



The First 1000 Days

What is meant by the first 100 days?



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first 1000 days?

The First 1000 days are the most important days in a baby's life. These are the key moments in which they will learn how to love and be loved, how to communicate effectively and most of all will determine how well their brain and body develop. The first 1,000 days of life - the time spanning roughly between conception and one's second birthday - is a unique period of opportunity when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan are established. (Cusick & Georgieff, 2013). The first 1000 days of life, from conception to age two significantly influence the outcomes for children, parents, and families, throughout the life course, and from generation to generation. (NHS Wales, *Reports* 2018). Conclusively it is agreed that the first 1000 days are those between conception and the second birthday, and these are the most important for the child's development and growth both physically and mentally.

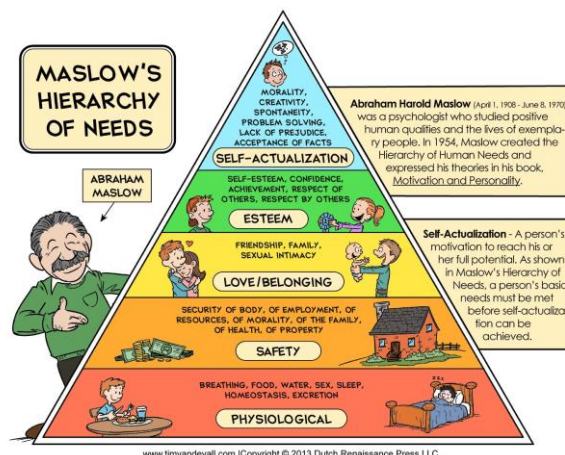
The importance of good nutrition during the first 1000 days



Why Nutrition Matters

Good nutrition during pregnancy and the first years of a child's life provides the essential building blocks for brain development, healthy growth and a strong immune system. In addition, a growing body of scientific research indicates that the foundations for lifelong health—including predispositions to obesity and certain chronic diseases—are largely set during this 1,000 day period. (Garner, 2022). A healthy diet is an important part of a healthy lifestyle at any time but is especially vital if you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy. Eating healthily during pregnancy will help your baby to develop and grow. You do not need to go on a special diet, but it's important to eat a variety of different foods every day to get the right balance of nutrients that you and your baby need. It's best to get vitamins and minerals from the foods you eat, but when you're pregnant you need to take a folic acid supplement as well, to make sure you get everything you need. (NHS, 2023)

Good nutrition during pregnancy and immediately after is important as it contributes to brain development, growth and overall health of the baby. Most health organizations will promote breast feeding as the best form of nutrients for a baby, however, many new mothers lack the support to meet this recommendation. Breastmilk fact: breast milk is a bioactive fluid . It contains proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals plus antibodies to fight germs. It also contains hormones that help your baby's development. (NCT (National Childbirth Trust), 2020). Helping a baby's brain develop in the maximum capacity can be a big responsibility for a mother and this is recognized by organisations such as the NHS. The NHS offer help with how to best feed baby and how to differentiate between a good diet and a bad diet, this help is available to new mothers through pregnancy, birth and the following years.





Maslow (1954) states that we have a hierarchy of needs and this forms a pyramid. Looking at the pyramid, at the base there is physiological needs. This refers to food, warmth, water and rest. These are the basic needs of a baby and as long as these are met the baby will grow to be happy and healthy. Food and water are the main source of nutrients, vitamins and minerals, without these a baby may become very unwell and need medical attention. Zinc has been proven to be a very important supplement in baby's diet and is now made as one of the main ingredients in baby formula to help non breast feeding mothers give their baby the best chance at consuming enough zinc to promote healthy brain development. Without good nutrition the infant may not develop at the same rate as their peer and this could then cause issues in future development and educational needs.

The importance of making a baby feel safe



(Robinson, 2023) explains that a secure attachment bond is a key factor in the way your baby's brain will arrange itself and develop itself emotionally, socially and physically. A secure attachment is built from the non verbal communication between a baby and its mother or carer. Ensuring the baby has their needs met as soon as possible will help baby learn to trust and connect with their mother. The benefits of a secure attachment are eagerness to learn, trust, consideration for others and a healthy self awareness, these are all attributes a child will need throughout their life and into adulthood. An insecure attachment bond is one where the child's needs are not met and this leads to the child not

knowing how to trust, rely on others or build positive relationships. A child with insecure attachment can have problems later in life with their own identity and learning to relate to others. There is more information on attachment and the affects of this on the following link: [Building a Secure Attachment Bond with Your Baby - HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-child/attachment-bond-with-your-baby.htm)



A few ways the mother could meet the baby's needs

and make them feel safe and loved are, ensuring the baby is warm and clean and ensuring the nappy is changed as soon as possible, leaving a baby sit in a dirty nappy can be degrading and bad for their health causing rashes or more serious health affects. Ensure the infant is fed the correct foods in the correct amounts, if the baby seems more hungry than usual or needs less food than usual speak to a health visitor for advice and see if there are any changes that can be made to their diet to help. Encourage a routine for the baby and ensure they have a basic day to day that can help settle them and prepare them for what will happen next. Using positive behaviour around the infant will let them know the mother is a welcoming and warm person and the infant is not in danger of being hurt.

