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GROWING with your child: THE FIRST three YEARS

BEING A PART OF YOUR CHILD'S EARLY YEARS IS A WONDERFUL AND FULFILLING EXPERIENCE. HERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO 36 MONTHS.

Having a baby can be a life-changing and amazing event, but at times, it can also feel like one of the toughest challenges you've ever faced. It's hard, especially as a first-time parent, to know if you're doing the right thing, or if your child is developing the "right" way.

Child development is a continuous process. "Each child is unique, and children develop differently and at different paces," explains Dr Sita Padmini Yeleswarapu, Consultant at the Department of Child Development in KK Women's and Children's Hospital. Learning about the different development stages can help allay some of the parental stress*.

According to Dr Padmini, here is what you may observe:

Newborns are usually very sleepy, especially in the few days after birth. Soon, your baby will have more periods of wakefulness. He will start to visually follow the movement of objects or persons, and will love to watch nearby faces. By **six weeks**, you may even be rewarded with a smile as you interact with him.

At **three months**, the baby will be more active, often fascinated by his own body movements, routines such as bathing, as well as interaction with others. He will react with smiles, vocalisations and excited movements, such as kicking his legs and waving his arms.

At **six months**, the baby may try to sit up. His neck will be stronger, and he will enjoy rolling, pushing himself up or bouncing. Introduce a rattle or chew toy, as teething takes place around this period.

*Consult a doctor if you are concerned about your child's development.

By **nine months**, the baby may be more responsive to his name or simple requests. He may even enjoy simple games like peek-a-boo. It is also the time to baby-proof your house, as your baby starts crawling.

At **12 months**, the baby may experience separation anxiety. This is acceptable. He's also learning more each day – he may enjoy stacking blocks, toddling, drinking from a sippy cup and even saying a word or two.

By **18 months**, your child may enjoy running, feeding himself, scribbling with crayons, listening to stories and more. Soon, he will be climbing stairs on his own, kicking a ball, or even starting to dress or undress himself.

Development can vary a lot at this stage, but by **36 months**, your child should be able to balance on one foot, pedal a tricycle, sort objects, draw and even use a scissors. He will happily chat, pepper you with questions and will be a bundle of irrepressible energy and joy.



Get practical and fun tips on how to engage your child at different milestones at bit.ly/Growing-with-your-child-booklet.

Bond with Your Child

No matter how your child is developing, one key thing you can do to support him is to spend ample time with him. "Parents are their children's first and best play mates," says Dr Padmini. Play is important as it builds and strengthens parent-child relationships, and helps in the overall development and well-being of the child.

To support the development of your child, Dr Padmini advises parents to get active with their baby. Let your baby crawl and create opportunities for tummy time for your baby to raise his head; introduce nursery rhymes with hand actions. And as he gets older, find crafts and activities to do together. While doing all these, always be mindful of your words and actions, as children look up to their parents as role models. ♥

KKH's Patient Education Centre is a one-stop resource centre on pregnancy and parenting, and organises activities and programmes designed to guide and prepare new parents on their parenting journey.

For more information on the programmes, visit <https://www.kkh.com.sg/EducationAndTraining/Pages/PatientEducationCentre.aspx>

LIMIT YOUR TECH



While mobile devices may offer content variety and ease of use, too much screen time can reduce a child's desire for other activities and affect his sleep patterns. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends the following guidelines:



▶ For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than for video-chatting.



▶ Parents of children 18 to 24 months who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programmes, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they are watching.



▶ For children aged two to five years, limit screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programmes. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.



Get tips on balancing screen-time in this digital age at bit.ly/Tips-for-healthier-screen-time.



PARENTING TIPS FOR A CHILD'S EARLY YEARS



18 Beanstalk



Jul-Sep 18

EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL

GOOD NUTRITION AND ADEQUATE QUALITY SLEEP ARE ESSENTIAL TO A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING. HERE ARE SOME FEEDING STRATEGIES AND SLEEP TIPS FROM KK WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.



- ▶ **Avoid using food as reward** or to comfort your child, as it may distort how your child views food.
- ▶ **Offer a variety of nutritious foods** and make nutrient-poor foods less accessible to your child.
- ▶ **Provide repeated exposure to healthy foods**, as children's food preferences are influenced by availability, accessibility and familiarity.
- ▶ **Be a good role model for your child.** Children learn about food by observing and modelling the eating behaviours of others.
- ▶ **Avoid restricting food excessively**, as it can promote increased preference and overconsumption of these foods when they become available.



- ▶ **Establish a regular sleep-wake schedule.** Put your child to nap or sleep, and wake them up at about the same time every day.
- ▶ **Have a consistent bedtime routine.** For example, include three to four quiet activities that slowly lead toward bedtime, such as brushing teeth, changing into pyjamas and reading a bedtime story. These should take about 15 to 20 minutes in total.
- ▶ **Bring a favourite blanket or toy to bed.** A transitional object may provide some security and comfort, and alleviate bedtime fears.
- ▶ **Limit screen time.** See page 19.



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For more information, visit www.kkh.com.sg/healthpedia

Stirring THE SENSES

FROM BIRTH TO THREE: BOOST YOUR CHILD'S EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT



Mother Goose Remembers

By Clare Beaton



Mother Goose's nursery rhymes are beloved by children and adults all around the world. Author Clare Beaton takes you on a trip down memory lane with this collection of her childhood favourites. Repetition and rhyming sounds make the nursery rhymes easy to read and sing along, too. The accompanying hand-stitched pictures are unique and attractive. This colourful book will captivate both you and your child.



What To Eat When You're Pregnant: A Week-By-Week Guide to Support Your Health and Your Baby's Development

By Nicole M. Avena



Research has shown that the food consumed during pregnancy has a huge impact on a growing baby's development and behaviour later in life. Written by a neuroscientist, this book walks you through the different stages of pregnancy to help you obtain a proper balance of nutrients. The information, recipes and detailed meal planning guides will put the minds of expectant parents at ease.



Contributed by *N.Nirmala, Librarian, National Library Board*



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