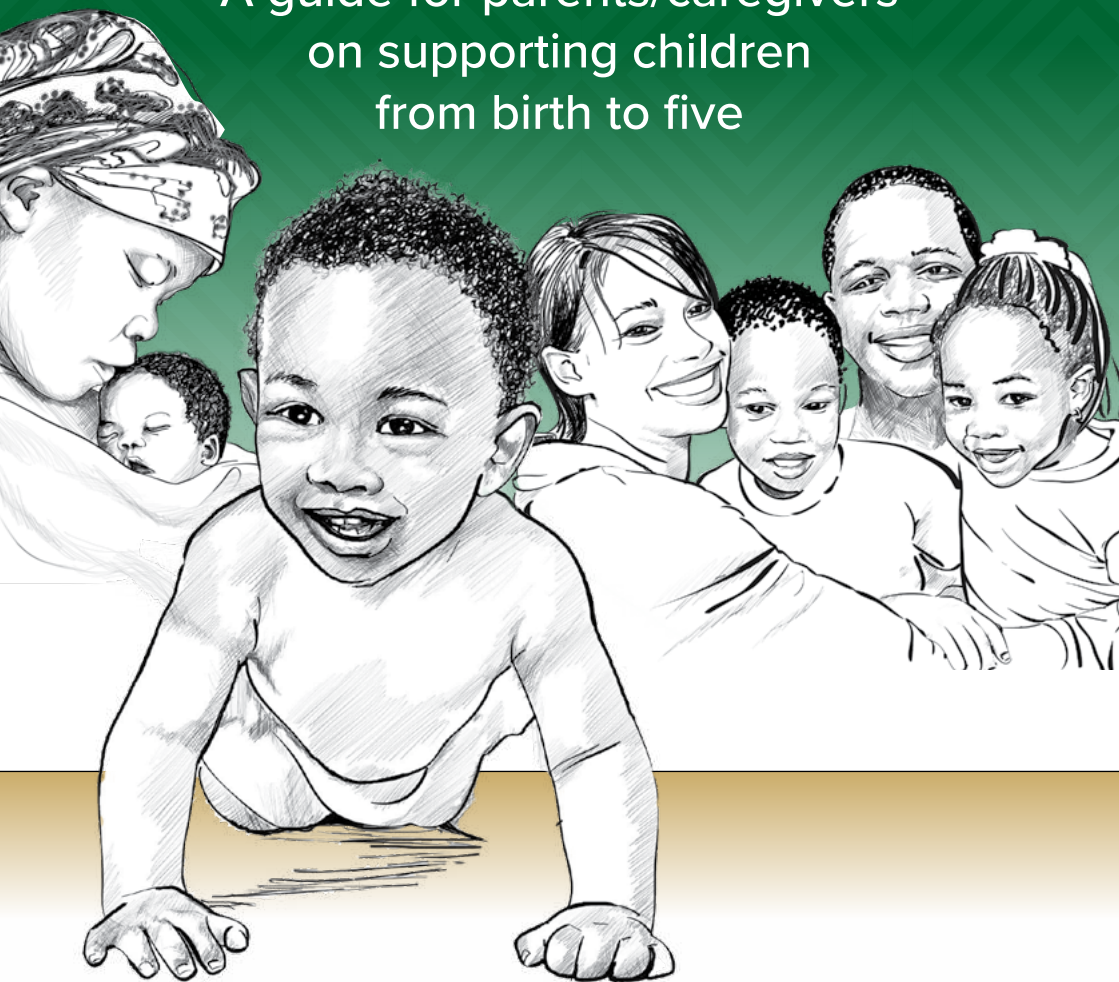


Giving Your Child a Good Start in Life

A guide for parents/caregivers
on supporting children
from birth to five



basic education

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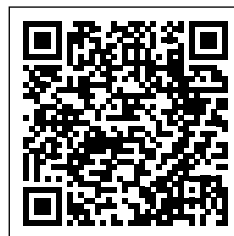
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Giving Your Child a Good Start in Life

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on supporting children
from birth to five



This guide is based on the *National Parenting Support Programme for Children from Birth to Five Years*. You can find a copy of this training manual at <https://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/NationalParentingSupportProgramme.aspx> or by using the QR code.



Giving Your Child a Good Start in Life: A guide for parents/caregivers on supporting children from birth to five

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Welcome

It is with great pride that I present *Giving Your Child a Good Start in Life: A guide for parents/caregivers on supporting children from birth to five*. Parents and primary caregivers are a child's first and most important teachers. The love, guidance and support they provide lay the foundation for children's lifelong learning, well-being and success.

This booklet empowers parents and caregivers with the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to nurture their children's growth and development during the critical early years.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the Department of Basic Education, United Nations Children's Fund South Africa and our many partners in government, civil society and communities who have worked tirelessly to bring this resource to life.

Together, we are building a strong foundation for the future of our children and for our nation. I encourage all who use this booklet to embrace its guidance and share its lessons widely. In so doing, we strengthen families, communities and South Africa as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Gwarube'.

Siviwe Gwarube (Member of Parliament)
Minister of Basic Education

What's inside

This guide is informed by evidence on early childhood development and by practical experience from programmes implemented in South Africa. Here is what's in it.



1 Children's rights and inclusion

Learn about the rights that children are born with and how to protect these so that all children, including those with disabilities, have equal opportunities to reach their full potential.



