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Introduction

Réamhrá

Welcome to **Caring for Your Baby: Birth to Six Months Old**. If you have just had a baby, this is the booklet for you! It contains valuable information to help you care for yourself and your baby over the next six months.

The birth of a baby is an exciting and challenging time for all. This booklet will help you deal with the every day concerns of being a parent. It will also point you to further information and support. A telephone list at the back of this booklet gives local contact details on child health and related support services.

This booklet also has a Compact Disc inside the back cover if you wish to listen to the information as well as read it.



1. Taking care of yourself as a parent

Ag tabhairt aire duit féin mar thuismitheoir

Becoming a parent changes your life! It is important to take care of yourself so you can take care of your family.

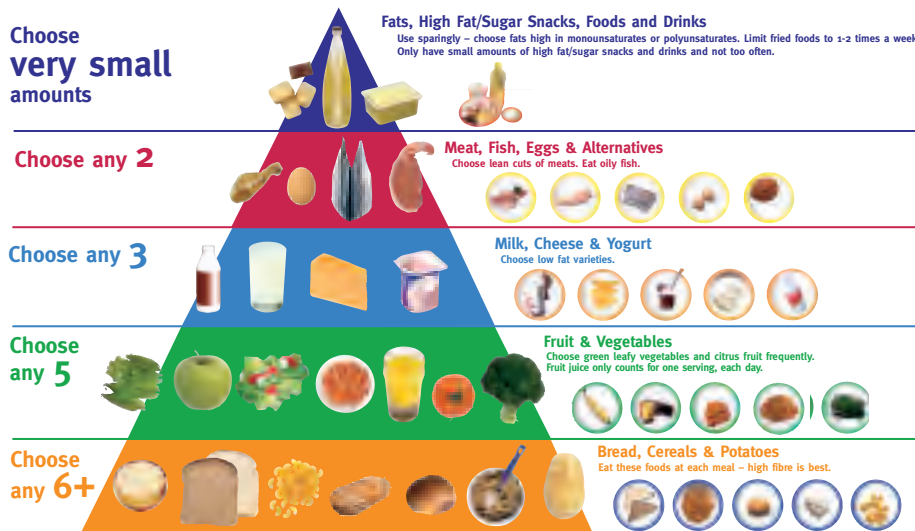
Especially for Mams

Eating well

A healthy balanced diet is always important, especially after giving birth. Use the food pyramid to help you choose a balanced diet. If you are breastfeeding, choose five servings of milk, cheese and yogurt. To avoid constipation, especially if you had stitches or bruising, eat foods high in fibre, such as vegetables, fruits, and wholemeal cereals. Aim to drink a lot of fluid.

Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion size

HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN
www.healthpromotion.ie



Drink water regularly - at least 8 cups a day

FOLIC ACID - AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN MAKING A BABY. YOU CAN GET FOLIC ACID FROM GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES BUT IF THERE IS ANY POSSIBILITY THAT YOU COULD BECOME PREGNANT THEN YOU SHOULD BE TAKING A FOLIC ACID TABLET (400 MICROGRAMS PER DAY).

HPH1700002
07/2006

Postnatal exercises

You experienced many changes in your body during your pregnancy. Now that your baby is born, most of these changes will return to normal. Special postnatal exercises will help. These are important to help you regain your figure and prevent future health problems such as leakage of urine (incontinence). In the hospital, your midwife or physiotherapist will give you information on how to do postnatal exercises. Do these exercises regularly.

Postnatal check

Six weeks after your baby is born, you are due for a routine postnatal check, including a breast check and cervical smear, by your doctor. This is a free service. Use this time to talk with your doctor about any questions or concerns you have on yourself or your baby.

Baby Blues

You may feel tired or strained due to lack of sleep and coping with your new role as a parent. Most new mams feel **baby blues** a few days after the birth. This is mainly due to a change in your hormone levels. As your body starts to return to normal, these feelings pass.

Postnatal depression

Postnatal depression is a term used to describe feelings of depression you may get after you have a baby. About 10-20 % of women are affected by postnatal depression in the first few months after giving birth.

After the birth, you may:

- have no interest in your baby or yourself;
- feel panic, anxiety, dizziness, a fast heartbeat, sick in your stomach, or sweaty;
- cry;
- be afraid of being left alone with your baby;
- feel resentful towards your partner;
- feel tired but unable to sleep;
- have no appetite;
- overeat;
- find it hard to concentrate; or
- loose interest in sex.

If you or your family notice some of these signs, then speak with your partner, family member, doctor, or public health nurse. Remember, postnatal depression does not last forever and the sooner it is recognised, the sooner you will get better.



For Mams and Dads

Physical activity

Some gentle exercises can help increase your energy level and help you manage the added work in your life following the birth of your baby. Build physical activity into your lifestyle. Try:

- going for a walk with your baby. Inviting your partner or a friend along gives you a chance to spend time together.
- going swimming once you feel ready.



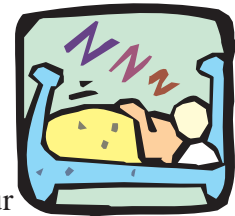
Family planning after childbirth

It is possible to become pregnant again soon after the birth of your baby, even if your periods have not returned. Now is the time for you and your partner to decide on a method of family planning that you are both happy with. You can get information on family planning and contraception from your midwife, doctor, public health nurse, or practice nurse.

Rest and relaxation

Extra rest is important for both parents, especially after your baby is born. In the first few days at home try to:

- limit the number of visitors who call to see you and your new baby;
- have a rest or a sleep when the baby sleeps;
- accept offers of help with the routine shopping or housework;
- allow some of the housework to go undone for now and focus on your baby and yourself, especially if you are breastfeeding; and
- prepare and freeze meals ahead of time to cut down on daily housework.



Looking after your relationship

Relationships can become strained between parents, especially when you are tired and tense. At times, you may feel that it is hard to cope with your role as a parent and balance this with work and other interests. Take care of your relationship by:

- saying a caring word or doing something for each other;
- letting your partner know that you appreciate their support in parenting and in caring for your relationship; and
- if you feel stressed, talk openly together and share your feelings in a calm and listening way.

Extra supports for parents

Being a parent can be a difficult as well as a rewarding time. Every parent needs support at some time. It may be more difficult if:

- this is your first baby and you are unsure of what to expect;
- you do not have a partner or support person to share the joy and the work of being a parent;
- your relationship with your partner is in difficulty;
- you feel there is support for your baby and your partner but little to support you; or
- you now live away from your home and family.

Getting help and support is important. Ask your public health nurse about supports available such as:

- breast feeding support groups;
- parent and baby support groups, and
- peer led support, for example Community Mothers Programme where local trained parents who have had similar experiences visit you at home to offer support and information.

