

## Leaflet for parents The role of the health visitor

5.1



Health visitors are qualified nurses with additional qualifications. They aim to promote physical, emotional and social wellbeing with both individuals and the population as a whole and are central to improving public health.

Health visitors have a strong emphasis on working with families before and after their babies are born and they continue to work with children in their early years. This can help to prevent difficulties or identify problems early on and provide additional support as needed.

A health visitor can be contacted through your local GP surgery, child health clinic or health centre.

“The seeds of many difficulties in adulthood are sown in early childhood”



# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

200

Health visitors work in partnership with people, with the aim of empowering individuals, families and communities to improve their own emotional, physical and social health.

Many health visitors have special interests and additional qualifications such as Healthy Heart, smoking cessation, postnatal depression, men's health, domestic violence and family planning.

Health visitors work in various ways, some examples are listed below.

## Individual and family work

Provide an individual family health plan in partnership with families

Support parents antenatally to prepare both emotionally and physically for their new baby

Work with parents to enable them to provide better health for children, increased achievement in school and to improve self-esteem in both children and parents

Support and encourage positive parenting styles

Work more intensively with families who require extra support

Provide support to mothers with emotional health difficulties, such as postnatal depression

## Group work

Offer health education groups such as 'quit smoking groups', exercise groups and parentcraft classes

Facilitate groups that encourage the relationship between baby/child and parents e.g. baby massage groups, antenatal and postnatal groups, parenting support groups and breastfeeding support

## Work with communities

Assess and address health needs of communities through profiling local information relating to health needs

Encourage contact with other support networks within the community e.g. Sure Start, Children's Centres, local voluntary and community groups

Work with community health improvement projects to help reduce health inequalities, for example 'walk to health' programme, access to healthy foods, 'walking school bus'

*NOTE: This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk).*

## Leaflet for parents Your feelings during pregnancy

The thought of becoming a parent can produce very mixed feelings. It is not uncommon to feel a whole range of emotions from joy and excitement to fear and panic. Making a decision to have a baby may be an individual choice or could involve other people.

It is not unusual to look forward to the birth of your baby whilst at the same time finding it difficult to adjust to your new role as a parent. The feeling of having another person wholly dependent on you for all their needs may be a frightening prospect. However, becoming a mother may feel a very natural experience, some women may actually feel a true sense of identity for the first time when they become a mother. These feelings may also be experienced by fathers.

Feelings can also change at different times in your during your pregnancy. You might sometimes feel close to your baby and at other times you may be preoccupied with how having a baby will affect you. These are some of the feelings that parents have expressed and as you can see they are varied.



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# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

202

It may be helpful to think about who will be able to offer you emotional support as well as the practical support you may need both now and after your baby is born. There are many people who can help you think about your feelings in becoming a parent. These might include your family and friends, your midwife or your health visitor.

5.1

How parents feel about their baby may be different for individual parents. There may be experiences that you have had that it would be helpful to talk about and this can begin while you are pregnant. Your midwife or health visitor will be available to talk about any concerns you might have.

Getting to know your baby can begin when you are pregnant. As your baby grows inside you may feel you are gradually able to get to know him or her. You will be able to recognise when your baby is very active or asleep. You may notice they have a rhythm to their waking and resting. You may begin to recognise different parts of your baby's body and how they move at different times. Your midwife or health visitor may be able to help you with this.

While you are pregnant your baby will hear your voice and babies can recognise their mother's voice and other voices that they hear frequently before and after they are born. Talking to your baby while you are pregnant is not as silly as it might at first seem.

Beginning to have a relationship with your baby is often talked about once a baby is born. However, your relationship starts sometimes from before your baby is conceived and can become stronger as it grows inside of you. As with all relationships it needs to be nurtured and the foundations for your relationship with your baby can be laid long before they are born.

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## Leaflet for parents

### **Fathers getting involved and staying involved**

Becoming a dad can feel like one of the best things to happen in your whole life. But it can also feel quite daunting and a big responsibility.

A father's role is a complicated one – your responsibilities increase, your relationship with your partner changes from being an exclusive couple to a new three-way relationship, in which you may feel temporarily excluded. As well as being a proud new father, feelings of resentment and jealousy can sometimes arise in the most unexpected ways. When you meet your new baby, you may also feel a bit vulnerable yourself and this can be both confusing and difficult to understand and manage.

This leaflet will explain exactly why you are such an important person in your child's life.

