

THE NEW AGE PARENTS E-BOOK



I just had a baby!

A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR NEW PARENTS

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10 Newborn Reflexes Every Parent Should Know

By Dorothea Chow

1. Rooting reflex

This occurs when you touch your baby's cheek, and he turns towards the same direction, with his mouth open. It could mean that your baby is hungry. New mums may mistake this as a definite cue for hunger, when actually you could be stimulating his reflex action by stroking his cheek with your hand or clothes, accidentally or otherwise.

2. Sucking reflex

Sucking (and swallowing) is triggered when a finger or nipple (breast or bottle) is placed into the baby's mouth, applying pressure to the roof of his mouth. The sucking action can be quite strong and rapid, which sometimes may look like your baby is chomping down on your breast!

A newborn baby loves to suck, and not always because he's hungry. Sucking when not hungry is often referred to as 'non-nutritive sucking' or 'comfort sucking', which can act as a coping mechanism for some babies. Babies who suck for comfort may seem to want to 'feed' frequently or for extended periods of time.

3. Moro reflex (also called startle reflex)

Whenever there is any sudden movement or loud noise, your baby will fling his arms out, fingers outstretched, extend his legs, and then quickly pull his arms back towards the body in a hugging gesture. Sometimes, he may tremble or cry.

You can minimize the chances of your baby waking himself up during naps by swaddling him tightly (but not too tight) to prevent any jerky movements from rousing him prematurely.

4. Gag reflex

The 'gag reflex' is triggered when your baby swallows too much milk or food. Baby reacts by closing off his throat, which causes his tongue to push the excess milk or food out of his mouth.

5. Crawling reflex

When you place your newborn on his stomach, he will usually draw his knees up under his belly in a fetal position. He will also kick his legs out and wiggle about in a crawling motion. If you apply firm pressure to the soles of his feet, you will see him trying to push forward. It is therefore very important that you never leave your baby unattended on something high as a bed or changing table, even if he hasn't started to flip or crawl formally yet.

6. Babinski's reflex

A gentle stroke on the sole of your baby's feet (heel to toe) will trigger his foot to turn in with toes stretched up. This reflex may be handy in helping to protect baby against falling.

7. Walking (or stepping) reflex

When you touch the soles of you baby's feet (versus stroke), they will curl in their toes. For the first two months or so, newborn babies will simulate a walking or stepping movement when you hold them upright with their feet on a flat surface. This may help to prepare them to do some actual walking several months down the road.

8. Grasp (or palmar grasp) reflex

When any object (or your finger) is pressed into baby's palm or brought very near to him, your baby will immediately close his fingers around the object, quite tightly. Amazingly, this grip can be strong enough to support his entire body weight. But we don't suggest to test this out on your own!

9. Traction response

Your doctor will test this by holding both of your baby's wrists and lifting him forward into a sitting position. Your baby's head should first 'lag' back, then straighten and fall forward.

10. Galant reflex

This reflex is proof of proper development of your baby's spinal nerves. While your baby is held under his stomach, your doctor will gently stroke along one side of his back. In response your baby will arch his body, and pull his pelvis towards the side that was stroked.

For further professional and medical advice, please consult your paediatrician.

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Caring for your Colic Baby

By Dr Ian Ong

Colic is usually used to describe the frustrating condition characterised by extreme periods of crying in an otherwise well-fed healthy infant. Despite many years of research, we still do not understand what causes colic. The most widely held view is that colic is due to trapped wind causing pain in the infant's tummy.

Colic commonly starts at about one month of age, particularly in the evenings and at night. This is a transient phenomenon which the infant outgrows by about four months of age.

Classical symptoms include prolonged periods of crying and fussiness with curled up legs, clenched fists and tensed abdominal muscles. This may last a few minutes to as long as three to four hours regardless of the usual efforts at comforting. The crying can stop just as suddenly as it started.

How to soothe your colic baby

1. Keep baby in gentle rhythmic rocking motion, e.g. gentle rocking in arms or in a sling, taking them out in a pram or car for a ride
2. "Burping" baby or feeding in a more upright position may help to prevent the build-up of "wind"
3. Try "anti-wind" medications like Infacol, Rid-Wind drops or gripe water, to help reduce or disperse intestinal gas
4. Gentle baby massage
5. Breastfeeding

Usually in the case of colic, the infant is otherwise healthy and well. The infant should be feeding well, passing normal stools and urine, and should not be running a temperature. Since the crying and fussiness can be severe, it is important to exclude other serious causes of inconsolable crying, such as infections, intestinal obstruction, injuries, particularly head injuries and post vaccinations.

Symptoms that may warrant a doctor's consult

Changes in baby's eating, sleeping or behaviour

1. Fever
2. Vomiting or diarrhoea
3. Tummy becoming distended or painful to touch
4. Persistent irritability despite above measures

Caring for a baby with colic can be very stressful. Sometimes, you may not be to calm your baby's crying. If your nerves get frayed, remember:

Never shake your baby

If you are feeling helpless and exhausted over your baby's crying, hand your baby to another trusted adult. If you're alone, put him or her down somewhere safe, such as in a crib.

Give yourself a break

It's stressful to listen to your baby cry for long periods. It is okay to arrange for someone to help with the baby so that you can have a few moments to yourself.

Stay positive and remember, colic is a transient phenomenon!

Dr Ian Ong is a Paediatrician at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic.

Practice Address

Blk 721 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8 | #01-2803 / 2805 Singapore 560721 | Tel: 6456 8874

More Baby Soothers

By The New Age Parents

Take your baby outside. Like adults, babies also need a breathing space. Taking him outside will divert his attention from the things that made him cry. Make sure that the external environment is not too hot or cold.

