

Are you ready for parenthood?

Tips, advice and support
for new parents



#ReadyforParenthood

southeastclinicalnetworks.nhs.uk/readyforparenthood



Congratulations on becoming a new parent

Becoming a new parent is life-changing. It can be fun and exciting as well as exhausting, and extremely challenging.

Our **#ReadyforParenthood** campaign aims to support new parents and carers. There's lots of information and support to help you with your new baby, so ask for any help that you need.

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Neonatal care

If your baby is born early (before 37 weeks) or unwell, they may need to be looked after in the neonatal unit.

Having a baby in neonatal care can be worrying, but you'll receive all the information and support you need.



You'll still be involved in your baby's care and be supported to feed, wash, change their nappy and hold them. This will help you bond with each other.



Attachment

Bonding with your new baby can take time. You can start to get to know them by having skin-to-skin contact. Spending time noticing what your baby likes and chatting with them as you feed or change them are great for beginning to bond.



Holding your baby, making eye contact, smiling and talking to them, helps your baby feel secure and connected and will help build your relationship. Your baby loves being with you!

Infant feeding

Breastfeeding has many benefits for mums and babies. If you need support with breastfeeding, ask your midwife or health visitor or get in touch with your local breastfeeding support group.



If your baby is around six months and staying in a sitting position with steady head and is co-ordinating their eyes, hands and mouth, it may be time to introduce solids. It's important not to rush the process too quickly. Speak to your health visitor.



Safer sleeping

The safest way for your baby to sleep is lying on their back on a firm, flat mattress in a cot, crib or Moses basket. Avoid overheating which can cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).



Some parents choose to share a bed with their baby. It is important to know how to do this safely. Seek professional advice and follow the safer sleep advice from the Lullaby Trust.



Infant crying

All babies cry, and some cry more than others. Crying is your baby's way of telling you they need you. They may be hungry, tired, too hot or cold, or need a nappy change or a cuddle.



No matter how stressed or frustrated you feel, you must never shake your baby. Speak to someone if you need help or support. If you're worried that your baby's unwell, speak to your GP or call NHS 111.



Perinatal mental health

Having a baby is a big life event and it's natural to experience a range of emotions. If you're feeling low or depressed, speak to your family, friends, midwife, health visitor or GP. Make time for yourself and keep doing the things you enjoy.

If you think your partner has postnatal depression, encourage them to get the help and treatment they need.



You can help by sharing the load - caring for your baby, as well as doing practical things like household tasks.

It's common for partners to get anxious or depressed too so seek help if you feel low.



Healthy living



The environments we provide our children help shape their experiences. Try to eat healthily and take regular exercise, and this will promote healthy behaviours to your children.

Physical activity increases energy levels and helps you feel good. It doesn't have to mean joining a gym. Pushing the pram or buggy to the shops or in a park is a good way to get active. Some parks even have free green gyms you can use.



Pelvic health

You'll bleed from your vagina after the birth. It'll be heavy at first, and you'll need super-absorbent sanitary towels. If you've had stitches, keep them clean and dry and tell your midwife, health visitor or GP if you're worried about them.



After having a baby, it's quite common to leak a bit of pee if you laugh, cough or move suddenly. Pelvic floor exercises can help with this. If you have pelvic pain or are leaking pee, ask for a referral for physiotherapy to help.



Stopping smoking

Smoking can still damage your baby's health after they are born. Secondhand smoke can increase the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and your baby's more likely to be admitted to hospital with lung problems or infections in their first year.



It can be hard to stop smoking, but it is never too late to try. Speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP or contact your local stop smoking service.



Healthy relationships

Having a baby often puts a strain on relationships. Make time for each other when you can.

Do little things to make each other feel cared for and included.



Talk to someone if you need help or support. There are lots of ways you can contact a relationship counsellor and some of them are free. Domestic conflict and abuse may get worse after the birth. Seek help and call 999 if you're in immediate danger.



Contraception and spacing pregnancies

You can get pregnant as little as three weeks after the birth of a baby, even if you're breastfeeding and your periods haven't started again.



Unless you want to get pregnant again, it's important to use some kind of contraception every time you have sex after giving birth, including the first time. Speak to your GP or contact your local family planning clinic for more information.



Vaccinations

Infant and childhood vaccinations are offered free of charge by your GP starting shortly after your baby is born.

As well as protecting your own baby, you're also protecting other babies and children by preventing the spread of disease.



Vaccinated people are far less likely to become seriously ill and you should have vaccines against illness when this is offered.



Useful links

Here is a range of useful resources to find out more about any of the topics covered in this booklet:

Neonatal care

- bliss.org.uk
- tommys.org/premature-birth
- nhs.uk (search *premature babies*)

Attachment

- unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly
- bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/bonding
- nhs.uk/start4life/baby (click on *baby moves*)

Infant feeding

- unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly
- nhs.uk (search *breastfeeding*)
- nhs.uk/start4life/baby (click on *feeding your baby*)

Safer sleeping

- lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice
- unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources
- nhs.uk (search *SIDS*)

Infant crying

- iconcope.org
- cry-sis.org.uk
- nhs.uk (search *crying baby*)

Perinatal mental health

- tommys.org (search *postnatal depression*)
- mind.org.uk (search *perinatal*)
- nct.org.uk (search *perinatal depression*)

Healthy living

- nhs.uk/healthier-families
- nhs.uk/live-well
- nhs.uk (search *keeping fit*)

Pelvic health

- nct.org.uk (search *pelvic floor*)
- nhs.uk (search *post pregnancy*)
- squeezyapp.com

Stopping smoking

- nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking
- nhs.uk (search *breast feeding and smoking*)
- lullabytrust.org.uk/smoking

Healthy relationships

- respectphoneline.org.uk
- relate.org.uk
- nationalDAhelpline.org.uk

Contraception and spacing pregnancies

- nhs.uk (search *contraception after baby*)
- nhs.uk (search *planning baby*)
- nhs.uk (search *planning another pregnancy*)

Vaccinations

- nhs.uk (search *pregnancy and covid*)
- nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations
- nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine

For more information about this campaign and to see more resources, visit:

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For more short hints and tips on parenthood, search **#ReadyforParenthood** on the social media channel of your choice.

Brought to you by NHS South East Regional Maternity Team with the support of a wide range of stakeholders, including the following local maternity and neonatal systems (LMNS):

- Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West LMNS
- Frimley Health LMNS
- Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth LMNS
- Kent and Medway LMNS
- Surrey Heartlands LMNS
- Sussex LMNS

#ReadyforParenthood

Are you ready for pregnancy?

You may also be interested in our sister campaign:

Are you ready for pregnancy?

For more information visit:

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