

Families and young children

Multicultural parent easy guide 3

ENGLISH

Parenting SA



The early years of a child's life are critical to their growth and development. During these years, particularly the first 3-5 years, parents have valuable opportunities to influence and shape their child's learning.

These years are often referred to as the 'building blocks for the future'. Being loved and cared for, forming close attachments with parents and others, and having opportunities to explore and learn about the world around them, enable children to develop confidence, coping skills and positive relationships with others. These experiences also support children's learning at school.

As a parent you are an important role model for your children. It is initially within the family and by observing you that your children learn to respond to the world around them. Children learn from the way people treat them and from what they see, hear and experience as soon as they are born.

Important steps in your baby's development

Every baby is different but there are some important steps in their growth and development that most babies share.

By 6-7 weeks

Smiling at you when you smile at them.

By 2 months

Holding up their head when you hold them upright.

Lifting their head when they are lying on their stomach.

By 3 months

Enjoying playing with toys that make a noise and holding a rattle for a short time.

By 4 months

May be able to roll from their front to their back but it may be another couple of months or longer before they can roll from their back to their front.

By 6 months

Starting to get teeth. Children usually have all their 'baby teeth' by 3 years of age.

By 7 months

Sitting up and perhaps starting to crawl.

By 9 months

Pulling themselves up into a standing position.

Some babies take longer and it will be another 2-3 months before they can stand without support and then a few more weeks before they can walk on their own.

By 12 months

Talking 'baby talk' and perhaps pronouncing one or two clear words.

If your baby does not do these things or is very slow in doing them, do not assume the worst. Speak to your doctor to make sure that everything is going well with your baby's development.

Babies and sleep

Managing sleep for babies and children is one of the most common concerns for parents and practices may vary for different cultures and families. In Australia, most young children have their own room where they sleep, but babies often sleep in a cot or bassinet next to their parents. Parents are discouraged from letting babies sleep in their bed because of safety considerations.



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Helping parents be their best

There are no easy answers to good sleep practices for babies and young children except that they should be safe and as relaxed as possible.

Some helpful tips:

- > Sleep needs and patterns vary among babies and children and will change as they grow. You need to adapt to these changes.
- > Having a regular routine can help babies and children to relax and settle into sleep. This could include being bathed, sharing a story, or a special goodnight hug or kiss.
- > Do not let your baby cry for long periods of time or become distressed. Babies should be comforted in order to feel safe and secure.
- > Babies should always sleep on their backs from birth, never on their tummy or side. Place babies to sleep half way down the cot with their feet almost touching the end. Bedclothes should just come up to their shoulders. Babies who have their heads covered, whose breathing is blocked in some way, or who become too hot, may be more likely to die suddenly.
- > Sleep babies with their face and head uncovered (no doonas, pillows, lambs wool, bumpers or soft toys). Babies do not need a pillow to sleep comfortably. A safe baby sleeping bag can be helpful instead of blankets. Remember babies cannot get themselves into a safe position eg if the bedclothes cover their head or large toys or pets smother them. For this reason it is important not to leave your baby asleep alone in the room with a pet.
- > Avoid exposing babies to tobacco smoke before birth and after.
- > Provide a safe sleeping environment night and day (safe cot, safe mattress, safe bedding). Choose cots, beds and bedding that meet Australian Standards (see SIDS and Kids website). Avoid clothing that has long strings, ribbons or cords (less than 10cm long if a dummy is attached to clothing).
- > Sleep baby in their own cot or bassinet next to the parent's bed for the first 6 to 12 months of life. Evidence shows that when babies sleep in a bed with a parent there is an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and fatal sleeping accidents. The SIDS and Kids Safe Sleep program therefore recommends that babies sleep in a cot next to their parent's bed for the first six to twelve months of life.

From baby to toddler

One to three years of age is usually referred to as the 'toddler' stage in a child's development and it is a period of rapid development and change. It is also a challenging time for parents as their children go from being totally dependent on them to wanting more independence as toddlers. Toddlers are active and curious and want to make choices for themselves.

Toddlers are too young to tell you what they want or how they feel so they often express their frustration through their behaviour – eg screaming, crying, throwing a tantrum. This can sometimes be difficult or embarrassing for parents but getting angry or punishing your toddler does not achieve anything because they are too young to understand their behaviour. Their determination, tantrums and desire to do things for themselves are all part of normal development and need your patience and understanding.

Because toddlers are active, curious and full of energy, parents must ensure that they are kept safe from harm. Falls, burns and scalds, swallowing poisonous substances or objects that can cause choking, drowning, and other serious mishaps can be avoided through vigilance and care. Contact Kidsafe SA for more information about child safety.

Toilet training

Between the ages of 2-3 years most children will also become 'toilet trained'. That is, they will be ready to stop using nappies and learn how to control their bowel and bladder. This is also an important stage in a child's development that requires patience and encouragement. Be prepared to wait until your child is ready. Do not pressure them and do not worry about accidents which are common in the early weeks. See Parenting SA's Parent Easy Guide on Toilet Training for more information.

Good health

Getting plenty of rest, eating healthy food, being immunised against diseases that could harm them, and enjoying activities that are fun and develop their skills, are important to your children's health and wellbeing. See Parent Easy Guide #1: Family Health and Wellbeing for additional information about immunisation and healthy eating for children.

