

DOULAS

can improve care before, during and after childbirth



Doulas are non-clinical caregivers who provide physical, emotional and informational support to pregnant people and their partners before, during and after childbirth.

For example, a doula might:

- Provide information about the procedures performed and actions taken during and after labor
- Help explain your birth plan and advocate for your emotional and physical needs to hospital staff
- Offer physical comfort through activities like massage and focused breathing
- Guide and support your family and loved ones
- Help with breastfeeding

Doulas can't provide medical advice and can't change the clinical recommendations of a midwife or doctor, but their role is an important one. They provide continuous support

and encouragement during labor and delivery and can help you have a better birthing experience.

The benefits of doula care

Studies suggest that doula care can make labor and delivery safer for pregnant people and their babies.

Benefits of doula care include:

- Fewer c-sections (cesarean sections)
- Less anxiety and depression for pregnant people
- Less pain-relief medication during labor
- Shorter time in labor
- Fewer negative childbirth experiences
- Better communication between pregnant people and their healthcare providers
- Lower healthcare costs

Source: March of Dimes, marchofdimes.org, search "doulas."

Choosing a Pediatrician

Pediatricians are doctors who focus on the health and development of children. It's a good idea for parents-to-be to choose a pediatrician about 3 months before baby is born. This will help secure a supportive medical home for baby's first wellness visit, which is usually 2 to 5 days after birth. Ask for recommendations from relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers and doctors you know.



Questions to ask others about their pediatrician:

- Do you feel rushed at your appointments?
- Are all your questions and concerns addressed?
- Do your children like their pediatrician?
- How are emergencies handled on the weekend or after hours?
- Are you included in the decision-making process?
- Does your pediatrician explain the side effects and risks of various medications?

Questions to ask the pediatrician:

- Does your office accept my insurance plan or make other payment arrangements?
- What is your educational background and training?
- What hospital would you admit my child to in an emergency?
- What is your philosophy about breastfeeding?
- Do you have a separate waiting area for sick children?
- If you are unavailable when I call, will your nurse be available?

A Healthy Start

BULLETIN Volume 0624

Reading To Your Baby

WHEN TO START AND HOW TO DO IT



Healthy Start can help you have a healthy pregnancy, baby and family!

We offer FREE services for pregnant women and families with children up to age 3.

HOME VISITING

PRENATAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

FREE SCREENING AND SERVICES

PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

CARE COORDINATION

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Reading to your baby is a great way to spend some bonding time together, and it has real benefits for them as they grow and develop. Here's how you can encourage a lifelong love of reading in your child.

When should I start reading to my baby?

It's never too early to read to your newborn. Your little one learned to recognize your voice in the womb, and they'll love listening to you talk, sing and read aloud from the moment they're born. In fact, research suggests that the sooner you start reading to your baby, the bigger the impact it will have as they grow.

Of course, your newborn may not understand the meaning of what you say to begin with, but the different rhythms and sounds will help to stimulate and develop their hearing, as well as laying good foundations for listening skills later in life.

No matter how old your baby is, regular reading helps them understand that books are fun! What's more, reading to your baby provides a little moment of quiet togetherness that you can both enjoy. Curling up together with a soothing story can be a calming addition to your baby's bedtime routine, and your baby will soon associate reading with feelings of happiness.

Why is reading to my baby good for them?

Reading to your baby, no matter how young they are, is a great way to develop the close and loving bond you have with each other. Your baby will love the undivided attention, and cuddling will make them feel safe and secure, which is important for their social and emotional development.

But reading to your baby isn't just great for bonding. The more words your baby

Continued...

Florida Healthy Start

Central & North Central Florida Coalitions

Connect
877-678-WELL

The Connect number is a one-stop entry point to services for pregnant women, caregivers and families with young children.

Participating programs: Healthy Start, Parents as Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families, Newborn Home Visiting, Healthy Start Doula Program and T.E.A.M. Dad.

Healthy Start of North Central Florida

Counties: Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Suwannee, Union

Central Healthy Start Florida

Counties: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Sumter

www.EveryBabyDeservesAHealthyStart.org



Administrative Office: 1785 NW 80th Blvd., Gainesville, FL 32606
An Affiliate Partner of WellFlorida Council www.WellFlorida.org



Reading to Your Baby, *continued*



hears in their early weeks, months and years, the better their language skills are likely to be. Reading aloud to your baby boosts the number of neural pathways in their developing brain. These become the foundation for learning and may also help your little one do better at school later on.

Why is reading to my baby good for me?

Studies have found that snuggling with and reading aloud to your baby has a positive impact on you, too. It can increase feelings of warmth and connection with your little one, allowing you to relax and enjoy this time spent together. This boost can last well beyond your baby's first year, with research showing that parental warmth is higher at 18 months among parents who were reading to their baby at six months.

