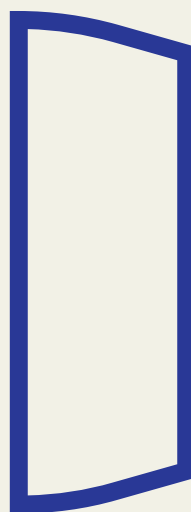


Give your child the best start!

By working together to support early childhood development we can help all young children to thrive



Find out how to give your child the best start in life, and what services are available to support young children and families.



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FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

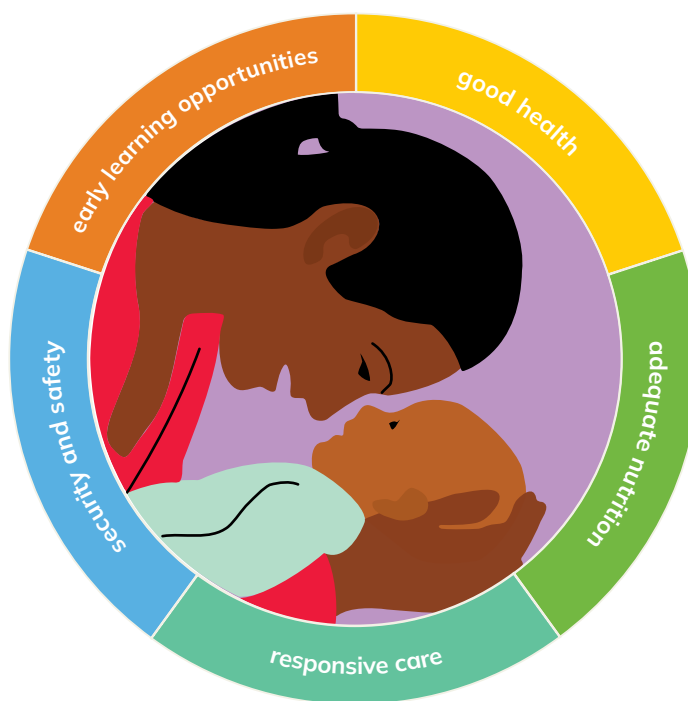


CHILDREN'S
INSTITUTE

What do young children need to thrive?

All children need nurturing care

- Did you know that a baby's brain is hard at work even before it is born? They are busy building new connections based on what they see, hear, touch and feel.
- Positive experiences – such as love, play and talk – build a strong foundation for lifelong learning and healthy relationships.
- But stress and trauma can lead to lifelong challenges.
- So, we need to do everything we can to give children the best start in life – starting early in pregnancy and continuing through to the start of formal schooling.



- All children need good food, healthcare, love, protection and opportunities to learn.
- These five ingredients of nurturing care help build a strong foundation and boost brain development.
- And it all starts with responsive caregiving – or the way we take the time to look, listen and to get to know our newborn babies, so that we can better meet their needs.



- Nurturing care starts in the home – with families who are tuned in to the needs of babies and young children.
- Families who feed them when they are hungry, comfort them when they are afraid, and keep them safe from harm.
- This helps build healthy relationships and gives babies and young children the confidence to learn and explore the world around them.
- Caring for babies and young children is one of life's greatest joys, but it can also be challenging. This is why government is providing a package of services and support for families and young children.



Government policies provide for:

- Free healthcare for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under six years.
- Free birth certificates that help children to access other services.
- Time off from work for mothers and fathers, so that they can take care of their baby.
- Parenting programmes that provide information and support to parents.
- Advice on what to feed babies and young children.
- Social grants (such as the Child Support Grant) to help families put food on the table.
- Social services to help families who have problems such as violence at home.
- Early learning programmes* that help young children develop the knowledge and skills they will need to start school.
- Parks and playgrounds where it safe for babies and young children to play.
- Clean water and a clean and healthy environment.

* ECD centres, creches, playgroups and preschools

Pregnancy: A healthy mother means a healthy baby



Fathers, friends and family have a big role to play!

They can help by:

- offering emotional support
- attending clinic visits
- helping with housework, and
- helping you live a healthy lifestyle.