### **Tips for helping during and after the pregnancy**

During the pregnancy, your partner may be feeling tired and uncomfortable as well as excited and anxious about the forthcoming new arrival. Expectant fathers can sometimes feel a bit left out of all the attention at this time, but your role as a supportive partner is essential. It could be helpful for both of you to attend the antenatal classes so that you can plan and be as prepared as possible together.

Some women get the baby blues or even feel quite traumatised by the birth. So do some men. Seeing your partner give birth can be pretty scary in lots of ways, whether there was a need for medical intervention or not. It is quite normal to find yourself re-living the experience afterwards. If this happens you might find it helpful to talk it over with someone, just tell them the story from start to finish, but make sure you let someone know that that's what you need to do – they are not likely to ask about the birth in detail unless you tell them.

In the first few weeks, and even months, after your baby's birth, your partner's mind is likely to be especially preoccupied with the needs of your baby, sometimes to the exclusion of all other people, housework and even herself. The more involved you can be in even the most basic of ways will be greatly appreciated, including: helping with the housework, shopping, changing nappies, feeding your baby, boosting your partners self-esteem and ensuring that she has some time to herself now and again. The more involved you are the more benefit there will be not only to your relationship as a couple, but in helping you and your baby to build your own close and secure relationship.

If your partner has been breastfeeding your baby, weaning can sometimes be a complicated time – it may feel like a relief to her in that she has more time to herself, or a time of loss and grief for the special closeness that the two of them shared together in this way. Some mums can feel guilty about the decision to wean, especially if your baby is reluctant to do so. If your baby decides to begin the weaning process first, as some babies do, your partner may perceive this as a rejection, feeling that she is no longer as needed.

As well as becoming more involved at feeding times, you may need to help your partner and your baby to manage some of the more difficult feelings they might be experiencing about this change. The loss of this particular kind of closeness however, can then allow for you, and any brothers or sisters to feel more included.

As you will be aware, it is well documented that smoking is harmful for babies – you, your partner and any visitors should not smoke in the same room as your baby.

## Building a relationship

Try to build a relationship from the start with your baby, don't isolate yourself even if you feel a bit left out at first. Being an equal partner in your child's upbringing will be rewarding and beneficial to you and your family as a whole.

Mums have a head start with getting to know the baby during pregnancy. It can sometimes take time for dads to catch up to feeling as close to their baby.

## You and your partner

You can help your partner enormously, and therefore your baby, by listening to her worries and feelings and helping her think them through. There is nothing like children (and lack of sleep!) to make everything feel overwhelming and when this happens YOU become your partner's most valuable resource – being a listening ear will be invaluable to her at these times.



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Having said that, having a baby is bound to change your relationship with your partner in some way, and it will probably take time to adjust to each other in your new roles as Mum and Dad. Communication is important.

## **KEEP TALKING TO EACH OTHER!**

Also give it time. There may be times when you can only think of each other as your child's other parent. But after a while it will become easier to see each other as partners, or husband and wife, as well. It is important for your children that you look after your own relationship too, so see if you can find ways to spend one-to-one time together. Think about who you would trust to baby-sit or be creative about having a 'night out' at home!

## **Play – Valuing the big kid in you!**

Many dads are naturally good at playing with their children, so muck in and have fun. In fact research has shown that fathers who play with their children as often as they can, help their children to learn (e.g. turn-taking, problem-solving, how to build relationships, and skills that will help them at school).

When you play with your child you will help him or her to explore their own strengths. You will get to know your child and it will strengthen the bond between you.

## **Being a role-model**

Children learn from their fathers about men in general. With your guidance, and without you necessarily realising it, your child will pick up ideas about what it means to be a man, such as how a man might handle emotions, deal with relationships, manage conflict etc. and this may well be different from the way women, initially mums, tend to handle things. This is another reason why you are such an important person in your child's life. So think about setting a positive example. If you don't want your child to swear, for example, don't swear. If you don't want them to be aggressive, give them an alternative by modelling a non-aggressive behaviour yourself when you are frustrated.

Understanding and thinking about your own upbringing may help you to decide how you want to be as a parent yourself. You may want to consider how your past experience as a child affects the way you are as a parent. Think about what parts of your own experience you would like to pass on to your child? What part would you rather leave out?

# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

206

Children need boundaries (or rules) in order to feel that someone is in control and the world is therefore safe. Sometimes fathers will take a more active role in providing the discipline. Remember discipline does not have to be harsh, in fact the calmer you are the more assertive you will sound. If you feel too sorry for your child however you may be tempted to give in, and if this happens often things will be harder for you (and your child) later on. Again reflecting on your own experiences as a child may help you to find a good balance between your 'head' and your 'heart' in matters of discipline.