2 Me, the parent/caregiver

Explore the important – and sometimes, challenging – role you play in your children's lives and how to balance this with taking care of yourself.



3 Healthy family relationships

Discover the importance of healthy family relationships and the value of communication and connection in bringing up babies and young children.



4 Positive discipline

Understand the difference between punishment and positive discipline and how to use positive discipline to guide children to being able to manage themselves.



5 Loss and trauma

Understand how loss and trauma affect young children and how you can support them during challenging times.



6 Health and nutrition

Learn about the different actions you can take to ensure that your child enjoys good health.



7 Play and creativity

Understand how play is essential for children's learning and development and find out you how can support and encourage children's play.



8 Physical development

Learn about the physical development milestones of babies and young children and discover how to support this area of their development.



9 Social and emotional development and confidence building

Find out what helps children to develop emotionally and socially and how to help them to believe in themselves.



10 Brain development and language stimulation

Understand the important connection between play and brain development and discover how to support your children's developing language skills.



11 Child safety and protection

Learn about the key steps to making sure that the environment your children grow up in is as safe as possible.



1 Children's rights and inclusion

In South Africa, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Everyone deserves respect and equal treatment, and an equal chance in life. This is true for all of us, no matter the differences between us.



Children's rights are human rights.

All children are equal and have the same rights.



All children should have a basic quality of life.



Children with disabilities have the right to participate in the world and become best versions of themselves.



All children – including children with disabilities and those who have barriers to learning – can learn together, with everyone participating on an equal basis.



With every right comes a responsibility. For example, all children have the right to be loved and protected from harm, and they themselves should learn to be loving and caring towards others.



Children's lives are influenced by and dependent on many factors. Changes or conflict in their everyday lives and in the lives of those around them affect all areas of children's lives.

Did you know?



South Africa has laws that protect children's rights. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa – the country's highest law – includes a focus on the rights of children. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 focuses on the rights of children and parents. These rights include the right to basic nutrition, shelter, play, healthcare, safety and education.

Having a birth certificate is every child's right. It allows children to enrol in school, receive healthcare and access social services and support, such as the child support grant. Later in life, it is needed for things like writing matric, getting an ID and applying for a job. Without a birth certificate, children can miss out on many rights and opportunities. To find out how to get a birth certificate for your child, visit your nearest Department of Home Affairs office or their website, or phone their hotline.

Department of Home Affairs



Phone: 0800 601 190
(hotline)



Website:
[https://www.dha.gov.za/
index.php/civic-services/
birth-certificates](https://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/civic-services/birth-certificates)

Children with disabilities have the same rights as all other children. 'Disability' results from the way society is set up, rather than from a child's impairment or difference. Children with disabilities should not be sheltered indoors or overprotected; instead, they need chances to explore, play and take on responsibilities to help build confidence and grow into their best selves. Practising inclusion makes this possible.

Inclusion means making sure all children have meaningful opportunities to participate so that they have equal opportunities to learn, develop and achieve their potential. When we are inclusive, we show that we value every child and understand that all children are unique and equal. We do not ignore the physical and/or neurological challenges children living with disability may face, but we see the person first and then their challenges.

Try this!

Here are some ways you can meet your responsibility to protect your children's rights.

- Make sure each of your children has a birth certificate.
- Protect your children from physical danger.
- Keep your children healthy.
- Respond in a caring way when they show or tell you what they need.
- Give them opportunities to learn and develop.
- Give them opportunities to take responsibility and make choices.
- Allow them to make mistakes.



Teach your child at least four rights and the responsibilities appropriate to his/her age that go with them.



Test your knowledge on ...



Children's rights and inclusion

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. At all times, children have rights, which adults must respect, protect and fulfil. (T) (F)
2. As children grow, they can be guided to practise age-appropriate responsibilities such as respect, care and participation. (T) (F)
3. All children have the same rights. This means that children with disabilities have the same rights as all other children. (T) (F)



2 Me, the parent/ caregiver

Parenting is a challenge but remember that children don't need their parents/caregivers to be perfect. They need parents/caregivers who are loving, patient and present. Even on hard days, your love and guidance shape who they become.



Parents/caregivers play an important role in their children's development.

Parents/caregivers are not perfect, but they raise their children to the best of their ability.



All parents/caregivers need love and support. Parents/caregivers who have children with disabilities need extra support.



Creating time for yourself ('me time') does not mean that you are neglecting your children. It is self-care.



Sometimes a parent/caregiver may feel stressed or overwhelmed. This is normal – and it's okay to seek help.



A parent/caregiver is a child's first teacher.

Parents/caregivers learn along with their children as they grow and develop.

Did you know?



The Children's Act 38 of 2005 says that as a parent, you are responsible for your children and you must take care of them. This means that, by law, you must maintain contact with your children, support them financially and provide for their needs. Whether you live with your children or not, by law you still must do these things.

Parents/caregivers are the people children first learn from.

For example, they learn their first words from us and we show them how to take their first steps. From the example we set, children learn how to treat other people. When we love our children, they learn how to love others. When we unconditionally accept our children, they learn how to accept and respect others. We can show our children how to grow up to be good adults through our everyday actions.



