

How can I support young children in my community?

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After school Mbali plays with young children in her community. She says: *I love the children. Playing with them makes them happy and I forget about my problems. We all have fun.*

DID YOU KNOW?

How we care for babies and young children affects their future health and development.

There are 7 million young children in South Africa. They need good food, health care, love and **stimulation*** to help them grow up strong, healthy and ready for school.

*KEY WORDS

Some of the words we use might be new to you or have a special meaning. See our list of key words on the back page.

Let's build a strong foundation

Why do we need to support young children?

The first 1 000 days are the most important time in a child's life. During pregnancy and the first two years of life, the baby's brain is growing fast and is very sensitive:

- If something goes wrong during these early years, it can be difficult to fix later on. For example: If children don't get enough to eat, they will not grow properly and they will not have the energy to play and learn.
- If we give babies and young children good care and stimulation, they will grow up strong, healthy and ready to do well at school.

We need to build a strong foundation so that all children in South Africa get the best possible start in life.

DID YOU KNOW?

Early childhood development* (ECD) starts long before children are born. We need to make sure that mothers get the support they need during pregnancy and when the baby is born. Children's needs change as they grow and develop new skills. We need to support them at each stage of their development.

What do babies and young children need?

Babies and young children need healthy bodies, caring relationships and active minds. These are the building blocks of early childhood development.



Healthy bodies

Young children need healthy food to eat, a safe healthy environment and to visit the clinic regularly, especially when they are sick.



Caring relationships

The love and support of parents and family help young children develop trust in people and their surroundings and the confidence to try new things.



Active minds

Young children need people to communicate and play with them. This is how they learn about the world, develop their thinking and learn to communicate.



Pregnancy

Infancy
(0 – 2 years)



Preschool
(3 – 4 years)



Foundation phase
(5 – 9 years)



What can families do to support young children?

Early childhood development starts at home. Here are 18 things that caregivers and families can do to make sure babies and young children get a good start in life.



1. Go to the clinic early in pregnancy, and regularly, to prevent problems and make sure the baby is growing well.

2. Avoid drinking, smoking and using drugs during pregnancy as this will damage the unborn baby.

3. Take babies to the clinic for regular check-ups to make sure they are growing well.

4. Use the baby's Road-to-Health Book from the clinic to make sure his or her **immunisations*** are up to date.

5. Ask the nurse to teach you about danger signs, so that you know when a baby is seriously ill and in need of medical care.

6. Breastfeeding mothers should eat healthy foods.

7. Give babies only breast milk for the first 6 months of life – this will help the child to grow strong and healthy.

8. Start feeding the baby other foods when 6 months old and keep on breastfeeding until the baby is 2 years old.

9. Ask the nurse for advice on what foods are best for the mother and baby.

10. Play with young children. This is how they learn.

11. Reading is an important part of learning. Read simple books with pictures to young children to help make reading fun.

12. Help them try new things and explore the world around them.

13. Ask the teacher at your local preschool or ECD centre about games you can play and books you can read to young children to help them learn.

14. If there's a toy library in your area, ask the librarian about good toys you can borrow to help young children discover and learn new skills.

15. Keep an eye on young children to make sure they are safe at all times.

16. Speak to a social worker or call Childline if you are worried about a child's safety or well-being.

17. Register the baby's birth as soon as possible. This makes it easier to apply for social grants.

18. Call or visit SASSA (South Africa Social Security Agency) to find out about social grants for children.



Important phone numbers

- SASSA: 0800 601 011
- Childline: 08000 55555

Services and support for young children

DID YOU KNOW?

Babies and young children have a right to play and learn. They also have a right to family care and protection. These rights are protected in the South African Constitution.

The government has put in place services to support young children and their families to give effect to these rights. These services include:

Health care: Pregnant women and children 0 – 6 years old can get free health care services at government hospitals and clinics.

Nutrition: All children need healthy food to eat. Clinics weigh babies regularly to make sure they are growing well. They help mothers to breastfeed and give advice on healthy eating for young children. If families don't have money to feed children, they should apply for a social grant.

Early learning: Children need opportunities to learn from birth until they start school. Early learning begins at home where

parents, caregivers and family members are the child's first teachers. Older children from about 3 – 4 years old benefit from going to play groups, preschools and ECD centres. All 5 – 6-year-old children should attend grade R to help them prepare for school.

