



First Connections

...make all the difference

INFANT ATTACHMENT - HELPFUL THINGS FOR PARENTS and CAREGIVERS TO KNOW

Infant Attachment Is:

- The deep emotional tie or connection that an infant forms with a main caregiver, usually the mother. It is "a tie that binds them together in space and endures over time."¹

Attachment Security Is Important:

- For your baby to grow in healthy ways, for him/her to be able to explore and learn and to have good relationships with others

Secure Infant Attachment Develops When:

- You respond to your baby promptly in warm and sensitive ways (hugging, snuggling, rocking, talking softly, soothing) when he/she is frightened, upset, sick or hurt. Your baby then feels safe and comforted, and learns to trust others
- You and your baby play and interact together in ways your baby enjoys

What Parents and Caregivers Can Do:

- Provide care that is warm, sensitive, responsive and dependable. How you respond to your baby lets him/her know how you feel about him/her
- Pay attention to how your baby responds to your care. This will help you to be more sensitive and 'in tune' with your baby's 'cues and signals' - the different ways your baby communicates his/her needs and feelings
- Have lots of close contact and active involvement with your baby
- Learn about infant massage. There are many possible benefits for you and your baby. It can be a special time in your day to relax, connect with your baby, and focus on her/him
- As your baby grows, learn which activities and toys are interesting to him/her

Other Things to Know:

- Your baby's brain continues to develop after birth. Attachment influences this development and affects thinking, learning, feeling and behaviour throughout life
- Your own experiences as a child can affect the relationship between you and your baby. If you have concerns about your childhood, talk to a doctor, nurse, social worker or other professional who can help you
- If you feel your baby is 'difficult', this can affect how you feel about and how you respond to him/her. You may benefit from talking this over with your doctor or other professional
- Get support from family, friends, and/or community groups. If the demands of parenting are too much, talk to professionals like your doctor or a visiting nurse
- If you are feeling down or depressed, if you find that you cannot enjoy your baby, or if you find yourself becoming angry with or overwhelmed by your baby, speak to your doctor, nurse or other professional. These feelings interfere with you being able to respond sensitively to your infant

All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today. - Chinese Proverb

¹ Ainsworth, MDS & Bell, SM. (1970). Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behaviour of one-year-olds in a strange situation. *Child Development*, 41, pp.49-67.

Source: First Connections...Make all the Difference: Infant Attachment-Helpful Things for Parent/Caregivers to Know, Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002. *Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2007.