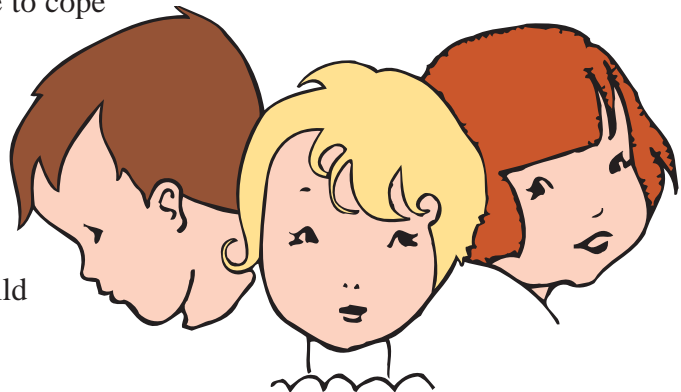
Information and phone numbers of local support services are available at the back of this booklet.

- **The Support for Families Directory.** This is a guide to groups who provide local marriage and relationship counselling, family mediation, child counselling and bereavement support. Ask your local Social Welfare Office for a copy.

A new brother or sister in the family!

If this baby is not your first child, then this is a time of change for other children in your family. It will take time and patience to cope with the extra demands. Your older child may go back to baby behaviour for a time, such as wanting a bottle, or wanting to be lifted up, or may even be jealous.

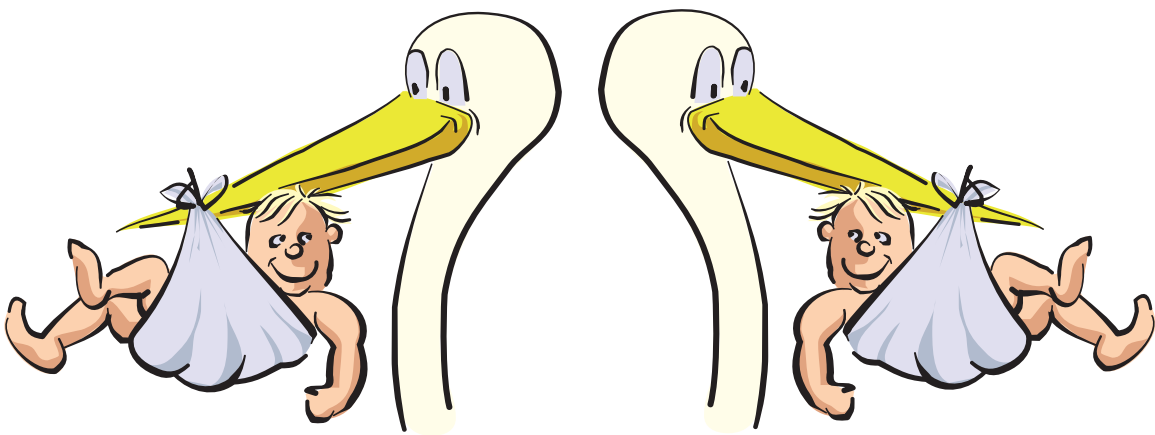
There are ways to help your older child adjust to your new baby:



- if possible, spend some time with your older child. Go for a walk, or a swim, or play a game. This may help to make your older child feel secure and adjust to their new position in the family.
- encourage your older child to become involved in caring for your baby; and
- talk with your older child about when he or she was a baby, use old photos or toys to help you.

Caring for twins or more!

Caring for twins, or more, is very different. There is certainly a lot more work! You need as much support as you can get. Ask your family and friends for help with the routine baby care or with the housework. The Irish Multiple Birth Association offer information and support on a range of topics for parents of twins, triplets or more. Their web site address and telephone number are at the back of this booklet. Support may be available from other organisations, ask you public health nurse, doctor or community welfare officer for details.



2. Feeding your baby

Ag tabhairt bia dod' leanbh

Breastfeeding

Research comparing the health of children who breastfed with children fed on formula milk shows that breastfeeding reduces the risk of illness. This protection from illness can last for many years after you stop breastfeeding. The health benefits of breastfeeding include less risk of your baby getting:

- cough and colds;
- stomach upsets;
- ear infections;
- childhood diabetes;
- asthma and eczema; and
- obesity (very overweight).

There are many other benefits of breastfeeding, such as:

- it is always available;
- there are no feeds to be made up;
- it is always at the right temperature; and
- it costs nothing.

Breastfeeding will also help you regain your figure and help to protect your health by reducing your risk of:

- breast cancer;
- ovarian cancer; and
- osteoporosis (bone thinning).

Breastfed babies need only milk for the first six months. Your baby should be demand fed; that is, feed your baby when he or she is looking for milk. Encourage your baby to feed for as long as he or she wishes to. This ensures a good supply of milk. You will know your baby is thriving if your baby is putting on weight and has wet and dirty nappies every day.

Knowing how to breastfeed is a skill that you will develop. New mothers and babies usually take a week or two to get good at it. After that, it becomes much easier and very rewarding. You will soon gain confidence with practice and support. As well as your

midwife, public health nurse, doctor and practice nurse, groups like Cuidiú and La Leche League are there to provide support. Ask your public health nurse for information on local support groups. For more written information on breastfeeding read the booklet **Breastfed is Best Fed**. It contains useful information, such as:

- starting to breastfeed;
- nipple care;
- adjusting to a breastfeeding routine; and
- common questions mother's ask.

Ask your public health nurse for a copy.



Formula feeding

While you are in hospital, if you decide to use formula milk, your midwife will give you information on what you need and how to make up the formula. At home, your public health nurse and practice nurse will give you information and demonstrate how to formula feed your baby.

What do I need to make up formula feeds?

You need:

- a bottle brush and tongs to help you grip the equipment;
- fresh water. Do not use bottled water to make up feeds. Bottled water may contain salt.
- the formula milk of your choice;
- a chemical, steam or microwave kit for sterilising bottles; and
- at least 6 bottles, lids, discs and teats.

If you have a visual impairment, use wide-necked bottles. They are easier to fill.

How do I sterilise equipment?

- wash your hands;
- wash the bottles, teats, discs, lids and tongs in warm soapy water;
- sterilise the bottles, teats, discs, lids and tongs, following the manufacturers instructions;
- wash your hands before removing the bottles from the steriliser with the tongs; and
- do not rinse out the bottles after they are sterilised.

Once put together correctly, sterile bottles with tight fitting caps and / or sealing discs are sterile for 24 hours as long as they remain unopened.

Clean and steralise all feeding equipment before using it

How do I make up a formula feed?