Attachment is a clinical term used to describe "a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1997) In particular, attachment theory highlights the importance of a child's emotional bond with their primary caregivers. Disruption to or loss of this bond can affect a child emotionally and psychologically into adulthood, and have an impact on their future relationships. (NSPCC, 2021). The NSPCC also said that,

Attachments are formed in different ways during the phases of a child's development.

Antenatal (before birth)

During the antenatal period, parents and carers can form a bond with their child. Any bonds formed before birth can have a positive impact on the relationship between babies and their caregivers once the child is born (Condon and Corkindale, 1997)6.

Birth until 6 weeks

This is sometimes referred to as the pre-attachment phase because the baby doesn't appear to show an attachment to any specific caregiver. However, parents and carers who provide a nurturing environment and are responsive to their babies needs can lay the foundation for secure attachments to form (Bowlby, 1997)7.

6 weeks until 6-8 months

During this stage of their development, a baby might start to show a preference for their primary and secondary caregivers (often the mother and father).

6-8 months until 18 months-2 years

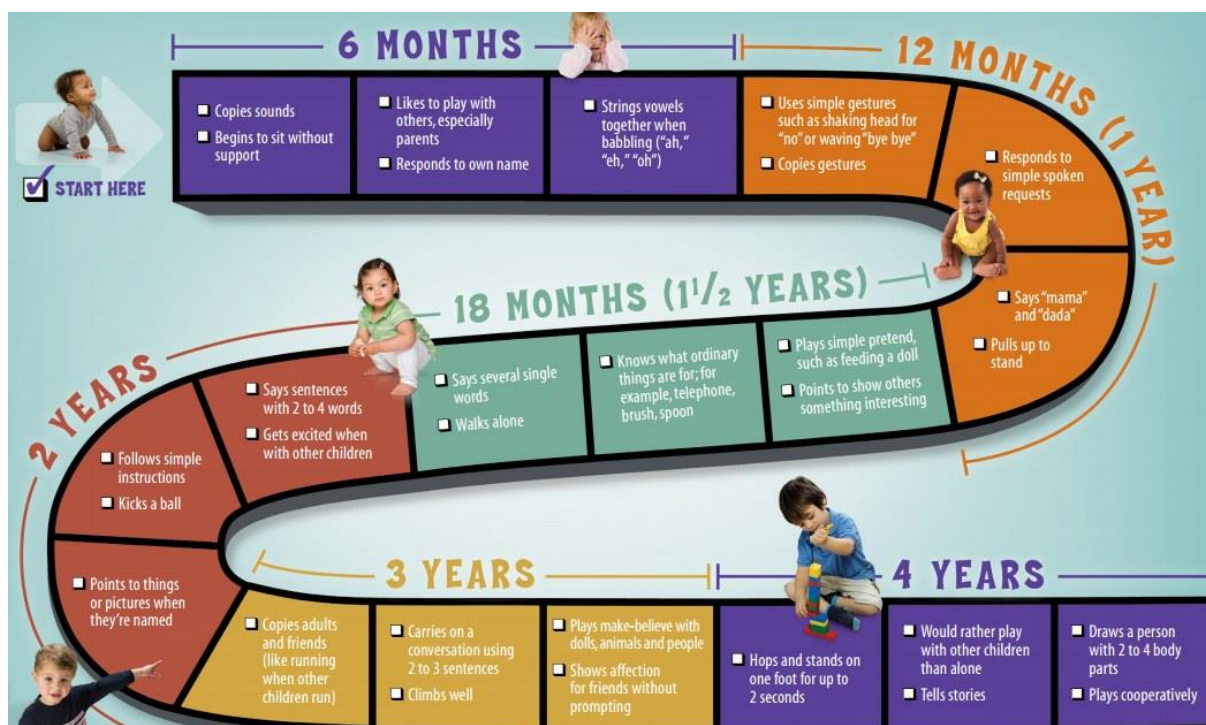
During this period a child begins to show a strong attachment to their primary caregivers. Babies start to develop separation anxiety during this phase and can become upset when their caregiver leaves, even for short periods (Bowlby, 1997)8.