Take good care of yourself

- Go to the clinic as soon as you think you are pregnant.
- Attend all your antenatal* visits to make sure all is well with you and your baby.
- Get enough rest, sleep and gentle exercise.
- Try to eat regular meals and healthy foods – vegetables, fruit, meat, fish, eggs, beans and milk.
- Say no to alcohol, tobacco and drugs as they can harm your baby while it's still in the womb.
- Reach out to friends and family for support because having a baby can be stressful.
- Listen to your health worker's advice and ask questions if you are worried or need information.



Celebrating the miracle of new life every step of the way

The first trimester

In the first three months of pregnancy, you may have morning sickness or feel tired and emotional, so it helps to talk to your friends and family about how you are feeling.



Your baby's brain starts developing, their heart starts beating and their arms and legs start to move.

*Antenatal: before the baby is born

Health

- Healthcare services are free for all pregnant women, and all pregnant women should be treated with care, dignity and respect.
- At each antenatal visit, the clinic will check that you and your baby are healthy and growing well.
- You can get useful advice and information about each stage of your pregnancy from MomConnect on 134*550# .
- Antenatal classes will help prepare you for giving birth and caring for your baby.

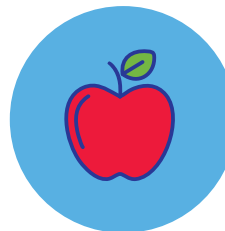


Giving birth

- It is safest to give birth in hospital.
- Ask if you can bring the baby's father or a friend to support you during childbirth.

Nutrition

- Pregnant women should eat a balanced diet as this will help your baby grow strong and healthy.
- At the clinic they will check if you and your baby are growing well and give you extra vitamins and minerals when needed.
- Many pregnant women don't have enough money to buy healthy foods. This is why organisations are calling on government to introduce a maternity grant, so that pregnant women can afford healthy food.



Care and protection

- Pregnant women, babies and young children need a safe environment – free from violence and abuse.
- If you are in an abusive relationship or you are feeling stressed and struggling to cope, then reach out and ask for help. Talk to a health worker, social worker or someone you trust.
- You can also ask the clinic for help if you are struggling to stop drinking, smoking or taking drugs.



The second trimester

In the second three months of pregnancy, you should have a lot more energy, and you can sing and talk to your baby.



Your baby's eyes and ears start developing. They can see and hear the world around them, and you will start to feel them moving inside you.

In the final three months, you may find it difficult to sleep or have heartburn and feel short of breath.

The third trimester



Your baby's body and brain continue to grow. There is not much space for them to move around.

Baby steps: The first two years



You are your child's first teacher

- Did you know that babies are ready to learn from the moment they are born?
- Babies learn by watching you and listening to your voice. So hold your baby close, and sing, talk and play with your baby as often as you can.
- Long before babies start to talk, they will “tell” you how they feel by crying, babbling and moving their bodies.
- Tune into what they are ‘saying’ and respond to their needs. This will build their trust in you and give them confidence to try new things.

Fathers are important too

- You can build a strong relationship by being a hands-on dad. Help care for your baby, hold them close, talk to them and learn how to comfort them when they cry.

Newborns feel safe and calm when you hold them close and talk softly. This will also help them sleep and eat well in the first weeks of life.

Giving birth

- It is safest to give birth in hospital.
- Ask if you can bring the baby's father or a friend to support you during childbirth.

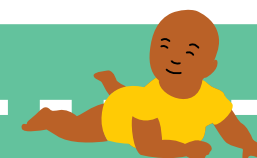
Well baby visits

- The Road to Health Book is an important record of your baby's growth and health. So bring it with you every time you visit a clinic or hospital.
- Go to the clinic for all your well-baby visits.
- Ask them about your child's health, growth and development. And talk to your health worker about any concerns.
- Make sure your baby is fully immunised to protect them from serious illnesses.



Know when to seek help

- If your baby is sick go to the clinic.
- Find out about the danger signs in the Road to Health Book so you know when to look for help.