You are likely to feel frustrated with your baby or young child from time to time. Children can sometimes push us to the end of our tether, particularly if we are feeling tired and overwhelmed. At these times avoid screaming at them, and never shake or hit them. It might be a good idea to think ahead of positive things you can do when you feel frustrated, such as doing some exercise, offering to go to the shops (to get you out of the house!), letting your partner know you need some time out, spending time doing 'normal' stuff with a mate, counting to ten even, or simply talking about how you feel.

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## Leaflet for parents

### Primary visit

This leaflet is linked to the first contact with your health visitor and explains more about how important you are in helping your baby to develop. It also explains a bit more about how your health visitor can work with you to improve any difficulties you may come across.

At the new birth visit you will probably find that quite a lot of time is spent talking through how you and your partner felt about the whole birth experience. Becoming a parent can bring back feelings of how you were parented yourself and you might need some time to think about that. You might also be wondering how your existing children will react to their new brother or sister, or even how your relationship with your partner might change as the result of your new arrival. Your health visitor will be available if you need to talk through any of these issues. A new addition to the family can be a very tiring, frustrating, puzzling, exciting, rewarding and wonderful time!

Understanding your baby's experiences and feelings, knowing what he/she can already do can make things easier. We already know that babies are born wanting to communicate and they are instinctively drawn towards human face shapes even though their vision is not yet very clear. Because they do not have words yet they will communicate in a different way through looks, cries, yawns, smiles and body movements, so it can be difficult sometimes trying to work out what all these things mean.

We know that good experiences will help a baby's brain to develop. These good experiences can be practical ones – like regularly giving her food when she is hungry, or having her nappy changed when she is dirty, or emotional ones – like having a cuddle when perhaps she feels lonely, bored or tired. Lots of talking with her when she is calm and seems 'ready' will help with her speech and thinking skills. This is one of the first ways your baby learns to 'take turns' and it will help her to become a good communicator, as she gets older.

You might feel sometimes that your instinct is telling you what your baby needs because you feel 'in tune' with her. Other times you might not feel this at all and that both you and your baby are misreading each other's signals. This could be due to lots of different reasons, but illness or stress might be possible causes, and this could be a time when having someone to talk to, such as your health visitor, might help.

# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

5.1

At these times when you feel things are not quite right your health visitor will be interested in your feelings and thoughts, but may also encourage you to think of your baby's experience and feelings about the situation too. Lots of recent scientific research has shown us that like us even tiny babies have lots of different feelings and that they are capable of experiencing anger, fear and even feeling stressed. Unfortunately when babies live in continually stressful environments where either their physical or emotional needs are not met, this can get in the way of their learning and their development.

Health visitors often work with families to try to find the best way forward together if difficulties arise. Often past experiences can have an affect on how individuals think about a given situation. Talking these through, however unrelated they may seem at the time, can help to make things more understandable. Usually we can think more clearly then and the situation appears more manageable. We can all recognise how relieved we feel when we have sorted a problem out that has been bothering us for some time. We generally feel calmer and more relaxed emotionally. Feeling well emotionally can have a big effect on how we feel physically so it is an important part of our overall health.

Good emotional health is really important for babies and children too. Recent research has shown that children who share positive early experiences with their parents develop increased resilience for dealing with later stressful events. Part of this process is a result of the parents showing a willingness to try to see things from the baby's point of view. Another benefit is that it can also improve the child's learning potential. On a more practical level, parents may also find that this approach presents a more realistic and rewarding experience of parenthood.

We hope you have found this leaflet useful. Your health visitor's contact details are in the front of your Parent Child Health Record as well as noted below. Although you have probably already agreed an individual contact plan, please remember that most health visiting services are accessible to all family members experiencing any type of issue affecting their health, whatever their age.

Your health visitor is .....

Based at ..... Clinic

Telephone number .....

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## Leaflet for parents Your eight month old

This leaflet is intended to help you understand some of the stages of development your eight month old has and will reach over the next few months.



The first year of a baby's life is crucial. During the first eight months you will have seen the most rapid development that will ever occur in your baby's life. It has probably been a busy and fascinating time but with some anxious and tiring moments too.

Your baby will be more aware of his environment and be taking a more active part in his relationship with others. The relationship you have with your baby will be shaping his development as he learns to adapt to the world around him, from this comes a growing independence. Your baby will have been working hard to understand his environment and your relationship with him, along with needing to be understood. By being consistently available for your baby you have helped him to learn to trust you. He has also learnt to feel safe and this will help him to start to learn the meaning of different sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch.