1. Boil the water and let it cool.
2. Wash your hands.
3. Pour the correct amount of cooled boiled water into the sterilised bottle.
4. Then, put the correct amount of formula powder into the bottle.
5. Put the teat and lid on the bottle. Make sure they are not loose.
6. Shake the bottle well until all the powder is dissolved.
7. Use immediately.

How do I prepare more feeds in advance?



- Follow steps 1-3 as above.
- Seal the bottles of water with the discs and lids. Cool to room temperature.
- Store in a clean place for up to 24 hours.
- When a feed is needed, either warm the bottle of water to the desired temperature or use it at room temperature.
- Open the bottle of water, remove the disc and add the correct amount of formula powder and close the lid.
- Then follow steps 6-7 as above.

For more information about sterilising and preparing each feed read the Health Promotion Unit guide to formula feeding. Ask your health promotion office or public health nurse for a copy.

To protect your baby from illness such gastroenteritis, you should make up each feed as you need it

How do I measure the exact amounts of formula and water

Too much or too little formula can cause health problems

- for each ounce (30 mls) of water, 
- measure one level scoop of formula powder. Use the scoop in the formula box.
- and run a knife across the top to get the scoop level 
- An example: for 3 ounces of water (90 mls) measure 3 level scoops of powder.

How much formula milk should my baby take?

This is only a guide. If you are bottle-feeding, let your baby decide how much he or she wants, unless your baby is sick. Do not try to make your baby finish a bottle if he or she does not want to. Never re-use leftover milk once your baby finishes feeding. Throw it away.

Your Baby's Age	Number of Feeds	Amount of Formula Feed
Birth to 1 month	6	3-4 oz (90 –120 mls)
1 – 2 months	5	5 – 6 oz (150 – 180 mls)
2 – 3 months	5	6 – 7 oz (180 – 210 mls)
3 – 4 months	5	7 – 8 oz (210 – 240 mls)
5 – 6 months	5	8 oz (240 mls) Use some of this milk to mix up spoon feeds

When can I stop sterilising the bottles?

All bottles must be sterilised until your baby is at least 1 year old. An unsterilised bottle can make your baby sick.

What other drinks can I give my baby?

- Breastfed babies need nothing except breast milk.
- If your baby is formula fed, you can give cool boiled water if your baby is constipated.
- Fruit juices are not suitable until your baby is 4-6 months old.
- Cows milk is not suitable for babies under 1 year old, as it is a poor source of iron.
- Do not add sugar, rusks, or baby rice to your baby's bottle.
- Do not give your baby tea, as it reduces your baby's iron uptake.
- Do not add any medicines to your baby's bottle.

Weaning to solids

What is weaning?

Weaning is the gradual introduction of solid food, which is fed with a spoon into your baby's diet.

Weaning your baby off the breast means that you introduce another form of food such as formula milk or solid food. For more details about weaning off the breast, ask your public health nurse or local support groups. Telephone numbers for these contacts are attached to the back of this booklet. For more written information on weaning off the breast, read the booklet **Breastfed is Best Fed**.

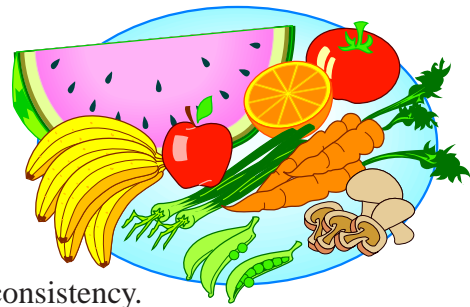
When can I start weaning to solid foods?

Breast milk gives your baby **all** the nourishment he or she needs in the first six months of life. After this, the iron stores that have built up at birth begin to reduce and your baby needs other foods. For formula fed babies, weaning to solid foods usually begins between 4-6 months old.

If your baby has special needs, is premature, or has a food allergy, then weaning may be delayed. If you have any questions about when your baby may be ready to move on to solid foods, ask your public health nurse, practice nurse or dietician for advice.

What first weaning foods can I give my baby?

- gluten-free cereals such as baby rice;
- fruit such as banana, stewed apple or pear;
- vegetables such as cooked carrot, turnip, or potato; and
- traditional foods other cultures use such as yam or pumpkin.



Purée, sieve, or mash weaning foods to a soft, runny consistency.

What liquid can I use to soften my baby's food?

Use:

- breast milk;
- formula milk; or
- cooled boiled water.

Do not use:

- gravy;
- stock cubes; or
- jars of sauce.

Are there any tips to help me wean my baby to solids?

- Do not give your baby weaning foods before he or she is at least 4 months old.
- Always wash your hands before you prepare food, or feed your baby.
- Choose a time when your baby is relaxed and fully alert.
- Be prepared for a mess! Dribbling bibs and floor mats are useful.
- Clean and sterilise your baby's spoon and bowl before you use them.
- Start weaning on to solid foods once a day. Gradually add weaning foods to other meal times.
- Start with 1 teaspoon of food per meal. Gradually increase the amount.
- Introduce new foods one at a time and allow your baby to get used to the taste.
- Offer the solid food first and then follow with breast or formula milk.

- Never leave your baby alone while he or she is eating, in case of choking.
- Do not reheat food.
- Do not add honey, sugar, or rusks to the formula feed.
- Do not add salt or sugar to your baby's food.
- Convenience foods, jars, or packets of baby food are useful for emergencies or when you are going out. They are unsuitable for everyday use because they are costly and may have added salt and sugar.

For more information and advice about weaning, ask your doctor, public health nurse or practice nurse.

Caring for your baby's teeth

It is not too early to begin taking care of your baby's future teeth.

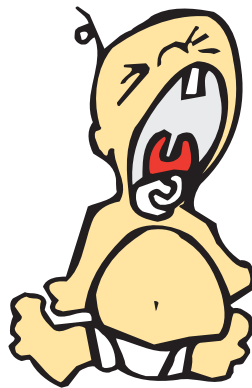
- Once teeth appear, clean them, using a soft wash cloth, daily.
- Do not let your baby sleep with a bottle in his or her mouth.
- Never dip your baby's soother (dummy) in sugar, syrup, or honey.
- If your baby needs a soother between feeds, give a clean soother that has been recommended by your dentist or doctor.



Teething and gums

Your baby may start teething from about 13 weeks, although no teeth may appear until 6 months or more. To help sooth your baby's gums give your baby something hard to chew such as a clean teething ring.

For more advice, ask your dentist or pharmacist.



3. Sleeping and crying

Codladh agus goil

How should my baby usually sleep?

The best position for your baby to sleep is on his or her back, with the back of their head resting on the mattress. To help your baby's development, including the shape of your baby's head, change his or her head position while sleeping. You can do this by gently turning your baby's head so that your baby also spends some time sleeping with his or her left and right cheek resting on the mattress.

