



0-9 months

Connecting through play

0-9 Months

Play is not only fun, but is also essential for healthy brain development and enhancing secure parent-child attachment.

Connecting with your baby

Staying in tune with your baby will build your relationship with them. By noticing little things about their facial

expressions, their body language and emotions you will feel more connected to your baby.

Babies are responsive and interactive from birth. They begin to communicate by using all of their senses and their entire body. They will let you know when they are ready for interaction and when they need a break. Supporting their exploration and helping them to soothe them when needed, will help your baby feel safe and secure.

What can you do to enhance this connection?

Firstly, it's important to understand and pay attention to your baby's cues. There are two main type of cues:

Engagement cues - it's not hard to interpret these cues, as they are so obvious. Baby will make it clear they want to be with you by smiling, holding arms out, cooing and so on.

Disengagement cues – these are signs that your baby needs a break from what is happening. An early indication that your baby is going to need assistance or time out is fast breathing, hiccups, looking away or yawning. If you are playing a game with your baby and they look away, this is a sign they need a break.

Follow your babies lead

If your baby smiles, take it to mean they are ready to engage with you and enjoy some interaction. If they're

not okay, stop what you are doing and allow them to take the lead. This will give them time to recover without the need to cry or become fussy.

Playing with your baby

- Play activities need to be simple. Very young babies enjoy play that involves gentle touch and singing.
- As your baby grows, they will start to enjoy movement, especially dancing around the house! Never use sharp shaking movements as this can result in damage to their very fragile brain.
- Playing music and making music with your baby can be a very positive and enjoyable experience. For example, if your baby is six months old and sitting in a high chair, try banging lightly on the chair tray, pause and watch to see what your baby does. If they pause too, it's your turn. Babies really enjoy simple turn taking activities that make noise.

Floor Play

It is essential to provide your baby with floor play, especially placing your baby on their tummy. You can start to give your baby time on their tummy, during their early weeks. This will help your baby to develop head control, body strength and assist with their ability to learn to crawl. Importantly, you must stay with your baby when they are on their tummy, as they are at risk of SIDS.

Tummy time

- Place your baby on their tummy, on a rug on the floor
- Place a small brightly coloured toy in front of your baby, so they see it
- Some babies don't like to be on their tummy and will protest. Start with a few minutes and gradually increase the time. Talk to them to reassure them, especially if this is one of the first few times on their tummy
- It can help for you to also get down to floor level. Your baby will be reassured, if they can see your face.

Safety check

Whenever you place your baby on the floor, make sure you check for any dangers that might attract your baby's attention and be dangerous. This is especially important once they start to move and explore. At around 7 to 9 months their pincer grip will start to develop, and they are able to easily pick up very small items from the floor. Other things to ensure their safety include:

- Making sure any pets are not in the room when your baby is on the floor
- Bookcases are anchored to the wall
- Tablecloths are not within reach
- Precious ornaments are out of reach
- Stairs, heaters and fans are not accessible.

Read to your baby

It is never too early to begin reading to your baby. Babies love books. Parents often start with thick-paged picture books. These provide opportunities to tell stories using descriptive language. By 4 months, you can start to teach your baby to turn the pages of the book. Remember to position your baby so they can see your face as you read to them. Your facial expressions will add to your baby's enjoyment.

Enjoy being with them

Remember, you are your baby's most loved object. Your baby will often have extended periods where they gaze at you. This is a wonderful opportunity to just be in the moment with your baby, gently stroking their head or arms, playing gently with their fingers and softly talking.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

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