Good hygiene is also important. Encourage your children to wash their hands before eating and treat any cuts or abrasions with antiseptic creams or lotions to prevent infection. Most young children enjoy their daily bath but make sure that you are there with them and never leave them unsupervised. Make sure that the bath water is not too hot and avoid soaps and shampoos with strong chemicals. Chemists and supermarkets sell bath and other products that are specifically for babies and young children.

Learning through play

Children learn by watching, listening and especially by doing. Through play activities children can develop physically and emotionally and also learn about the world around them. Physical activity can help them to develop their strength, balance and skills. Doing craft and making things with their hands can help them develop their fine motor skills as well as provide them with a sense of achievement and pride.

There are many activities that can help young children to express their creativity and imagination. These include reading and telling stories, painting, singing and dancing, listening to music, playing with building blocks and other educational toys, doing puzzles, outdoor exploration games and other activities. There may also be stories, games and activities from your own cultural traditions that you can share with your children.

Television

Certain television programs are very popular with children and support their learning. Watching too much television, however, or watching movies or programs that are not suitable for children may be harmful. The longer your children watch television the less time there is to play, to socialise with other children, and to be active – all of which are important to their health and development.

Social development and cultural understanding

The manner in which children view, relate to and socialise with other children and adults is influenced to a large degree by their parents and others who care for them – eg grandparents, relatives. Children learn from watching and listening. When they observe their parents relating to others in a friendly and considerate manner, caring about others and/or being polite to others, they are likely to do the same.

Teaching children to understand and appreciate the differences amongst people is also important. Over 150 different cultures are represented in Australia. Your attitudes to different cultures will make a big difference to the way in which your children view and treat people from other cultures. The same is true for those who have a disability or who stand out in our community because they appear different.

Take time to talk to your children about their cultural heritage and the importance of respecting cultural differences. If they experience racism at school or other places, do not dismiss their concerns. Reinforce that such behaviour is unacceptable in Australia and if necessary, discuss the matter with your child's teacher.

Looking after yourself

Raising and caring for children is very satisfying and brings much joy to parents but it can also be tiring and overwhelming at times. If you feel that you are not coping, do not be afraid to ask for help from your spouse or partner, family members or friends. Contact the services at the end of this guide for information and support and let them know if you need assistance in your own language.

If you are exhausted, stressed, and do not look after your own health and wellbeing, this will affect your parenting and your relationship with your children. So take good care of yourself and don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

Services that can assist you:

Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA)

The MRCSA is a leading settlement agency in SA. It provides information, counselling, referral, community education and other support services to families and individuals of refugee background and their new and emerging communities.

59 King William Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: (08) 8217 9510
Website: www.mrcsa.com.au
Office hours are between 9.00am and 5.00pm

The Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia also has centres in outer metropolitan and country regions:

Northern Area Migrant Resource Centre

28 Mary Street, Salisbury SA 5108
Tel: (08) 8283 0844

Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre

5 Second Street, Murray Bridge SA 5253
Tel: (08) 8532 3922

Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre

13 Eleanor Street, Mount Gambier SA 5290
Tel: (08) 8725 2753

Migrant Health Service (MHS)

The MHS is a primary health service for refugees, other humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers.

21 Market Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: (08) 8237 3900

Community Health Centres

There is a community health centre in your local area that can provide you with health information and assistance. Many have workers who can speak your language. Look in your White Pages telephone book under *Primary Health Care Services*.

Department of Education and Children's Services

For information about preschools, schools and childcare services.

31 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: (08) 8226 1000
Website: www.decs.sa.gov.au

Women's Health Services

Women's Health Statewide (Adelaide)
Tel: (08) 8239 9600 or (free call) 1800 182 098
Website: www.whs.sa.gov.au

Dale Street Women's Health Centre (Port Adelaide)
Tel: (08) 8444 0700

Southern Women's Health Centre (Noarlunga Centre)
Tel: (08) 8384 9555

Elizabeth Women's Health Centre (Elizabeth)
Tel: (08) 8252 3711

Telephone services

In an emergency dial 000 for an ambulance or fire or police.

Government of SA Interpreting and Translating Centre

Tel: (08) 8226 1990 any time for telephone interpreting over the phone.

www.translate.sa.gov.au

Parent Helpline

Tel: 1300 364 100 any time for help with babies or children's health, or parenting

Child and Family Health Centres

Tel: 1300 733 606

9.00 am - 4.30 pm Monday - Friday to make an appointment at your local Centre.

Youth Healthline

Tel: 13 17 19 any time - an information service for young people.

Crisis care

Tel: 131 611 for urgent help outside office hours from 4.00 pm to 9.00 am on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays.

Healthdirect

Tel: 1800 022 222 any time for free health advice from registered nurses.

Kidsafe SA

Tel: (08) 8161 6318

SIDS and Kids

Tel: 8363 1963

Websites

www.cyh.com

The **Child and Youth Health website** has information on a wide range of children's health and parenting topics.

www.parenting.sa.gov.au

The **Parenting SA website** has over 80 Parent Easy Guides on parenting topics and information on parenting support groups in the community.

www.kidsafesa.com.au

The **Kidsafe SA website** has information about keeping babies and children safe and products available for sale.

www.sidsandkids.org

For information about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and safe sleeping.

Parent Easy Guides for New and Emerging Communities

This Parent Easy Guide was produced as a partnership initiative between the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia (MRCSA) and Parenting SA, Children Youth and Women's Health Service, Government of SA.

It is available in Arabic, French, Swahili, Dari and Dinka from the MRCSA, Parenting SA and www.parenting.sa.gov.au.

For more information

Migrant Resource Centre of SA (08) 8217 9510

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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