The first few weeks can be a difficult time, especially if your baby slept very well in hospital but will not sleep at home! It will take time to adjust to a new routine. Newborn babies usually sleep up to 16–20 hours over a day. Some babies sleep more than others. Background noises such as music or children playing may not wake your baby, but a sudden noise might.

At about 3 months, your baby may still go straight to sleep after a feed and then wake for a short while before the next feed is due.

By about 6 months, your baby will stay awake and be more alert between feeds.

Are there tips to help my baby to sleep at night?

Build a routine around the last feed before you settle your baby down to sleep. For example:

- Feed your baby after a bath, or after you change him or her into sleeping clothes.
- Use a dim light when you feed your baby at night. A light that is too bright may over stimulate your baby.
- Do not talk out loud when you feed your baby at night. Talking may encourage your baby to stay awake. You can whisper to your baby if you need to.
- Do not change your baby's nappy if the nappy isn't dirty.



Where can my baby sleep safely?

- Keep your baby's cot in your room for at least the first six months.
- To avoid a draught, do not place your baby's cot below a window or against an outer wall.
- Do not place your baby's cot next to a radiator or heater, as it may be too hot.
- Do not hang ribbons and bits of strings from toys over your baby's cot.

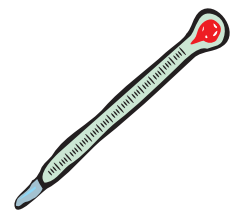
Reducing the risk of cot death

What is cot death?

Cot death (sudden infant death syndrome) is the sudden death of an infant or young child that is unexpected and tests after death fail to show the cause of death.

How can I reduce the risk of cot death?

- Always put your baby on his or her **back to sleep** in a face up, face clear position.
- Place your baby's **feet to the foot** of the cot.
- Do **not smoke** in the same room as your baby.
- Do not share a bed with your baby if you or your partner:
 - drank alcohol;
 - took medicine that causes drowsiness;
 - feel very tired; or
 - if your baby is less than 16 weeks old.
- Keep your baby's head and shoulders above the blankets.
- Do not let your baby get too **hot** or too **cold**. To check how warm your baby is, feel his or her tummy. Your baby's tummy should feel warm, but not hot. If your baby's tummy feels hot, or if you baby is sweating anywhere, then your baby is too hot.
- Dress your baby for bed in a nappy, vest, and babygro. In hot weather, your baby needs fewer clothes.
- Use light layers of blankets in an ideal room temperature of 16-20°C (62-68°F).
- Duvets are not recommended for babies under one year old.
- Do not put a pillow in your baby's cot.
- Take off the dribbling bib before you put your baby down to sleep.



Why does my baby cry?

Crying is the main way that your baby tells you he or she needs something. Common reasons for crying include:

- hunger or thirst,
- wet or dirty nappy,
- pain from wind or colic,
- too hot or too cold,
- overtired or over-stimulated,
- loneliness and boredom, or



- crying because he or she is unwell. Contact your doctor to check there is no underlying health problem.

How can I soothe my crying baby?

- Pick up, hold your baby close, and move gently.
- Feed your baby.
- Change your baby's nappy.
- Gently rock your baby up and down in the pram.
- Gently talk or sing to your baby or listen to music together.
- Massage your baby gently with unscented oil.
- Go for a short walk or drive in the car with your baby.
- If the crying continues, if it sounds unusual, or you are concerned that your baby is ill, contact your doctor.

Never shake your baby

If you are finding it hard to cope with your baby's crying, then take time out.

- Put your baby down in his or her cot and go into another room.
- Ask someone to care for your baby.
- Phone Parentline for support and advice: 1890 927 277.
- Contact a relative, friend, your doctor, or your public health nurse for advice and help.

Never shake your baby as this can damage your baby's brain.

What is baby wind or colic?

Wind is air that your baby has swallowed while he or she is feeding, crying, or yawning. Help to relieve the trapped wind. Hold your baby up against your shoulder after a feed and massage his or her back.

Colic is a tummy pain. Nobody is sure why some babies get colic. It happens much less in breast-fed babies. Colic pain usually starts when babies are about 2 weeks old and ends when babies are about 3-4 months old. It is more common in the evening time. If your baby has colic, he or she will cry. Your baby can also draw up his or her legs and go red in the face. To help relieve the colic:

- massage your baby's tummy;
- try different types of teats if you are formula feeding; or
- ask your pharmacist, doctor, or public health nurse about medicines that may help.



4. Caring for your baby every day

Ag tabhairt cúram dod' leanbh gach lá

Bathing your baby

Your midwife or public health nurse will show you how to bathe your baby. Do not be afraid to ask for help, or to see it done once or twice before you try.

Are there tips to help me bathe my baby?

- Organise everything such as clean towels, creams, and clothes before you start the bath.
- Plan the bath for a quiet time of the day.
- Do not bathe your baby just after a feed, as he or she may get sick.
- Close windows to prevent a draught.
- **Never** leave your baby alone in the bath.
- **Do not** rely on a toddler or older child to mind your baby in the bath.
- Put the cold water in the bath first, then warm water. The temperature should be about 36°C.
- The water level should be just high enough to cover your baby's tummy when he or she is lying down.
- Use both hands to lift your baby in and out of the bath.
- **Support your baby's head** while you wash your baby.
- A baby bath two or three times a week is enough to keep your baby fresh.



How do I keep my baby fresh between baths?

- A **top and tail** wash is a quick way to keep your baby fresh between baths. This means washing:
 - your baby's face;
 - the folds under the neck; and
 - the nappy area.

Dirty nappies

Your baby's dirty nappy is sticky and green or black in colour for the first few days. This is called meconium. This will later change to a yellow colour. Breastfed babies usually have runny nappies that do not have a smell. Formula fed babies have dirty nappies that are usually more formed and smellier!

Wash your hands after changing a nappy

How often should my baby have a dirty nappy?

Some babies have a dirty nappy at every feed and other babies have a dirty nappy once a day. Your baby is not constipated if the bowel motion passed is soft, even if the bowels have not moved for one or two days.

How often should my baby have a wet nappy?

Your baby should have 5-6 wet nappies a day. This means your baby is getting a good supply of milk.

Carrying your baby

It is important to support your own back and your baby's head and back when you are lifting and carrying your baby. Useful equipment for moving about with your baby include:

- A baby sling because it supports your baby's head and encourages bonding with you.
- A rearward-facing baby seat for carrying your baby safely in a car.
- It is important choose a pram or buggy that can lie back (recline) so that your newborn baby can lie down to sleep, especially if your baby is premature.



In general, your baby is ready to go outside for a walk or a drive as soon as you feel fit enough to go yourself. You and your baby must wear clothes suitable for the time of year. You will also need to stock up your baby bag with spare bibs, baby clothes, feeds and equipment to change your baby's nappy. With time and practice, it gets easier and quicker to do!