**If you have any concerns or worries about any aspect of your baby's development your health visitor will be pleased to discuss this with you. These concerns may include sleeping, eating, speech, general behaviour or development.**

### **Essential child development: emotional and physical**

The first three years of a child's life is a crucial period of rapid brain development. The human and environmental interactions that he receives during this time are just two of the components that can affect his capacity to realise his full potential in life.

It is important to bear in mind the following points:

1. Children develop at different rates from each other, but go through the different developmental stages, usually in the same order.
2. Each child develops in his or her own unique way depending on personality, how he or she is managed and family background.
3. Children develop in their minds, bodies and feelings. A delay in one area can result in a delay in another.

## Understanding the stages of development

- This can help us to accept behaviour that is normal for each stage of a child's development.
- Children's behaviour can be seen as progression from one stage to the next, rather than as naughty or wrong.

## Eight month old babies

Emotional milestones	Physical development
<p>Show anxiety about strangers</p> <p>Become more clingy to care giver</p> <p>Aware of object permanence and may become distressed when carer leaves the room</p> <p>Likes to engage adults using speech sounds</p> <p>Enjoys taking their turn in a 'conversation'</p> <p>Likes babbling sounds to be repeated back to them</p> <p>Uses many forms of communication e.g. facial expressions, laughing, squeals, cries to make feelings known</p> <p>Able to think about what they want to do and then do it e.g. reach for a ball that has rolled away</p> <p>Awareness develops of what happens when you do something e.g. when I press this a ball appears</p> <p>Can show fear and sadness as well as pleasure, joy, anger and distress</p> <p>Starts to throw body back in protest</p>	<p>Can sit unsupported</p> <p>Reaches for toys in front and to side</p> <p>Attempts to crawl</p> <p>Picks up small object between finger and thumb</p> <p>Looks for fallen toy and toys hidden</p> <p>May still startle to sudden and loud noises and movements</p> <p>Knows and turns to own name</p> <p>Babbles repetitive sounds e.g. mama, dada, abab, when alone and to adults</p> <p>Rolls front to back and back to front</p> <p>Stands with support. Should be able to put both feet flat on floor</p> <p>May attempt to pull to stand</p> <p>Feeds self with finger foods and can chew lumpy foods</p> 

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## Fears

When your baby is about eight-nine months old, their brain development accelerates to improve their abilities to store and file memories. They start to be able to tell the difference between familiar people and strangers. During this time the attachment to their carer strengthens.

Whether you are returning to work or planning on simply leaving your baby in a crèche for an hour, it is important to consider how you both feel about being separated.

It may help to allow you and your baby to become familiar with the nursery or crèche gradually before you leave them there. This could include sitting or playing with your baby, for short periods of time, in the nursery setting. This will allow you both to build up a relationship with the nursery worker and help your baby to feel more familiar, secure and less distressed when you do eventually leave them in someone else's care.

Cuddling and comforting your baby when she is unsure of strangers will help him to feel loved, secure and to be more comfortable meeting new people as she grows up. Playing disappearing and reappearing type games, like peek-a-boo, help them to learn that you will come back after separation.

## Speech and language

Your baby will have been communicating his needs to you since he was born. You will have learnt to recognise different types of cries, gestures and limb movement. Now your baby is able to communicate his needs in many different ways such as babbling repetitive sounds. He may do this when alone but should enjoy 'talking' with other people too. He will especially enjoy you repeating his sounds back to him.

As a parent you play a large part in his speech and language development, he will learn from hearing you talk, while you play with, dress, bath or feed him.

Repeating simple phrases like 'here's your hat' and 'we are washing your face' are a good way of putting words to actions.

Playing with your child is an important part of speech and language development. He learns to take turns in speech as well as listening to what you are saying. Make comments about what he is doing, rather than ask questions, for example 'you've got the ball'. It is also important for him to lead the play and explore his environment, this allows him to be creative with how he uses his toys. Sharing books with your baby is a great way to help speech, this may just mean looking at and talking about the pictures or reading a story.

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# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

212

It is important to create an environment, which is safe for your baby to explore. Many objects that were previously untouchable are within easy reach once your baby is moving.

By eight months many babies are able to sleep through the night.

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Your health visitor is .....

Based at ..... Clinic

Telephone number .....

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## Further reading

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Miller, L. (2004) *Understanding your baby*. London: Rosendale Press.

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Murray, L. and Andrews, L. (2000) *The Social Baby*. Richmond, UK: CP Publishing.