Taking care of yourself is important because our children's well-being is dependent on our well-being. Self-care promotes overall physical and mental well-being, enhances resilience to stress and prevents burnout. Follow the five self-care steps (p. 11) to take good care of yourself.

Remember: Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness or something to be ashamed of. It takes courage to ask for help. If you or another parent/caregiver you know needs help, contact LifeLine or the Mental Health Helpline.

LifeLine



Phone: 0861 322 322
(available 24/7)



Email:
safetalking@lifeline.co.za

Mental Health Helpline



Phone: 0800 456 789
(toll free, available 24/7)



SMS: 31393



Five self-care steps

1 Consider your condition:

Notice when things feel 'not right' and when you are not coping. Seek support from a family member, colleague, neighbour, friend or mental-health professional.

2 Communicate and connect:

Be aware of your feelings and thoughts. Communicate and connect with others to help yourself feel and get better.

3 Show compassion and contribute:

Showing compassion and helping others help us keep life's ups and downs in perspective. Reach out to someone less fortunate than yourself and find small ways to assist them – it will make you feel valued and appreciate what you have.

4 Care for yourself:

This is how we protect and preserve ourselves in good and bad times. Make caring for yourself in small and big ways a regular routine. Even if you don't have much time, you can do some deep breathing each day: close your eyes and breathe in to a slow count of 10, then breathe out. Repeat this a few times. Be willing to do a little more self-care when you need an extra boost.

5 Contact a professional:

There are many things you can do to stay healthy in body, mind and spirit, but you also need to know when it's time to get professional help – and then take that step.

Try this!

Invite your child to draw a picture of you while you draw your own picture of yourself.



Test your knowledge on ...



Being a parent/caregiver

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).
The answers are on page 43.

1. Only parents who live with their children must support their children financially and meet their needs. (T) (F)
2. You need to stop caring for yourself once you have a child or look after a child. (T) (F)

3 Healthy family relationships



A healthy family is one that loves, cares for, nurtures and supports the children who are part of it. This environment helps build strong pathways in children's brains for problem-solving, empathy, confidence and self-control.

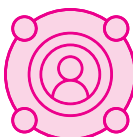


Families play many important roles in children's lives.

All children need a stable family environment to provide them with a sense of belonging.



Families offer babies and young children an environment and experiences that help them to understand the world around them.



All family members play an important role in raising children. For example, brothers and sisters contribute towards the love and attachment that young children experience. Grandparents and elders pass on cultural and moral values.



Family members should support parents/ caregivers but still allow them the space to parent their children.



All children in the family should be treated equally. For example, boys and girls should do the same number of household chores.



Children receive and show love differently.

What matters most about a family is the love and support it gives to children. It doesn't matter how many children or adults are in a family, whether family members live together or apart, or whether they are related by blood. In some families, parents/caregivers and/or children may be living with disabilities. We need to teach our children to value and respect all types of families.



Single-parent family: A family headed by one parent who raises the children



Nuclear family: Two parents and their children who live together



Extended family: More relatives who live together – for example, grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins



Grandparent-headed family: A family in which grandparents are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren



Blended family: A family formed when the parents come together with their children from previous relationships



Cohabiting family: The parents live together without being married



Polygamous family: One of the parents is married to more than one spouse at the same time



Same-sex parent family: A family headed by a same-sex couple



Biracial family: The parents are from different racial backgrounds



Child-headed household: A child takes on the role of caregiver for younger siblings, often due to the death or absence of adult family; these families need adult supervision and support



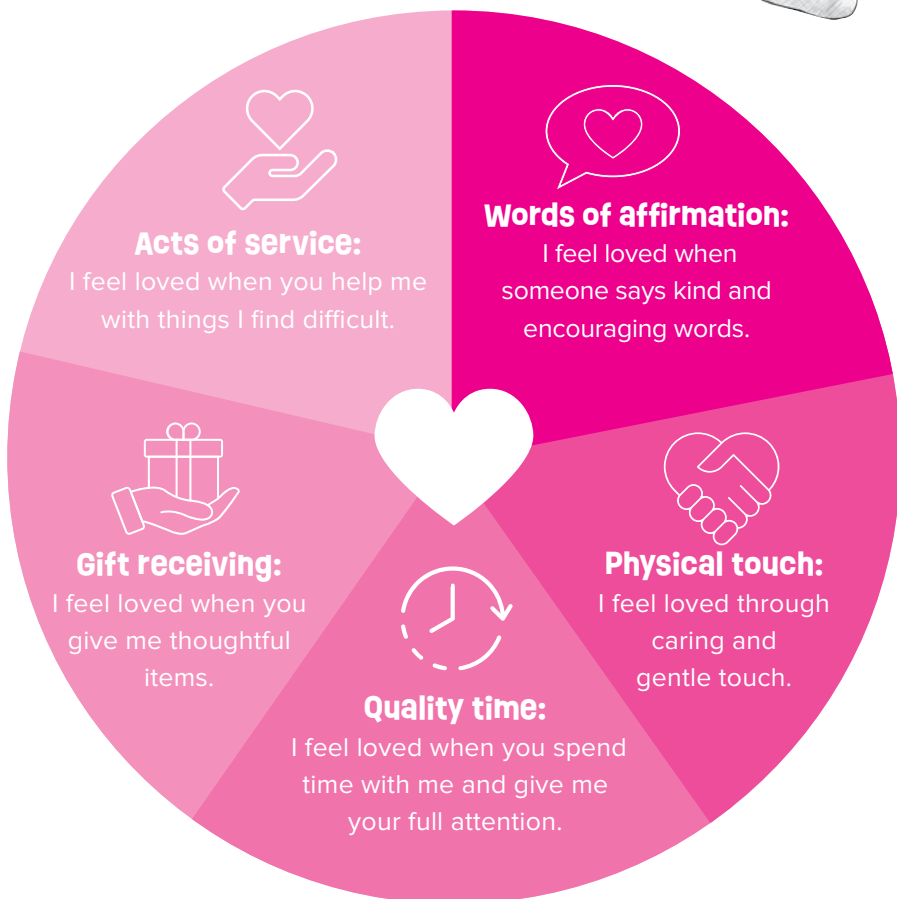
Foster family: A family approved for temporary care of foster children