Common skin care questions

What is cradle cap?

Cradle cap looks like dry flaky or yellowish-crusted skin on your baby's scalp. Cradle cap will eventually go away on its own. If it spreads or worsens, ask your doctor or public health nurse for advice.

What is jaundice?

Jaundice is when your baby's skin and eyes have a yellowish shade. Many babies get slightly jaundiced in the first few days after birth. This is because your baby's liver is not yet ready to fully break down blood cells. If jaundice stays for more than the first week after birth or if it worsens, contact your doctor or public health nurse for advice.

What are milk spots?

Milk spots, also called milia, are tiny infected spots on your baby's face and neck. Bacteria causes milk spots. The spots should settle without any treatment.

How do I care for my baby's umbilical cord (belly button)?

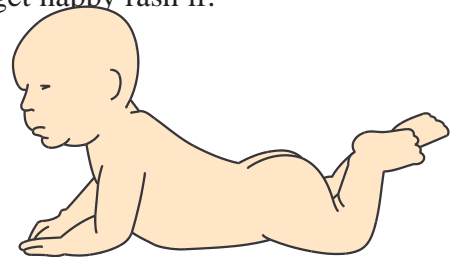
- Wash your hands before and after you touch the cord.
- Clean around the base of the cord with cotton wool and cool boiled water.
- Keep the belly button area dry after you clean it.
- Make sure that the nappy is not covering the cord.

The umbilical cord stump should fall off in the first week after birth.

What is nappy rash?

Nappy rash is a red, moist, or broken area on your baby's bottom. Most babies get nappy rash at some time in the first 18 months. Your baby can get nappy rash if:

- you leave him or her too long in a dirty or wet nappy,
- a rough nappy rubs against your baby,
- your baby has a thrush infection,
- you use a strong soap or washing powder,
- you use baby wipes that contain alcohol, or
- your baby is teething.



How can I heal my baby's nappy rash?

Gently wash your baby's bottom and pat it dry. Leave off the nappy for half an hour and expose the skin to fresh air. There are treatments available, such as creams and powders that help to heal nappy rash. Ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice.

Immunisation

What is immunisation?

Immunisation is a safe and effective way to protect your baby against certain diseases. These diseases can cause serious illness or even death. Immunisation works by causing your baby's immune system to make antibodies to fight the disease.

When should I immunise my baby during the first six months?

When my baby is:	My baby should have:
0-1 month	BCG
2 months	5 in 1 + Men C
4 months	5 in 1 + Men C
6 months	5 in 1 + Men C

BCG = to prevent tuberculosis (TB)
Men C = to prevent meningococcal C, meningitis or blood poisoning
5 in 1 = to prevent diphtheria; tetanus; whooping cough (pertussis); hib (haemophilus influenzae B); polio (poliomyelitis)

Minor reactions that may occur after an immunisation include:

- redness, soreness or swelling in the area where the injection was given,
- fever, or
- irritable behaviour.

If your baby is very unwell after an immunisation, there may be some other reason for the sickness. Talk to your doctor about this. For more written information about immunisation read **Your child's immunisations. A guide for parents.**

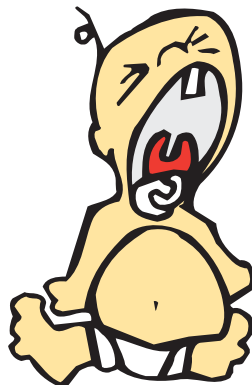


Childhood illness

Most babies get ill at some stage. Usually, you can care for your baby at home, as these bouts of illness pass quickly. The table below lists some common childhood illnesses and things you can do to care for your baby. If you are unsure, contact your doctor.

Common childhood illnesses and things you can do to care for your baby

Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The normal temperature for a baby, taken under his or her arm (also called axilla) ranges from 36.5 to 37.2 degrees Celsius. ● Get advice from your doctor if your baby has a temperature, especially if your baby also looks unwell.
Coughs and colds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep your baby warm. ● Give your baby fluids to drink, such as the usual milk feed. ● Contact your doctor if your baby finds it hard to breath. ● Contact your doctor if the cough doesn't go away.
Vomits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small vomits after a feed are normal and your baby will grow out of this. ● If your baby vomits large amounts, or if the vomiting is forceful or repeated, contact your doctor.
Sticky eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get advice from your doctor or pharmacist in case there is an infection in the eyelid area.
Thrush (Candidia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On your baby's tongue and mouth, thrush is a white spotted fungus that doesn't brush away when you touch it. ● On your baby's bottom, thrush looks like a red rash with white spots. ● Contact your doctor or pharmacist to find out how to treat thrush.
Tummy upsets (Gastroenteritis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If your baby has a tummy upset with vomiting, diarrhoea, or both, then he or she can get dehydrated (dried out) if your baby is not given enough fluid to drink. ● Offer your baby small amounts of fluids, such as their milk feed very often while he or she is unwell. ● If the problem continues and your baby will not drink, then contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice and treatment.



When should I always contact my doctor about my baby's health?

Always contact your doctor if your baby:

- has a purple or red rash that looks unusual,
- if the soft spot (fontanelle) on your baby's head appears raised or sunken,
- has a fever,
- appears much paler and sleepier than usual and is hard to wake up,
- has an unusual non-stop high-pitched cry or scream,
- has a fit (convulsion),
- has difficulty breathing,
- goes blue around the lips or face,
- is not feeding normally or refusing to feed,
- has unusually dry nappies, or less than three wet nappies in one day,
- has diarrhoea at each nappy change,
- has an upset, such as a fall or a bump on the head,
- gets an electric shock,
- is burned / scalded,
- is bitten by an animal.






5. A guide to your baby's growth and development

Treoir ar fás agus forbairt do linbh

Your baby's development

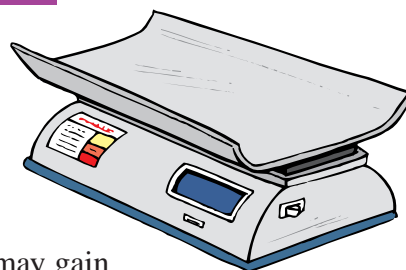
Your baby's development may vary. If you are worried about your baby's development or hearing then talk with your doctor or public health nurse. The table below gives a guide to your baby's development.

