

Is it true that sugar can make my child hyperactive?

Answer



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The idea that sugar causes healthy children to behave differently is controversial. Most research shows that sugar does not make children overactive or hyperactive, even children who are sensitive to sugar.

However, there's a common perception that a connection exists between behaviour and types of [food and drink](#). This means it's easy to draw conclusions about a supposed link between sugar and hyperactivity.

Many parents who see their children running around non-stop at a [party](#) think that sugar is the culprit. Birthday parties and [festivals](#) are usually occasions for children to gorge on cake, sweets and [mithais](#), having much more than they're used to in one go.

The truth is that toddlers and preschoolers are [bundles of energy](#), with a short attention span. In other words, they are easily excited. A party atmosphere, with more noise and activity than they're used to, is probably enough to encourage any small child to behave [boisterously](#).

When you notice a change in your child's behaviour, it's natural to think about what he's eaten. It may be your first thought, rather than examining the circumstances that could be affecting your child.

Having said this, some researchers don't rule out the possibility that lots of sugar may slightly affect some children. Refined or processed sugar enters the bloodstream quickly. This can cause a surge in blood sugar (glucose), which is then followed by a slump and tiredness.

Day to day, it does make sense to keep down the sugar levels in [your child's diet](#). Sugary treats and snacks such as cakes, sweets, lollipops, *mithai* and biscuits are always popular with children, but provide few vitamins, minerals or other nutrients. Sugary foods and [drinks](#) are also harmful to your [child's teeth](#).

Having lots of energy is normal for small children. So try not to worry if your child is bouncing off the walls sometimes. Perhaps he just needs a [walk and some fresh air to burn off energy](#). If you are really concerned about your child's behaviour, talk to your [child's doctor](#).

Parents' tips: bottle feeding equipment

Parents share about the formula-feeding equipment they got on with best.



"A cold water [steriliser](#) is just as good as a steam steriliser and is usually lower in price. Plus you don't have to buy de-scaler and the bottle of [sterilising](#) fluid lasts for months!"

Sarah

"I have a set of small containers that stack up together in the shape of a cylinder. Each container stores pre-measured [formula milk](#). When we're out and about I can just add the formula to a bottle of water and give it a good shake. Try to buy one in which the spout of the container pours easily into the bottle to avoid spillage."

Lakshmi

"My top buy was a microwave [steriliser](#) bag. It's simple and quick to use, taking just five minutes and there's no need for [sterilising](#) tablets. Also it's good if you're going away, provided there's a microwave at your destination, because it's light and compact, so you can fill it with empty [bottles](#) for the journey to make the most of space. They are mostly available online."

Charlotte

"If you are using ready-made formula then you can buy a bottle warmer that plugs into the cigarette lighter in your car. It heats the milk up in fifteen minutes and we found it invaluable on [long car journeys](#)."

Abisola

"I highly recommend steam [sterilisers](#). I've used one with my both my kids and it worked out perfectly. It's best to get one that holds up to six [bottles](#). It's much more time efficient to sterilise a few at a time. And being able to store all of them in a clean and sterile place is an added bonus!"

Julie

"If you don't want to spend much money on a [steriliser](#) and find boiling bottles too much work, consider just using a vegetable steamer. It did the job for me!"

Anita

"Try [steriliser](#) bottles which [sterilise](#) themselves in the microwave. They are so quick that I only needed two of them. They are also convenient to take along when I go to see my mum, in-laws or friends. That's because I only need to pack one bottle and some formula milk. You can find them online."

Ramya

"I used anti-[colic](#), BPA-free bottles and found them to be really good and more importantly safe. The nipples don't collapse like on some other makes and my son enjoyed his feed much more as a result."

Jodi

"I can thoroughly recommend [steriliser](#) bottles. You do not need any extra equipment because they self-[sterilise](#) in the microwave."

Vicky

"When you buy a steriliser, make sure the trays can fit any type of bottle, and the necks on the trays are not

restricted to a specific bottle size. "

Gurpreet

"For me it made sense to buy a large steriliser that fits six to eight bottles. I love that I can take out the bottle tray and fit my breast pump and breastmilk containers in the steriliser for a good clean. Since my little one has started weaning, I also use it to sterilise her pacifiers, plates, spoons, and other feeding equipment."

Theny

"We have a lot of power cuts and voltage problems. My friend suggested we use a stabiliser for our electric steam steriliser. It's been two years and it works just as well as when we first bought it! "

Sonia

"I don't use bottle warmers and think they are not worth the expense. Once I stopped breastfeeding, I needed a warmer on the go but it was difficult to find a socket everywhere, to plug it in. A thermos with hot water serves the same purpose!"

