

Young parents

Parent easy guide 39



Parenting SA

There are lots of good things about being a young parent as well as lots of new things to learn. Being a parent is one of the most important roles anyone can have and it can be both hard work as well as fun. Sometimes you might feel like you just want to be free of the responsibility of being a parent and have someone look after you. Having a partner, family or friends who provide practical support can make being a young parent a bit easier. Without a good network of people who can help out you might feel like you are doing it all on your own. It is important to look after yourself as a parent so that you can look after your family. When you have a new baby and as your child grows up, it is also really important to know where to get help with all the things you need to know and do.

*This PEG uses 'he' and 'she' in turn.
Change to suit your young person's sex.*

Looking after your child

- > Children need lots of love and affection. Give your children heaps of cuddles and tell them you love them many times a day
- > Children are eager to learn and need lots of things to do to help their brains develop properly. When they are very young their parents are their best playmates. They like you to:
 - talk and read lots to them
 - sing to them
 - take them for walks
 - lie on the floor and let them crawl over you
 - play with them and their toys
 - dance with them.
- > Children need your time - they want you to be around them and to take notice of them. This might mean giving up things you want to do. It might also mean pretending you are interested in what they are doing, even when you don't feel like it. Giving your time and attention helps your child to feel loved
- > You need to keep a close eye on young children. It is important to make your house and outdoor area as safe as possible as children are curious and can get into lots of things. Washing up detergents, laundry powders and medicines need to be kept in a high cupboard and locked. Watch them near water (even nappy buckets)
- > The best toys for young children are often ones you don't have to buy. Children love:
 - saucepans and lids

- pegs or lids to put into containers
 - home-made play-dough
 - jugs and water to pour
 - cushions on the floor to crawl over
 - cardboard boxes of different sizes to crawl into, and to make tunnels and cubby houses
- > Change toys often to give variety and keep a special toy for a treat. Join your local library (and toy library) to borrow books and toys at no cost
 - > It is important for babies and toddlers to learn to socialise. This helps them to be confident to learn and interact with their peers when they go to kindy and school. Take your children to a playground or join a playgroup so that they can mix with other children.

Looking after yourself

Children need you to look after them but you can't do this well if you don't look after yourself.

- > You may drift away from old friends because you don't share the same interests any more. Join a young parents' group to make new friends. Your children can play with other children and have fun while you share ideas and ways of coping
- > All parents need a break and it's okay to need your own space. Get someone you trust to care for your child so you can have a night out, go shopping or do something special for yourself
- > All parents have times when they get really busy and times when they get upset. Take a break, go outside, ring a friend or someone who understands



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- and talk about it. Always make sure your child is safe first
- > Being outside can make you feel more relaxed so take your baby for a walk in the pram or take your toddler to the local playground. Have a picnic in a park
 - > As a young parent it is important to plan for the future and to have skills that can help you get work when you need to. Young parents who keep on learning, either through school or training programs, have a better chance of getting work they really enjoy. Some schools have programs designed for young parents and usually have a crèche on site. TAFE also has courses that may help you. It can be a bit scary for anyone trying to return to school or TAFE but they have counsellors who can help you with information about lots of things. They can help you with getting Centrelink benefits, subsidised child-care and finding ways to get financial and other practical support.

Getting help

All parents want to be seen as coping well and being good parents. This means that sometimes they are afraid to ask for advice. But the truth is, parents of any age need information and support to do a good job. As a young person you are becoming independent and learning to do things for yourself. When you become a young parent you may think you need to do everything yourself without others interfering. However, we all need to say 'I don't know' sometimes without feeling ashamed, and this is really important when you are a parent.

What many young parents have found is:

- > Other young parents are a good source of information about where to get support
- > They sometimes feel they're being judged when going to an agency, a doctor or a clinic for help. It is important to look around until you find someone you feel comfortable with
- > If you have problems with health workers not understanding what you want:
 - think about what you want from them
 - write it down
 - practice saying what you need and why, without getting frustrated or upset

- ask if there is a worker at the agency who works with young parents
- take a friend with you if you feel worried
- > Be willing to listen to family members when they give advice. The more ideas you get, the more ideas you have to choose from. It doesn't mean you have to do it. Choose what feels right for you
- > Ask health workers you trust for referrals to people who will be able to help you.

Reminders

- > Be wise enough to learn from others
- > Be smart enough to say 'I don't know'
- > Get lots of information so you have plenty of ideas to make good choices
- > Everyone is allowed to make mistakes - they are to learn from
- > Find support for yourself and use it
- > Don't be ashamed to ask for help
- > Make sure you care for yourself so you can care for your family
- > Spend lots of time doing things your baby loves - it helps them develop.

Contacts

Parent Helpline: Tel 1300 364 100 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for advice on child health and parenting

Child and Family Health Centres: Tel 1300 733 606 9am - 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment at your local Centre

Youth Healthline: Tel 1300 13 17 19

- > The Second Story Youth Health Service (TSS):
City 8232 0233 | Elizabeth 8255 3477 |
Christies Beach 8326 6053 | Woodville 8268 1225
TSS Young Parent Programs can provide individual and group support before, during and after your pregnancy and while you are parenting. TSS also has nurses, doctors and counsellors.
- > Talking Realities: Tel 8243 5459 A program for young parents at the Parks Community Health Service

Websites

www.parenting.sa.gov.au For other Parent Easy Guides

www.cyh.com For parenting and child health information

For more information

Parent Helpline 1300 364 100

**Parenting SA
Children, Youth and Women's Health Service
Telephone (08) 8303 1660
Internet: www.parenting.sa.gov.au**

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Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia

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