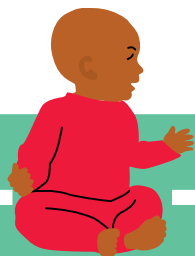
Good nutrition

- Breastmilk is a superfood that helps protect your child from different illnesses. So give **only** breastmilk for the first six months. Then you can start to slowly introduce other foods.
- Ask your health worker for advice on breastfeeding and how best to introduce your baby to family foods.
- At the clinic, they will measure your baby to make sure they are growing well, and they will help you if your baby is struggling to gain weight.



Social grants

- The Child Support Grant is there to support children living in poor households.
- Visit your local SASSA office or call their helpline to find out if you qualify for the grant and how to apply.



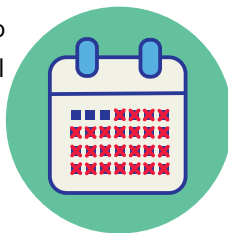
Birth certificates

- Registering a child's birth with the Department of Home Affairs within 30 days after birth will make it easier to access social grants and other services.



Parental leave

- Working parents are entitled to four months of unpaid parental leave which they must share between them. This allows both parents to spend time with their newborn baby.



Guidance and support

- Learn more about your baby's health, growth and development from the Side-by-Side Campaign on your local radio station or on Facebook @SideBySideSA.
- For parenting support and advice, join the Parentline WhatsApp group on 087 813 4290.



Safety in the home

- Accidents happen fast, so always keep a careful eye on your child.
- As babies start crawling, they need a safe place to play.
- Keep medicines, cleaning products, paraffin, alcohol, cigarettes and other dangerous objects safely out of reach.
- Protect children from burns. Keep fires, heaters electric plugs and hot drinks out of reach.
- Call 112 for help in an emergency.



The preschool child: 3 – 5 years old

From 3 to 5 years old, children become more independent. They speak in longer sentences, ask lots of questions, and are ready to start preschool.



Learning through play

- Young children learn through play, so make time to play with your child every day.
- Children enjoy drawing and painting, playing with sand and water, and imaginary play (dressing up, playing 'house' or 'driving' a car).
- They are ready to start playing with other children so help them learn how to share and take turns.
- Singing songs, telling stories and reading books builds their language skills.
- They also have lots of energy so make time for outside play – running, climbing, jumping, hopping and learning how to throw, catch and kick a ball.

Sleep, rest and screens

Young children also need to rest. They need 10 to 13 hours of sleep a day (including naps).

Limit the amount of time your child watches TV or plays with a cellphone – no more than one hour a day.

Preschools and ECD centres

- Children from 3 – 5 years old benefit from an organised early learning programme.
- Playgroups, preschools and ECD centres should provide:
 - age-appropriate activities that allow young children to learn through play.
 - a daily routine (time for snacks, naps, learning, and outdoor play).
 - different materials that help children learn (e.g. books).
 - a safe space for outside play.
- Look for an early learning programme that provides a safe and caring environment that builds children's confidence and love of learning.
- An early learning programme with more than six children should be registered with the Department of Basic Education. Ask to see their registration certificate before you enrol your child.





Healthcare

- Children younger than six years are entitled to free healthcare services so go to the clinic if your child is sick.
- Clinics should also reach out to deliver services to children attending early learning programmes.
- Children with learning difficulties need extra support, so speak to your child's teacher or the clinic if you are worried about their learning and development.

Good nutrition

- Preschool children need a balanced diet to build healthy bodies and brains. Give them fruit, vegetables, fish, eggs, beans, meat, milk, cheese and water to drink, and cut down on food and drinks that are high in sugar, salt and fat.



Social grants

- The Child Support Grant helps families put food on the table.

Family leave

- Workers are entitled to three days of family responsibility leave a year to care of a sick child.

Care and protection

- Young children need safe places to play and learn. So, do what you can to stop violence in your home and community.

Guidance and support

- Learn more about your baby's health, growth and development from the Side-by-Side Campaign on your local radio station or on Facebook @SideBySideSA. For parenting support and advice, join the Parentline WhatsApp group on 087 813 4290.