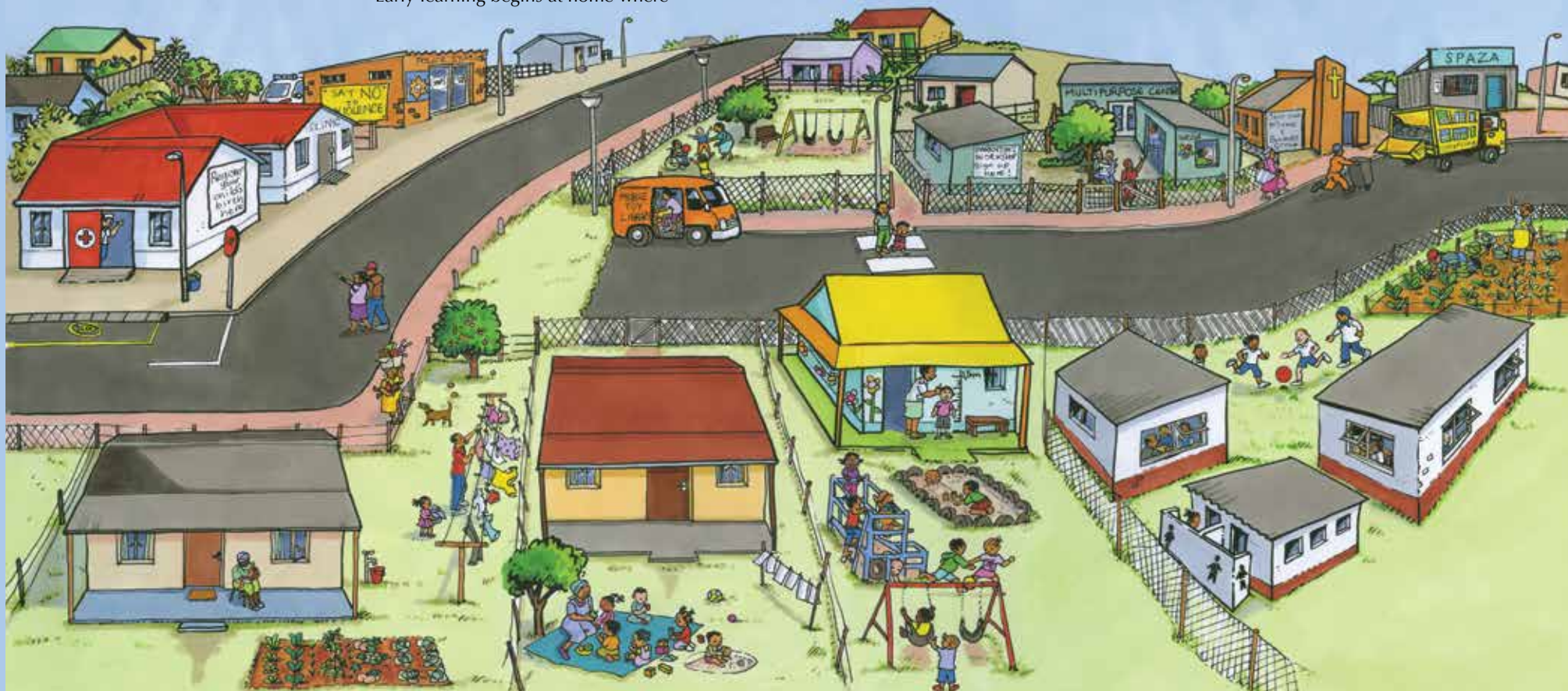
Support for parents and caregivers: Caring for young children is not always easy. Parenting programmes help mothers and fathers learn how to care for babies and young children and give them the best start in life. These programmes are offered by social workers, child and youth care workers, and community organisations.

Social services: Happy caregivers mean happy, healthy babies. Caregivers who

are stressed and unhappy should talk to a **health or social service professional***. These professionals provide support for caregivers and also protect children from abuse and neglect.

Birth certificates: All births should be registered with the Department of Home Affairs so that each child has a name and a nationality. Having a birth certificate also makes it easy to apply for social grants.

