

More Tips

- Patterns and routines help babies feel safe. Sticking to a consistent schedule for feedings, naps, and bedtime can help you build a trusting relationship with your baby.
- Research shows that babies who have a bedtime routine fall asleep 30% faster, wake up 50% less often, and sleep for longer stretches of time.
- A father's comforting touch can be just as calming as a mother's. Sometimes Dad forms a special bond with the baby when handling middle-of-the night feedings and diaper changes.
- Using 3-4 nurturing activities will help your baby wind down and learn that these activities mean it's time to sleep. Try giving your baby a bath, gently massaging their muscles, and then spending a short period of quiet time together.
- Keeping your baby's crib near your own bed for their first year of life will make it easier to respond quickly to their needs. Responding quickly will help you build a trusting relationship.



For more information about healthy child development and safe sleep for babies, visit PreventChildAbuseFL.org or scan the QR code.



Dad Tip

Since babies are comforted by scents associated with their mothers, dads may find it helpful to use the same lotion or shampoo as mom. Dads can also bring a shirt that mom has worn that day with them to feed during the night.



CREATING A
LOVING BOND
WITH YOUR BABY

PreventChildAbuseFL.org

Bonding Basics



The bond between a parent and child is among the strongest in nature. Whether you're biologically related or not, it's important for your child to form a strong bond with you. Luckily, children are already wired to bond with their caregivers.

Making your baby feel safe and loved is one of the most important building blocks to bonding with your child. Developing a trusting relationship with your baby is an important first step. Your baby will learn to trust you as you respond to their needs. A daily routine for feeding, naps, and bedtime will help your baby learn what to expect from their environment, which will also build trust.

What if I don't feel a strong bond with my baby?

Bonding doesn't always happen within hours or days. Bonding is delayed in about 30% of mothers for a variety of reasons. Maybe your baby, or the birth process, wasn't what you expected. Maybe you are disappointed, under a lot of stress, or simply exhausted.

Most parents will develop a strong attachment to their babies as they care for their babies' needs over the first few months. Once parents get to know their babies, and adjust to this new addition, their feelings usually deepen. If you don't feel that you're bonding by the time you take your baby to their first doctor's appointment, talk to the doctor about your concerns.

There are plenty of great ways to safely bond with your baby. Try some of these ideas with your little one.

- **A parent's loving touch comforts a baby** and makes them feel loved and safe.
 - Give your baby a gentle massage. It is a great bonding experience and also relaxes your baby and promotes good sleep habits.
 - Cradle your baby and gently stroke their skin in different patterns.
- **Skin-to-skin contact is very soothing for your baby.**
 - Try resting your baby on your chest while you watch television or talk with friends.
- **Eyes can be a window to the soul**, especially for someone who can't talk yet!
 - Making eye contact with your baby is a great way for the two of you to connect.
- **Your voice is one of your baby's favorite sounds.**
 - Talk to your baby and respond to noises they make.
 - Tell your baby about your day.
 - Read or sing to your baby every day.
 - This will help your baby connect with you and learn important language skills at the same time.
- **Babies like you to acknowledge their efforts.**
 - Try mirroring your baby's movements or mimicking your baby's cooing.
- **Playing simple games like peek-a-boo or "this little piggy" provides your baby with needed brain stimulation** and deepens your bond.

Bonding Safely



Without trust, there cannot be successful bonding. Babies need to trust that their parents will consistently meet their needs and keep them safe from harm. Some parents believe that sharing a bed with their babies, sometimes called co-sleeping, is the best way to bond with and protect their babies. Research shows that **sharing a bed with a baby is dangerous**. Consider these facts before you decide where your baby will sleep:

- Suffocation and strangulation in an adult bed is the **leading cause of accidental infant death** in the state of Florida.
- The risk of sleep-related infant death is **40 times higher** for babies who sleep in adult beds compared to babies who sleep in their own cribs.

"The safest place for an infant to sleep is alone in a crib, in the parents' room for the first year of life."

-American Academy of Pediatrics

