

Parenting ⁷ Series

Connecting with Your Baby For Parents with Babies Under One



Online Version Watch Video 1 Watch Video 2 Watch Video 3



Department of Health

The Interactive Way

In the early months, parents interact and communicate with their babies mainly through physical contact, facial and vocal expressions. As your baby develops, many more forms of interactions become possible. Talking, singing, playing or reading with him together in an interactive and harmonized way make you feel closer to each other. These interactions form the cornerstone upon which your baby develops his emotional connection with you, a major step in his social emotional development. In addition, they are the important venues for teaching your baby and facilitating his development.

When to interact with your baby?

♥ **ANY TIME** as long as he is not tired and you are ready.

What to do together?

♥ **ANYTHING** that is safe will do. There are no prescribed settings or tools e.g. a handkerchief from your handbag can become a plaything for engaging your baby.

♥ The most important 'tool' is **you!**
A caring look, a warm smile, a gentle stroke, a kiss or a hug can make your baby feel your love. At the same time, his response will make you feel close to each other.



- ♥ You may read to him with a rhythmic voice to attract his attention. He will return by looking at you attentively or even wiggle in excitement.

- ♥ Cloth or cardboard books with colourful pictures are attractive to young babies. Books with different textures, sounds and odours give additional stimulation.



- ♥ Music is an excellent medium for you to interact with your baby. You may dance to the music with him by rocking him gently or swaying his arms and legs while humming along.

- ♥ As he becomes able to support himself on his legs, you may dance with him by supporting or holding him in your lap. You may also dance together with him in front of the mirror.



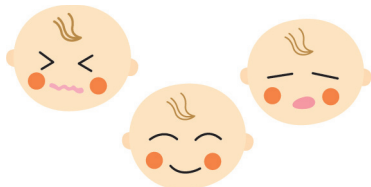
♥ Peek-a-boo, tickling, nursery rhymes with actions are good interactive play with your baby.

♥ Any kind of play is fun as long as you are **physically and psychologically involved**.



How to interact?

😊 Let your baby look at you **face to face**. You may get down to her eye level or pick her up.



😊 **Observe** her facial expressions and body language.

😊 **Listen** to her.

Listen and respond to her accordingly. Her coos may stand for something she wants to tell you.



 **Pay attention** to what she is watching.

 **Respond** to her immediately by:

- **Imitating** her sounds or actions.

- When you respond by imitating her, she will know that you are interested in what she does. You can also guide her to imitate you in return.



- **Try to interpret** her meaning.

- If your baby squeals and wiggles in excitement, she might want you to carry on playing with her. If she stops and turns her face away, she might lose her interest or even feel tired. Then it is time to quiet down and let her have a rest.



- **Describe** what you see or hear **to help her learn.**

- Say the words for things she is interested in, e.g. say 'ball' for her when she is touching a ball.



- Talk about what happened or is happening, e.g. tell her 'spoon fell down' while pointing to the dropped spoon.



- **Use actions and gestures** to illustrate your words. She will also learn from you to express in gestures before she can speak.

- **Wait** for her response. Don't just keep on talking. Pause and **let your baby take a turn** to give her more chances to express in her own way.



Repeating helps her understand and remember.

Find different ways to repeat new words and actions as often as possible. Sing her favourite nursery rhymes with actions repeatedly. Rhymes with tunes and words that repeat themselves help her learn. She will eventually sing out some of the words by imitating you.



Add a new idea by building on what she already knows. For example, when she can pick up a

block, teach her to release it into a bucket. When she is already saying words e.g. 'cookie', tell her about different names of food such as 'bread' and 'cake'.



😊 Add new experiences through reading such as substituting her as the character in the story, 'Look! Sarah is taking a bath.' You may also make the story come to life e.g. point to the puppy in the picture and say, 'Doggie goes to bed. Baby Sarah also has to go to bed now.'

😊 Interact with her in a **calm and pleasant** mood as she can sense how you feel.



By the end of 12-months old, if your child:

- Has no eye contact with carer
- Does not respond to calling of his name often
- Does not respond to commands with gestured cues e.g. wave "bye-bye", "Give me"
- Does not communicate his wants by pointing or gestures e.g. looking or reaching out his hand
- Does not babble
- Appears not hearing well

Please discuss with your doctor or nurses in MCHC, family physician or paediatrician.

Connecting with your child successfully needs you to understand her uniqueness, tune in to her level, observe her signals, and respond appropriately. Do try out the ideas in the leaflet with your baby and enjoy the fun of being together.



Family Health Service

Website: www.fhs.gov.hk

24-hour Information Hotline: 2112 9900