Social grants: The money from social grants helps caregivers to buy food, clothes and other things that children need. Poor children qualify for the Child Support Grant and children with disabilities for the Care Dependency Grant. These children are also entitled to free schooling and health care.



What can young people do to help?

There is a lot that young people can do to support their younger brothers and sisters and other young children living in their community. Tick the things you are already doing for young children and add your own ideas to the list.

I can:

- play with young children
- talk to them and sing to them
- read to them and tell them stories
- feed them when they are hungry
- comfort them when they are sad
- give them help when they need it
- teach them how to do things on their own
- take them to a play park
- keep an eye on them to keep them safe
- help their parents to take care of them
- put away dangerous things – like matches, paraffin, knives and hot cups of tea, and make play areas and homes safe for young children
- _____
- _____
- _____

Where can I go for help?

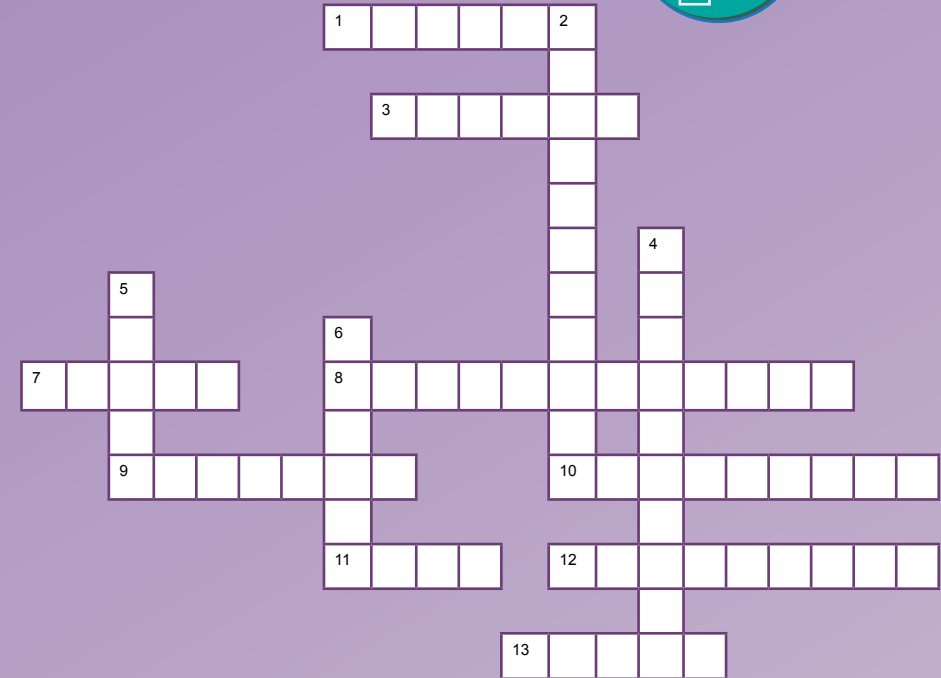


If you want to know more about how young children grow and develop, ask your caregiver. They will have lots of stories to tell you about how they took care of you when you were young.

Other people who can give you useful advice are:

- Nurses, doctors and community health workers
- Social service professionals
- The teacher at your local preschool or ECD centre

Test your knowledge of ECD



Across

1. You can apply for this when children are poor and need financial support
3. This is where you get the Road-to-Health booklet
7. A health professional
8. Babies and young children should get this at the clinic to protect them from serious illnesses
9. _____ food is good for young children
10. The food children need to grow and stay healthy
11. You need to keep an eye on young children to ensure that they are ____
12. Their number is 08000 55555
13. You can read young children stories from _____

Down

2. Activities that encourage young children to learn new things
4. The milk that mothers produce and the only food babies need until they are 6 months old (two words)
5. _____ must be registered at the Department of Home Affairs after the baby is born
6. Things that every child should be allowed to have or do. These are protected by the Constitution

Answers – Across: 1. Grants, 3. Clinics, 7. Nurse, 8. Immunisation, 9. Healthy, 10. Nutrition, 11. Safe, 12. Childline, 13. Books. **Down:** 2. Stimulation, 4. Breast milk, 5. Birth, 6. Rights.