Remya

Toxic chemicals in baby equipment



In this article

- [Who is raising concerns?](#)
- [How does all this affect me and my baby?](#)
- [Which chemicals are we talking about?](#)
- [How can I tell if baby products are free from these chemicals?](#)
- [Should I worry about BPA in baby bottles?](#)
- [What can I do to protect my child?](#)

Over the years there have been several media scares about potentially harmful chemicals in [your baby's bottles](#), [toys](#), and nursery equipment.

But how much of a concern is this really? Read on to know the facts and the [precautions](#) to be taken.

Who is raising concerns?

Many environmentalists and campaigners have been worried about the presence of certain chemicals in our environment. No one is sure what the long-term effects of these man-made chemicals will be for us, but there is already evidence that they are harming wildlife.

How does all this affect me and my baby?

Some of these chemicals are used in the manufacture of baby equipment, such as plastic (polycarbonate) [feeding bottles](#), [cot mattresses](#), and plastic [toys](#). Some experts are concerned that they can be ingested by children and build up to harmful levels in their bodies.

Which chemicals are we talking about?

There are three groups of chemicals used in the manufacture of [household](#) goods that environmentalists and reformers have expressed concerns about:

Organotin compounds and phthalates (plasticisers).

These chemicals are used as stabilisers in PVC. They can be found in vinyl flooring and hard PVC [toys](#). These have been found to cause hormonal changes in animals.

Bisphenol A (BPA).

This chemical is used in plastic [cups](#) and [toys](#), and to line food tins and the metal lids of jars. BPA helps to make plastic clear and shatterproof.

Some studies have suggested that these chemicals disrupt the body's hormone system and are linked to chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. This has led to BPA being banned from [baby feeding bottles](#) in some countries.

Brominated flame retardants.

These chemicals are used to treat the following to make them less flammable:

- [clothing](#)
- furnishings
- [prams](#)
- [buggies](#)
- mattresses, including [cot](#) mattresses

Research has shown they can leach out and be absorbed into the body. They have also been found in blood and [breastmilk](#).

They can act as hormone disrupters. Animal tests have linked them to learning disabilities, cancer, [miscarriage](#), and changes in the immune system.

How can I tell if baby products are free from these chemicals?

Most branded children's products that are free of these chemicals are often clearly labelled as being so. You might have seen labels mentioning 'BPA free', for example. However, manufacturers are not obliged to

state on the packaging which chemicals are present in their products.

However, it's important to keep in mind that the Indian market is not standardised and some manufacturers may not be following the guidelines and rules. Also, many of local and imported products flooding the market may not have the required labels and specifications. This makes it really difficult for the buyer.

As a parent, the only way to be sure is to buy products from reputed and recognised brands that value their reputation and customer feedback. Also make sure to read the outer pack and label clearly. Check with the shop owner or retailer about guarantees and recall policies.

Should I worry about BPA in baby bottles?

The European Union (EU) says there's enough evidence that [baby bottles](#) may not be safe if they are made with bisphenol A (BPA). In 2011, the EU banned BPA in baby feeding bottles in Europe. However in some markets you may still find bottles with BPA.

If you have fed your baby using a bottle made using BPA in the past, be assured your baby should be fine. Some experts estimate that a [bottle-fed baby](#) would need to drink more than four times the usual number of [bottles](#) each day before he would absorb a harmful amount of BPA.

BPA has been used in products for more than 50 years. It's in so many household and grocery items, it's actually quite hard to avoid. Your baby can also absorb BPA from:

- drinking and trainer cups
- tins and jars of food
- cleansing products
- [sucking](#) plastic toys

What can I do to protect my child?

Unfortunately, the onus is very much on consumers to find out if potentially toxic chemicals are used in baby products. If you feel you would like to avoid these chemicals:

- Only buy products from reputed brands that have proper labels that mention the chemicals or ingredients used or not used.
- Don't buy PVC toys or, if you do, check the packaging first to see if they contain organotin compounds.
- When buying a plastic bottle, look at the number on the bottom (you'll find it inside a triangle). Those labelled "6" may contain styrene, so you may wish to avoid these.
- When [buying a cot mattress](#), check the label to see if it has been treated with a flame retardant.
- Don't pass mattresses on to siblings - [buy a new one](#) for each child.

- Check the manufacturer's website or call their customer service to ask if their products contain any of the chemicals listed above.
- Regularly replace plastic cups and food containers.
- Don't microwave food or drink in plastic containers. Polycarbonate plastics are strong, but over time they may break down if regularly exposed to high temperatures.

How to feed a fussy toddler

Approved by the [BabyCenter India Medical Advisory Board](#)

In this article

- [What is the best way to cope with my fussy eater?](#)
- [How do I know when my toddler is full?](#)
- [I'm desperate for my toddler to eat, but is there anything I shouldn't do?](#)
- [What should I do if my child doesn't eat enough?](#)
- [Take our poll](#)

When [mealtimes](#) are more about [tantrums](#), screaming and bribery than healthy eating, you may feel at the end of your tether.