Adoptive family: A family in which children have been legally adopted and are being raised by non-biological parents

Healthy family relationships are formed through communication.

Parents/caregivers can build strong bonds with their children by learning how each child shows love and feels loved. Understanding the five love languages helps us to know ourselves better and to connect with our children. What is your love language? What is the love language of each of your children?



Try this!

Here are ways you can communicate and connect with your children in your family's unique love language. Try them out and see which ones work best for each of your children.

- **Words of affirmation:** Say, "I love you", "I'm proud of you" and "You did well". Write notes to your children saying that you are proud of them.
- **Physical touch:** Hold hands and give hugs and gentle pats on the back. Sit close together when you share stories.
- **Gift receiving:** Give thoughtful gifts and gestures. It's not about the price – even a special stone or a favourite meal can make your children feel valued.
- **Quality time:** Do activities together like reading, talking or playing games. Make eye contact. Pay attention to details. Eat meals together as a family.
- **Acts of service:** Do chores together. Work on projects together. Pick children up on time. Help them with daily tasks like tying their shoelaces.

Tell your child about members of your family and how important they are. Ask your child, "What do you love most about being part of this family?"



Test your knowledge on ...

Healthy family relationships

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Families should support parents/caregivers rather than take over the parenting of children. (T) (F)
2. Parents can use different words and actions to let their children know that they are loved. (T) (F)



4 Positive discipline



Positive discipline helps parents/caregivers guide children's behaviour so they learn about the boundaries in life. Positive discipline focuses on gently and gradually teaching children the skills they need to develop into self-managing adults.

Did you know?



Punishment and positive discipline are not the same thing!

Punishment:

- is a penalty imposed on children for doing something adults think is wrong;
- uses fear to force children to behave;
- can be physically violent – for example, spanking, slapping or hitting; and
- can be verbally violent – for example, shouting, name-calling and using insults.

Positive discipline:

- guides children to learn what to do and what not to do;
- respects children's developmental needs and rights; and
- is physically and verbally non-violent.



Why use positive discipline instead of punishment?

- Using positive discipline practices, such as setting routines, talking with children and guiding them with love, results in children who are in control of themselves.
- Positive discipline builds resilience and trust, and better behaviour in the long run.
- Positive discipline encourages children to make choices and solve problems. It also teaches them to take responsibility.
- Positive discipline requires consistency from parents/caregivers. We provide important examples for our children – they are samples of our examples.
- Young children's brains are like sponges – they grow more than a million new connections every second. When a child is shouted at or hit, stress hormones are released that can affect their brain development, learning and even their health later in life.
- Hitting babies or young children does not teach them right from wrong. It only teaches them to be fearful and angry.

Try this!

Here are some tips on using positive discipline.

- Always be patient, respectful and consistent.
- Choose discipline methods suited to your child's age and development level. Remember, babies can't yet understand the effects of their actions.
- Structure the environment by setting daily routines, such as keeping regular times for meals and bedtime. Basic rules help children understand what needs to be done. For example, "We play with balls outside" and "We pack away toys after playing with them".
- Notice positive behaviour – it encourages more positive behaviour. For example, say, "It looks like the two of you are playing well together."

- Ignore misbehaviour such as showing off, sulking, whining and temper tantrums. (Remember: Never ignore behaviour if children are hurting others or putting themselves in danger!)
- Distract your child. (This works well with babies.) For example, if children play with something dangerous, give them something safe to play with.
- Control the situation, not the child. Do this by giving choices. For example, say, “Do you want to wear this shirt or that one?” Instead of giving orders, set limits. For example, allow children to explore and touch things, but if they do something dangerous, distract them by replacing the item with something else.
- Teach children about cause and effect. This helps them learn to take responsibility for their actions. For example, if your children play with a pot and leave it outside, say, “Oh dear! I can’t cook food for you because I don’t have the pot I need. Please can you fetch it for me?”

Describe a situation where a child needs guidance to learn appropriate behaviour. Ask your child to suggest possible actions that could help.



Test your knowledge on ...



Positive discipline

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. The goal of discipline is for children to always follow what we tell them do. (T) (F)
2. Positive discipline guides children in a respectful way to manage their own behaviour. (T) (F)



5 Loss and trauma

Loss is the experience of being permanently separated from someone or something important to you. Trauma happens when someone faces or is threatened by death, serious harm or violence, including physical or sexual abuse.

Children can experience loss and trauma from the time they are born.

Children experience loss and/or trauma in different ways.