Fun and games for young children



Here are some toys and games that you can play with children of different ages:

Peek-a-boo

This is an easy game of hide-and-seek that you can play with young babies. You can use your hands, a blanket or even a towel when it is bath time. Hide behind your hands and when you take them away quickly, say "Peek-a-boo". This helps babies learn that you are there, even when they can't see you.

Throwing and fetching

From 6 – 12 months, babies learn to sit by themselves and then to crawl. They are learning to use their hands and enjoy throwing and fetching games. Sit on the floor together and give them a soft ball to throw. Then roll it back to them. Later they will learn to crawl and fetch the ball when it rolls out of reach.

Walking and talking together

Go for a walk together. Talk to young children about what you see and hear around you. Teach them the names for different things – house, car, tree. As they get older keep building their vocabulary – the big tree, the big tree with green leaves. Ask questions and encourage them to touch, look, listen and learn about their world: "Bzzzz. What's making that funny sound? Can you hear the busy bees?"



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Sorting and counting games

Use things you have in your home to teach 1 – 2-year-olds different colours, shapes and sizes, eg big shoes, small shoes, red shoes, blue shoes. 2 – 3-year-olds love sorting games. Collect stones, shells or bottle tops of different sizes, shapes and colours. Ask them to find all the small shells or all the red bottle tops. Later you can use the stones or shells to teach 3 – 5-year-olds to count.

Make your own picture book

Babies and young children enjoy picture books. Cut out pictures from old magazines or draw your own. Paste them in an empty book, or on sheets of card and make your own book. Start with pictures of things that the baby knows, like a cup and spoon. Later you can make picture books of farm animals or other interesting things, and add words. Page through the book with the child. Name the different animals, or make the animal sounds. For example, when you see a chicken you can say "cluck, cluck".

Make your own playdough

From about 2 years old, children enjoy playing with sand, clay or playdough.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup of salt
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1 cup of water

Mix together in a saucepan to make a smooth paste. Bring to the boil, stirring all the time. Cook until playdough goes lumpy and leaves the sides of the pot clean. Cool slightly and knead until smooth. Add food colouring and store in an airtight container.





KEY WORDS

Caregivers: anyone who takes care of children. This could be a parent, family member, adult or older child.

Child: anyone younger than 18 years.

Early childhood development: how babies and young children grow and learn.

ECD services: services such as clinics, early learning programmes and social grants that support early childhood development.

Gauge: to measure or weigh. The *South African Child Gauge* measures how well the country is doing in meeting children's rights.

Government: a group of people who have the power to make laws and deliver services to the country's people.

Immunisation: special medicine to protect children from serious illnesses like measles.

Law: a set of rules made by government which everybody should follow.

Nutrition: the food children need to grow and stay healthy.

Rights: things that every child should be allowed to have or do. For example: the right to education. These rights are protected by our Constitution, the highest law in South Africa.

Health and social service professionals: nurses, social workers, child and youth care workers, community workers and other professionals who help people with their problems.

Stimulation: activities that encourage young children to learn new things.

What is the *South African Child Gauge*?

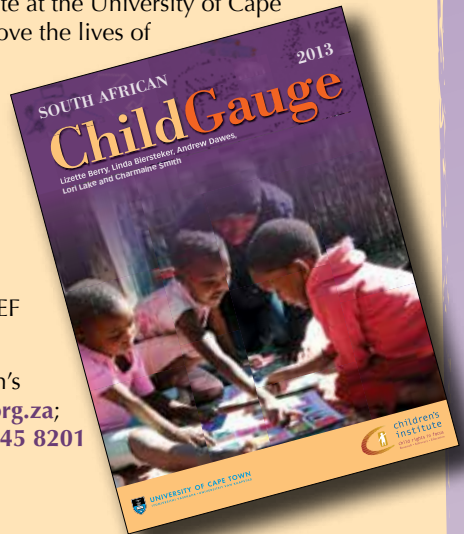
The *South African Child Gauge* is a book about children in South Africa. It is published every year by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town. It describes what can be done to improve the lives of children in South Africa.

In 2013, the book discussed the services and support that young children need to get a good start in life.

You can find the book on our website at www.ci.org.za

This booklet was produced by the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town and UNICEF South Africa.

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