

Attachment

The bond between you and your baby is called 'attachment'. Attachment happens in the first few months of your baby's life and helps them feel safe and secure so they grow up strong and confident. The more security you give your baby in the first few years, the more they will be able to cope with the challenges of growing up. If you don't look after your baby or neglect them or abuse them, this can affect their development in a very negative way.

Who do babies attach to?

- ❖ Babies attach to their carers in the first few months of their life.
- ❖ They can form attachments with more than one person.
- ❖ If the mother or main carer is depressed or maybe very distracted, the baby can attach to another caring person to help them grow.

If there are too many different people looking after a baby or there are lots of disruptions, babies can find it difficult to adjust and develop secure relationships.

How do babies attach?

- ❖ Babies and toddlers try to get comfort and protection from the people they are attached to. All human babies have this behaviour to protect themselves from danger.
- ❖ Smiling, cooing, crawling, following, holding out their arms, and crying are all things that your baby does to get your attention.
- ❖ Look at your baby, smile, give them a cuddle or a hug and they will feel safe and secure and then they are free to relax, play, explore and learn.



- ❖ If you ignore or punish your baby, she will continue to be anxious or afraid and try to gain your attention – usually by crying even more. Sometimes if you continue to ignore her, she will give up – not because they feel better, but because she loses hope.

Baby's signals

All babies are different and will have their own ways of showing what they need.

Learn about your baby's signals so that you can give them what they need. This will help them feel safe and secure and they will grow into independent children and adults.

Your baby may try and 'talk' to you by making eye contact or little noises, smiling, copying your gestures and looking interested.

Sometimes when they have 'had enough' or perhaps need you to be more gentle with them, your baby may look away, shut their eyes, try to struggle or pull away, yawn, look tense, unsettled or cry.

What you can do

- ❖ Learn to know your baby's signals, what his messages mean and then respond – usually your baby will need to be held, fed or have their nappy changed.
- ❖ Be gentle with your baby – talk to them softly, don't startle them
- ❖ Be flexible – don't stick to a set routine if it doesn't suit you or your baby.
- ❖ Be prepared for changes e.g. just when you think you've worked



out your baby's routines his rapid growth means you need to respond differently to his changing needs.

- ❖ Remember babies like to play with anything within their reach, so place the cot away from heaters, power points, lights, hanging mobiles and curtain cords.
- ❖ Use only light bedding to avoid overheating (doonas, thick quilts and heavy blankets can make the beds too hot). Pillows are not necessary for babies.
- ❖ Large toys and pets can smother babies. Check that pets cannot get into the bedroom.
- ❖ Do not smoke inside your home, especially in the same room as your baby, or in the car, as the cigarette smoke is harmful to babies.
- ❖ Find out more about how babies grow and learn.
- ❖ Think about, treat, and talk to your baby as an individual with her own likes and dislikes.