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## Leaflet for parents Using a dummy

This leaflet aims to help you think about what a dummy might mean to you and your baby and explain why dummies might be helpful for young babies but can become increasingly problematic for parents and older babies and children.

There are many names given to dummies such as pacifiers, comforters, artificial teats and soothers. They have been in existence for hundreds of years and have been made from a variety of materials including clay, silver, pearl and coral.

The subject of dummies can provoke strong feelings for many parents and the decision whether to use a dummy or not can be difficult. For many parents it can sometimes feel like using a dummy can mean the difference between a crying baby and a contented baby. Other parents have strong feelings about not using a dummy. This may be as a result of having experienced difficulties when using a dummy with another child, seeing older children using dummies continually or wanting to soothe their babies themselves.

Dummies can be useful to pacify and comfort young babies who have few alternative ways of experiencing comfort. It is widely recognised that young babies gain greatest comfort from being held by a familiar, loving adult. However there may be times when this can feel difficult. For example, parents can feel tired, worried, and unsure how their baby is feeling or what they need. Babies can feel anxious and overwhelmed by strong feelings and in the early months of life they may have few means of calming themselves.

Dummies can play a part in helping in two ways. Firstly dummies can help soothe a baby and it can do this by the baby sucking hard and 'holding on' to the dummy. Secondly, they will focus their energy on the sucking and this allows the baby to feel like his anxiety is being 'held' by the dummy. Once the baby is calmed you may then be able to start to use other ways of comforting your baby such as cuddling, touching or talking to your baby.

The dummy may mean different things to different parents. Parents and babies will also have different views about the dummy.

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## Your baby's view of their dummy

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## Parents' view of a dummy



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If a baby has a dummy constantly available to suck then he may only be comforted when his dummy is in his mouth. This means he does not have the opportunity to learn other ways of gaining comfort, which will be more helpful as he gets older. Gradually learning what it's like to feel separate from mum and being able to comfort himself is a healthy and really important stage in a baby's development. The best way for a baby to learn how to soothe himself is to learn from his parents. The dummy can get in the way of a baby learning how to manage the times when mum is not available as it soothes him into feeling he is still connected to her. Prolonged use of the dummy can make separation from mum harder and harder to deal with.

Prolonged use of the dummy can also lead to other developmental delays in the baby's communication skills, thought processes and play, all of which develop out of a sense of being separate. A teddy bear or comfort blanket are much more helpful to a baby and young child and should take the place of a dummy as the infant matures. This is because they 'symbolise' mummy, for example, they take the place of mummy when she is not available, whereas the dummy as we described earlier in the leaflet makes the baby feel that mummy is always available.

Surprisingly, because prolonged use of a dummy can delay psychological development and this can make the baby feel more clingy, and therefore more angry and anxious. Dummies are also thought to play a part in sleep problems as babies often wake when the dummy falls out.

Keeping dummy time to a minimum means:

- The use of the dummy will be more effective – using the dummy to calm your baby so that you can then use other more long-lasting soothing methods, will help your baby to gradually learn to manage their feelings and tolerate separation.
- Less dribble – putting hands, feet, toys and other objects into the mouth for short periods will naturally stimulate the production of saliva. Having a dummy in the mouth for a long time will over stimulate the saliva duct causing excess dribble to make the skin sore and wet the clothes.
- Better muscle development for eating, swallowing and talking – dummies can affect the way the muscles develop possibly leading to delay.
- Allow the correct contact to be made between the tongue and the rest of the mouth for speech sound development.

- More opportunity to practice talking.
- Teeth growing as they should and less likelihood of developing a lisp.

## Tips for preventing dummy dependency

- Before using a dummy take some time to think about the many ways you might be able to comfort your baby.
- Use the dummy as a way of initially calming your baby so that you can then develop other ways to soothe him.
- Gradually reduce the use of the dummy as you become more confident in calming your baby preferably before six months of age.
- Once your baby is asleep take the dummy out of his mouth.
- Don't encourage the dummy to become a habit, only give it as a way of calming your baby when he is tired or upset.
- Never let your baby babble or child talk with a dummy in his mouth.
- Don't leave dummies where your child can see or reach them himself, put it away when it is not needed.

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Leaflet for parents

## Looking after your baby's teeth

Every parent wants their child to grow up with good teeth. As your baby's first teeth come through it can be an exciting and anxious time. This leaflet includes simple and helpful tips for keeping teeth healthy by building on your developing relationship with your baby.

