

Wee Beginners (0-18 months): Attachment: A Connection for Life



Attachment is the deep emotional bond between a baby and the person who provides most of their care. Just as most parents feel a strong connection with their newborn after birth, babies also become attached to their parents. Attachment develops as you respond to your baby's needs in warm, sensitive, and consistent ways. This is especially important when your baby is sick, upset, or distressed.

A baby's first attachment usually happens quite naturally. When you respond, your baby learns that they can trust you, and depend on you for comfort and to feel safe. As you get better at knowing what your baby is telling you and meeting their needs, your baby feels less stress.

It should not be confused with "spoiling". Babies cannot be spoiled.

Attachment involves two people interacting, sharing, and connecting. As you respond to your baby's needs, your baby will respond to you. You will notice that it becomes easier to soothe them, that they want to be near you, and that they react to you even from a distance.

Though babies form attachment relationships with other adults who care for them, the bonds with their parents are the most important ones.

Why is attachment important?

Secure or healthy attachment is the foundation that lets your child explore the world and have a safe place to come back to. Attachment is the first way that babies learn to organize their feelings and their actions, by looking to the person who provides them with care and comfort.

Healthy attachment will help your child handle situations as they grow older, such as separating from you (starting child care or school), cooperating with other children, and developing self-control. Attachment also helps your child learn how to trust other people.

How do I know my baby is developing a secure attachment?

The early signs that a secure attachment is forming are some of a parent's greatest rewards:

- By 4 weeks, your baby will respond to your smile, perhaps with a facial expression or a movement.
- By 3 months, they will smile back at you.
- By 4 to 6 months, they will turn to you and expect you to respond when upset.
- By 7 or 8 months, they will have a special response just for you. Your baby may also start to respond to your stress, anger or sadness.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3dW8EwF>

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My child is in daycare. Does that mean they won't be "attached" to me?

Babies can develop secure attachment with more than one important adult in their lives, including a child care provider. This does not affect the special relationship babies have with their parents.

Sometimes I have trouble meeting my baby's needs. What should I do?

"My baby won't stop crying!"

Remember that in the first 3 months, all babies go through a period when they cry more than at any other time. Keep responding to your baby in a warm and sensitive way.

"Our family is going through some rough times."

Sometimes there are other problems that make it hard for parents to care for their baby. Being separated for long periods of time can also cause stress.

"I can't tell what my baby needs."

Sometimes babies have issues that make attachment difficult. Some babies have trouble making their needs understood. They may have health problems, be irritable, or hard to read. If this is the case, speak to your doctor about what you can do.

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