Rest assured that you're not the only parent with a [fussy eater](#). Try not to get anxious about [mealtimes](#). This might make the problem worse, particularly if you are expecting your toddler to eat more than he needs.

If allowed to do so, your toddler will take in just enough calories for his own needs. So you should always respect your toddler's decision that he has had enough to eat. If you have [family members](#) or a [live-in maid](#) taking care of him during the day when you are [away at work](#), reassure them that he won't stay hungry if he doesn't eat all that is served and that it's okay if he does not "clean up his plate".

In short, you decide what goes onto your toddler's plate but let him choose how much of that he eats.

[Your toddler's diet](#) should be varied and contain foods from the different [food groups](#). This way he will get exposed to different tastes and multiple sources of each nutrient that he needs to grow well.

You'll probably experience bad days, when your toddler refuses foods he usually likes. Try not to fret too much about what your toddler eats at a single meal, or in a single day. Instead, think about what your toddler [eats over a week](#).

What is the best way to cope with my fussy eater?

Most toddlers go through a phase of eating a very narrow range of foods. This is a normal part of their [development](#).

It's partly because of something called food neophobia, which many toddlers experience. This is a fear of new foods, which, naturally, leads to a reluctance to try them. Most children will experience neophobia around the age of two. Rest assured that it's a phase that will pass.

Your toddler needs time to learn that unfamiliar foods are safe and enjoyable to eat. He will gain confidence by watching you and others eating the foods he is unsure about.

It'll also help if you make sure your toddler gets [plenty of exercise](#). That will help him to have an appetite for his meals.

Try these tips for making mealtimes run smoothly:

[Eat as a family when you can](#)

Eat with your toddler as often as possible. If you and your husband [both work full-time](#), it might be hard to arrange shared mealtimes, but try to make time if and when you can.

At shared mealtimes, eat the same foods as your toddler. Toddlers learn to eat new foods by watching and copying their parents and other children eating them.

Stay positive

Make positive comments about the food you are eating. You're a role model for your toddler. If you make positive comments about foods, such as "These are yummy!", your toddler may be more willing to try them.

Praise your toddler when he eats well, because toddlers respond positively to [praise](#).

If you only give him attention when he is not eating, he may start to refuse food just to get some attention from you. Toddlers like attention, even if it is negative. If he doesn't eat well, take the uneaten food away without commenting. Accept that he has had enough.

Make mealtimes relaxed and enjoyable

Arrange for your toddler to eat with other children when possible. Perhaps there are other young children in the family or your toddler has a friend in the neighbourhood or playschool who enjoys his food. Invite the friend over for a meal or a snack. Your toddler may eat better when he is with his own age group.

Eat away from distractions such as the [TV](#), [pets](#), games and [toys](#). Distractions will make it more difficult for your toddler to concentrate on eating. Also, distracting your toddler by carrying him around the house or to the window or door while feeding him, may make mealtimes seem like a different kind of play time. Your

toddler needs to learn that meal times are for eating and playing can be done before or after.

Offer [finger foods](#) as often as possible. Allow your toddler to touch his food, play with it if he wants to, and [make a mess](#) at mealtimes. Toddlers enjoy having the control of feeding themselves with finger foods.

If you are [eating out](#), your toddler may not be prepared to try any of the food on offer, as it may all be unfamiliar to him. Take something that he will eat with you to tide him over until his next meal or snack. Packing a small *chapatti* with cheese spread, a banana or a tomato sandwich in a favourite lunchbox might make it easier for him to eat in unfamiliar surroundings.

Make mealtimes consistent

[Work out a daily routine](#) of three meals and one or two [snacks](#) that fits around your toddler's [daytime sleep pattern](#). Toddlers thrive on routine and knowing what to expect.

Your toddler won't eat well if he's [tired](#) so offer the meal when he's hungry but not yet ready for his nap.

Limit mealtimes to 30 minutes and accept that after this, your toddler is unlikely to eat much more. Don't sit at the table trying to persuade your toddler to eat more. Wait for the next snack or meal and offer some nutritious foods then. Most toddlers eat whatever they are going to eat within the first 30 minutes.

Ask everyone in the [family](#), and anyone else who feeds your toddler, such as your [maid](#), to follow your approach and routine.

Keep your toddler interested

At lunch and dinner offer your toddler [savoury food](#). You could offer a [wholesome dessert](#) too after the savoury course. A good way of getting your child to like fruits and to eat healthily is to offer fruit as a desert after each meal. Your child will learn from you so if you eat well, he will probably grow up to do so too.

Give small portions. A good rule of thumb is to give your child a portion the size of his fist. Toddlers can be overwhelmed by big platefuls and lose their appetite. If your toddler finishes his small portion, praise him and offer him more.