18 months – 2 years onwards

At this point children are likely to become less dependent on their primary caregiver, particularly if they feel secure and confident the caregiver will return and be responsive in times of need (Bowlby, 1997)9. Children who have experienced abuse, neglect and trauma might develop coping strategies that can make it more complicated to recognise attachment issues. As well as affecting attachment, experiencing trauma can have an impact on a child's brain development. Children might need extra support to help strengthen the architecture of their brain (NSPCC, 2023). Trauma can affect babies, children, and adults all through their lives in different ways, it can lead to behavioural issues and lack of emotion toward certain situations. Trauma should be treated appropriately and encouraged throughout their life.

John Bowlby (1944) believed that the infant's and mother's relationship during the first five years of life was crucial to socialization. According to Bowlby, if separation from the primary caregiver occurs during the critical period and there is no adequate substitute emotional care, the child will suffer from deprivation. This will lead to irreversible long-term consequences in the child's intellectual, social, and emotional development. (McLeod, 2023).

Physical development in the first 1000 days



Physical development is tracked from conception to adulthood, this is done with scans, height and weight measurements, fine and gross motor skills observations and other methods of development trackers. Some examples of child development milestones are, as written out by (NHS, 2023). By two months old it is expected that:

- Whilst laying on tummy, baby turns their head to the side
- Whilst laying on back, baby waves arms, legs and wiggles/squirms
- Briefly holds a toy when you place it in their hand
- Follows an object or person with both eyes

By four months old it is expected that:

- When laying on tummy, baby will hold their head straight up and look around
- When in a sitting position, baby will hold their head steady, without support
- Whilst laying on back, baby will bring hands together over the chest, touching their fingers
- When in a sitting position, baby should start to reach for a toy close by
- When baby has a toy in their hand, they will hold it whilst looking at it, waving it about and attempting to chew it

By six months old it is expected that:

- Baby will roll from their back to their tummy
- Baby will be able to sit up with support
- Baby will be able to get into a crawling position
- Be able to grasp a toy using both hands at once
- Reach a small object using their finger and pick it up using their thumb and all fingers
- Be able to pick up a small toy with one hand and pass it to the other
- Plays with feet when laying on back

By nine months old it is expected that:

- Sits without support
- Can get into sitting position from lying down
- Will pull to stand and take weight on feet
- May crawl
- Rolls over both ways

By twelve months old it is expected that:

- Sits well and gets into sitting position alone
- Pulls to stand from sitting position and can sit down again
- Walks around furniture
- May crawl or bottom shuffle
- May stand alone

- Help turn the pages of a book
- Throw a small ball
- Be able to pick up a piece of string with first finger and thumb

By eighteen months old it is expected that:

- Walks well
- Can walk upstairs holding an adults hand
- Can stack blocks on top of each other
- Turn the page of a book
- Put a small in their mouth, right side up

By two years old the child should be:

- Tries to kick a ball
- Runs well
- Jumps with both feet leaving the floor at the same time
- Holds pencil by using thumb and first two fingers
- Can string small items such as beads, pasta onto a string
- Drinks from a cup with no lid

Although this information is listed on the NHS website and is outlined as the milestones that should be met by these ages, every child is different, and in the first 1000 days some children will learn to walk and talk before stacking bricks, while other children will learn to stack bricks before walking and talking. If the parent is concerned over the development of their child there are resources out there for them to utilise, such as health visitors, nurseries, general practitioner or baby groups such as baby massage. These resources are for both advice and physical help.



Environment and surroundings



According to research, a poor family environment during a child's early years has been related to developmental delays. These include:

- Poor linguistic skills
- Behavioural issues
- A lack of school preparedness

Longer-term consequences have also been related to a child's early home environment. Examples of such outcomes are:

- Teen parenting
- High school graduation
- Employment and earnings as an adult (Lead Academy, 2023).

It could be said the above research is showing the importance of a healthy environment for the child from the beginning of their life to ensure they have the best opportunities throughout their childhood and into their adulthood. A poor family environment could be interpreted as a single parent with lack of resources and lack of support, or a mother in a domestic violence relationship where there is uncertainty over the safety of the child and the mother alike. To ensure a healthy environment the parent should try their best to ensure the health and safety of the child, and ensure they are always put at the forefront in the care of the family.

By ensuring the child has limitless opportunity to love and learn the child is more likely to do well in education, physical development and emotional development in the first 100 days. To conclude it is

apparent that everything that happens in the first 1000 days of the child's life are the most important steps that will be taken and will shape the child's life. It is important that parents and practitioners alike always ensure the child receives the best care and equal opportunity to promote their development and help them become the best versions of themselves. From pregnancy to birth there is a lot of responsibility on the mother to ensure the baby is receiving the right nutrients and hydration, however once the baby is born this responsibility falls on all responsible adults to ensure the baby's needs are being met and the baby is always safe, happy and healthy.

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