5.1

### Brushing your baby or child's teeth

As a parent you can play an important part in helping your baby or child to enjoy the experience of brushing their teeth. Parents often say that they want their baby's experiences of having their teeth brushed to be a pleasant and enjoyable one.

Many parents ask when is the best time to start brushing their baby's teeth. Once the teeth have come through you can begin to brush their teeth. It will be a new experience for both you and your baby and taking time to learn together can create a strong basis for the future.

You may be worried about how your baby will respond to the toothbrush and how you can manage to manipulate the brush in your baby's mouth.

It can start with your baby watching you brush your teeth. One of the most successful ways that parents have found to make brushing teeth a pleasant experience is to create a simple turn taking game for your child to enjoy. This can begin by smiling at each other and showing one another your teeth and gradually move on to introducing the toothbrush.

Your baby or child will let you know she is ready to move to the next stage by her response and if she shows you she is a little worried you can retrace the steps of the game until she is feeling more confident.

Once your baby or child is ready, start to include tooth brushing in her daily routine. It may help if you sit your baby or child on your lap with a mirror in front of you above the basin. She can watch what you are doing and you can see how she feels. She will also be able to see the toothbrush and this may be less worrying for her.

Some parents find that brushing their children's teeth during bath time can be helpful as they are often preoccupied with playing and tooth brushing is then associated with a pleasurable experience.

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Sometimes encouraging a child to brush their parents' teeth in return for brushing theirs can work very well. Do not worry that the toothbrush may be uncomfortable or make them wretch if it goes too far back in the mouth. This rarely happens because the first teeth to come through are at the front of the mouth. By the time some of their back teeth are through you and your child will have gradually adapted the game to include them opening their mouth wide so you can brush the back teeth.

As your child grows older and begins to enjoy the sense of independence, they may want to brush their own teeth. Parents can be concerned that their children may not clean their teeth as thoroughly. The turn taking game can again be helpful as part of the routine, encouraging them to clean their teeth first and finishing with a final of cleaning each other's teeth.

Adults usually brush their teeth twice a day. By including children in this routine you can pass on an important and protective message for life.

## Tips

A small-headed brush with soft bristles is fine to start with.

Fluoride is added to toothpastes and some local water supplies as it helps to prevent tooth decay. If teeth are exposed to very large amounts of fluoride it may cause some markings on the teeth.

By brushing his teeth each morning and night, last thing before he goes to bed, it very quickly becomes an acceptable part a child's daily routine.

The most important thing to remember is to remove all the plaque (the coating that builds up on teeth) from all the surfaces, the front, and the back and biting surfaces of the teeth. This helps prevent both tooth decay and gum disease.

You can get more information about the type of toothpaste, how much to use and how to brush your child's teeth from NHS Choices website:

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Careofkidsteeth.aspx)

## Going to the dentist

Taking your baby or child with you when you attend dental appointments is a good introduction to the dentist, and the dental surgery will become a familiar environment. It can be helpful to explain to your child that the dentist helps the family keep their teeth healthy. Avoiding words like 'hurt'

and 'bad teeth' will prevent a situation where your child is anticipating an unpleasant experience.

As they get older, a ride on the chair sitting on your lap will often be associated with a pleasurable experience. If they refuse, it may be a sign that they are anxious and letting them know that you understand they are not ready to sit on the chair can help them cope with the feelings they might have.

Some parents may feel unable to take their child to the dentist because of their own concerns. Your child may be unsettled by your own feelings about the dentist and be unsure of how they themselves feel. It can be helpful to talk to your dentist and arrange a way of creating a calm atmosphere for your child. This may include involving a friend or relative in the visit so they can support you and your child.

If you do not have a dentist you can find out about local dentists from the NHS Choices website.

NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentist/LocationSearch/3](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Dentist/LocationSearch/3)

## Keeping teeth healthy

Healthy teeth are associated with a clean mouth and a well-balanced diet. Make sure that your child's sugar intake is restricted and that her teeth are brushed regularly to give her teeth the best possible start. Baby teeth help guide the permanent tooth into the right position so it is important that they last until they are ready to fall out. Avoiding decayed or early tooth loss can help protect your child from the difficult physical and emotional experiences that are connected with tooth decay.

Tooth decay is caused by sugar. When something that contains sugar is eaten or drunk the mouth produces acid, which slowly dissolves the outer enamel layer of the tooth. The acids are diluted by saliva in the mouth after about 20 minutes. The more often that teeth come in to contact with sugar will increase the rate of tooth decay.

Whilst it is hard to control sugar intake at meal times, food and drink that contain sugar should be limited in between these times.