Go for a joy ride. Take the car and buckle up! The view of the surroundings might help to soothe your baby's mood. No heavy traffic on the road? Unwind the windows and let the breeze caress your baby's face.

Put that record on. Play some happy music and 'dance' with your baby by rocking or swinging him gently in your arms. The movements and music might just tickle him.

The power of praise. Mention how great or good your baby is doing great alone in the crib. They may not understand what you are saying but your energy does not lie!

The classic Peek-a-Boo. This might be an old trick but it works. Hide behind a furniture or use a blanket to cover yourself up. Every time you show your face, try coming up with different expressions or sounds.

Gently blow into your baby's palm or tummy. Most babies find this ticklish and the sound and feel of the air on against their body will crack them up.

Be a silly billy. Babies love attention. Pretending to sneeze or bump your head with a funny face may incur a fit of giggles.

Bubbles. Bubbles have a magical ability to capture a toddler's attention. They are amazed with floating bubbles and derive great pleasure from popping them.

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Am I Producing Enough Breastmilk For My Baby?

By Som Yew Ya

Medical reasons aside, most mothers are able to produce milk for nursing their newborn child. As breastfeeding intake cannot be specifically measured at one time or another, a common worry is whether enough milk is produced fast enough to feed your baby adequately.

First, it is important to determine whether your milk supply is low or, if it is due to your perceptions and expectations. E.g. expecting your baby not to feel hungry for a fixed duration after a feed or expecting your fed baby to sleep through the night.

If your baby feeds through direct latch and allowed to feed as long as he wants, this is not a problem as the baby will feed till he feels satisfied. The suckling action generates hormones which induces the let-down reflex.

Generally if a baby presents the below signs, it probably means enough milk is received.

- *Frequent wetting of nappies and bowel movements* (frequency depends on age)
- *Baby is alert and contented* and does not feed all the time

A newborn needs about 8 - 12 or more feeds per day. However, it is normal to have phases of higher frequency of nursing, such as during growth spurts. Some babies may wake frequently for night feeds which are normal as well.

- *Weight, height and head circumference growth*

Do not be alarmed if your baby loses weight in the first few days of life. This is due to meconium and water loss. In her book '*Successful Breastfeeding: A Practical Guide*', Kang Paik Ghaik, a Senior lactation consultant mentioned that babies should regain their birth weight after two weeks; gain 150g to 200g per week; double in birth weight by four to six months and be at three times birth weight when they turn one.

But what if your milk supply is really very low? Here are some ways to improve your milk production.

1. Relax and enjoy your nursing times

The most common milk production inhibitors are stress and illness. Settle with baby and nurse your child away from distractions i.e. phone or noise. This will help with milk let-down.

2. Breastfeed frequently with your baby correctly latched

Offer a feed every two to three hours in the day for a few days or more times in a day. Offer both breasts to latch on. Do not use your level of engorgement as an indicator of your milk supply. There is always milk to feed.

3. Let your baby decide how long to feed

Different babies suck differently and duration is not a good gauge of how long a feed should be. Babies need to suckle sufficiently to receive the calorie rich hindmilk.

4. If your baby does not settle after a feed, wait 20 to 30 minutes and then provide a brief 'top-up' feed. This may help to satisfy the baby.

5. Offering the breast to soothe your baby rather than the pacifier to boost the milk build-up.

6. Scheduling too rigidly or being separated for long durations may hinder the milk supply

Milk supply may dip when mothers return to work. Express your milk diligently when sick or away to maintain supply. Avoid supplementation, glucose or water for fully breastfed babies unless medically advised.

7. Food that promotes lactation

While there is no miracle food, having sufficient fluid intake first and foremost is important. Some women recommend consuming higher-protein foods, such as fish and green papaya soup.

8. Remedies that help to promote lactation

Do note that these are not scientifically established but some mothers find them helpful in facilitating milk supply. Fenugreek, blessed thistle, alfalfa, spirulina, goat's rue, raspberry leaf, fennel and brewer's yeast are some herbal remedies that have been used

to promote milk supply. Some may exist in different forms. E.g. Alfafa exists as dried herb or powder.

Formulations also exist such as lactation teas. One example is Sacred Nursing Tea from Origins Jamu Massage which is USDA organic certified. When taking remedies, do follow instructions accordingly and take at your own discretion. Ultimately, demand and supply is the principle to go in producing milk. Other ways may facilitate but not be a substitute.

At any time, if you suspect an underlying medical condition or require medication, it is important to seek professional medical advice. For massaging and latching issues, a session with a lactation consultant with your Hospital ParentCraft department may help to facilitate your breastfeeding process.

Breastfeeding is not easy but it does get easier over time. Plus the many tangible and intangible benefits make it worthwhile. With sufficient nutrition, eating the right diet, breastfeeding support and perseverance, it can be done!

For further professional and medical advice, please consult a lactation consultant.

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Formula Feeding For Newborns

By Ms Suzanne Khor

The best source of nutrition is your own breastmilk as it provides all the necessary nutrients for your baby to grow well. Numerous studies have demonstrated a number of important health benefits to breastfeeding.

- Stronger Babies

Breast-fed children are stronger and have better resistance to disease and infection early in life than formula-fed children

- Lower Health Risks For Mothers

Mothers who breastfeed are less likely to develop osteoporosis later in life, are able to lose weight gained during pregnancy more easily and have a lower risk of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer.

