

fact sheet

WHAT DO BABIES REALLY NEED? THE GIDGET FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA PERSPECTIVE



What babies need 23.4.22

There are so many pressures and expectations placed on expectant and new parents. So many choices are available and this can make decisions very difficult. They can involve choices around: feeding, sleeping and settling ideas, names, parenting styles, support networks, bedding, noise cancelling machines, exercise post baby, bedtime routines, how to respond to crying, social life changes to name a few. It can feel overwhelming.

At times it can be useful to sit back, take a breath, have some conversations with trusted friends and family and also trust yourself when making decisions. It takes time to get to know your baby and for them to get to know you. Mistakes will be made but there is always time to try something else if one idea or approach does not work. Be kind to yourself.

No one is totally prepared for parenting. Trusting your own instincts can often be the right way to start and then reflect on how they are going and seek support if you need to. Reach out to trusted health professionals and be aware of social media content as some can be biased and may also give unrealistic views on being a parent.

Babies really don't need too much in the early phases. Our brains emit various hormones that can assist with attachment to the baby and we can even feel like we have 'brain fog'. Maybe this is the body's way of helping us focus on our new role as a parent? When people develop perinatal depression and anxiety these early tasks of parenthood can be temporarily disrupted and it can take even more energy to get the basic tasks done let alone managing all the associated emotions.

LET'S GET BACK TO BASICS AND LOOK AT WHAT BABIES REALLY DO NEED!

"I can't tell you in words yet what I feel and what I need. A lot of the time you'll have to guess, and you won't always get it right. But please keep

trying. Just the way you keep trying reassures me that you love me, and that's the most important thing I need to know". Author: Andrew Roberts. <https://www.aaimh.org.au/resources/letter-from-your-baby/>

We thought it might be useful to share our ideas on what babies really need. It's not as complex as some may think and good to remind ourselves of the basics. It's really about love, consistency, patience and paying attention.

1. Babies from an early age will respond to your tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions and body language. So, see if you can engage with your baby when you can and don't feel pressure to do it at every waking moment they have. They also need to see the real you. Don't be afraid if you have the occasional cry in front of them they learn from this.
2. Babies use facial expressions, vocalisations and body language to communicate their feelings such as joy, discomfort or distress and to communicate their physical and emotional needs. Babies will feel more secure if their caregivers can respond to them in a warm and timely way. This may not be possible all the time so just keep this in mind and do what you can.
3. Comfort them when they cry. Crying is often a way of seeking contact with their carer. Attending to your baby at night when they cry will not cause a lasting 'habit' but will contribute to the baby's sense of security. Crying can be hard to sit with and hear but when parents help babies to manage their difficult feelings, their babies learn how to do this for themselves as they grow older, thus they develop a healthy capacity for self-regulation. If you need to have a brief break then place baby safely in their cot, go and briefly enjoy some fresh air or a cup of tea and return to soothe.



fact sheet

WHAT DO BABIES REALLY NEED? THE GIDGET FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA PERSPECTIVE



What babies need 23.4.22

4. Pay close attention to them and see what they are trying to communicate. Talk with them about what you are doing even if they can't respond. When they start to make sounds say something back to them. Notice what they seem interested in and encourage them to explore.

When you are feeling low these responses can seem hard, so do what you can and don't force it. Being kind to yourself is so important and love comes from all sources, not just you.

You have your life to develop a relationship with your baby and it takes time to develop an attachment to them. For so many it does not come instantly, and like any other relationship you have it is a two way process and takes time to develop. 🌸



 @GidgetFoundation
 @GidgetFndation

 @gidgetfoundation
 Gidget Foundation Australia

gidgetfoundation.org.au | 1300 851 758
contact@gidgetfoundation.org.au

Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.