At 1-2 months babies:	At 3-4 months babies:	At 5-6 months babies:
<p>hold up their head for short periods of time,</p> <p>bend their legs when they lie on their tummies,</p>  <p>turn their head and eyes towards light,</p>  <p>respond to your voice, startle to a sudden sound,</p> <p>begin to smile more,</p>    <p>begin to be more awake.</p>	<p>kick vigorously,</p> <p>keep their head up with little or no support,</p> <p>lift up their head when you put them on their tummy with their arms on the floor,</p> <p>sit up straighter when you hold them in a sitting position,</p> <p>at 4 months babies put weight on their feet when you hold them standing up,</p> <p>follow moving objects with their eyes,</p> <p>watch their own hands, turn their head to follow sounds, make noises, 'oo', 'ah'</p> <p>laugh and giggle when you play with them,</p> <p>are more awake and alert, feed less frequently, and may sleep through the night.</p>	<p>sit with support,</p> <p>roll from their front to their back,</p> <p>raise themselves on the palms of their hands when they lie on their tummy,</p>  <p>grasp small objects,</p> <p>look around constantly,</p> <p>make tuneful noises to themselves and others, put things in their mouths, play with their feet,</p> <p>hold up their arms so you can lift them,</p>  <p>may sleep through the night.</p>

Your baby's weight gain and growth

How much weight should my baby gain?

Your baby loses up to 10% of the birth weight during the first few days of life. Then your baby will start to grow steadily. Most babies double their birth weight by about 6 months but this may vary. For instance, a breastfed baby may gain weight more gradually.



How much should my baby grow?

After the first month, your baby may increase in length by an average of 1-1.5 inches (2.5-3 cms) per month. Your doctor or public health nurse will measure your baby's height, length, and head. The results are plotted on a record chart. Your baby has growth spurts at around 2 or 3 weeks, 6 weeks and 3 months old. At these times, your baby's appetite will increase.

Your baby's vision

What colour are my baby's eyes?

Babies are often born with blue eyes. You won't see the final colour of your baby's eyes until he or she is about 3-6 months old.



What can my baby see in the first 6 months?

Your baby's age:	What your baby can see:
At birth	Your baby should have sight from birth.
0-6 weeks	Your baby will start to focus on the face in front of him or her.
6-8 weeks	On seeing you, your baby will start to smile. Your baby can follow a brightly coloured toy that is held about 20 cms (8 inches) away.
2-6 months	Your baby enjoys looking at bright colours and moving objects.
By 6 months	Your baby can see across a room.

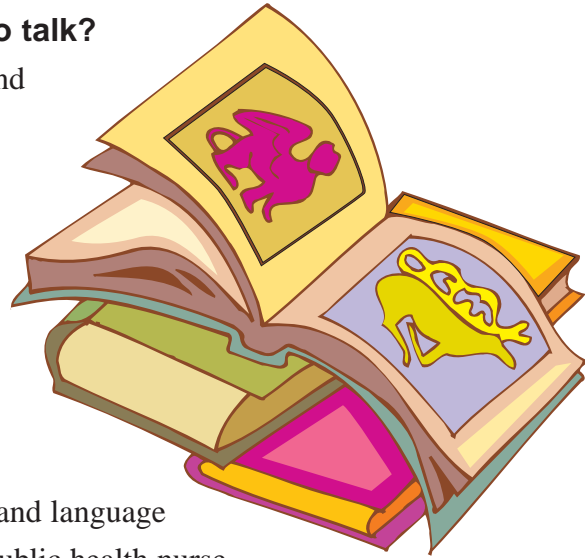
Some babies are born with eye problems or develop eye problems at an early age. If you are concerned about your baby, contact your doctor or public health nurse for advice or referral on to a specialist.

Your baby's speech and language

Speaking to and reading with your baby will help your baby learn to talk.

Are there tips to help my baby learn to talk?

- Talk to and reply to your baby's gurgles and babbling by copying the noises.
- Read colourful books with your baby.
- Say nursery rhymes and sing songs.
- Play music for your baby.
- Play simple games that have words and actions with your baby, such as peek-a-boo.



If you are worried about your baby's speech and language development or hearing, contact your local public health nurse, doctor, or speech and language therapist.

Health checks for your baby

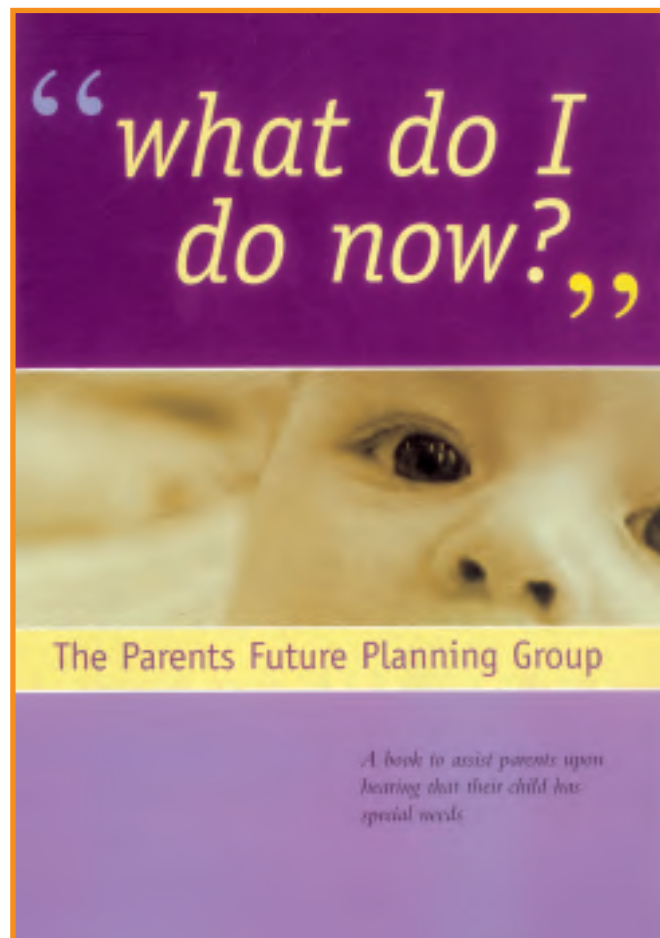
When is the health check?	What is the health check?
After a birth in hospital	A paediatric doctor examines your baby. A paediatric doctor is a doctor who works with children.
During your baby's first week of life	Your baby has a heel prick test to check for 4 metabolic disorders and 1 affecting the thyroid gland. The test is called a Newborn Screening Test for Inherited Metabolic Disorders. A metabolic disorder is an inherited disorder that affects the way your baby's body changes food and essential chemicals into energy and waste matter.
On discharge from hospital or following a home birth	Your public health nurse will visit your home to meet and support you, your baby, and your family.
At 6 weeks	Your doctor checks your baby.
Other times during the first 6 months of your baby's life	Your public health nurse calls to your home to check your baby's progress. Your public health nurse, or doctor and practice nurse hold well baby clinics. You can have your baby weighed and discuss his or her progress at these clinics.