- Cost Effective

Breastfeeding also has advantages in terms of saving you money. It's cheaper than buying formula and helps avoid medical bills later because it helps equip the baby to fight off disease and infection.

Choosing & Using Baby Formula

However, in certain instances, when it may not be possible to breastfeed, or in case you do not have adequate breastmilk, you may need to feed some infant formula. Here are commonly asked questions mothers would ask about using baby formula.

1. How much formula does my baby need?

To know how much formula your baby needs, you should follow baby's cues for hunger. Usually, a baby will cry when hungry every 2-3 hours. So, you should feed baby following this 2-3 hourly cycle. Sometimes, baby may seem hungry/ cry for milk even before the scheduled time. This is normal, and you should feed baby even if it is not following their usual schedule.

2. What type of formula should I choose?

You will notice that there are many types of formula in the market. To choose the best formula for your baby's needs, understand the three main types of formula first:

- **Cow's milk formulas**

Infant formula is made with cow's milk that's been processed to resemble breast milk. This gives the formula the right balance of nutrients — and makes the formula easier to digest. Most babies are able to grow on cow's milk formula. Some babies, however — such as those allergic to the proteins in cow's milk — need other types of infant formula.

- **Soy-based formulas**

Soy-based formulas can be useful if your baby is intolerant to cow's milk formula or to lactose, a carbohydrate naturally found in cow's milk. However, most often than not, babies who are allergic to cow's milk might also be allergic to soy milk.

- **Protein hydrolysate formulas**

These types of formulas contain protein that's been broken down (hydrolyzed) — partially or extensively — into smaller sizes compared to standard formulas. These formulas are used in babies who don't tolerate cow's milk or soy-based formulas. Extensively hydrolyzed formulas are required for babies who have an allergy to cow's milk.

Choose the best formula that you think will suit your baby, as you know your baby best of all. If your baby has been diagnosed with cow's milk allergy, your paediatric allergist or your dietitian will also advise you on the most suitable types of formula for your baby.

3. What kind of water should I use?

Plain boiled water is safe for mixing with infant formula for baby. Sterilize infant bottles by using a bottle steamer sterilizer or immersing bottles in boiling water in a large pot.

4. What are the signs of a formula allergy?

All food allergies are caused by an immune system malfunction. Your immune system identifies certain milk proteins as harmful, triggering the production of immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies.

The next time you come in contact with these proteins, these IgE antibodies recognize them and signal your immune system to release histamine. Histamine and other body

chemicals cause allergic responses, e.g. runny nose, itchy eyes, dry throat, rashes, hives, nausea, diarrhea, difficulty breathing and anaphylactic shock.

Ms Suzanne Khor is a Senior Dietician at Thomson Paediatric Centre (The Child Development Centre)

Practice Address

10 Sinaran Drive #09-04 Novena Medical Centre Singapore 307506 | Tel: 6397 6627

Ask the Expert

Q: *My baby dislikes milk. How can I make her like milk and gain weight?*

A: There are many reasons why your baby may start to refuse milk. Common reasons include the following:

- Incorrect teat size. Your baby might be ready for a teat with a larger hole and is getting frustrated with the old teat.
- If your baby is already started on solids, she may be too full to take her milk. Try offering her milk 2-3 hours after her meal. Some babies simply prefer solids to milk. She can still get her nutrients from solids and gain weight.
- Your baby may be unwell. If there are ulcers or thrush in her mouth or she has a viral infection, her appetite may transiently be affected. You should bring her to see her paediatrician.

If your baby has a hearty appetite for food but refuses her milk, do not worry. Try offering her milk before her meal. Try offering 'milk alternatives' like yoghurt and cheese. If she has very poor milk intake, offer more fluids after solids to ensure she is adequately hydrated. Most importantly, monitor her weight gain and bring her to see her paediatrician if she is not gaining weight appropriately.

Dr Goh Siok Ying is a Paediatrician at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic.

Practice Address

Blk 726 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6 #01-4154 Singapore 560726 |Tel: 6456 8874/ 6397 6966

Q: *What brand of formula milk is the best for newborns other than breast milk?*

A: All brands of formula milk aim to be as close as breast milk. There is a lot of research into infant formulas and this has resulted in a lot of additives being included e.g DHA, AA, choline, taurine, probiotics, prebiotics etc. Each baby's digestive tract is unique and

may not adapt to certain brands, not because the nutritional effect is inferior. For example, different brands use different fat blends and the same formula may be okay for some babies but cause diarrhoea or constipation in others.

The general trend now for milk companies is to work towards lesser but better quality protein in their formulas as high protein content is linked to undesirable metabolic effects at an older age. It is a plus if there are other additives in the formula but the difference it make in intelligence and vision is not large, especially if the baby is properly weaned at the appropriate time.

Dr Nancy Tan is a Paediatrician at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic, with a sub-specialty in Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition

Practice Address

SBCC Baby & Child Clinic (Gleneagles) | 6 Napier Road #07-01/03 Gleneagles Medical Centre, Singapore 258499 | Tel: 6235 6706/ 6397 6966

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Introducing Solid Food to your Baby

By Dorothea Chow

Most experts recommend introducing your baby to solids between the ages of 4 to 6 months, because babies are not developmentally ready to digest solids before then.

Starting on Solids

There are two main routes to introducing your bub to solid meals. The more traditional approach is to begin with rice cereal – blended with breast milk, formula milk or water – and then, gradually, to introduce a variety of vegetables, then fruits, then meats, all pureed to a super fine consistency for a start.

