

Ten Ways to Give Your Baby a Great Start in Life

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Research clearly shows that the brain and personality of a child is developing in dramatic ways during the first years of life. What you do in the first three years of your child's life directly impacts the adult your child will become. Quite simply, the first years last forever.

Here are ways to get your child off to a great start:

Hold Your Baby: Cuddle your baby often; rock him; hug and kiss him as you feed or change him. **Never hit or shake your baby!**

Respond to Your Baby's Signals: Try to understand what your baby is feeling or telling you with her facial expressions, movement, or sounds.

Talk, Sing, and Read to Your Baby: Talk about what you are doing; talk about what your baby is doing, name the things in your child's world. Say rhymes, recite poetry, and play music. Share looking at and handling sturdy picture books.

Play With Your Baby: Have fun together! The greatest gift you can give your child is your time and attention. Parents are the most important people in a child's life.

Establish Rituals and Routines: Children enjoy the security of routines. Regular times for meals, naps, and bedtime give structure to a young child's day.

Encourage Safe Exploration and Play: Introduce her to a variety of tastes and things to touch. Childproof your home so that your baby can safely crawl or toddle with few restrains. Limit television.

Give Your Child a Healthy Start: Make sure he has regular checkups, on-time immunizations, plenty of rest, and a well-balanced diet. Never put your baby at risk by delaying his shots; they can be obtained through the health department as well as private doctors.

Recognize that Each Child is Unique: Every child is a very special gift with individual temperaments, talents, appearance and growth patterns. Never compare children. Look for and encourage the special gifts your child brings.

Emphasize the Positive: Say positive things to your child. **Catch your child being good** ...and her behavior will improve. Teach your child limits. Always use discipline as an opportunity to teach good behavior and self-control.

Take Care of Yourself: If you are tired, unhappy, or irritable, your child will suffer. Get enough rest, maintain supportive relationships, and add some interesting experiences or hobbies to your life!