

# Parenting Concerns

A guide by PANDAS

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# Introduction

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Becoming a new parent can be filled with love, joy and excitement — but it's also completely normal to feel overwhelmed, uncertain or anxious.

This guide brings together trusted resources to answer some of the most common worries and questions parents have in the early days and weeks with a new baby.



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# Practical First Steps

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Adjusting to life with your baby is a big change, and you'll probably have a lot of questions. Where do I start? What's normal? Who is here to support me?

The first few days and weeks can feel overwhelming. This section shares trusted resources to help you find your footing and get familiar with the basics of postnatal care, support visits and newborn needs.

# Where do I start as a new parent?

## There's no 'right' way to be a parent, but it can help to read advice from trusted sources

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The early days with your baby can feel like a blur. You might feel overwhelmed with information, which makes it hard to know where to start.

To begin with, it can help to read advice from trusted sources on caring for a newborn, understanding baby cues, and managing your own wellbeing.

The [NHS Start for Life hub](#) covers everything from safe sleeping to feeding. If you're looking for tips on daily care and settling in, [this article on baby basics might help](#).

**To find out more:** Try the NHS's [tips for new parents](#), and [guide to the early days](#).

# What postnatal care will I receive?

## You and your baby will continue to receive care long after you give birth

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The care you get after your baby is born is called postnatal care. You'll be seen by a midwife for the first few days, and then a health visitor who checks your baby's development up until they reach school age, and supports your physical and emotional recovery.

These meetings will be quite often to begin with, and gradually lessen as your baby gets older. The NHS's [guide to your baby's health and development reviews](#) gives a good summary of what to expect.

Your GP will also offer a [6-week check](#) to review your health and wellbeing. If there's anything else you need, there are lots of [NHS support services](#) available to you too.

**To find out more:** Tommy's has a [helpful guide explaining what to expect after the birth](#).



**There's no such thing as a perfect parent. So just be a real one.**

Sue Atkins, parenting expert and author

# What is a health visitor?

**Specially trained nurses or midwives who offer support and advice from shortly after your baby is born until they start school**

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Your health visitor will visit you at home or invite you to clinics to talk about your baby's development, feeding, sleep, and your emotional wellbeing. They can also connect you to additional services if needed.

**To find out more:** The Institute of Health Visiting explains [what a health visitor does](#).

# Sleep and Crying

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Sleepless nights, endless rocking, and those hours when nothing seems to soothe your baby — we've been there too.

It's normal to feel exhausted and unsure. Here we explore common sleep challenges, and what you can do to manage sleep deprivation and keep your baby safe at night.

# What can I do if my baby is crying and sleepless?

## Checking whether your baby is hungry or uncomfortable is a good place to start

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All babies cry – up to 2 hours a day on average – and sometimes it can feel like nothing you do helps. If your baby cries for long periods and is hard to soothe, it's OK to ask for help.

Cry-Sis have a [useful checklist](#) to go through when your baby won't stop crying. It includes checking whether they are hungry, unwell or uncomfortable. They also run a helpline for parents with sleepless or crying babies.

**To find out more:** [ICON](#) provides guidance for coping with crying and helps you understand when it's normal – and when to seek help.

# When will my baby sleep through the night?

**Some babies start to sleep through the night between 6 and 12 months, others still wake frequently after their first birthday**

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Every baby is different, but frequent waking is normal and expected in the early months. Newborns sleep for around 18 hours a day, but in small chunks with regular feeding breaks.

Don't worry about following a strict bedtime routine at first, it's better to just follow your baby's cues. When your baby is over 3 months old you may find it helpful to start introducing more consistency.

**To find out more:** NSPCC has a great guide on [babies and sleeping](#).



**Sleep when you can, ask for help when you need it, and know that this phase will pass.**

The Lullaby Trust,  
advice from their safer sleep and new parent resources

# How can I make sure my baby is sleeping safely?

## Your baby should sleep on their back, in a cot in the same room as you for the first 6 months

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Safe sleep practices reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), which can be triggered by things like overheating or restricted airways.

The [NHS advises](#) that you always place your baby on their back, use a clear cot with no pillows or toys, and share your room (not your bed) for the first six months.

**To find out more:** Visit [The Lullaby Trust](#), who specialise in guides and videos about safer sleep for babies.

# How do I cope with sleep deprivation?

## If tiredness is severely affecting your mood and you feel like you can't cope, you need to find ways to get more sleep

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A certain level of sleep deprivation is normal for new parents. It can affect your mood, memory, and ability to cope. If it starts to take a toll on your mental health then you need to try and address it.