Rice, in the form of porridge, soupy noodles and macaroni can also be introduced after a couple of months. Hard-boiled egg yolks are given first, then hard-boiled egg whites later on, the soft-boiled versions can be given as well. This is to guard against the effects of possible food allergies. In fact, it's generally thought wise to introduce no more than one new food every 2-3 days, to monitor for allergic reactions.

As your baby grows more teeth, purees are made chunkier and more 'solid', until eventually the child is comfortable with the normal meat, rice and noodle textures of typical adult fare.

Baby Led Weaning

In more recent years, another method of introducing solids has fast gained popularity: baby-led weaning (BLW). BLW proponents believe in letting your child feed himself from the very start of weaning. Just hand them the food in a suitably-sized piece (e.g. a 1cm cube of steamed broccoli), and if they like it, they eat it. If they don't, they won't.

There are no purees, no food processor, no baby rice – it's all about you and your child eating and exploring food together. If purees are your choice of method, however, some basic equipment is essential to preparing baby's meals.

Food Steamer and Blender

Steaming helps the food keep most of its nutritional value, and is easy on the cook as well. Once the food is thoroughly cooked, you can use a hand-blender immersion blender or food processor to puree the food into a paste or fine chunks. To save time,

effort and amount of dish-washing, invest in an all-in-one food processor, which will do the blending for you as well the steaming.

Thermos

Most purees taste horrible cold. Plus allowing hot food to go cold can encourage bacteria to grow, even after a few hours. A well-insulated thermos flask will help keep baby's meals safe and warm, especially if you prepare them in advance. However, do avoid keeping food warm for more than 4 hours.

To keep the food hot for as long as possible, fill your container with boiling water before adding your baby food, let it stand for 5 minutes, empty it, and then immediately add the freshly-cooked hot food, and securely tighten the lid

Time to Eat

That's really all that you physically need to make those first meals for your baby. Of course, lots of tender loving care and patience that will go into peeling fruits, chopping, and blending, and finally, feeding your bub spoonful after spoonful of the finished product.

Do note that, whichever feeding method you choose, the following items should be restricted from baby's diet until after the first year.

- Peanuts and peanut butter
- Too much salt or sugar
- Honey
- Cow's milk or soy milk
- Soft, sticky food, e.g. kueh
- Hard candies

For further professional and medical advice, please consult your paediatrician.

Ask the Expert

Q: *My girl is turning 4 months old soon, any advice on what types of solid food to introduce to my baby?*

A: Traditionally, rice cereal has been recommended. Recent research suggest that while that can be the first food but we should have whole grain cereals and move faster towards vegetables, fruits and meat. Babies who remain on refined rice cereal for fear of allergies from other proteins eventually end up obese with a high chance of diabetes mellitus.

Babies are recommended to be weaned between 4 – 7 months now, especially if they are completely breastfed and are not gaining weight well enough. Exclusively breastfed infants are also at higher risk of iron deficiency.

Research shows that earlier weaning does not increase allergies if weaning does not occur before 4 months. In fact, late weaning is associated with increased allergic tendencies and also feeding difficulties as they cannot learn to swallow well or handle coarser textures.

Q: *How much fruits can an 18-month-old toddler take a day and what is the best timing to take?*

A: The recommended fruit intake is $\frac{1}{2}$ – 1 portion, with one portion being about 1 small apple or 10 grapes or 1 slice of papaya. Generally it is recommended that they take the fruits during breakfast or tea time so as not to interrupt their feeding routine. Toddlers at 18 months should have 4 meals and 3 milk feeds.

Dr Nancy Tan is a Paediatrician, with a sub-specialty in Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic.

Practice Address

SBCC Baby & Child Clinic (Gleneagles) | 6 Napier Road #09-05 Gleneagles Medical Centre, Singapore 258499 | Tel: 6235 6706

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Simple Massages For Your Baby

By Dr Goh Han Meng

Assorted scientific studies have suggested accelerated brain development as well as significant improvement in social, self-help, gross motor, fine motor and language skills in infants exposed to massage. Furthermore, a systematic review on the safety of massage in children revealed that, overall, massage therapy is safe, particularly in trained hands.

The benefits of systematic tactile stimulation include:

- Helping the baby to relax and ease more easily into sleep
- Calming a fussy baby
- Promoting emotional development
- And not least, promoting parent-child bonding

In our modern society where both parents are often working, we value the precious hours we can devote to our babies. Although the quantity of the time spent is paramount in establishing a strong parent-child bond, its quality also matters. Infant massage is an ideal way to facilitate bonding between you and your baby.

How long does it take?

Generally, the massage session takes less than 10 minutes for a baby less than 2 months old, and up to 20 minutes for an older baby. It can be performed at any time of the day, but a good time to do it is after a warm bath, when your baby is not yet drowsy.

Setting the environment

The environment should be a warm room with a soft flat surface where both you and your baby are comfortable. For example, you may place your baby on the bed with your seat just next to it at a comfortable height. Other parents may prefer to sit on the floor with their babies lying on a soft blanket or thin mattress. Your baby will need to be fully undressed for the massage, or at least, wearing only the diaper. Gentle background music can even be played if desired to set the mood.

Using Baby oil or lotion

Baby oil or lotion is used in the course of the massage. It is important when using the emollient for the first time to place a small patch on your baby's skin and observe for 5-10 minutes to ensure that he or she is comfortable with its use. As a baby's skin is delicate, it is not appropriate to use concentrated essential oils for this purpose. The emollient should be poured onto one's palms first to warm it before application onto your baby. During the massage, it is good to talk to or sing to your baby as this will enhance the massage experience.