Occasionally, you can make his food look more interesting by cutting or plating it in such a way as to make a picture. For example, a potato cutlet (*aloo tikki*) can form an island and green broccoli (*hara gobhi*) trees. Or you can use a *chapati* as a base for a face and use cabbage (*patta gobhi*) as hair, and peas (*mattar*) for the eyes, nose and mouth.

For a change, you could have a picnic outside when the weather's nice. It will be fun for you both, and less messy. If you've taken your toddler to a cafe or restaurant, take a [nutritious snack](#) in case he doesn't want to eat anything on offer.

Involve your toddler

Involve older toddlers in [food shopping](#). They can help you to find things in the shop or supermarket. Your toddler can also help you to set the table. This will encourage a [positive attitude](#) to food and mealtimes.

Your toddler could also help with simple cooking and food preparation. He might enjoy shelling peas (*matar*) or washing vegetables in the kitchen sink. Give him a ball of *chapati* dough to roll and flatten into baby *rotis*. Let your toddler handle and touch new foods without being under pressure to eat them. He may then be more likely to try the food when it ends up on his plate.

How do I know when my toddler is full?

Your toddler is telling you he has had enough to eat of a particular food, course or meal, if he is:

- keeping his mouth shut when offered food
- saying "no"
- turning his head away from the food being offered
- pushing away a spoon, bowl or plate containing food
- holding food in his mouth and refusing to swallow it
- spitting food out repeatedly
- leaning out of his highchair or trying to climb out
- crying, shouting or screaming
- gagging or retching

I'm desperate for my toddler to eat, but is there anything I shouldn't do?

It's easy to fall into traps that can rack up the tension at mealtimes. So here are the pitfalls to watch out for:

Don't coax or plead with your toddler to eat more

A little gentle encouragement is OK, but never insist that he finishes everything on his plate. Similarly, once your toddler has had enough to eat, don't start to [spoon feed him](#), or force spoonfuls into his mouth. This can make him anxious and frightened about food. It can also encourage him to [eat more than he needs](#).

Don't take away a refused meal and offer a different one in its place

Your toddler will soon take advantage if you do! In the long run, it is always better to offer family meals and accept that your toddler will prefer some foods to others. Always try to include in each meal, one food that you know he will eat.

Don't offer the sweet course as a reward for eating the first course

This is easier said than done. However, by doing this, you will make the sweet course seem more desirable than the savoury one.

Don't offer large drinks before a meal

Large drinks of milk or juice an hour before the meal will reduce your toddler's appetite. If he is thirsty, give him a [drink of water](#) instead.

Keep [fruit juices](#) to mealtimes only as they are linked with [tooth decay](#). Make sure they're well diluted (one part juice to 10 parts water). Always make sure the water is [clean and safe](#) to drink.

Fruit squashes, even the low-sugar variety, can encourage a [sweet tooth](#). Also, fizzy drinks have no nutritional value and most brands have high amounts of sugar, artificial colouring and flavours. Some drinks may also have caffeine and artificial sweeteners. You'll keep your toddler healthier and save yourself trouble if you keep these off your shopping list. Find out more about [best and worst drinks for thirsty children](#).

Your toddler needs between 350ml and 400ml of [milk](#) a day. It's not a good idea to give more than the recommended quantity, as it may cut his [appetite for solid foods](#) that have other essential nutrients like iron and vitamins.

Try to phase out bottles so that all your toddler's drinks, including milk, are given in [cups or glasses](#).

Don't offer snacks just before or just after a meal

Keep at least three hours between meals and snacks. If your toddler hasn't eaten well at his main meal, don't offer him a snack straight afterwards. It's tempting to give your toddler a snack, just to make sure he has actually eaten something. However, it is best to stick to a set meal pattern. Wait until the next snack or meal before offering food again.

Don't assume that because your toddler has refused a food he will never eat it again

Tastes change with time. Some toddlers need to be offered a new food up to 20 before they like it. Also, try changing the way you present the food. For example, if he doesn't take to *paneer* cubes, try grating them into stuffed *paranthas*. He might not like *dal*, so try stuffed *dal paranthas* instead. Or he might enjoy *chana masala* gravy with rice instead of boiled chickpeas (*kabuli chana*) *chaat*.

Don't feel guilty if one meal turns into a disaster

Put it behind you and approach the next meal positively. You and your toddler are both on a learning curve. Your toddler is learning to try new flavours and textures, and you are learning to cope with tricky mealtimes. Don't punish your child for refusing to eat as it may make mealtimes even more stressful for him.

What should I do if my child doesn't eat enough?

If you are really concerned about your toddler's eating habits, make a list of all the food and drink he has over a week. Check that your toddler has had [foods from the main groups](#). These are starchy foods, protein, dairy produce and [fruit](#) and [vegetables](#).