Your baby with special needs

If your baby has special needs or a long-term illness, this can bring extra adjustments to your family's life. You as a parent may have difficult feelings to cope with. You may also have to make extra decisions for your baby and your family.

Your local doctor and public health nurse are there to help. They can offer information and support to guide you. They can also refer you on to other services that you may need. To learn about the services in your area for your child with special needs, contact the disability services department in your local community care area. The phone numbers are at the back of this booklet.



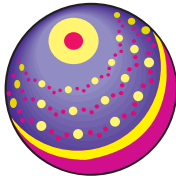
'What do I do Now?' is an information booklet written by parents of children with special needs. It is aimed at parents who have just found out that their child has special needs. You might find the information helpful and supportive. Contact the health promotion unit in your area for a copy.



6. Play and learning

Súgradh agus foghlam

Help my baby develop through play

My baby's age	What to do with my baby?	How does my baby respond and learn?
<p>0-3 months</p> 	<p>Cuddle, touch, sing and talk to your baby.</p> <p>Hang a toy over your baby's cot to help your baby's vision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your baby gets excited when he or she hears or sees you. ● Your baby responds to your touch and the tone of your voice by cuddling in to you. ● Your baby learns to feel safe and bonded to you. ● Your baby shows interest in the moving toy. ● Your baby learns by seeing different colour things and hearing different noises.
<p>3-6 months</p> 	<p>Play on a floor mat with your baby. Place your baby on his or her tummy for a short time. This will help to stretch and develop his or her muscles.</p> <p>Include toys suitable for your baby. Do not use toys that are too small or sharp, as your baby will put them in his or her mouth as part of learning through play.</p> <p>Gently bounce your baby on your knee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your baby laughs readily when you play together. ● Your baby can also show anger by screaming and squealing instead of crying! ● Your baby learns to move about freely. ● Your baby learns to attract your attention by making noise or waving his or her arms and hands excitedly. ● This contact through play is an important part of your baby's development. ● Your baby learns about bright colours, different feels, tastes and shapes, and objects that make noise.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your baby enjoys the gentle motion and learns about movement.

7. Keep your baby safe

Coimeád do leanbh sábhálta

At 0-6 months, your baby fully depends on you to keep him or her safe.

How to keep your baby safe from 0-6 months old

- Do not leave your baby alone on a bed, raised changing mat, or other raised surfaces.
- Do not leave your baby in a bouncer on a raised work surface. Your baby may topple over.
- Do not smoke around your baby. Smoking can harm your baby's health.
- Always keep a fireguard in front of an open fire, stove, gas, or electric fire.
- Make sure that your home has a smoke alarm that works. It could save lives.
- Do not have a hot drink while you feed your baby. You might spill your drink and scald your baby.
- Be careful when you carry your baby in your arms in case you trip or fall.
- Always strap your baby into the pram or push chair with the safety harness.
- Only use toys that are suitable for your baby's age.
- Keep pets away from your small baby.

How to be safe in the sun

- Always keep your baby in the shade.
- Use loose clothing and a hat that covers the back of your baby's neck.
- Use a total sun block on your baby's face and arms or legs if they are uncovered.

What to do in case of an accident

- **If an accident is serious, do not delay, get help: dial 999 or 112.**
- **Ask for Ambulance, Fire Brigade or Gardaí.**
- **Stay on the phone and listen carefully to the advice you are given.**

Other emergency telephone numbers are inside the back of this booklet.

It is also important to:

- Keep a first aid kit in your home.
- Learn basic first aid skills.

For information on first aid courses in your local area contact:

Order of Malta (01) 6684891

St. John's Ambulance (01) 6688077

Irish Red Cross (01) 6765135



Travelling in a car with your baby

Using a baby car safety seat correctly can help prevent injuries to your baby.

How can I keep my baby safe in the car?

- Always put your baby in a safe baby car seat.
- Always strap your baby into the baby car seat.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when you strap a baby car seat in your car.
- The baby car seat, for babies up to 10 kgs (22lbs) which is from birth to about 6-9 months old is designed to face the rear of the car, not the front.
- It is safer for your baby to travel in the back seat of the car, if possible.
- **Never** put a rear-facing baby seat into the front passenger seat where a passenger air bag is fitted.
- Never leave your baby alone in the car.



Choose a baby car seat that:

- displays a recognised safety standard symbol;
- is the right size for your baby's height, and weight; and
- fits safely into your car.

Do not use a baby car seat that:

- is too old;
- is second hand or was in a crash;
- does not come with manufacturers instructions;
- has any cracks in the frame of the seat; or
- is missing parts.

For more written information about keeping your baby safe in the car, read '**Child Safety in Cars; A guide to selecting and fitting Child Restraints**'. Contact the National Safety Council for a copy. The phone number and web address is at the back of this booklet.



8. Going back to work

Ag dul ar ais ag obair

If you are planning to work outside the home, you will need to make childminding and possibly breastfeeding arrangements before you go back to work.

How can I make good childminding arrangements?

Your childminding arrangements must suit both you and your baby. Some childminding options are:

- full day care for over 3.5 hours in a day nursery or crèche,
- half-day services for less than 3.5 hours in a Playgroup, Montessori, or Naoinraí, or
- a childminder in your home or their home.

What should I look for before making good childminding arrangements?

- Choose a minder or day care service that meets your childcare needs.
- Always visit the childminder or service before you send your baby to them.
- Ask a childminder for references.

Ask questions and discuss the options with your partner, family, friends and other parents who use the service.

You can also get information from your public health nurse or pre-school services officer in your local Health

Board or childminding advisory officer in your County Childcare Committee.

The information we give here is only a guide. For more information on local services, ring the telephone numbers and visit the websites that are listed at the back of this booklet.



How can I go back to work and continue breastfeeding?

You can continue to breastfeed your baby when you go back to work. During the work day, you can express breast milk and save it for your baby. You do this with a breast pump.

Before you go back to work, you need to discuss arrangements with your employer. You will need:

- breaks so you can express breast milk,
- a private place to express breast milk, and
- a fridge to store the milk until you take it home.

When they return to work, most women who breastfeed continue to breastfeed their baby in the morning before work and at night during the week. During the day, the childminder gives the baby a bottle that contains the milk you expressed. At the weekend, you can breastfeed your baby at every feed. For more information, talk to your public health nurse, a support group, or a friend who has returned to work and continued to breastfeed their baby.



9. Your benefits and leave entitlements

Do chuid sochair agus socraithe saoire

There are various state benefits and leave entitlements for pregnant women and parents. There may also be extra supports and entitlements, for example if your child has special needs. The facts below are correct now, but may change in the future. For further information, contact the Health Service Executive. Local phone numbers are at the back of this booklet.