Reading to your baby can be a much less active role for you, so if you're feeling tired from play, pulling out a book, or three, can help to give you a break. Being physically close and calm with your child will boost your happy hormones and lower your stress levels, too.

What are the best books for reading to my baby?

To begin with, reading to your baby is mostly about letting them hear and understand the rhythm of language.

Although they'll soon pick up on your tone of voice, they cannot completely understand what you're actually saying, so feel free to read from your favorite magazine or novel. If you're enjoying what you're reading, your baby's more likely to enjoy it too!

As your baby's eyesight improves in the first few months, they'll probably be fascinated by pictures with bright colors and sharp contrasts. This is a great time to introduce board books and picture books, which are strong enough for their little hands (and mouth!) to explore.

Look for books with built-in activities, such as images hidden under flaps or behind sliding panels. Nursery rhymes are another good bet, as your baby will probably enjoy their sing-song rhythm and playful wording. They're also easy to remember, so you can chant them during daily routines, such as bathtime ("Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub").

How should I read to my baby?

The most important thing is that your baby learns to make a connection between the things they love the most—you or your partner's closeness and your voices—and their favorite stories. Most of all, they'll enjoy the undivided attention that story time brings!

Repetition helps your baby to build their language skills, so look for stories that

use the same phrases again and again, or just read your baby's favorite stories to them often. To keep them interested, vary the pitch of your voice, or use different voices for different characters.

Research shows that interactive reading is a great way to help build a child's vocabulary and understanding. So although your baby can't talk back to you yet, try to ask them questions about what you're reading.

For example, if you're reading about a ball in the book, you could ask your baby something like: "You like playing with your ball too. You have a red ball but this one in the book is a yellow one".

The most important thing is that your baby enjoys the experience. Watch their cues to see when they're ready for some snuggly story time, read their favorite books, and give them time to point, pull or feel what's on the page.



Should I teach my baby sounds and letters?

When you read to your young baby, focus on enjoying the story and the quality time together, rather than trying to teach them to read. If you read to your child enough, when they're ready they'll eventually make the connection between the sounds of words and the letters on the pages (phonics). In the meantime, teaching them to enjoy reading is a much more valuable lesson.

Source: *BabyCentre*, <https://www.babycentre.co.uk/a25015135/reading-to-your-baby-when-to-start-and-how-to-do-it>

SUPPORTING FATHERS' MENTAL HEALTH

Did you know?

- **One in 10** fathers get Paternal Postpartum Depression (PPPD);
- Up to **16 percent** of fathers suffer from an anxiety disorder during the perinatal period.



Helping dads be at their best—physically and mentally—during early childhood has a big impact on children's health.

Studies show that FATHER INVOLVEMENT LEADS TO CHILDREN WHO:

are more ready for school



have a better vocabulary

have better social skills



are better able to regulate their emotions

FATHER INVOLVEMENT HELPS MOMS TOO

- It increases both parents' confidence
- It helps both parents be more responsive to their baby
- It decreases mothers and fathers' potential for mental health issues



How Can Health Professionals Help Fathers?

1. Screen for paternal depression during well-child visits
2. Connect dads with resources and interventions

REFERENCES

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NICHQ
National Institute for Children's Health Quality



Water Safety

KEEP KIDS SAFE FROM DROWNING

In Florida, drowning is one of the leading causes of preventable death in children 1–4 years of age. To reduce the risk of drowning, use multiple layers of protection and restrict unsupervised access to water sources such as pools, hot tubs, canals, ponds, ditches, bathtubs, toilets and more.

Supervise! Proper supervision is the most effective drowning prevention.

- Know your surroundings and possible drowning risks to your child at home and when traveling.
- Ensure young children are always supervised by a trusted caregiver.
- Assign a Water Watcher and use touch-supervision.
- Never leave a child alone near water, even for a second.

Swim Safety

- Water survival skills training and swim lessons can help reduce drowning risk for children between the ages 1–4.
- By their 4th birthday, most children are ready for swim lessons.
- Swim lessons are not a replacement for supervision.
- Make a family drowning prevention plan and ensure all family members know how to swim.

Barriers & Alarms

- Use barriers to water access. Install door chimes or alarms.
- Install and maintain 4-foot pool fencing and self-closing, self-latching gates and doors.
- Secure and lock all doors, windows and pet doors.

Did You Know?

- While most child drowning incidents occur in a pool, nearly 70% of those children were not expected to be in the pool at that time.
- Distracted caregivers are a primary factor in child drowning incidents.
- Drowning incidents are preventable.

Source: FloridaHealth, WaterSmartFL.com