As babies are introduced to foods other than milk it is useful to introduce them to sweet tastes in the form of food that will cause less tooth decay such as sweet potato, parsnip, pears, and other fruit or vegetable.

# Solihull Approach Resource: The first five years

220

Snacks and treats do not have to be in the form of sweets and biscuits, there are lots of alternatives that children love. Try breadsticks, fingers of toast or a sandwich, fruit and raw vegetables.

Baby drinks in bottles are a common cause of tooth decay in young children. To help reduce tooth decay it is helpful if you begin to introduce a baby cup from the age of about six months especially for drinks that might contain some form of sugar.

If acidic drinks (such as fruit juice, squashes or carbonated drinks) are drunk too often this can lead to tooth erosion. This is where the enamel, the outer surface of the tooth, is slowly worn away.

Having sweetened drinks in a bottle at night can result in a lot of damage to children's teeth, and cause decay to young children's teeth, often referred to as bottle or nursing decay. This is because at night our mouths do not make as much saliva and so acids are not diluted so quickly. If your child has a drink at bedtime or during the night, it is very important to use water or milk and not juice that might contain sugar.

## Tips

Most baby drinks contain sugar in one form or another, with the exception of water and milk. If you want to offer them an alternative, try diluted fruit juice 1 part to 10 or very dilute squash in a cup not a bottle.

**NOTE:** This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk).

## Leaflet for parents Your two year old

This leaflet is intended to help you understand some of the stages of development your two year old is likely to pass through over the next few months/year.



5.1

**The first three years of a child's life is a crucial period of rapid brain development. The human and environmental interaction that he receives during this time are just two of the components that can affect his capacity to realise his full potential later in life.**

The change from birth to two years is the most stunning period of change and development in a human being's lifespan. Between the ages of two and three years we can lose a sense of perspective as the child can do so much of what grown ups can do, but it is unreasonable to expect them to be 'mini adults'. However, being a two year old or the parent of one can be exciting, beautiful, frustrating, puzzling, baffling, frightening. Bringing up a two year old is much more rewarding when we try to understand the meaning of what they do and think about our own responses (Reid, 1992).

**If you have any concerns or worries about any aspect of his/her development your health visitor will be pleased to discuss this with you. These concerns may include: toilet training, speech, sleeping, feeding, temper tantrums and general behaviour.**

### **Essential child development: emotional and physical**

It is important to bear in mind the following points:

1. Children develop at different rates from each other, but go through the different stages, usually in the same order.
2. Each child develops in his or her own unique way depending on personality, how he or she is managed and family background.
3. Children develop in their minds, their bodies and feelings. A delay in one area can result in a delay in another.

### **Understanding the stages of development**

- This can help us to accept behaviour that is normal for each stage of a child's development.
- Children's behaviour can be seen as progression from one stage to the next, rather than as naughty or wrong.

## Two year olds

5.1

Emotional milestones	Physical development
<p>Toddlers normally show extremes of behaviour between two and three years – very dependent/ independent, very aggressive/ calm/helpful/stubborn</p> <p>More independent – get very angry when stopped from moving somewhere, tantrums common (cries, kicks, bites)</p> <p>Begins to show feelings of pride, pity, sympathy</p> <p>Needs carer to tell what is right and what is wrong</p> <p>Fear of strangers is less</p> <p>Fear of noises, thunder, trains, flushing toilets</p> <p>Plays alone or alongside others – won't share</p> <p>Short attention span and easily distracted</p> <p>Harsh parenting and smacking gets in the way of a child's emotional development</p>	<p>Runs, pushes and pulls large toys</p> <p>Climbs on furniture</p> <p>Sits on small bike and scoots along with feet</p> <p>Hand preference usually obvious</p> <p>Enjoys picture books and recognises detail</p> <p>Pencil grip changes, scribbles to and fro and in circular motion</p> <p>Uses 50+ words and will understand many more and begins to form simple two-three word sentences</p> <p>Talks to self</p> <p>Names familiar objects and parts of body</p> <p>Carries out simple instructions containing two or three pieces of information</p> <p>Spoon feeds self and chews well</p> <p>Enjoys imitating domestic activities</p> 

## Speech and language development

From the age of two-three years, children develop a higher level of understanding of themselves and others. The stage is set for the child to learn and think ahead. They are also beginning to put words to their emotions in a very simple way.

**NOTE:** This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk).

At this age they are trying to use much more language and their speech will become clearer to main carers. They jabber a lot during play and will name body parts. They can also follow simple instruction such as 'get your slippers'. 2-3 word phrases develop into longer sentences with many grammatical immaturities e.g. 'me do it' 'I runned'. Pretend play will be developing e.g. dusting TV, bath dolly.