Maternity benefit and adoptive benefit

Who gets it?	Who do I contact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maternity benefit is a payment to employed and self-employed pregnant women. ● You are entitled to 18 weeks maternity benefit. ● You must satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions. ● Adoptive benefit is a payment to an adopting mother, or to a single adoptive father from the date your child is placed with you. ● It is available to both employed and self-employed people. ● You are entitled to 16 weeks adoptive benefit. ● You must satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your employer ● your local Social Welfare Office ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● Social Welfare Services (maternity benefit section) Lo call 1890 690 690 www.welfare.ie Lo call leaflet request line 1890 20 23 25

Maternity leave and adoptive leave

Who gets it?	Who do I contact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You are entitled to 18 consecutive weeks maternity leave. ● You must tell your employer in writing at least 4 weeks before you start your leave. ● You are also entitled to a further 8 weeks unpaid leave after the end of your maternity leave. ● You are entitled to time off without loss of pay for antenatal and postnatal medical visits. You must inform your employer 2 weeks in advance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your employer ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● The Equality Authority 1890 245 545 www.equality.ie
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You are entitled to 16 consecutive weeks adoptive leave if you are an adoptive mother, or a single adoptive father in paid employment. ● You must inform your employer in writing 4 weeks before you start your leave. ● You are also entitled to a further 8 weeks unpaid leave after the end of your adoptive leave. 	

Paternity leave for fathers

Who gets it?	Who do I contact?
At present, there is no legal entitlement to paternity leave. It depends on your employer's policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your employer ● The Equality Authority Lo Call 1890 24 55 45 www.equality.ie

Parental leave for mothers and fathers

How long is it?	What is it?	Who do I contact?
14 weeks.	<p>This unpaid leave is for each parent. It must be taken before your child is 5 years old. This leave can not be transferred from one parent to the other.</p> <p>This leave can be taken in one block or divided into sections, with agreement from your employer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your employer ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● The Equality Authority 1890 24 55 45 www.equality.ie
3 days in 12 months and no more than 5 days in 36 months.	<p>This paid leave is called force majeure. It is to be taken to deal with family emergencies relating to the injury or illness of a close family member.</p>	

Child benefit

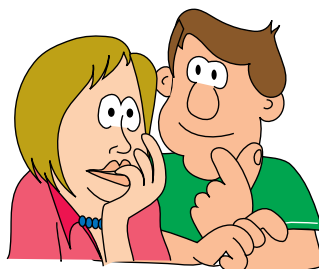
Who gets it?	When to apply?	Who do I contact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children up to 16 years of age. ● Children up to 19 years of age who are in full time education or on FÁS youth reach course. ● Children who are physically or intellectually disabled and dependent on you. 	<p>Within 6 months of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your baby's birth. ● a child becoming a member of your family. ● your family coming to live in Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your local Post Office ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● your local Social Welfare Office ● Social Welfare Services (child benefit section) Lo Call 1890 400 400 www.welfare.ie

One-parent family benefit

Who gets it?	Who do I contact?
<p>One-parent family benefit may be available to a mother or father of a new baby if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● unmarried; ● widowed; ● a prisoner's spouse; ● separated; ● divorced; or ● your marriage is annulled. <p>You must not be living with a partner. You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● live with your child; ● satisfy a means test. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your local community welfare officer ● your local Social Welfare Office ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● Social Welfare Services (One parent family section) <p>Lo Call (1890) 50 00 00 www.welfare.ie</p>

Other benefits you may qualify for

You may also qualify for some of the following:	Who do I contact?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● back to work allowance, ● back to education allowance, ● disability payment, ● domiciliary care allowance - from birth or date of applying up to 16 years. Subject to all eligibility criteria being met. ● exceptional needs payment, ● family income supplement, ● medical card, ● mortgage interest supplement, ● rent supplement, ● supplementary welfare allowance, ● supplement for special diet, ● unemployment payment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● your local community welfare officer ● your local Citizens Information Centre ● your local Social Welfare Office, www.welfare.ie ● Your local Community Service Area in the HSE



10. Useful web pages and phone numbers

Leathnaigh idirlíon agus uimhreacha fón úsáideach

Informational support on:	Web address	Phone number
Accident prevention and safety		
Child Accident Prevention Trust	www.capt.org.uk	
National Safety Council	www.nsc.ie	1890 200 844
Breastfeeding support		
Cuidiú, Irish Childbirth Trust	www.cuidiu-ict.ie	(01) 8724501
La Leche League, breastfeeding information and support	www.lalecheleague.org	
Child health information		
Heath Promotion Unit	www.healthpromotion.ie	(01) 6354000
Health Protection Surveillance Centre, Information on immunisations	www.ndsc.ie	(01) 8765300
Health Service Executive, working together for health	www.hse.ie	(045) 880400
Irish Health Online health information resource	www.irishhealth.com	
Meningitis Research Foundation, information and support on meningitis	www.meningitis.org	1890 413 344 24-hour helpline
VHI, health care information and 24-hour helpline	www.vhihealth.ie	1850 247 724 24-hour helpline for VHI members only
Family planning information		
Irish Family Planning Association	www.ifpa.ie	(01) 4740944
Social welfare and services information		
Information and advice on social services	www.comhairle.ie	1890 777 121
Information on public services	www.oasis.gov.ie	
Social welfare information	www.welfare.ie	(01) 7043000

These websites and phone numbers are correct at the time of going to print.

Informational support on:	Web address	Phone no.
Parent support information		
Aware, support for depression	www.iol.ie/aware	1980 303 302 24-hour help line
Barnardos, working with children and families	www.barnardos.ie	(1850) 222 300
Cairde, challenging the health inequalities of ethnic minorities	www.cairde.org	(01) 8552111
Childminding Ireland, registered childminders in your area	www.childminding-irl.com	(0404) 64007
Fathers direct, information for fatherhood	www.fathersdirect.com	
Family Support Agency, a resource for families and family well being		(01) 6114100
Irish Multiple Births Association	www.imba.ie	(01) 8749056
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – click on The Parents’ Zone	www.ispcc.ie	(01) 6794944
Irish Refugee council	www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie	(01) 8730042
Irish Sudden Infant Death Association	www.carmichaelcentre.ie/isida/	1850 391 391
National Disability Authority, and links to Irish disability organisations	www.nda.ie	(01) 6080400
One Parent Family, voice, support and action.	www.onefamily.ie	1890 662 212
Parentline, for parents under stress	www.parentline.ie	1890 927 277
Pavee point, the Traveller development and support centre	www.paveepoint.ie	(01) 878 0255
Rollercoaster, for the ups and downs of parenting	www.rollercoaster.ie	(091) 637 746
Treoir, information for unmarried parents and their children	www.treoir.ie	LoCall 1890 252 084

These websites and phone numbers are correct at the time of going to print.