Loss and trauma can cause feelings of grief, sadness, confusion and abandonment. They can have a big impact on a child's emotional and psychological well-being.

Seeking professional help can address the loss and/or trauma experienced by children. It supports children's mental health and healthy development, helps them cope better in early learning settings and enables them to manage difficult emotions.

The way parents/caregivers deal with their own loss and/or trauma influences how their children will deal with these.

Children should be helped to understand loss as a natural part of life.



Did you know?



Children can face many types of loss. The divorce or separation of parents disrupts existing living arrangements, routines and relationships. Children may also experience the death of a loved one or pet, as well as the ending of friendships. Illness, injury or disability can mean losing physical abilities, independence or good health. Some children may become homeless. Others who are exposed to trauma, abuse or violence may lose their sense of innocence and trust in the world. Without proper support to help them make sense of these losses, children are more likely to act out negatively and suffer from serious long-term effects.

Dealing with loss and trauma is a process that each baby and child goes through in their own way and at their own pace.

Symptoms of loss: Because babies and young children experience loss as a feeling that they do not like, they may moan, nag or behave oddly, seemingly without any clear cause.

- **Children from birth to 2 years** may also have changes in sleep patterns, appetite and mood, and become more clingy or irritable.
- **Children aged 2–5 years** may also express loss and grief through play and drawing. They may also return to earlier behaviours that are more usual in younger children (for example, bedwetting and having tantrums).

Symptoms of trauma: Babies and young children who have experienced trauma may be easily startled, feel tense or nervous, have difficulty sleeping, have temper tantrums, cry uncontrollably and/or be aggressive. You may notice that they try to stay away from places, objects and people that remind them of the traumatic event. They may also have flashbacks, bad dreams and frightening thoughts; feel guilty; blame themselves for what happened; and/or be uninterested in taking part in activities.



Phone: 116
(24 hours, toll free)

Try this!

We can help children who are dealing with loss and/or trauma.

- Provide children with a safe and caring space to share their feelings. Encourage open communication and let them know it's okay to talk about emotions.
- Listen to children without judging or interrupting when they talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- Tell children that what they are feeling is normal after experiencing loss or trauma. Let them know it's okay to grieve in their own way.
- Stick to regular routines as much as possible. This helps children feel safe and secure.
- Encourage children to use healthy ways of managing difficult feelings, for example, by talking, writing, drawing, playing or doing simple relaxation exercises like taking slow, deep breaths in and out.
- If children are struggling to cope, seek professional help from social workers or Childline South Africa, a free national helpline service.

Tell your child a story about a baby animal that loses its parents. Describe its feelings and how it copes.



Test your knowledge on ...

Loss and trauma

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Loss and trauma don't affect children under the age of 5 years.
(T) (F)
2. Letting children talk about difficult feelings only makes things worse for them. (T) (F)





6 Health and nutrition

Children thrive when they receive good nutrition and love, have opportunities to play and communicate, are protected from disease and injury, and can access healthcare and additional care or support when they need it.



Parents/caregivers can support children's healthy growth and development.



Good nutrition is important for mothers and children so that children can grow and be healthy.



Good nutrition starts with breastfeeding. Babies need only breastmilk during the first 6 months of life. Breastfeeding should continue until children are at least 2 years old.



Breastfeeding helps keep babies healthy and builds a strong immune system.



From 6 months of age, children need enough good quality food.



Parents/caregivers can help children develop and learn through simple actions that show you love them – for example, by responding to their needs and likes/dislikes, holding them close, and playing, singing, talking and reading with them.



Immunisations are free and they protect babies and children from common childhood illnesses and disease.



Parents/caregivers can protect children from injury by making sure that they play in safe places.



When children are sick or injured, they need help from their parents/caregivers and/or a health worker.



Sometimes children need special care or support. Knowing what to do and where to go helps you and them. For example, if your baby has a disability, you will need extra support with caring for and protecting your baby.

Did you know?



It is dangerous to use alcohol or other substances, including tobacco, during pregnancy. Drinking alcohol can lead to babies being born with foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). Babies with FAS are born with health impairments and intellectual and physical disabilities. This means that they develop at a slower pace and may not reach all their milestones.

Immunisation uses special medicines called ‘vaccines’ to help protect babies’ and children’s bodies against specific (and serious) childhood diseases. The vaccines lower the chances of babies and children getting sick and protect them from the most dangerous effects of diseases. Most immunisations last for life. Find the full list of childhood vaccines on page 27 of your child’s *Road to Health* booklet. Remember: All these vaccines are free!



Try this!

Your simple actions can make a big difference for your children.

- **Show love:** Hold and talk, sing and play with your children regularly.
- **Protect:** Make sure each child has a *Road to Health* booklet and is fully immunised.
- **Protect:** Help prevent diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera by making sure your children wash their hands with soap and water.
- **Provide good nutrition:** Breastfeed babies until they are 2 years old. Feed children older than 6 months foods that help them to stay healthy and grow well. (See pages 4–7 of the *Road to Health* booklet.)
- **Provide healthcare:** Make sure that you know what the danger signs are (see page 3 of the *Road to Health* booklet). Take your child to the nearest clinic if you see any of the danger signs.
- **Get extra support:** Make sure your child has a birth certificate. You need this to apply for a child support grant.
- **Get extra support:** If you have a child with a disability, tell your healthcare worker so that you can be referred to a social worker for parenting support. Also, join a support group so you can share your experiences with other parents.