Discuss your child's eating habits and diet with his doctor. She can check your toddler's [weight and height](#), and can usually reassure you that there is no problem.

Your toddler's nutrition

Approved by the [BabyCenter India Medical Advisory Board](#)

In this article

- [What should my toddler eat?](#)
- [How can I be sure my child gets all the nutrients she needs?](#)
- [Are any particular foods essential?](#)
- [Is my toddler's diet good enough?](#)

What should my toddler eat?

Once your child is comfortable eating solids, it is time to transition from baby food to most of what your [family eats](#).

After the age of one, your toddler is probably done with [breastfeeding](#) and [formula](#) or the [amount of milk](#) she drinks is a lot less. It then becomes important that she has a good mixed diet, providing her with all the nutrition she needs.

Your child's diet should include the [right mix of foods](#) because each food item has different nutrients. She also needs some nutrients more than others.

There are many ways of classifying food but to keep things simple, you can divide your child's food into the following groups that should be given in the following proportions:

| Food group | Examples | Quantities |
|--|--|---|
| Cereal and starchy foods | Potatoes (<i>aloo</i>), rice, wheat, pasta, noodles | Give food from this group at each meal and at some snacks . |
| Fruit and vegetables | Apple (<i>seb</i>), banana (<i>kela</i>), beans (<i>been</i>), spinach (<i>paalak</i>) | Give foods from this group five times a day, so with each meal and two snacks |
| Proteins | Meat, chicken, fish, seafood, lentil (<i>dal</i>), seeds, nuts | Give two to three portions of protein-rich food a day. |
| Dairy products | Milk, cheese, | Give two to three portions of dairy products a day. |
| Fats and sugar | Oils, butter, <i>ghee</i> , sweets | Use the required amount of oils in cooking |

Food group

Examples

Quantities

but avoid fried foods. Keep sweets to a minimum.

How can I be sure my child gets all the nutrients she needs?

A balanced diet means that your child gets a wide variety of foods in different combinations every day. If your child eats a varied diet, you need not worry about what nutrients are in each food because over a few days, she will get a bit of all that she needs. This is a major advantage because working these things out is complicated!

To ensure that your toddler is [getting enough iron](#) for example, try giving a variety of iron-rich foods. So, if you give her spinach (*paalak*) for lunch and potato with fenugreek leaves (*aloo methi*) for dinner, you are giving her body [different sources of iron](#) and increasing the chances that she will get enough.

Other good sources of iron include broccoli (*hari phool gobhi*), lean red meat, and dried fruits. This method is especially good for fussy eaters because if she refuses one dish, she will still get the required nutrients from another dish.

Similarly, your vegetarian child can get protein from a variety of sources. Legumes or beans like *rajma*, *chana*, *lobia*, *kala chana* and lentils like *urad dal*, *tur dal*, *moong dal* and *chana dal* are all protein-rich foods.

So are nuts like almonds (*badaam*) and walnuts (*akhrot*), and seeds such as sesame (*til*), garden cress (*sabja*), and flax seeds (*alsi or agasi*).

Soya bean products like soya nuggets, tofu, soya milk and soya bean flour contain all the essential amino acids and come closest to meat products in terms of the amount of protein they provide.

Calcium is found in [milk](#), yoghurt, *paneer*, spinach (*paalak*), broccoli (*hari phool gobhi*) and nuts and these foods are also rich in [iron](#) and protein.

Are any particular foods essential?

Any nutrient is found in a variety of foods so no single food is absolutely necessary. But make sure that your child is having foods from every food group in the proportions mentioned above.

Bear in mind that it's important to keep your toddler well [hydrated](#) and to ensure she gets the fluids she needs.

Water plays a vital role in how well the body functions and also helps prevent [constipation](#). Find out [how much water](#) your toddler needs to drink every day.

Is my toddler's diet good enough?

Toddlers can be [fussy eaters](#) and it can be tricky to get them to eat all the vegetables and fruits that you would like them to. But if your child likes fruit more than vegetables, make sure she has some with each meal. Or if she prefers vegetables to fruit, give her [veggies more often](#) including for a snack between meals.

If your child has [allergies](#) or follows a strict [vegetarian](#) or [vegan diet](#) and you are worried about whether she is getting the nutrients she needs, speak to her doctor. He might recommend [vitamin supplements](#) if he feels she does not get enough nutrients from her diet.

If your child doesn't have any particular dietary restrictions, try to encourage her to have a varied and healthy diet. The food habits your child develops now will follow her to adulthood.

So delay as long as possible or keep to a minimum foods that are [high in sugar](#) or salt and low in nutrients, such as fries, [deep-fried snacks](#), fizzy drinks or deep-fried sweets or [mithais](#).

