



The First 1000 Days

Introduction This Sway Portfolio is indicative of the important factors that shape a baby's growth and learning in the first 1000 days.



What do we mean by the first 1000 days?



The first 1000 days is inclusive from the time that they are conceived until they reach 24 months old. During this time, even from the very early stages, their body, brain, and their immune system continually grows and significantly develops. During this time, your own body has a huge impact on their future and development. Things such as your health in general, your nutrition and even your own stress levels can all have a major impact on the babies development during this time. Sarah Cusick, PhD and Michael K. Georgieff, MD (2013) states that the most rapid period of brain growth and its period of highest plasticity is in the last trimester of pregnancy and the first two years of life. Sarah Cusick, PhD and Michael K. Georgieff, MD (2013) also states that over the following months of the baby's life, their brains change shape and at birth, they develop areas such as the hippocampus and the visual and auditory cortices. In the first year a baby's brain rapidly grows the language processing area, early development of the prefrontal cortex which helps control the 'high processing' elements such as inhibition, flexibility and attention. If the development during this time is interrupted or affected, then this could have detrimental affects in the baby's later years. Jan (2023) states that being overanxious all the time the stress can affect the baby's emotional development and wellbeing and then sets out 10 steps to reduce stress during pregnancy. Jan (2023) also states that right from the start of pregnancy an overload of

stress hormone - cortisol - can cross from the mother's blood stream via the placenta to the unborn baby and that is why it is important to learn techniques to destress and relax. Being able to stay as stress-free as physically possible, reduced the risk of any stress related complications.

The Basics That Make Every Baby Happy!



The World Health Organisation (2020) highlights that children thrive when adults and those involved in their care respond effectively. The World Health Organisation call this 'Responsive Care'. The World Health Organisation (2020) explains 'Responsive Care' as turning children's signals and responding to the child's needs. By doing this, the adult forms a secure relationship with the child and binds a loving relationship with the child as they grow to trust that the adult knows what they need and know that the adult can effectively sooth them. This helps children feel safe knowing that the adult will support their needs. Adults can build strong bonds with babies by also making regular eye contact whilst cradling them, talking and singing and recompensing positive sounds and actions that the baby makes. The more we talk and engage with baby's, the more they learn and develop.

Elena Donovan Mauer (2017) reiterates that adults must create a pattern so that the baby knows that they are predictable and reliable. Elena Donovan Meuer (2017) also states that swaddle blankets are a good tool to help a baby feel safe and secure as this reminds them of the uterus and triggers the 'calming reflex'. The Calming Reflex is a theory set out by Harvey Karp, MD. He also states that 'For at least the first four months, all babies need to be swaddled. for some, that's all they need'. In practice, if nothing else works, try swaddling the bay and see if this helps sooth them.



Teaching Right From Wrong In The Right Way.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has a ten health discipline list that they feel best helps parents teach children acceptable behaviours as they grow and develop. These tips may not work for every child, so the list must be used appropriately. The AAP goes on to show that show and tell helps a child develop behaviours that teach them right from wrong by using calming words and actions. Setting limits and giving consequences means that children learn how far they can go, and when enough is enough. In practice, this could be when a family are at the beach, children are told how far they can go from their parents and if the child goes too far, then the consequence could be time away from playing and the child is only allowed to observe.

The AAP also highlight that listening is important. Let your child finish their sentence before stepping in to help solve any problem. Not only listening, but watching how your child reacts to certain situations can help a child develop. If a child is jealous or angry, then the actions after this could become a problem so talking through these feelings and letting a child express those feelings is a positive thing. Do not try and add words that the child has not used, or does not know the meaning of, as this will only hinder their progression. By sitting and listening and offering support when a child needs it also shows a child that adults are listening and giving attention. Don't let children feel like adults aren't listening. In practice, if a family are at a large indoor play area and something has happened out of view of adults, do not assume what has happened, take time, go down to their level and listen attentively to what the child is saying, only drawing conclusion when the child has stopped speaking.

Cristy James (2021) states that 'As children grow, positive attention plays a significant role in the initial development of a positive self-image. Positive attention helps children internalise the messages shared and helps them to develop confidence and the belief that they can achieve their dreams and goals'. (Cristy James, 2021, available at: [Child Development - The Importance of Positive Attention \(iu.edu\)](#)).

The AAP also highlights that babies learn from watching adults, so when spending time with babies, always ensure that an example is set. Do not do actions or use words that are not appropriate for young children as they will absorb the actions and repeat them. Following this, knowing when to ignore the unwanted behaviour could help with stopping it. If an adult reacts to bad behaviour, some children will repeat it because they know that they get a reaction. Not doing anything and ignoring it, could prove to be a boring outcome for the child, thus, they will stop doing it as the outcome wasn't desired.

Barnardo's states that 'Society can place unrealistic expectations on how young children should behave. It is important to remember that your child will have a unique emotional response to different situations as you would as an adult. It is important to always consider the age and stage of your child's development, which may be different to their actual age.' Barnardo's also provide practical helpful tips to help with a difficult situation with a toddler. Count to ten if the child is doing something naughty, but is not doing something dangerous. Try not to engage in an argument with young children about what happened, your child may not be able to understand that it was dangerous. Barnardo's also ask for adults not to ask more of your child than they can manage.