Make a healthy snack with your child.



Test your knowledge on ...

Health and nutrition

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Babies need food and water from the age of 3 months. (T) (F)
2. Vaccines protect babies and children against serious illnesses. (T) (F)





7 Play and creativity

Play is important for all children. It supports their learning, development and overall well-being.

Play is how children learn best.

Play is important for brain development. It helps children learn to think, solve problems, use their imagination and be creative, which will help them later at school and in life.

Play helps children develop physically, socially and emotionally.

Play helps children feel safe and secure.

Babies should play from birth. The most important stage for brain development is between birth and 2 years.

When parents/caregivers play with their babies and children, it strengthens the bond between them; builds trust, confidence and resilience; and supports language development.

Screen time should *never* replace play. Children under 2 years should not have any screen time – this includes no cellphones, tablets or TV. Children aged 2–5 years should watch only educational content that encourages them to join in. They should have no more than one hour of screen time on weekdays and no more than three hours over weekends.



The ways in which children play changes over time. Babies and very young children play on their own, but as they grow older, children want to play more with other children. Note that the ages below are a only guide – all children develop differently.

1 0–3 months: Babies make movements with their bodies and make sounds. They are exploring and learning about their environment.

2 0–2 years: Young children play alone and are not interested in playing with others.

3 2 years: Young children watch others playing. They ask questions about or comment on how the other children are playing.

4 2+ years: Young children play alongside each other, without talking to each other very much.

5 3+ years: Young children play together with other children, taking on different roles in the group in imaginative games.



Did you know?

Children learn language and communication through play. Talking to babies, even though they cannot talk back, helps to build the relationship between the baby and parent/caregiver and teaches babies about language and communication. Make-believe play – for example, playing shop – helps children develop communication, imagination and problem-solving skills. Talking with them during play – for example, discussing what they are doing and how they are feeling – boosts their language and thinking skills.



Try this!

Try these tips to help your children get the most out of their play.

- Play with your children regularly and let them play alone.
- Avoid always showing children the 'right' way to do something. Let them make mistakes – it's how they learn.
- Provide lots of different materials for babies and young children to play with.
- Think carefully about the toys you give to your children. Babies can easily choke on a small toy or parts of a toy. Do not buy toys that encourage violence, such as guns and knives.
- Use what you have at home. Let your children play with wooden spoons, pots, pans and plastic containers.
- Young children love to play with building blocks. Make your own by using big square blocks or pieces of wood.
- Make bath time a time to learn. Let your children play with empty plastic containers of different sizes in the bath.
- It is important for babies and young children to spend time playing outside, where they can run, jump and climb.
- Encourage children from an early age to pick up and pack away toys after each play session.



Use anything you have at home (for example, plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, old clothes) to make a toy with your child.



Test your knowledge on ...



Play and creativity

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Learning happens even when children play alone. (T) (F)
2. You don't have to buy expensive toys. Many everyday household items can be used for children to play with. (T) (F)





8 Physical development

'Physical development' means how the big and small muscles in babies' and young children's bodies grow and get stronger over time. This is important because children need strength, co-ordination and motor skills for everyday activities and learning.



Children develop physically at their own pace.



Good nutrition is important for children's physical development.



Parents/caregivers should have their babies' and children's growth monitored regularly at the clinic or by a doctor.



Play is important for big and small muscle development.

Parents/caregivers can stimulate their babies' and children's physical development in different ways.

Did you know?



Assistive devices such as baby walkers and jumpers or carrying a child on the back are often chosen due to adults' personal and cultural beliefs. They are mostly used to keep babies safe and/or entertained while parents/caregivers do chores. However, extended daily use of these devices may result in poor muscle tone or injury if the baby falls or tries to reach dangerous objects. These devices are not necessary. Providing opportunities for babies to play and move around is much better for their physical development.

Babies and young children reach physical milestones as they grow.

These milestones aren't strict rules. They are general guidelines of what most babies and young children can do at different stages. We can use them to help identify possible physical disabilities at an early stage.



2 months: I can raise my chest and head by pushing upwards with my arms. I can hold my head steady.



3–5 months: I can fix my eyes on an object you show me.



5 months: I can sit upright, if I am supported.



11 months: I can stand on my own.



8 months: I start to crawl. I can stand when supported.



7 months: I can sit on my own.



13–15 months: I take my first steps. I am learning to walk on my own.



2 years: I start trying to climb stairs, walk backwards, run and jump.



3–5 years: I can jump, hop, skip, run, tear up paper and cut using child-sized scissors.

What should I do if my child doesn't reach their milestones? If you are worried that something is wrong, visit a healthcare clinic or doctor with your child.

Try this!

These games and activities support your children's physical development.

- Encourage babies and children to be active. They should not spend lots of time being still or sitting down.
- Hang colourful objects on pieces of string over where babies lie so they can try to grab them. Put colourful objects a little in front of babies so they must crawl to reach them.
- Give babies and children objects with different textures – smooth, rough, soft, hard – to hold and feel.
- Let children play outside regularly. Encourage them to run, jump, hop, skip, balance and climb.
- Play outside games together (for example, throwing, catching and kicking balls, hide-and-seek).
- Take children on walks and to the park.
- Let children help with simple tasks at home, such as carrying non-breakable objects and hanging up the washing.