Use positive discipline

- Positive discipline aims to encourage good behaviour by building children's self esteem and teaching children how to take responsibility and solve problems.
- Children learn from watching what you do, not what you say. So, try to be a positive role model.
- Criticism makes children feel small. So, use praise and encouragement to build your child's confidence.
- Instead of saying no all the time, try to create a safe environment where they are free to explore.
- Having a daily routine helps your child feel safe and secure because they know what to expect.
- Children often misbehave when they are tired, hungry, frustrated or ignored. Try to plan ahead so that things don't get out of hand.
- If your child is upset, try to stay calm as getting angry will only make it worse. Try to understand what's upsetting them, and help them calm down.

Remember that learning good behaviour takes time and practice. So be patient and kind.

Extra care: Sometimes children and families need extra care and support

Social grants

- Social grants help families who are struggling to meet their children's basic needs.
- Call the SASSA helpline to find out if you qualify for the Child Support Grant and/or Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant.
- If you don't have a birth certificate or ID, you can still apply using other forms of identification.*



Mental health

- Having a baby is a huge change and it is normal to feel down, worried or stressed out. Making time to do things you enjoy, like listening to music or chatting with a friend, can help you start to feel better.
- If these heavy feelings carry on for weeks and you are no longer coping with everyday life, then it's time to reach out for support.
- Instead of keeping all these feelings inside, talk to someone about your hopes and fears. You can talk to a friend, call Lifeline's tollfree number anytime of the day or night, or ask your clinic if they can refer you to a counsellor, psychologist or social worker.
- It also helps to have practical and financial support. So, ask your partner, friends and family to help with some of the housework and childcare.

Protection

If you are in an abusive relationship, then you and your children need help to make it stop.

- Tell someone you trust.
- Reach out to local organisations or call the Childline, Lifeline or Gender-Based Violence helplines that are free to call, any time of the day or night.
- You can also speak to a health or social worker, or an FCS** officer at your police station – they are specially trained to help families and children.
- If you have suffered a sexual assault, go to your nearest clinic, hospital, or a Thuthuzela Care Centre as they provide a one-stop service including medical treatment, counselling and help in opening a police case.
- Make a plan and have a safe place to stay with a friend, or women's shelter – in case you need to leave home in an emergency.
- Don't give up. Keep trying until you get the help you need.

Children with disabilities

- At the clinic the nurse will check to see if your baby is reaching all their developmental milestones.
- Some babies struggle to see or hear things properly, others may be slow in learning how to walk, talk or use their hands.
- If you have any worries about your baby's development, talk to your healthcare worker.

Get support early

- Make sure your child gets the help they need as soon as possible so that they reach their full potential.

Social grants

- Caring for a child with a disability can be challenging and expensive, so families also need support. If your child with a disability needs fulltime care, you can apply for the Care Dependency Grant.

Extra care and support

- Children with learning difficulties, disabilities and other long term health conditions often need support from a team of people to address their different needs.
- Some children benefit from special equipment such as wheelchairs, reading glasses or hearing aids.
- The aim is to help children to participate as fully as possible in home, school and community life.

Education that includes all children

- Early learning programmes need to provide a supportive learning environment in which all children – including children with disabilities – feel welcome and able to learn and reach their full potential.
- Find out which early learning programmes are good at working with children with disabilities in your community.



Working together, we can build a better world for our children.

Government has committed to invest more in early childhood development. So, speak to your councillor to find out what your municipality is doing to support young children and families.



About this booklet

This book was developed by the Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, in partnership with UNICEF South Africa, so that families of young children know what kinds of services and support should be available in their communities.



unicef  for every child

We are here to help you

Health

Your local clinic	_____
Your doctor	_____
AIDS helpline:	0800 012 322
Mental health helplines:	0800 456 789 or SMS 31393
Emergency ambulance:	10177
Emergency call from cellphone:	112
Poison Information Centre	0861 555 777
Side-by-Side Campaign	Facebook @SideBySideSA

Birth certificates and ID documents

Home Affairs helpline:	0800 601 190
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Child protection, safety and social grants

Police emergency number:	10111
Childline toll free:	116
Lifeline toll free:	0800 012 322
GBV Command Centre:	0800 428 428 or SMS *120*7867
SASSA toll free helpline:	0800 60 10 11
Black Sash helpline:	072 663 3739

Childcare and education

Your local ECD centre, creche or preschool

Parentline

WhatsApp 087 813 4290