Tummy Time And The Importance.



Safe To Sleep (no date) describes tummy time as the times when you place your baby on the his or her stomach while the baby is awake and someone is watching. Tummy times has many benefits as Safe To Sleep (no date) highlights. It helps prevents the flat spots on the back of the baby's head and it also makes neck and shoulder muscles stronger so babies can start to sit up, crawl and walk. This time spent on thier front also helps to improve baby's motor skills and fine tune them as they spend more time on thier bellies.

NHSinform (2023) say that you can start tummy time as soon as a baby is born. Even if they are a little bit older, tummy time is a good exercise. If the baby is young, Parent Club (2023) say to keep the time spent on thier bellies short to begin with, gradually increasing the length of time as the baby gets more used to it and becomes more tolerant. Parent Club (2023) interject and claim that time on a baby's tummy can be a really fun activity. It helps develop core strength and body awareness. Parent Club (2023) go on to say that it is a really simple activity to do. All you need is a safe, clean and quiet space and then place the baby onto thier tummy. The activity is made more beneficial if they can see your face so that they still feel safe. Placing a baby on a colourful blanket and adding some soft or liked toys to the floor may also make the baby engage more in the activity. As a baby and parent play together, important connections are made between each other.

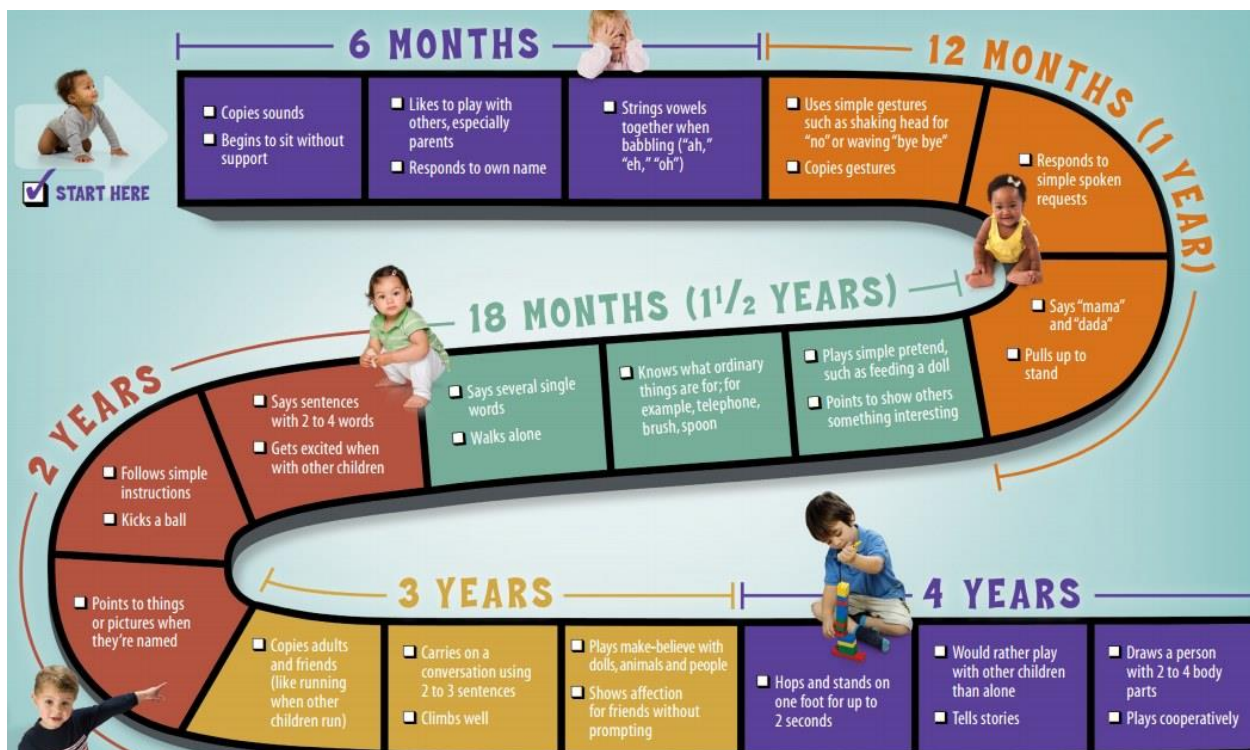
Good Nutrition And Healthy Babies



NHS Wales (2011) states that breastfeeding gives babies protection from disease and infections. A study has also shown that breastfed babies are less likely to develop illnesses such as asthma, eczema and even diabetes. NHS (2023) also highlights that breastfeeding has long-term benefits for babies that last all the way in to adulthood. Whether it is a short cycle of breastfeeding or a more long-term cycle, it will still have a positive impact, the protection lasts and has greater benefits. NHS (2023) add to NHS Wales (2011) findings that breastfeeding also helps reduce the risk of diarrhoea and vomiting and infections which in turn means that there will be less trips to the hospital. Surprisingly, it also helps lower the risk