Vitamin supplements can help when necessary but should not be used to compensate for a poor diet because of preferences. It is easier for the body to get the nutrients it needs from food rather than supplements.

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BABY

You've survived 9 months of pregnancy. You've made it through the excitement of labor and delivery, and now you're ready to head home and begin life with your baby. Once home, though, you frantically realize you have no idea what you're doing!

These tips can help even the most nervous first-time parents feel confident about caring for a newborn in no time.

Getting Help After the Birth

Consider getting help during this time, which can be very hectic and overwhelming. While in the hospital, talk to the experts around you. Many hospitals have feeding specialists or lactation consultants who can help you get started [nursing or bottle-feeding](#). In addition, nurses are a great resource to show you how to hold, burp, change, and care for your baby.

For in-home help, you might want to hire a baby nurse or a responsible neighborhood teenager to help you for a short time after the birth. Your doctor or the hospital can be good resources for finding

information about in-home help, and might even be able to make a referral to home health agencies.

In addition, relatives and friends often want to help. Even if you disagree on certain things, don't dismiss their experience. But if you don't feel up to having guests or you have other concerns, don't feel guilty about placing restrictions on visitors.

Handling a Newborn

If you haven't spent a lot of time around newborns, their fragility may be intimidating. Here are a few basics to remember:

- **Wash your hands (or use a hand sanitizer) before handling your baby.** Newborns don't have a strong immune system yet, so they are susceptible to infection. Make sure that everyone who handles your baby has clean hands.
- **Be careful to support your baby's head and neck.** Cradle the head when carrying your baby and support the head when carrying the baby upright or when you lay your baby down.
- **Be careful not to shake your newborn, whether in play or in frustration.** [Shaking](#) that is vigorous can cause bleeding in the brain and even death. If you need to wake your infant, don't do it by shaking — instead, tickle your baby's feet or blow gently on a cheek.
- **Make sure your baby is securely fastened into the [carrier, stroller, or car seat](#).** Limit any activity that could be too rough or bouncy.
- **Remember that your newborn is not ready for rough play,** such as being jiggled on the knee or thrown in the air.

Bonding and Soothing Techniques

Bonding, probably one of the most pleasurable aspects of infant care, occurs during the sensitive time in the first hours and days after birth when parents make a deep connection with their infant. Physical closeness can promote an emotional connection.

For infants, the attachment contributes to their emotional growth, which also affects their development in other areas, such as physical growth. Another way to think of bonding is "falling in love" with your baby. Children thrive from having a parent or other adult in their life who loves them unconditionally.

Begin bonding by cradling your baby and gently stroking him or her in different patterns. Both you and your partner can also take the opportunity to be "skin-to-skin," holding your newborn against your own skin while feeding or cradling.

Babies, especially **premature babies** and those with **medical problems**, may respond to **infant massage**. Certain types of massage may enhance bonding and help with infant growth and development. Many books and videos cover infant massage — ask your doctor for recommendations. Be careful, however — babies are not as strong as adults, so massage your baby gently.

Babies usually love vocal sounds, such as talking, babbling, singing, and cooing. Your baby will probably also love listening to music. Baby rattles and musical mobiles are other good ways to stimulate your infant's hearing. If your little one is being fussy, try singing, reciting poetry and nursery rhymes, or reading aloud as you sway or rock your baby gently in a chair.

Some babies can be unusually sensitive to touch, light, or sound, and might startle and cry easily, sleep less than expected, or turn their faces away when someone speaks or sings to them. If that's the case with your baby, keep noise and light levels low to moderate.

Swaddling, which works well for some babies during their first few weeks, is another soothing

technique first-time parents should learn. Proper swaddling keeps a baby's arms close to the body while allowing for some movement of the legs. Not only does swaddling keep a baby warm, but it seems to give most newborns a sense of security and comfort. Swaddling also may help limit the startle reflex, which can wake a baby.

Here's how to swaddle a baby:

- Spread out the receiving blanket, with one corner folded overslightly.
- Lay the baby face-up on the blanket with his or her head above the folded corner.
- Wrap the left corner over the body and tuck it beneath the back of the baby, going under the right arm.
- Bring the bottom corner up over the baby's feet and pull it toward the head, folding the fabric down if it gets close to the face. Be sure not to wrap too tightly around the hips. Hips and knees should be slightly bent and turned out. Wrapping your baby too tightly may increase the chance of [hip dysplasia](#).
- Wrap the right corner around the baby, and tuck it under the baby's back on the left side, leaving only the neck and head exposed. To make sure your baby is not wrapped too tight, make sure you can slip a hand between the blanket and you baby's chest, which will allow comfortable breathing. Make sure, however, that the blanket is not so loose that it could become undone.
- Babies should not be swaddled after they're 2 months old. At this age, some babies can roll over while swaddled, which increases their risk of [sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\)](#).

