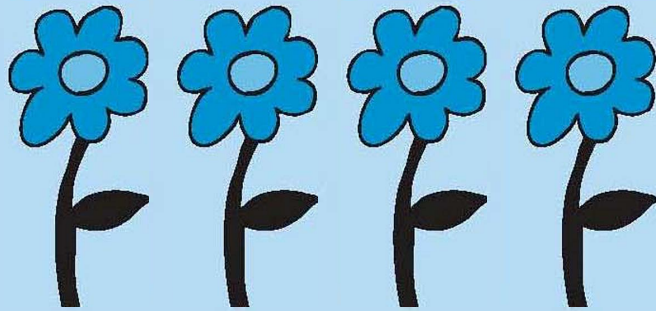


It is OK to ask for help

Looking after a baby is demanding and exhausting. We all need help from others.

- ♥ Have a list of people you can call on. Keep their telephone numbers handy.
- ♥ Plan a regular time when you can leave your baby with someone you trust.
- ♥ Don't keep your distress a secret. Share your concerns with a partner, relative, friend, or neighbour.
- ♥ Join a parents' group. Watching other babies and listening to their parents' concerns can be interesting and reassuring.



For more parenting information and support:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Parentline ACT | (02) 6287 3833 |
| Parentline NSW | 1300 130 052 |
| Parentline NT | 1300 301 300 |
| Parentline QLD | 1300 301 300 |
| Parent Helpline SA | 1300 364 100 |
| Parenting Line TAS | 1300 808 179 |
| Parentline VIC | 13 22 89 |
| Parenting Line WA | (08) 9368 9368 (metro) 1800 111 546 (regional) |

Parenting lines provide a telephone service providing information and good ideas about caring for babies and children.

Content consultants:

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Julie Maddox (Clinical Nurse Consultant)

NAPCAN is an independent charity and the leading advocacy body for prevention of child abuse and neglect.

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PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

NAP016 Revised 09/09

LISTENING TO BABIES

Listening to BABIES



Why listening to babies is so important

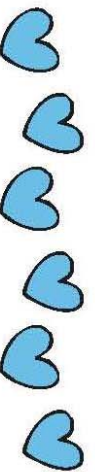
From birth, babies express themselves in many ways. By smiling, making all kinds of noises and movements they get our attention and let us know how important they are. While gurgling or crying, they are exercising their vocal chords. One day those noises will develop into real words. Until then, babies need us to listen and respond to them.

Babies are born sociable! As well as food and clothing, they need to communicate with their carers. Communication takes two – with lots of listening and taking turns. We also use facial expressions and hand gestures to show each other we are interested. Babies start learning this from us from the moment of their birth.

Spend time watching and smiling at your baby. Even within the first few weeks, you can get to know each other. As well as being fun, this is helping your baby's brain develop for life.

Turn taking

Turn taking is how babies start to get the hang of talking. Listen to the noises your baby makes and copy them. Imagine that these noises are starting a conversation, and 'reply' by saying comforting, loving, or funny things to them. Keep pausing, watching, and smiling to encourage them to respond. This will help develop eye contact, listening skills, and build your baby's trust and attachment to you.



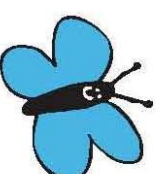
Growing babies

By 6 months, babies want to be part of the action. Whether you are washing up, fixing the car, or gardening, put your baby somewhere close but safe where they can see you. Shopping is great for babies – so much to see and lots of variety. Tell them what you are doing and watch their response.

Dads and baby talk

Dads need to bond with babies too. This happens through listening and talking to your baby. Don't be put off if they lose interest. Babies' attention only lasts for 1 to 3 minutes, then you need to change the activity.

Crying



Crying is one way your baby communicates. A crying baby is saying, "I need help!" They might be tired, hungry, or scared. Even the noise of their own crying can upset babies.

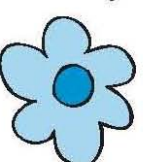
A new baby's cry can be distressing. It can leave parents feeling very inadequate. As you get to know each other better, you'll be able to work out how to help. Just remember:

- Crying is perfectly normal.
- Babies cry up to 2 or 3 hours a day.
- Crying is nature's way of making sure a baby's needs are met.
- Crying is meant to be an unpleasant sound so parents can respond to the baby's needs.

If your baby keeps crying

If your baby has been fed, changed, and cuddled but still won't settle, here are some other things you can do:

- Try a dummy – just sucking is soothing.
- Gently massage your baby or rock him in the pram while talking calmly or singing to him.
- Wrap your baby in a soft sheet and snuggle him close so he can feel your heartbeat.
Or use a sling and spare your back!
- Go for a walk in the fresh air. The change of scene and rhythm of the stroller can be calming for both of you!
- If the crying becomes too distressing for you, put your baby in a safe place and ring a supportive family member or friend, or a 24 hour parent helpline.
- If the crying continues it's time to get advice from your local Child and Family Health nurse or GP.



Caring for yourself

If you are tense and stressed, your baby is likely to pick up on this and cry more. Make a plan with your partner for how to take time out.

- Say "no" to things that aren't really important.
- Rest when your baby is napping.
- You and your baby have similar needs. Make sure you get regular food and enough rest too.
- Share the caring so you and your partner each get time to relax or do something different.