

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The first six years are the most important years in your child's life. In the early years, the brain forms connections that set the stage for lifelong learning, behaviour and health. By age six, children have a solid foundation for reaching their full potential in the years ahead.

Parents and caregivers have the greatest impact on how a child grows and develops in the early years. You can make the difference!



What I Need

If babies, toddlers and preschoolers could tell you what they need, here is what they might say:

Keep me safe.

Know where I am and who I am with. Teach me who to go to when I need help.

Keep me secure.

Hug me. Respect me. Let me know your love is forever. This will help me develop trust and self-esteem.

Keep me healthy.

I need a variety of good foods, regular checkups, immunizations, fresh air, time to run and play and regular sleep.

Help me learn.




Talk, sing and play with me. Read to me. Stimulate me with sights, smells, tastes and sounds.

Help me adjust.

I need routines and comfort when I am upset. Help me make friends and learn how to get along with others.

HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED

STEPS FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Age	Safety	Security	Health	Learning	Adjusting
Baby Birth to 12 months 	Always put your baby to sleep on his back. This reduces the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Use a Canadian Standards approved car safety seat (infant or convertible) in the rear-facing position every time you travel in a vehicle.	You cannot spoil your baby. Pick him up when he cries. Find different ways to soothe him such as feeding, cuddling, rocking and walking with him. Hold your baby as often as possible, especially when you are feeding her.	Breast-feed your baby if you can. Take your baby for regular checkups and make sure he gets the immunizations he needs.	Talk to your baby. Point out familiar objects and name them. Read simple picture books and nursery rhymes to your baby. It is never too early to start.	Respect your baby's personality and feelings. Each of us responds to people and situations in our own unique way. Introduce your baby to grandparents, caregivers and others. This will help him learn how to get along with people later in life.
Toddler 1 to 3 years 	Childproof your house. Cover electrical outlets. Remove dangerous objects. Keep medicines out of reach. Provide safe opportunities for your child to climb, swing, slide and run.	Tell your child you like the way she is and the things she does. Hug your child when he is angry or frustrated.	Keep your home and car smoke-free. Make sure your child wears a hat and sunblock when she plays outside in the sun.	Sing, talk, listen and read to your toddler every day. Enjoy counting and rhyming games together.	Develop unrushed routines for eating, going out, playing and sleeping. Help your child understand his feelings. For example, say, "I see that you are angry because you don't want to go. We will come back later."
Preschooler 3 to 6 years 	Watch your child at all times when she is around water. Enforce safety rules in driveways, parking lots and around traffic. Make sure he always wears a helmet when riding a bike.	When your child misbehaves, help her calm down. Show her that you love her but don't accept the behaviour. Hang his artwork on the wall. Tell him you like his dancing and singing.	Take him to the dentist and get his vision and hearing checked before he starts school. Make sure she has lots of opportunities to be physically active.	Use everyday situations to teach opposites, time and how the calendar works. Limit the amount of time your child watches television. Watch television with her.	Give her lots of chances to play with other children. Your child's fears and nightmares are real to him. Comfort him and help him find ways to feel better.

Your Child Is Unique

Children grow and develop at different rates. Don't worry if your child starts to talk a few months later than other children, or takes a little longer to learn how to get along with others. But if you have concerns, don't hesitate to talk to a health care professional or ask for advice at your Ontario Early Years Centre.



Take Care of You

Parenting is a joy and a challenge! Nighttime crying, temper tantrums and the sheer energy of a five-year-old can leave you feeling tired and upset.

When you feel this way, it is hard to be at your best.

Parenting will be a joyful process when you take care of you, as well as your child.

- Take a break once in a while. Go out with friends or your partner. Ask a friend, family member or someone you trust to stay with your child.
- Go for walks with your child and meet other parents. Enjoy music and other activities you like.
- Get your parenting questions answered by visiting the Ontario Early Years Centre in your area.
- See your doctor if you are sick, feel sad for more than two weeks or if you are worried that your behaviour may harm your child.