To try and find time to get more sleep, the [NHS recommends](#) napping when your baby sleeps, sharing night duties, exercise, and taking relaxation breaks when possible.

If you're not able to sleep even when your baby is sleeping, it could be a sign of [postnatal depression](#), so speak to your GP or health visitor.

**To find out more:** [BabyCentre's guide to coping with sleep deprivation](#) covers a wide range of advice from the early days to going back to work.

# Relationships and Bonding

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Having a baby can shift the most important relationships in your life — including your relationship with yourself.

This section looks at how your relationships might change, how to build a bond with your baby, and how skin-to-skin and emotional connection play an important part in your baby's development.

# Will having a new baby affect my relationships?

## Yes – and it's completely normal

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The early weeks and months are tiring and emotional, and you may find you have less time and energy for friends, family, and even your partner.

Try to communicate openly, ask loved ones for help, and share responsibilities where you can. It's important to make time for yourself to be away from your baby and around other adults, so don't feel guilty about doing this.

**To find out more:** Read [NHS Inform's new babies and relationships guide](#).

# How do I bond with my baby?

## Try cuddling, skin-to-skin, talking, singing and simply spending time with your baby

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Bonding is a long-term process that [starts in pregnancy](#) and takes time. It's normal to not feel a bond with your baby straight away.

Babies rely on us for everything, so spending time with them, giving them love and paying attention to the things they do can help them feel safe with you.

The [NHS advises](#) talking to your baby and giving them lots of eye contact, and taking any opportunity to hold and cuddle them.

If you feel disconnected or unsure, reach out to your health visitor or GP.

**To find out more:** [UNICEF's guide](#) explains everything you need to know about parent-child bonding.

# Why are the first 1000 days so important?

## A baby's first 1000 days is a critical period of very fast development for their brain

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During this period of almost 3 years, your baby's experiences and environment are shaping their emotional development.

Giving your baby sensitive, nurturing care is the best way to give them a great start in life. Your own wellbeing is just as important as theirs here, because parents are the best providers of nurturing care when they are emotionally, financially and socially secure.

It's also important for society to support family-friendly employment policies, and high quality childcare services, as well as access to parenting guidance.

**To find out more:** There are a few charities, such as [Home Start](#) who campaign for better support of parents in the first 1000 days.



**Babies learn who they are  
by how they are loved.**

Pam Leo, author of *Connection Parenting*

# What is skin-to-skin contact and why does it matter?

**Skin-to-skin contact is when your baby is held against your bare chest. It helps regulate their temperature and heart rate and supports bonding and breastfeeding**

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**The NHS recommends** having skin-to-skin contact with your baby as soon as they are born, and for as long as possible. But any time you can do this it will be beneficial.

Not only does it help to regulate your baby's temperature, but it calms both your baby and you. If you are breastfeeding or chestfeeding, skin-to-skin can also help your body to produce milk, and can help make feeding easier for both you and your baby.

Partners can do skin-to-skin too.

**To find out more:** [La Leche League](#) has a great guide explaining the origins of skin-to-skin and all about the benefits.

# Feeding and Nutrition

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From breastfeeding to bottles, tongue-tie to weaning — feeding choices can feel overwhelming.

Whether you're breast or bottle feeding, or doing a bit of both, this section offers evidence-based guidance and support, helping you navigate the early months of nourishing your baby with confidence.

# Where can I find support for breastfeeding?

**Breastfeeding isn't always easy — but there is support. You can speak to your midwife, health visitor, or reach out to specialist organisations**

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Your NHS midwife and health visitors will help you get breastfeeding off to a good start, and you can contact them between appointments for help. You can also find [breastfeeding drop-ins and cafes](#) where you can meet others and share your experiences.

[The Breastfeeding Network](#) is a great place to find answers to any questions you have about breastfeeding, and they also have a helpline and online chat service. [La Leche League](#) also offer free support via phone, email, or web chat. They also run in-person support groups.

**To find out more:** [Best beginnings](#) have a series of videos that follow the honest breastfeeding journeys of four new mums.

# What is tongue-tie and how might it affect feeding?

**Tongue-tie is when a tight strip of skin under the tongue restricts movement. It can affect latching, cause sore nipples, and lead to poor weight gain**

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Tongue-tie can be mild or severe. [According to the NHS](#), signs include your baby's tongue not lifting or moving side to side, their tongue looking heart-shaped, or not being able to stick their tongue out.