Diapering Dos and Don'ts

You'll probably decide before you bring your baby home whether you'll use cloth or disposable diapers. Whichever you use, your little one will dirty diapers about 10 times a day, or about 70 times a week.

Before [diapering your baby](#), make sure you have all supplies within reach so you won't have to leave your infant unattended on the changing table. You'll need:

- a clean diaper
- fasteners (if cloth prefold diapers are used)
- diaper ointment if the baby has a rash
- a container of warm water
- clean washcloth, diaper wipes, or cotton balls

After each bowel movement or if the diaper is wet, lay your baby on his or her back and remove the dirty diaper. Use the water, cotton balls, and washcloth or the wipes to gently wipe your baby's genital area clean. When removing a boy's diaper, do so carefully because exposure to the air may make him urinate. When wiping a girl, wipe her bottom from front to back to avoid a [urinary tract infection](#). To prevent or heal a rash, apply ointment. Always remember to wash your hands thoroughly after changing a diaper.

[Diaper rash](#) is a common concern. Typically the rash is red and bumpy and will go away in a few days with warm baths, some diaper cream, and a little time out of the diaper. Most rashes occur because the baby's skin is sensitive and becomes irritated by the wet or poopy diaper.

To prevent or heal diaper rash, try these tips:

- Change your baby's diaper frequently, and as soon as possible after bowel movements.
- After cleaning the area with mild soap and water or a wipe, apply a diaper rash or "barrier" cream. Creams with zinc oxide are preferred because they form a barrier against moisture.
- If you use cloth diapers, wash them in dye- and fragrance-free detergents.
- Let the baby go undiapered for part of the day. This gives the skin a chance to air out.

If the diaper rash continues for more than 3 days or seems to be getting worse, call your doctor — it may be caused by a fungal infection that requires a prescription.

Bathing Basics

You should give your baby a sponge bath until:

- the umbilical cord falls off and the navel heals completely (1-4 weeks)
- the circumcision heals (1-2 weeks)

A bath two or three times a week in the first year is fine. More frequent bathing may be drying to the skin.

Have these items ready before bathing your baby:

- a soft, clean washcloth
- mild, unscented baby soap and shampoo
- a soft brush to stimulate the baby's scalp
- towels or blankets
- a clean diaper
- clean clothes

Sponge baths. For a sponge bath, select a safe, flat surface (such as a changing table, floor, or counter) in a warm room. Fill a sink, if nearby, or bowl with warm (not hot!) water. Undress your baby and wrap him or her in a towel. Wipe your infant's eyes with a washcloth (or a clean cotton ball) dampened with water only, starting with one eye and wiping from the inner corner to the outer corner. Use a clean corner of the washcloth or another cotton ball to wash the other eye. Clean your baby's nose and ears with the damp washcloth. Then wet the cloth again and, using a little soap, wash his or her face gently and pat it dry.

Next, using baby shampoo, create a lather and gently wash your baby's head and rinse. Using a wet cloth and soap, gently wash the rest of the baby, paying special attention to creases under the arms, behind the ears, around the neck, and in the genital area. Once you have washed those areas, make sure they are dry and then diaper and dress your baby.

Tub baths. When your baby is ready for tub baths, the first baths should be gentle and brief. If he or she becomes upset, go back to sponge baths for a week or two, then try the bath again.

In addition to the supplies listed above, add:

- an infant tub with 2 to 3 inches of warm — not hot! — water (to test the water temperature, feel the water with the inside of your elbow or wrist). An infant tub is a plastic tub that can fit in the bathtub; it's a better size for babies and makes bathing easier to manage.

Undress your baby and then place him or her in the water immediately, in a warm room, to prevent chills. Make sure the water in the tub is no more than 2 to 3 inches deep, and that the water is no longer running in the tub. Use one of your hands to support the head and the other hand to guide the baby in feet-first. Speaking gently, slowly lower your baby up to the chest into the tub.

Use a washcloth to wash his or her face and hair. Gently massage your baby's scalp with the pads of your fingers or a soft baby hairbrush, including the area over the fontanelles (soft spots) on the top of the head. When you rinse the soap or shampoo from your baby's head, cup your hand across the forehead so the suds run toward the sides and soap doesn't get into the eyes. Gently wash the rest of your baby's body with water and a small amount of soap. Throughout the bath, regularly pour water gently over your baby's body so he or she doesn't get cold. After the bath, wrap your baby in a towel immediately, making sure to cover his or her head. Baby towels with hoods are great for keeping a freshly washed baby warm.

While bathing your infant, **never** leave the baby alone. If you need to leave the bathroom, wrap the baby in a towel and take him or her with you.