What stroke should I used?

While there are many ways where massage can be performed, it is important to remember that preferences exist, even in a little baby. There is no one set or "correct" way to do it, but with time, you will discover the pattern that your baby finds pleasurable. Once the correct level of touch is learnt, practice with one's own baby will individualize the routine.

A sample routine is outlined below, in the order prescribed:

1. Face

This is the most important part of the massage with the longest length of time spent on this part of the body as your baby is most sensitive in this region.

- Using your fingertips, gently stroke from the forehead, past the temples to your baby's cheeks
- In the same manner, stroke the brows from the inside to the outside
- Run your fingers from the side of the nose near the nasal bridge towards the cheeks along the lower contour of your baby's eye socket
- Do the same from the midline just above his or her upper lip outwards to the cheeks
- Stroke the jaw line from the chin outwards toward the ears
- Perform circular strokes around the contour of the ears

2. Chest

- Using the whole length of your fingers, gently stroke from the breastbone along the bony contour just below the collarbone till you reach the shoulders, and then down the side of the torso

3. Arms

- Focusing on one arm at a time, massage from the shoulder / armpit towards the wrist in a smooth milking motion – this is also known as “Indian milking”
- The reverse direction may also be performed – known as “Swedish milking”

4. Hands

- Open each hand and gently stroke and roll each finger one at a time – if your baby’s hand is closed, you can cause it to open by reflex simply by stroking the back of your baby’s hand
- Using your thumbs, massage the palm and back of the hand from your baby’s wrist to the fingers

5. Stomach

- Using all 5 fingers at once, gently stroke from the region below the breastbone towards the groin
- Bend your baby’s knees toward the tummy to help relax his or her abdominal muscles

6. Legs

- The same actions used for the arms also apply to the legs

7. Feet

- Using your thumb, gently rub from your baby’s heel to toe along the sole
- Gently squeeze or rub each toe one by one

8. Back

- Placing the baby prone on a blanket or pillow, or on your lap, position yourself on the side of your baby
- Using all 5 fingers, gently rub with horizontal strokes across your baby’s back, first across the nape of the neck and shoulder blades, slowly progressing to the buttocks
- Finally, stroke your baby from the nape of the neck towards the buttocks

Final points

It is often difficult to visualize the massage process without hands-on experience under the watchful eye of an accredited therapist. While there are many videos available free-of-charge online that demonstrate the techniques used for infant massage, it is usually up to you to discover the one that works best for your baby.

Although such visual aids are very useful to reinforce the learning process, there is always the concern of excessive force or inappropriate technique causing inadvertent hurt to your baby.

Every major hospital in Singapore with a neonatal unit has parent craft services, which may include classes on infant massage. The interested parent may enquire at these institutions and gain more confidence through practical sessions taught and supervised by these trained personnel.

Lastly, this is an experience meant to be enjoyed by both you and your baby. Rather than feel the need to accomplish all the “correct” strokes, do relax and savour this wonderful time when the only thing that matters is giving pleasure to your baby, and enjoying his or her responses in return.

Dr Goh Han Meng is a Paediatrician at SBCC Baby & Child Clinic.

Practice Address

Blk 721 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8 #01-2803/2805 Singapore 560721 | Tel: 6456 8874

Crib-Sleeping vs Co-Sleeping: Which is Better?

By Tammy Fontana

Newborns typically sleep up to 16 to 17 hours a day. So where does your baby spend the night? In the same bed as you and your spouse, or in a crib?

Co-Sleeping

Pros	Cons
Co-sleeping with a newborn baby or young child may be easier because they wake frequently and it makes night feedings easier.	It is a 5 year commitment. Transitioning your child out of your bed before this age can be very difficult and many parents get “stuck” with their child in their bed.
You don’t have to give up a room for the child to sleep in.	A parent’s privacy, intimacy and sleep will be compromised with a child in the bed.

Co-sleep can be a safe choice. However, parents must take note of these safety steps:

- Never sleep with you child if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Ensure your child will not be pinned or have his or her faced blocked
- Take extra precautions if your child is premature and if you are smoker as these two factors increase the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

What Is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)?

SIDS (also known as cot death or crib death) happens when there is a sudden death of an infant where the exact cause of death remains unexplained by medical history and after autopsy. Infants are at the highest risk of SIDS especially during sleep.

Crib Sleeping

Pros	Cons
Parents will have more privacy and time for intimacy.	In the short-term, for the first 6 to 9 months parents will need to get up to feed their child. However, children no longer need to feed from 9 months of age onward (Waking to feed after 9 months is a sign of a sleep problem).

Can Your Child Sleep Independently?

The ability to learn how to fall asleep independently is a learned behaviour regardless of where your child sleeps. Poor quality sleep has been linked to postnatal depression in women and disruptive behaviour in children, resulting in reduced academic performance. Children should learn how to fall asleep independently, regardless of where they sleep. Night feeding or waking up after 9 months of age is a sign of sleep problem. It impacts the child's immune system, temperament and ability to learn.

Neither cot nor crib sleeping guarantees a good sleeper. What matters is that the child is able to fall asleep 100% on his or her own.

Whatever you decide, make sure that you make an informed decision based on evidence, and not based on cultural beliefs and pop-psychology. When in doubt, do not hesitate to ask your doctor or health professional.

Going Out with Your Baby

By Dorothea Chow

For any new mum, bringing your baby out can be a pretty daunting task, especially if you're making the trip alone. More so if you need to take public transport totting your little one and a hefty diaper bag, and maybe even the pram!

Here are some tips to get you going.

WHEN TRAVELING ABOUT

1. Don't pack at the last minute

You're bound to leave something out if you resort to last minute packing of your diaper bag. Having an earlier preparation would give you some buffer time to remember items you should bring along for the trip. And you don't want to start your journey all harassed and hectic. Try to make a checklist of items you think are necessary for the trip, at least for the first few times you venture out. After a while you'll know the list like the back of your hand!

2. Always bring extras

Extra diaper for the baby, extra change of clothes for the baby (and yourself, if your little one has a habit of pooping, peeing or burping onto you), extra cash, etc.

3. Be prepared for the crowds

Don't over-pack either – you don't want to be lugging an overflowing diaper bag and your child while jostling with the crowds for a seat.

4. Make a back-up plan

Although most malls, hospitals and other public venues would have a functional baby care room these days, there's no predicting when baby will choose to pee, poo or get suddenly hungry, and sometimes the room may be occupied or under renovation when you need it the most. Have a back-up plan in the event of such potential emergencies. For example, bring along a nursing shawl in case you have to breastfeed in public. And a diaper changing mat can come in handy should you need to clean your baby up on a bench.

5. Avoid bringing out the pram

For young babies, bringing them out in a pram on public transport can be a real hassle, because you'll need to stow away the pram when you board a bus, then open it up again when you reach your destination. To avoid the extra hassle, invest in and get used to carrying baby about in a sling or baby carrier.

WHEN DINING OUT

1. Sling is best

Using a sling allows you to have your hands free to eat and drink your fill while ensuring baby is safe and happy. Other baby carriers like the Ergo and Bjorn can work too, but would be a tad less comfy for you when seated. For one, you might have some difficulty seeing your food...

Of course, another good option for placing baby while you eat is the pram. But this is troublesome to bring out for reasons stated above.

2. Avoid soupy stuff

It's difficult to eat anything soupy when you're worrying about dripping hot liquid onto your little one. For a start, stick to rice, bread or salads, which are a lot easier to transfer from plate/bowl to mouth. You might also want to avoid ordering anything that is going to take a long time to prepare – unless you're sure your baby is going to be sound asleep for a while yet.

3. Choose your eating companions wisely

Ideally, at least one of your dining party should be comfortable with carrying a baby, should you need the extra pair of hands while you remove the sling or take a quick toilet break.

WHEN SHOPPING

1. Know your baby's limits and yours

Realistically speaking, most babies will begin to be restless after more than an hour or two in the sling or carrier and want to be taken out or need their diaper changed or be fed. So don't plan a 3-hour shopping spree and expect it to go smoothly! Keep most trips to a maximum of 2 hours so that both baby and you are not over-tired or cranky at the end of it.

Before having a baby, I would sometimes spend hours browsing in a store before actually buying something, or sometimes not buying anything at all. But if you have a

mission in mind, eg. a birthday present for a friend, plan your shopping route and keep an eye on the clock, so that the trip is a fruitful one!

2. Know your size

Trying on clothes with a baby attached to you is often impossible, especially if you're alone. And it is definitely not advisable to lay your baby on the floor or (worse still!) hang your sling or carrier on the door hook! So it helps to know your general size, which you can easily do at home by checking what fits at the moment and what doesn't, so you can skip the use of the fitting room and make full use of in-store mirrors instead.

3. Ask a friend along

As with dining out, it's best not to shop alone, and to find a shopping buddy who can help you carry baby, if you really need to try something on for size.

Try out these tips for yourself, and before you know it, you'll be bringing baby on board with you everywhere, and become an inspiration to the next newest mum you meet!

Secrets to Starting Parenthood Together

By Yvonne Chee

As you start your parenthood journey with your spouse, there are bound to be conflicts. Finding time to discuss the future together will help strengthen your bond and minimize conflicts in your parenting journey ahead.

1. Setting Clear Family Values

Family values are rules or ideals, which a family shares for the common good of its members. Values give a family an overarching purpose and guide as to how each family member acts and behaves in different situations. It also unites the parents and the family, enriches and guards the intimacy of the family members. **Positive family values could include kindness, mutual support, respect, sacrifice, hard work, fun, and service.**

Each family's set of values will be different from the next and will be shaped by things like education, religion, and family history. If you haven't set family values between your husband and yourself, it will be a good time to do so before the arrival of your firstborn.

If you have children and have not done so, it will also be good to start setting clear family values that you and your family can live by. You can also print out your family values and have it nicely framed in your house.

2. Setting Clear Expectations Of Each Other

"What are the expectations you have of yourself as you take on the role of a mother/father and wife/husband? What are the expectations you have of your spouse as a parent?"

As you approach to the day when you become parents, setting clear expectations of yourself and your spouse will help minimize conflicts that may happen during crunch or stressful times.

You can make this sharing activity a little more enjoyable by taking time on your own to write down the expectations (of yourself and your spouse) then pass the list to each other to view and point out those that are similar and different. Then, take time to hear each other and communicate on the expectations. If the expectations set are too high, this will be a good time to adjust and align them.

Some expectations may include:

- Waking up to care for the baby when the baby cries in the middle of the night
- Taking on some 'baby' duties on a daily basis
- Bringing baby out for walks
- Going out for breakfast as a family every Saturday morning
- Informing each other in advance (i.e. 3 days) if there are plans to meet with friends. Ask your partner if they can manage on their own. Work out a plan to get help when one parent is away.
- Spending one-to-one time with your baby

3. Set Clear Roles and Responsibilities

While discussing on the expectations of each other, it will also be beneficial to talk about the expected responsibilities, who and how to manage them when the baby arrives. Like planning on the strategy for a football match, having a proper discussion on the roles and responsibilities of the players in the team will help the team play the game more effectively and to win the game.

Similarly, your spouse and you are a team together. And your goal now is to ensure that baby is cared for, and that together you can ride through the adjustment period as new parents. Below is an example of the division of responsibilities that my husband and I have set before the arrival of our first-born:

My spouse	Me
Bath baby	Feed baby
Diaper changing when around	Diaper changing when father is not around
Help bottle feed baby two times a day – at the 7pm and 11pm timing	Pump milk
Cleaning of toilets	Vacuuming
Mopping	Laundry (wash, dry and fold)
Washing of dishes	Cooking of meals
	Maintaining neatness of the household
	Grocery shopping
	Tracking of expenditure and income

I remember that my husband suggested dividing the baby responsibilities at night during the first 3 months of our parenthood journey (before our baby slept through), so that each of us can have some proper sleep and rest. I would take on the feeding and diaper duties from 11pm to 3am while he rests and sleep, and then I will wake him up at 3am for him to take the shift from 3am to 7am.

4. Parenting Styles

Setting consistent parenting styles to raise your child would definitely help minimize conflicts in your journey. Is your parenting style one that is going to be firm and authoritative – assertive, supportive but not intrusive and restrictive? Will it be one that is established by rules and guidelines that your children are expected to follow? How will you ensure that both your parenting styles will be consistent so that your child will not be confused? Discuss about it and coming to a decision will help to ensure that your child will not be confused by your different parenting values and styles.

5. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate!

It is of utmost importance that the husband and wife continue to communicate throughout the journey. Communication is a process, and learning that process brings couples closer. When a couple learns to communicate, they develop a uniquely shared language. Although effective communication is hardly a natural skill, researchers have demonstrated that the quality and quantity of communication improves a relationship.

Marital and parental communication need not be lengthy to produce success but having the existence of communication will increase feelings of connectedness. By doing so, it will help sustain your marriage even in the new parenthood journey. Having effective communication will also minimize confusion between the spouses.

Always state your thoughts as clearly, honestly, and positively as you can.

Minimizing confusion increases relationship commitment, and commitment is directly related to relationship satisfaction.

Saving on the Dollar: Useful Tips for Parents

By Yvonne Chee

There are so many things one would need to prepare for your first child - from baby cot to wardrobe, diapers to milk bottles, and breast pumps to baby carriers and strollers. These items are not just bulky, they are also costly. Here are eight useful tips on how to save and prepare the best for your baby.

1. Speak to experienced mummies who have been there and done that, on the best deals to invest in so that your money would be well spent.

2. Seek out and/or join forums where they sell second hand goods – the only key is that you will need to always test the product first before buying it over.

Try to seek out items that are still under warranty. Beware of over shopping for unnecessary items! Some forums to check out:

- [The New Age Parents Pre-loved Corner](#)
- Singapore Motherhood
- Kiasuparents
- Gumtree Singapore
- Craigslist Singapore

3. Collect hand me downs from family, relatives and friends! As our baby grows relatively fast in the first year of their life, it doesn't make much sense to spend tons of dollars on their clothes. Also, hand-me-downs are well used and most comfortable for your baby!

4. Some online websites or shops may sell the diapers/items you are using for your child at a cheaper price. The best part is that some include delivery which saves you time and effort. Here are some online shops to check out:

- [Luvbabies.kimsang.com.sg](#)
- [Agapebabies.com](#)
- [Taobao.com](#)
- [Diapers.com.sg](#)

- CK Departmental Stores
- NTUC baby fair discounts

5. Check out the pharmacies at the hospitals before making purchases for yourself during your pregnancy or for your baby. The items there can be relatively cheaper than shops that are near our homes.

6. Write to all the diaper brands or formula brands in Singapore to **ask for samples** in the first few months of your child, so you'll get to use them, and also try them out to see if they are suitable for your child.

7. Set a budget on the necessities, on expenses you may expect to come, and how much you can spend on

8. Buy only the essential items you need for that period. Check out with your friends who have been there in your position. They just might have a list of items to get to prepare you for the first six months of your baby's life. Also, don't overstock items because of a sale because there will soon be another sale!

Financial Priorities for you Newborn

By Tan Ooi Sim Winston

“What type of financial plan should I buy for my little one so that they can get a head start in life?” This is a big question most parents ask themselves when they discover they have a little way on the way. Here are six important financial priorities to look out for.

1. Coverage for parents

- Hospitalisation and Surgical Insurance (aka. Health Insurance) with cash rider (that takes care of deductibles and co-insurance)
- Critical Illness Protection (Having a lump sum to offset alternative medical treatments, possible renovation of home to accommodate critical illness care, daily living expenses due to no-pay leave to recuperate at home, etc)
- Family Income Protection (Leaving a stream of income for your loved ones should one prematurely decrease before the average mortality age)
- Disability Income Protection (Having a lump sum and stream of income to offset disability treatments, possible renovation of home and car to accommodate for disability, daily living expenses due to the fact that one may not be employed in the same capacity as before the disability)

2. Hospitalisation & Surgical Insurance with cash rider for your little ones

- When a baby is born in Singapore after 2011, he/she is by default under CPF's Medishield insurance, unless the parents have opted out.
- Parents are strongly encouraged to change to a Private Integrated Shield Plan as these plans are more comprehensive.

3. Tertiary Education Planning for your little ones

- Current tertiary fees for a university degree costs between S\$7,650 to S\$30,000 a year (depending on the degree one is pursuing) for a Singapore citizen.
- In year 2033, a university degree is estimated to cost between S\$23,146 to S\$90,768 a year.