Play a ball game with your child: roll the ball to your baby or play catch-and-throw with your young child.



Test your knowledge on ...

Physical development

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. All babies and children reach the same milestones at the same age. (T) (F)
2. Play is important for children's muscle development. (T) (F)



9 Social and emotional development and building confidence



Over time, babies and young children need to be helped to understand how they fit into the world, to handle their own feelings and to believe in their own abilities.



Parents/caregivers can support children's social and emotional development.



Babies and young children learn social and emotional behaviour from watching the behaviour of adults and other children.



Babies and young children develop socially and emotionally in different ways. They need to be allowed to safely experiment with new behaviours.



Social development helps children understand the people they live with in their community.



Parents/caregivers can help babies and young children understand and manage their emotions.



Play is important for children's social and emotional development. It helps them to build confidence and self-esteem.

Friendships and playing with others are important for social and emotional development.

Young children need friends to play with. This teaches them how to get along with others. Through playing together, children learn important social skills like how to share, take turns, care for others and manage conflict.

Building children's confidence supports healthy social and emotional development. Being confident helps children feel able to do things and want to try something new. It also helps them cope better with challenges and build strong relationships with others. You can build your children's confidence by praising them for trying and for when they succeed; letting them try things on their own; offering them choices; and allowing them to problem-solve.

Did you know?



Although parents/caregivers often find children's tantrums difficult to deal with, tantrums are a normal part of early childhood. When children have a tantrum, they lose control of their feelings and behaviour. They may throw themselves on the floor, kick and scream. Acting aggressively towards the child – for example, shouting or smacking – only makes things worse and teaches them that violence is acceptable. Rather bend down to child-level, acknowledge the child's feelings and offer a positive behaviour choice.

Try this!

You can support your children's social and emotional development in different ways.

- Play, talk and laugh with your children. This shows them that you are interested in them and that they are interesting.
- Praise your children so that they know you are proud of what they are learning to do.
- Let your children help around the house. By doing this, they learn valuable social skills for daily life such as sharing, helping and getting along with others.

- Act with love and kindness towards other people and express your emotions in positive ways. Children watch and copy the behaviour of their parents/caregivers.
- Create a safe environment where your children can explore and discover things about the world on their own. This helps to build their confidence.
- Set simple and reasonable rules and limits on what your children can and cannot do – and then stick to these rules. This helps children feel secure.
- Have confidence in your children – believe that they can succeed. This helps them to feel good about themselves and to have an ‘I can’ attitude.
- Allow your children to make decisions, where appropriate – for example, to choose which T-shirt to wear. Giving them responsibility for small decisions teaches them how to gradually gain control over their lives.

With your child, draw pictures of faces showing different feelings/emotions. Together choose a different ‘face’ to discuss each morning.



Test your knowledge on ...



Social and emotional development and building confidence

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Playing with other children is important for children’s social and emotional development. (T) (F)
2. Children learn how to treat other people by watching how adults act towards others. (T) (F)



10 Brain development and language stimulation

Providing stimulation for babies and young children is important for the development of their brains.



Learning starts at home, not when children join an early childhood development (ECD) programme.



When brain development takes place, it contributes to the development of language, memory, thinking, reasoning and problem-solving.



Exposing babies and children to different environments and playing with them helps build strong connections that assist brain development.



Babies can understand simple adult communication before they can talk. They need people to talk to them so they can learn how to use language.



Saying rhymes and singing songs with babies and children supports the learning of language. It also encourages memory development and creativity.



Telling stories and reading to babies and children helps them develop language, thinking, memory and visualisation skills.



Babies and children can learn more than one language at the same time.

Each baby and young child is unique. They all develop language and communication skills at their own pace.

Did you know?



The first 1,000 days of life – from conception to the age of 2 years – are very important for brain development. Babies' brains make up to 1,000 new connections per second – more than at any other life stage. By the age of 5 years, a child's brain is 90 per cent of its adult size. Children's early experiences, including their relationships with parents/caregivers, shape their brain development and have lifelong impacts on learning, behaviour, and physical and mental health.

How to support brain development

Regularly expose children to a variety of activities. These include reading, singing, talking, physical activities, memory games, construction play, make-believe play and going outside. These activities encourage stronger connections to form in the brain, which provide the basic 'hardware' for children to develop the skills and abilities they need for success at school and in life.



Talk and sing! Language provides a foundation for children's development in other areas. Babies and young children bond with their parents/caregivers through spoken language. Talking to babies and young children, saying rhymes and singing songs stimulate children's language development. When babies start talking, they use just single words. Then they learn to put a few words together before they develop the ability to talk in short sentences. Most children can communicate quite complex ideas by the age of 3 years.



Play, play, play! Play is central to brain development – it strengthens the brain connections that support thinking, learning and memory. Through talking, pretending and interacting during play children learn to plan, experiment, find solutions and use language. Play also encourages curiosity and creativity, helping children understand how things work and explore new ideas.



Read, read, read! Cuddle together for quiet times with a book right from when babies are born. Encourage older babies and young children to turn the pages and to point to what they see. Ask children how the story characters might be feeling and wonder together what will happen next. Let your children choose the books that you read together – the more interested they are in the book, the more they will benefit from you reading it to them. And reading with your children teaches much more than information about the world. Children learn that you value their interests and choices and that you love them and enjoy being close to them. Research shows that lifelong readers are those children who were read to when they were young.



