

The Earlier The Better

Attachment Comes First

Research shows that the earliest contacts with you, or other caregivers, can literally mould your child's brain development. Without early positive "attachments", a child may suffer future problems with confidence, social behaviour, and relationships.

Attachment is the strong emotional tie of affection and connection that develops between a baby and caregivers (usually parents). **Attachment is most important when a baby is upset, sick or hurt.**

Children who receive sensitive, responsive care in their first year of life enjoy an important beginning, shaping the way they will learn, think and behave for the rest of their lives. Early secure relationships with important adults lay the foundation for healthy emotional development. This will help children develop the feeling of trust, security, and the need to explore, learn and develop to their full potential.



The time to build your
child's future is NOW.

TIPS:

- Talk, read and sing to your baby
- Encourage safe play and exploration
- Respond to your infant's cues & signals
- Hold, comfort and protect your baby
- Respond promptly when your baby cries
- Be warm and loving everyday
- Follow your child's lead, try to see things from your child's point of view
- Taking care of yourself is one of the most important ways that you take care of your baby

**REMEMBER: COMFORTING IS MOST IMPORTANT
WHEN YOUR BABY IS UPSET, SICK OR HURT.**



www.regional.niagara.on.ca
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Learn more about early childhood development
by speaking with a public health nurse.

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Operated by the Regional Niagara Public Health Department

Building Your Child's Emotional Health



 **Niagara Region**



You Affect Brain Development

Babies are born with many billions of brain cells or “neurons” eager to form into neural pathways which carry information that is essential in developing sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, movement, speech and thought.

This shaping or “wiring” occurs with amazing speed in early childhood, then continues on more slowly into the pre-teens.

A healthy attachment with at least one adult helps “wire” a child’s neural pathways to deal with stress and anxiety plus new information and experiences¹.

FOOTNOTE: 1 Reference: An Ounce of Prevention Fund and Zero to Three Paper, 1998.



Build An Emotionally Healthy Child

Playing

As a parent, you are your child's first and favourite playmate – their favourite toy. Spontaneous play is essential for all kinds of social and emotional learning, even the development of a baby’s imagination. A safe, stimulating environment allows children to play and explore in ways that develop thinking, physical, language and interaction skills. The delight you take in their discoveries makes them want to play more and more.

If you are like most parents today, your greatest challenge is probably trying to find time to care for yourself, along with the other ongoing responsibilities. Everyday activities such as comforting, playing, listening, and just spending time focused on one another all help develop your child’s:

- Self-esteem and confidence
- Curiosity to explore and learn
- Social skills and relationships with other children
- Self-control and coping abilities
- Problem-solving skills
- Communication skills and literacy levels

Comforting

When you comfort babies, you assure them that the world is safe and they are cared for. Some may advise, “Let the baby cry...”, but remember, their cry is a way of telling you they are unhappy, hungry, cold, wet, lonely or frightened. Recent research has shown that responding to your babies cries will **not spoil** your baby. In fact, babies who have been responded to quickly and consistently, especially during the first six to eight months of life, actually cry less later in life and develop a secure attachment.

Listening & Responding

You actually help your baby’s healthy brain development when you respond sensitively to what your baby is telling you with all those little sounds, facial expressions, body gestures and varied cries, (*I’m hungry, I’m happy, or I want you to talk to me*). Your sensitivity to those attempts to communicate is an important pathway to a secure parent-child attachment. When parents consistently respond in a warm, loving manner, children learn to trust in others and to trust in their own ability to have an impact.