Circumcision and Umbilical Cord Care

Immediately after [circumcision](#), the tip of the penis is usually covered with gauze coated with petroleum jelly to keep the wound from sticking to the diaper. Gently wipe the tip clean with warm water after a diaper change, then apply petroleum jelly to the tip so it doesn't stick to the diaper. Redness or irritation of the penis should heal within a few days, but if the redness or swelling increases or if pus-filled blisters form, infection may be present and you should call your baby's doctor immediately.

Umbilical cord care in newborns is also important. Some doctors suggest swabbing the area with rubbing alcohol until the cord stump dries up and falls off, usually in 10 days to 3 weeks, but others recommend leaving the area alone. Talk to your child's doctor to see what he or she prefers.

An infant's navel area shouldn't be submerged in water until the cord stump falls off and the area is healed. Until it falls off, the cord stump will change color from yellow to brown or black — this is normal. Consult your doctor if the navel area becomes reddened or if a foul odor or discharge develops.

Feeding and Burping Your Baby

Whether feeding your newborn by [breast or a bottle](#), you may be stumped as to how often to do so. Generally, it's recommended that babies be fed **on demand** — whenever they seem hungry. Your baby may cue you by crying, putting fingers in his or her mouth, or making sucking noises.

A newborn baby needs to be fed every 2 to 3 hours. If you're breastfeeding, give your baby the chance to nurse about 10-15 minutes at each breast. If you're formula-feeding, your baby will most likely take about 2-3 ounces (60-90 milliliters) at each feeding.

Some newborns may need to be awakened every few hours to make sure they get enough to eat. Call your baby's doctor if you need to awaken your newborn frequently or if your baby doesn't

seem interested in eating or sucking.

If you're formula-feeding, you can easily monitor if your baby is getting enough to eat, but if you're breastfeeding, it can be a little trickier. If your baby seems satisfied, produces about six wet diapers and several stools a day, sleeps well, and is gaining weight regularly, then he or she is probably eating enough.

Another good way to tell if your baby is getting milk is to notice if your breasts feel full before feeding your baby and less full after feeding. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about your child's [growth](#) or feeding schedule.

Babies often swallow air during feedings, which can make them fussy. You can prevent this by burping your baby frequently. Try burping your baby every 2-3 ounces (60-90 milliliters) if you bottle-feed, and each time you switch breasts if you breastfeed.

If your baby tends to be gassy, has [gastroesophageal reflux](#), or seems fussy during feeding, try burping your little one every ounce during bottle-feeding or every 5 minutes during breastfeeding.

Try these burping strategies:

- Hold your baby upright with his or her head on your shoulder. Support your baby's head and back while gently patting the back with your other hand.
- Sit your baby on your lap. Support your baby's chest and head with one hand by cradling your baby's chin in the palm of your hand and resting the heel of your hand on your baby's chest (be careful to grip your baby's chin — not throat). Use the other hand to gently pat your baby's back.
- Lay your baby face-down on your lap. Support your baby's head, making sure it's higher than his or her chest, and gently pat or rub his or her back.

If your baby doesn't burp after a few minutes, change the baby's position and try burping for another few minutes before feeding again. Always burp your baby when feeding time is over, then keep him or her in an upright position for at least 10-15 minutes to avoid spitting up.

Sleeping Basics

As a new parent, you may be surprised to learn that your newborn, who seems to need you every minute of the day,

actually [sleeps](#) about 16 hours or more! Newborns typically sleep for periods of 2-4 hours. Don't expect yours to sleep through the night — the digestive system of babies is so small that they need nourishment every few hours and should be awakened if they haven't been fed for 4 hours (or more frequently if your doctor is concerned about weight gain).

When can you expect your baby to sleep through the night? Many babies sleep through the night (between 6-8 hours) at 3 months of age, but if yours doesn't, it's not a cause for concern. Like adults, babies must develop their own sleep patterns and cycles, so if your newborn is gaining weight and appears healthy, don't despair if he or she hasn't slept through the night at 3 months.

It's important to place babies on their backs to sleep to reduce the risk of SIDS. In addition, remove all fluffy bedding, quilts, sheepskins, stuffed animals, and pillows from the crib to ensure that your baby doesn't get tangled in them or suffocate. Also be sure to alternate the position of your baby's head from night to night (first right, then left, and so on) to prevent the development of a [flat spot](#) on one side of the head.

Many newborns have their days and nights "mixed up." They tend to be more awake and alert at night, and sleepier during the day. One way to help them is to keep the stimulation at night to a minimum. Keep the lights low, such as by using a nightlight. Reserve talking and playing with your baby for the daytime. When your baby wakes up during the day try to keep him or her awake a little longer by talking and playing.

Even though you may feel anxious about handling a newborn, in a few short weeks you'll develop a routine and be parenting like a pro! If you have questions or concerns, ask your doctor to recommend resources that can help you and your baby grow together.