Try this!

Make a book with your child. Invite your child to draw the pictures, while you write the words. Then, read it together!



Get free books and stories!



Visit these websites to find books and stories to share with your children:

- **Book Dash:** <https://bookdash.org/books/>
- **Mikhulu Trust:** <https://mikhulutrust.org/resources/for-parents/>
- **Nal'ibali:** <https://nalibali.org/kids-corner/>
- **Stories for Joy, Department of Basic Education:**
<https://ecdinfohub.org/stories-for-joy/>

Test your knowledge on ...



Brain development and language stimulation

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).

The answers are on page 43.

1. Talking to very young babies is a waste of time because they can't understand what you are saying. (T) (F)
2. Stories, rhymes and songs help develop the language skills of babies and young children. (T) (F)



11 Child safety and protection

All children deserve to grow up in a safe environment, free from objects or substances that could harm or injure them and free from abuse and neglect.



Children need loving care so that they can develop and grow.



Parents/caregivers should watch over children carefully to make sure that they are always safe and do not get hurt.



Young children should be kept away from dangerous areas.



Potentially dangerous objects should be kept out of children's reach.



A first aid box must be kept at home and used for small injuries. It must be updated from time to time.



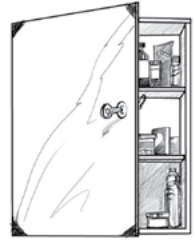
If children are injured, they should be taken to the nearest clinic as soon as possible.

Abused children should be comforted and taken to the nearest clinic or crisis centre.

Protect children from objects that could harm them. Creating a safe home environment is something all parents/caregivers should do.

- Make sure that no broken glass or open food cans are lying around where children play.
- Make sure that children do not play near open fires or hot stoves.

- Be aware that children can accidentally pull over lamps or candles and start a fire or burn themselves.
- There are many items that are dangerous to children – for example, knives, scissors, paraffin, poisons, matches and medicines. Store these items where children cannot reach them, even if they were to climb onto a chair.
- Test children's bath water with your elbow before putting them in it. If the water feels too hot to you, then it will probably burn them.
- If you suspect your child has swallowed or had contact with something poisonous, contact the Poisons Information Helpline immediately to get advice.



Other ways to protect children

- **Protect babies and children from harmful behaviour.** This means keeping them safe from experiencing or witnessing any physical, sexual or emotional abuse by older children or adults. Some parents/ caregivers do not care properly for their children's physical needs. This neglect can put children's lives in danger. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, seek immediate safety and medical care for the child, and report your concerns to the relevant child protection authorities (for example, a social worker, the South African Police Service or a designated child protection service) in line with South African law.

Poisons Information Helpline



Phone: 0861 555 777

Childline South Africa



Phone: 116
(24 hours, toll free)

SASSA website



<https://www.gov.za/services/child-care-social-benefits/child-support-grant>

- **If you are unable to look after your own children** – for example, when you go to work – you must find someone you trust to take care of them. If you choose to send your children to an ECD centre, find one that is registered and has a good reputation in your community. Ask other parents/caregivers you know for recommendations.
- **Taking care of children's needs can be expensive.** If you need help with these costs, you may be able to register for a child support grant. Visit the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) website or office nearest to you to find out if you qualify for this help.

Try this!

Play 'hot or not?' with your child by placing small items, including matches, a candle and pictures of hot objects like an iron, kettle or stove, in a packet. Let your child choose one and ask, "Is it hot or not?". Practise saying together, "If it's hot, I don't touch. I call an adult."



Test your knowledge on ...

Child safety and protection

Decide whether each statement is **true** (T) or **false** (F).
The answers are on page 43.

1. Anything that could harm a child should be kept out of reach.
(T) (F)
2. No one has the right to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse children or neglect them. (T) (F)



Answers



Page 8: (1) true, (2) true, (3) true; **Page 12:** (1) false, (2) false;
Page 16: (1) true, (2) true; **Page 19:** (1) false, (2) true; **Page 22:** (1) false,
(2) false; **Page 25:** (1) false, (2) true; **Page 29:** (1) true, (2) true; **Page 32:**
(1) false, (2) true; **Page 35:** (1) true, (2) true; **Page 39:** (1) false, (2) true;
Page 42: (1) true, (2) true

Resources

Book Dash

Scan the QR code:



Childline South Africa



Phone:
116

Department of Home Affairs



Phone:
0800 601 190



Email:
hacc@dha.gov.za

Gender-Based Violence Command Centre



Phone:
0800 428 428



SMS:
*120*7867

LifeLine

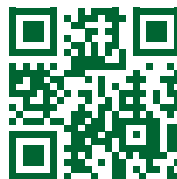


Phone:
0861 322 322



Email:
safetalking@
lifeline.co.za

Scan the
QR code:



**Mental Health
Helpline**



Phone:
0800 456 789



SMS: 31393

Mikhulu Trust

Scan the QR code:



Nal'ibali

Scan the QR code:



**Poisons
Information
Helpline**



Phone:
0861 555 777

SASSA

Visit your local
office or scan the
QR code:



**Stories for Joy,
Department of
Basic Education**

Scan the QR code:



