

Caroline Chisholm Society

Child Development Guide

Your baby's journey to kinder

From birth to 4 years old



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Chisholm**
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Your Postnatal Care

- As soon as you have delivered your baby you have commenced the postpartum period of care. This period lasts for between 6 to 8 weeks and is a very important part of your journey into parenthood.
- Your recovery from childbirth is an important time and you will be guided by the midwives and medical professionals in the first few days in hospital. The time you spend in hospital can vary depending on your health and wellbeing as well as your confidence in looking after your newborn baby.
- This can be a challenging period of time as your body recovers from the birth; and you commence caring for your newborn baby. Getting as much sleep and rest as possible is important however can be difficult to get into a routine. Many women try to sleep when their baby is sleeping in order to avoid becoming over tired, this is a good strategy in the early weeks and assists you to recover.
- Care for your body is of high importance including caring for your breasts, vagina (any tearing) or wound management post a cesarean section birth. Caring for your bodies needs is very important, avoiding infection and having a six week check up with your General Practitioner is of high importance in your self-care.
- The challenges of new parenthood are many with new skills needed to cope with the day to day care of your newborn baby. Babies need a lot of time and attention as they are totally dependent on your care.
- A Maternal and Child Health Nurse will make contact with you within the first few days after your baby is born. A home visit is organised within the first week so that you have the opportunity to talk about your babies feeding, weight, sleeping and safety needs.

Babies first week of life

- In the first week of life your new born baby may sleep a lot, this is normal and healthy. Your baby will need regular feeding, nappy changing and to be kept warm.
- Your baby is learning to suck, this sucking reflex is a natural part of the babies first instincts and is important in the baby being able to attach when breastfeeding. If you are having any difficulties with feeding your baby (beast or bottle) it is important to discuss this with the midwife as soon as possible.
- Your baby's immunisation is very important and commences the first week of life. The immunisation program in Australia is designed to keep your family safe, see your general practitioner or Maternal and Child Health Nurse for more information specific to your child and family's needs.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Cuddle time, relaxing and getting to know each other.

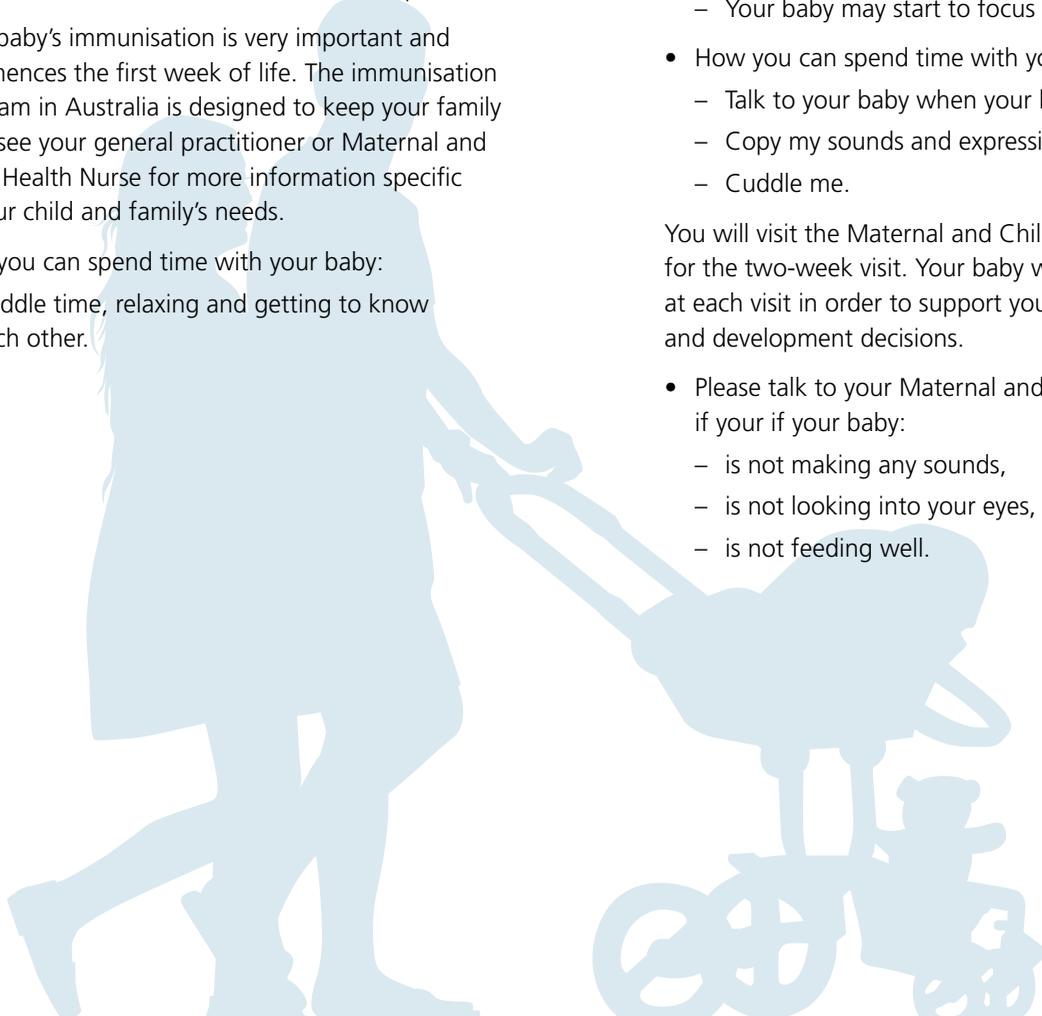
Baby at two weeks' old

This is a time of growth and development, during the first year your baby will grow and develop rapidly. Your baby needs the security and comfort of your care. Family and friends are an important part of the baby having familiar surroundings.

- What may your baby be doing:
 - Your baby may grasp your fingers when placed in your baby's hand.
 - Your baby may be startled by loud noises.
 - Your baby may start to focus on faces.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Talk to your baby when your baby is awake.
 - Copy my sounds and expressions.
 - Cuddle me.

You will visit the Maternal and Child Health Service for the two-week visit. Your baby will be weighed at each visit in order to support you in feeding and development decisions.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your if your baby:
 - is not making any sounds,
 - is not looking into your eyes, and
 - is not feeding well.



Baby at four weeks' old

Your baby begins to learn and take interest in the world around them. Good health and wellbeing is the basis for all of your babies learning and development.

- What may your baby be doing:
 - Watching familiar faces when being fed or talked to.
 - Lifting his/her head and turning it side to side when on the tummy.
 - Shutting his / her eyes against bright light.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Copy my sounds and expressions.
 - Play with your baby when he/she is on the tummy on the floor.
 - Bathe, sing and talk to your baby.

Your four week visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your if your baby:
 - is not making any sounds.
 - is not beginning to watch faces.
 - is not responding to bright lights.
 - is not moving both arms and legs.

Baby at eight weeks' old

At eight weeks old your baby is growing rapidly.

- What may your baby be doing:
 - Smiling.
 - Bringing his / her hands together.
 - Making “talking” sounds.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Sing and talk to your baby.
 - Play with your baby when your baby is on the tummy on the floor.
 - Take your baby out for walks.

Your eight week visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your if your baby:
 - is not making sounds.
 - is not beginning to smile.
 - is not looking at you in the eyes.

Baby at four months' old

Your baby is very interactive at this age and enjoys your company when awake.

- What may your baby be doing:
 - showing good head control, lifting it up 90 degrees when on his or her tummy.
 - smiling and laughing out loud.
 - reaching out for objects.
 - following moving objects with their eyes.
 - taking a greater interest in surroundings.
 - attempting to pick up objects using both hands.
 - vocalising to get attention and have their needs met.
 - recognising familiar faces and starting to interact more with others.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Look at books and read together.
 - Sing and talk to your baby.

Your four month visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your baby:
 - is not responding to noises.
 - is not making any sounds.
 - is not enjoying eye contact with you.
 - is not lifting their head.

Baby at eight months' old

Babies find out about our world by touching, tasting, smelling, listening, watching and moving around, they need lots of floor play and time on their tummies in a safe place.

- What may your baby be doing:
 - keeping their head level with their body when pulled to a sitting position.
 - progressing from sitting supported by your arms to sitting alone.
 - recognising partly hidden objects.
 - trying to get a toy that's out of reach.
 - looking for a dropped object.
 - moving by rolling or attempting to crawl.
 - making sounds such as 'ah goo' or similar.
 - imitating sounds.
 - clapping hands.
 - expressing feelings, likes and dislikes.
 - enjoying and demanding attention and affection.
 - increasing interaction with family members.
- How you can spend time with your baby:
 - Playing peek-a-boo.
 - Playing on the floor

Your eight month visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your baby:
 - is not enjoying eye contact with you.
 - is not interested in sounds.
 - is not babbling.
 - is not able to roll.

One year old

At one year old your child is becoming more social and enjoys going for walks outdoors. At this stage a child is learning to feed his/her self and enjoys meal times with the family.

- What may your child be doing:
 - may be standing or walking.
 - pointing with their index finger.
 - showing needs and wants in ways other than crying.
 - saying three recognisable words.
 - understanding several words and simple commands.
 - helping with dressing themselves by holding out arms for sleeves and feet for shoes.
 - enjoying showing affection and always being near parents.
 - beginning to understand the meaning of 'no'.
- How you can spend time with your child:
 - Playing music, singing and dancing.
 - Sharing books.
 - Getting out and about.

Your twelve month visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your baby:
 - is not enjoying eye contact or cuddles with you.
 - is not interested in sounds.
 - is not you know what they want.
 - is not seeming to understand you.
 - is not crawling or standing holding on.
 - is not pointing.

18 months' old

Children love socialising, visiting friends or playgroups are a great way to entertain your child.

- What may your child be doing:
 - walking well with feet slightly apart.
 - climbing, managing corners and obstacles well.
 - saying six to 12 recognisable words.
 - repeating last words of sentences.
 - wanting to be more independent and do things without help.
 - showing personality traits.
 - playing alone, but still liking to be near adults.
 - easily frustrated and throwing temper tantrums.
 - using objects and routines for comfort and security.
- How you can spend time with your child:
 - Exploring.
 - Looking at books.
 - Visiting the park.

Your eighteen month visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your baby:
 - not enjoying eye contact or cuddles with you.
 - not coming to you for affection or comfort.
 - not understanding any words.
 - not pointing or waving.
 - not trying to communicate with you.
 - not showing any signs of pretend play.
 - not walking.

2 years' old

At this age your child is learning to become independent.

- What may your child be doing:
 - walking up stairs and maybe walking backwards.
 - squatting and standing without using hands.
 - kicking a ball and throwing over arm.
 - saying 50 or more recognisable words and understanding more.
 - joining in some nursery rhymes.
 - becoming increasingly independent but still constantly demanding parents' attention.
 - clinging tightly in affection, fear or fatigue.
 - throwing temper tantrums when frustrated.
 - starting to develop an imagination.
- How you can spend time with your child:
 - Talking to your child.
 - Drawing together.
 - Visiting a nearby park, the local library and playgroup.

This is the time to start looking at 3 year old kinder options if your child is not in a day care program. Socialisation and early childhood development is one of the most important parts of your child's growth and development both physically and emotionally.

Your two year old visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due.

- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your if your baby:
 - not coming to you for affection or comfort.
 - not understanding any words.
 - not putting any words together.
 - not enjoying pretend play.
 - not running.

3.5 years' old

At three-and-a-half years old your child is becoming more independent and adventurous and loves being involved in everything like helping with cooking and shopping.

Toilet training is well underway, your child may still need help with tasks like brushing teeth.

- What may your child be doing:
 - identifying some pictures by naming them.
 - balancing on one foot, walking on tiptoes and walking upstairs.
 - constantly asking questions.
 - listening to and telling stories.
 - washing and drying hands.
 - identifying a friend by name.
 - using less 'baby talk' in speech.
 - speaking in ways that can be understood half the time.
 - decreasing temper tantrums.
 - developing fears of the dark or animals.
 - How you can spend time with your child:
 - Making up games.
 - Sharing and telling stories.
 - Letting your child try to do things for his/her self.
- Your next visit to the Maternal and Child Health service is due at approximately 3.5 to four years old.
- Please talk to your Maternal and Child Health Nurse if your if your baby:
 - not talking clearly.
 - not able to talk in sentences.
 - not coming to you for affection or comfort.
 - not playing 'imaginary' games.
 - not playing with other children.
 - not drawing.

Four years' old

Your child is a little person who will watch your behaviour and copy you. Your everyday mannerisms and behaviours will often be seen in your child's behaviour.

- What may your child be doing:
 - socialising with a broader range of people.
 - understanding how to share and play well with other children.
 - developing a sense of humour and concern for others.
 - using hands and fingers skilfully.
 - holding a pencil in a mature grip using preferred hand.
 - speaking well.
 - decreasing temper tantrums.
- How you can spend time with your child:
 - Playing with puppets or toys, or playing outdoors, with plenty of running, tumbling and rolling.
 - Painting, drawing, musical play, dancing, jumping around.
 - Cooking.



Where to get help? Maternal and Child Health

The Maternal and Child Health Service provides a schedule of contacts and activities for all families, with an emphasis on prevention, promotion, early detection and intervention for health and wellbeing. It also provides a universal platform that can:

- Help to identify children and families who require further assessment, intervention, referral and/or support.
- Bring families together, foster social networks, support playgroups and strengthen local community connections.
- Deliver other service and supports, such as family support services, immunisation and volunteer programs.

The Maternal and Child Health Service provides 10 key ages and stages visits from birth to 3½ years, including a home visit and visits are 2, 4, and 8 weeks; 4, 8, 12 and 18 months; and 2 and 3½ years of age for all children and their families.

If you have any concerns or questions about your child's or family's health and wellbeing, the service is provided 52 weeks of the year, and is supported by the 24-hour Maternal and Child Health Line (13 22 29).

Where to get help?

Recognising serious illness in your infant

A for Alertness

Babies are at risk of serious illness if they are more drowsy than usual, cannot wake properly, do not respond to normal stimulation and are less active.

B for Breathing

Breathing in a seriously ill baby is characterised by a heaving chest with indrawn ribs, or grunting with each breath.

C for Circulation

A seriously ill baby may become pale all over and may have cold legs and cold hands.

Fluids in

Babies are very prone to dehydration. You must keep up your baby's fluid intake, especially if vomiting and/or diarrhoea are occurring. If your baby is breast-fed, then consider the frequency of feeding and the duration of active sucking over 24 hours. A breastfed baby might not suck for as long or as often as usual.

If you are bottle-feeding, calculate the volume of milk taken by your baby over 24 hours and compare it with your baby's normal intake. Babies are at risk of serious illness if they take in less than half their normal feed in the previous 24 hours.

Fluids out

Fewer than four wet nappies over 24 hours indicates risk of dehydration in babies under six months of age.

THE MORE OF THESE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS PRESENT THE HIGHER THE RISK OF SERIOUS ILLNESS.

THE MOST SERIOUS COMBINATION OF SIGNS IS A BABY BEING DROWSY AND PALE WHILE HAVING A HIGH TEMPERATURE.

Seek urgent medical attention if:

- Your baby is pale, drowsy and hot.
- Your baby has a temperature of more than 38 degrees and is less than six months old.
- Your baby is weak and will not wake properly.
- Your baby has a weak, high-pitched or continuous cry.
- Your baby is vomiting green fluid.
- Your baby has convulsions.
- Your baby is having difficulty breathing.
- Your baby stops breathing for more than 15 seconds.
- Your baby has a lump in the groin area.

We encourage new mums and dads to make themselves familiar with the Green Book, *My Health and Development Record*.

And do not hesitate to call the 24-hour Maternal and Child Health Line (13 22 29).

Where to get help? Is my baby growing?

- Growth charts
- Head circumference
- Length (i.e., height)
- Weight
- BMI
- All by gender

Available in your green book,
*My Health and Development
Record*.



Reference: Victorian Government. (2016, July 7). Learning and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/health/Pages/default.aspx>.

Our Values

Respect for Life

Compassionate
and Caring

Social Justice

Empowerment of
Women and Families

Recognition of Diversity

Accountability and
Best Practice



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