of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). NHS (2023) strongly suggest that breast milk is recommended for around the first six months of the baby's life. Whilst weaning, breast milk should go side by side with food for as long as the baby will take it to help them grow and develop. NHS (2023) says that a baby should start being weaned at around six months of age. Starting off with small amounts once a day, at a time that suits both mum and baby. Blended food is better and start by providing food such as pureed fruit and vegetables. This can be provided along side the normal intake of breast milk. Always make sure that food is properly cooked and then cooled to a suitable temperature before feeding it. By adding foods that are not sweet means the baby will be introduced to a range of flavours, not just sweet which in turn means that the baby will have a more varied diet. NHS (2023) highlights the importance of adding any food that can trigger allergies one at a time. Do not over provide foods such as eggs, cows milk, nuts and peanuts and foods that contain wheat, soya, shellfish, seeds and fish. Only if they are non-reactive should you continue to feed these to a baby. Parents also need to introduce food in other ways, such as baby-led weaning. This is where the parent gives thier baby finger food and lets them touch and taste the food as they like. Foods such as fruit and soft vegetables, and even soft crisps, are idea for this exercise. Along side weaning a baby from milk, it is important to keep the baby hydrated. During meal times, baby's should be given sips of water from either a beaker or a small cup, depending on the baby's ability.

Meeting Developmental Milestones



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022) say that babies by two months of age should be able to calm themselves down when they are spoken to, cuddled, rocked or picked up. At this age a two month old should be able to look directly at faces and seem happy to see a parent when they are approached. They should also be able to smile back at anyone that smiles at them. At this age, babies

should be able to make other sounds, such as cooing, ooo, and aahh. Cambridgeshire Community Services (2023) add that by two months of age, babies should be able to move their head from side to side whilst they are on their tummy. They should also be able to lay on their back and wave their arms and kick their legs. Babies should be able to hold toys for a short period if they are placed into their hands. Cambridgeshire Community Services (2023) also highlight that by this age, a baby should be able to turn to voices in the room and deliberately make eye contact with parents. By the age of four months old, babies should be able to support their head without support and be able to look around. Fine motor skills have now progressed and babies should be able to bring their hands together over their chest and touching their fingers whilst laying on the ground. Toys are now objects that the baby can hold and wave them around and they may also use them to chew on. Moving onto communication at this age, babies should be able to recognise themselves in a mirror and attempt to communicate. Babies should now be laughing softly and become excited if their parent re-enters the room after leaving for a time. At this age, a babies will be able to make high pitched squeals as a result of pent up excitement. By six months old, babies should be able to completely roll over from their tummy to their back or vice versa. Sitting up is now a little easier so with some support, the babies will be able to complete this task. Both hands can now grab toys and keep hold of them and words such as 'da' and 'ga' and 'ka' are able to be made. At nine months old, the development has increase a considerable amount. Babies should be able to sit without support, can fully sit up from laying down and even start to weight bear and hold on to furniture, adults or other children. Sounds can now be imitated and they can follow simple instructions, such as 'pass that to me'. Babies can now recognise people close the them and can become clingy. At twelve months, babies should now be able to stand up and sit down unaided, walk around using furniture and even crawl or shuffle along on their bottoms. Babies should now have the coordination to throw objects such as a ball and even help turn the pages of a book. Their speech should have developed and now they should be able to say words such as mamma or dada. They should also be responding to their name. By eighteen months of age, babies should be well along the way to the development of walking on flat surfaces as well as steps or stairs. They should also be able to place blocks on top of each other and firmly secure them. By now, communication should have also developed into using single different words. Recognising body parts should now be evident and enjoys activities such as nursery rhymes and may even be able to sing, or act, along. By two years old, the toddler should now be running, jumping with both feet, hold a pencil with their thumb and two fingers and drink from a cup without the need of a lid. By now, the toddler should know basic objects and converse what they are and be able to string a sentence of a few words together.

Play Time!



Raisingchildren.net (2022) highlight the importance of play for newborn babies development, learning and wellbeing, as well as bonding. Learning at such a young ages does not including playing on the swings, nor sliding down the slide. It is more gentle play, such as tickling, cuddling, blowing raspberries on body parts, counting fingers and toes and singing. Raisingchildren.net (2022) says that newborn babies love anything that rhymes and involves touching. Touching soft objects such as teddies or other plush toys also stimulate play and other sensory activities. When carrying out nappy changes, this is a great time to play. Turn something that can become quite stressful for babies into something fun and enjoyable. Raisingchildren.net (2022) also highlights the importance of change the scenery and finding new things for the baby to look at and focus on. Outdoors in the park, or even shops, is beneficial.

Appropriate Clothing!



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The NHS (2021) highlights that babies grow very fast and because of this, the first few weeks of the baby's life, new parents need to be prepared with the right clothes. A typical wardrobe for a baby should include the basics, such as, several baby grows and stretch suits for both day and night use. Different thickness cardigans such as wool or cotton. Four vests as well as a shawl or blanket to wrap the baby up in. If the weather is cold then items such as a wooly hat and mittens are a must and if the weather is very hot, ensure that the baby has a sun hat to keep the sun out of their eyes.

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