- It is prudent to start saving for your little ones as early as possible, as the savings amount will increase exponentially with each passing year where one procrastinate.

4. Critical Illness Planning for your little ones

- Many parents may have neglected the significance of Critical Illness Planning for little ones.
- In most cases when a child contracts critical illness, one of the parents will most likely quit his/her job and stay at home to take care of the child full time. This may reduce a significant portion of the family's disposable income.
- By doing proper critical illness planning for the child, the impact of a reduction in disposable income can be minimised.

5. Personal Accident planning for your little ones

- A personal accident plan may be bought once a child reaches 6 months of age.
- Being a child who is active and beginning to understand and explore the world, accidents may occur anytime.
- It would be prudent to purchase a personal accident plan that covers outpatient treatments of your little ones.
- Some personal accident plans that are more comprehensive also provide coverage for Avian Flu, Chikungunya Fever, Dengue Fever, Hand Foot Mouth Disease, etc.

6. Retirement Planning for you and your spouse

- After all the above Financial Planning objectives have been provisioned, it is time for you and your spouse to sit down and start thinking about how you would like to live your retirement!

EXPERT PANEL

Dr Ian Ong

A mother of two children, Dr Ong graduated from the Royal Free and University College Medical School in London. She completed her postgraduate specialist training at KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Dr Ong has special interest in early childhood development as well as infant feeding and nutrition.

Practice Address: SBCC Baby & Child Clinic, Blk 721 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8 #01-2803/2805 Singapore 560721 | Tel: 6456 8874

Dr Nancy Tan

Dr Tan graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree in 1994. Her post-graduate qualifications include a Master of Medicine (Paediatrics), Singapore, a Membership of Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Edinburgh, and a Diploma in Dermatology (Family Practice) from the National University of Singapore. Dr Tan is trained in paediatric gastroenterology, hepatology and nutrition.

Practice Address: SBCC Baby & Child Clinic (Gleneagles) 6 Napier Road #09-05 Gleneagles Medical Centre Singapore 258499 | Tel: 6235 6706

Dr Goh Siok Ying

Dr Goh obtained her basic medical degree (MBBS) from the National University of Singapore in 1999. She received her general paediatric training at the National University Hospital from 2000 to 2003, and obtained her postgraduate degree MRCPCH (UK) and Masters of Medicine in Paediatrics in 2003. She continued her advanced specialist training at the National University Hospital, with an interest in clinical paediatric endocrinology and diabetes. g

Practice Address: SBCC Baby & Child Clinic (Ang Mo Kio) Blk 721 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8 #01-2803/2805 Singapore 560721 | Tel: 6456 8874

Dr Wong Chin Khoon

Dr Wong headed the Children's Emergency at National University Hospital when it started the service in 2002, before moving on to Department of Emergency Medicine, KK Women's and Children's Hospital serving as Senior Consultant in 2006. He was also the Senior Consultant, Contingency & Scenario Planning Division, Ops Group at Ministry of Health from 2008 – 2010. He remains amongst only a handful of paediatricians who has received formal training in the field of Paediatric Emergency in Singapore.

Practice Address: SBCC Baby & Child Clinic Blk 26 Jalan Membina #01-05 Singapore 161026 | Tel: 6276 5700

Dr Goh Han Meng

Before joining SBCC Baby & Child Clinic, Dr Goh served as a registrar at KK Women's and Children's Hospital in the neonatology, paediatric medicine, children's emergency and

paediatric subspecialty departments. He has a keen interest in paediatric sports medicine and general ambulatory paediatrics.

Practice Address: Blk 721 Ang Mo Kio Ave 8 #01-2803/2805 Singapore 560721 | Tel: 6456 8874

Suzanne Khor

Suzanne Khor has been practicing as a clinical dietician for the last 15 years and worked as a senior dietician in KK Women's and Children's Hospital for 7 years. She obtained her undergraduate degree in Dietetics with honours from the National University of Malaysia and postgraduate degree (Masters of Health Science Education) from University of Sydney Australia. She also has experience in adult nutrition through her working experience at Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Practice Address: Thomson Paediatric Centre (The Child Development Centre) 10 Sinaran Drive #09-04 Novena Medical Centre Singapore 307506 | Tel: 6397 6627

Tammy Fontana

Tammy Fontana, MS, NCC CTRT Sex Therapist (USA) is the founder and mental health therapist for both All in the Family Counselling and Babysleepfairy.com. She has been providing professional counselling and sleep services in Singapore for over 8 years. She has her Master's Degree in Mental Health Counselling (USA) and is a USA National Counsellor Counsellor (NCC) and Certified Choice Therapy Reality Therapist (CTRTR). She is also a US trained certified Sex Therapist. She provides evidenced and practiced based solutions to parents, individuals and couples.

Tammy can be contacted at tammy@babysleepfairy.com.

Tan Ooi Sim Winston

Winston is a Chartered Financial Consultant, with 12 years of experience in Financial Planning. Becoming a Dad in May 2013, his business is focused on Insurance Planning and Retirement Planning for young families, individuals and small medium enterprises.

Winston can be contacted at tanoosim_winston@hotmail.com.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor:

Michelle Ang

Experts:

SBCC Baby & Child Clinic

Thomson Paediatric Centre (The Child Development Centre)

Tammy Fontana (Baby Sleep Fairy)

Tan Ooi Sim Winston

Writers

Dorothea Chow, Som Yew Ya and Yvonne Chee

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