### Gaining control: toilet training

Being ready to toilet train requires a child to be physically mature, emotionally secure and intellectually able to understand what is happening. Between the second and third year, for a lot of children, daytime training is achievable. When the carer and child are in tune with each other they can learn to identify the signals that the child wants to 'poo' or 'wee'. At this stage the child can be introduced to the potty and may sit on it for a few minutes after meals and before bedtime.

Often toddlers become aware of wet or full pants right after, rather than before the event or they 'go' when they get off the toilet. This can be frustrating for parents but it shows that the child is relating the potty to pooing. However, they haven't mastered the right order yet. This can be an important step as they need to beware of the discomfort after it happens to help them become aware of the full feeling before 'weeing' or 'pooing'. The most important part of toilet training is establishing a calm attitude and relaxed routine.

Achieving dryness at night often takes longer, possibly up to five years.

If you would like to discuss any issues, please contact your health visitor.

Your health visitor is .....

Based at ..... Clinic

Telephone number .....

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#### Further reading

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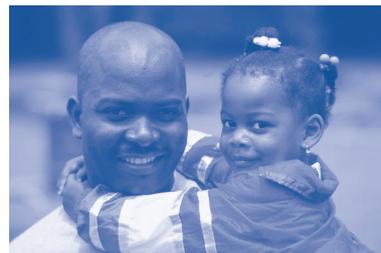
Reid, S. (2004) Understanding your 2 year old. London: Jessica Kingsley.

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*NOTE: This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk).*

## Leaflet for parents Your three year old

This leaflet is intended to help you understand some of the stages of development your three year old has and will reach over the next few months/year.



**The first three years of a child's life is a crucial period of rapid brain development. The human and environmental interaction that he receives during this time are just two of the components that can affect his capacity to realise his full potential later in life.**

The transition from two to three years sees a more confident child who is able to separate from their parents easier, but still needs reassurance. Children of this age can be very affectionate as they start to realise that those around them have feelings too. However, they can find it difficult to wait for your attention as they live for the moment. Tantrums become less at this age but moods can change very rapidly and dramatically. Your three year old can be charming and exhausting. Bringing up a three year old is much more rewarding if we help them to put their feelings into words to understand what has or is happening.

**If you have any concerns of worries about any aspect of your child's development your health visitor will be pleased to discuss this with you. These concerns may include toilet training, speech, sleeping, eating or general behaviour.**

### **Essential child development: emotional and physical**

It is important to bear in mind the following points:

1. Children develop at different rates from each other, but go through the different stages, usually in the same order.
2. Each child develops in his or her own unique way depending on personality, how he or she is managed and family background.
3. Children develop in their minds, their bodies and feelings. A delay in one area can result in a delay in another.

*NOTE: This leaflet is designed to be used as part of a wider conversation with your practitioner. If you want to take an online course for parents, visit [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk).*

## Understanding the stages of development

- This can help us to accept behaviour that is normal for each stage of a child’s development
- Children’s behaviour can be seen as progression from one stage to the next, rather than as naughty or wrong.

## Three year olds

Emotional milestones	Physical development
<p>Play is the work of this age – focus on becoming confident and efficient</p> <p>Quite balanced – normally happy and contented</p> <p>Still self-centred and magical in thinking – believes wishes make things come true</p> <p>Has imaginary friends who can be blamed when things go wrong</p> <p>Bargaining works but reasoning does not</p> <p>Distraction still works</p> <p>Doesn’t get so frustrated and gets less angry when stopped</p> <p>Biggest fear is that carer will abandon him – especially at night</p>	<p>Enjoys walking/climbing and running</p> <p>Likes drawing/threading/play-dough and simple jigsaws</p> <p>Begins to take turns, as a start to sharing</p> <p>Large vocabulary mainly intelligible to strangers, but many ungrammatical forms persist</p> <p>Able to follow more complex instructions</p> <p>Asks many ‘what, where and who’ questions</p> <p>Listens eagerly to stories</p> <p>Uses fork and spoon</p> <p>Pulls pants/knickers up/down</p> <p>Repeats and signs nursery rhymes</p> <p>Gives full name and sex</p>

## Fears

A child’s imagination begins to develop between the ages of three and a half and four years, they may have frightening dreams. They can be happy to be separated from you in the daytime but remain fearful of being left alone at bedtime. It is important to explain where they are going and what is happening. If you need to leave them try to stick to the time stated for your return, as this helps trust continue.