It might not need treating, but if it does then specially trained doctors, nurses or midwives can carry out a very straightforward procedure called a frenulotomy.

**To find out more:** Download this [NHS leaflet](#) for more information about tongue tie and the procedure to correct it.



**Whether you breastfeed, formula feed or do a bit of both — what matters most is that your baby is loved, fed, and safe.**

UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative

# What is combi feeding and how do I do it safely?

**Combi (or mixed) feeding means using both breast and bottle. It's a flexible option – but timing matters to avoid disrupting milk supply**

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Once you and your baby are comfortable with breast feeding, you could offer your baby bottles of expressed milk or formula alongside breastfeeding. It can be a more flexible way to feed, especially [if you have two or more babies](#), or are sharing feeding responsibilities with a partner.

[The NHS website](#) has some advice about how to slowly introduce your baby to a bottle.

**To find out more:** [Tommy's guide](#) goes into more detail about how to combi-feed safely.

# What do I need to know about bottle feeding?

## If you're using bottles, follow safe prep guidelines and feed responsively

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[The NHS](#) has a full guide to bottle feeding which explains the equipment you need to buy, as well as how to safely bottle feed your baby.

If you're planning on using formula, it can be overwhelming trying to choose the right one. [First Steps Nutrition Trust](#) has some great information about the different options available.

**To find out more:** Download [this guide from Start for Life](#) for step by step instructions on making up a feed, sterilising your equipment and more.

# When and how should I start giving my baby solid food?

**Weaning usually starts at around 6 months. Your baby should be able to sit up, hold their head steady, and coordinate their hands, eyes and mouth**

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To start with, [introducing your baby to solid food](#) is more important than what that food is. They'll still be getting most of their nutrition from milk.

Start by letting them try a small amount of food before their usual feed. Try to let them try different tastes and textures, so they learn how different foods feel in their mouth.

There are a few [extra things to be aware of if your baby was premature](#).

**To find out more:** Watch a [short introduction to weaning from Start4Life](#), or these slightly longer videos from [NHS Midlands](#) and [NHS Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent](#).



**It's not just baby blues if it lasts longer than two weeks. Talk to someone — you deserve support too.**

**NHS England**  
from the Every Mind Matters campaign

# Emotional Wellbeing

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You matter too. Your mental health is just as important as your baby's.

Many new parents experience a mix of emotions — from joy and pride to sadness, guilt and worry. This section covers how to recognise when things don't feel right, and where to turn for help.

# How can I look after my mental health as a new parent?

## You are not alone. Talk to your GP, health visitor, or contact a support charity

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It's normal to feel anxious, low or overwhelmed. These feelings don't make you a bad parent – but they are signs you may need more support. Speak to your midwife or health visitor about how you're feeling, they are there to help.

Organisations like us here at [PANDAS](#) can offer you free support over the phone, online or in person.

**To find out more:** Visit [NHS: mental health after birth](#), or [Tommy's Mental Health Hub](#).

# Accessing Support

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You are not alone. If you are struggling — whether emotionally, practically or mentally — there are people and services who want to help. Below are trusted services and organisations that offer **mental health support, talking therapies,** and **community support** for new parents across the UK.

## Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathways and Services

- **NHS England:** [Perinatal Mental Health Overview](#)
- **NHS England:** [Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway \(PDF\)](#)
- **Royal College of Psychiatrists:** [What are perinatal mental health services](#)
- **NHS Scotland:** [Perinatal Mental Health Network Scotland](#)
- **NHS Wales:** [PNMH Programme and Pathways](#)

## Talking Therapies

- **NHS England:** [Find care for your mental health before, during and after pregnancy](#)
- **NHS Scotland:** [Living Life | NHS 24 & We're here for you | Parent Club](#)
- **NHS Wales:** [Health A-Z : Counselling](#)
- **CBT:** [Overview - Cognitive behavioural therapy](#)

# Further Useful Resources

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## Guidelines

- **NICE:** [Women's and reproductive health guidelines](#)
- **RCOG:** [Browse patient information](#)

## Finances

- **GOV.UK:** [Pregnancy and birth - help and benefits](#)

## Community Support

- **PANDAS:** [Peer-to-peer support for you, your family and your network](#)

## Podcasts and blogs

- **The Midwives' Cauldron Podcast:** Listen to experts discuss a wide range of pregnancy and parenting topics. [Find it here.](#)
- **Dr Sara Wickham:** Blogs, guides and resources about pregnancy, birth and beyond. [Explore her website](#)



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Thank you

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Hope for Parents