

Tips for Parents



Magu plant.
Rhowch amser iddo.
llyw.cymru/rhowchamseriddo

Parenting.
Give it time.
gov.wales/giveittime

Your child's brain is amazing

Your child's brain begins to grow before birth. During the first three years it will grow the most. By age three, 90% of their brain will be developed.



How does your baby's brain develop?

Your baby's brain is made up of different areas that control everything they do, from hearing and walking to problem-solving and how they feel. Each area of the brain has millions of brain cells, or neurons which are connected to each other by synapses.

At birth your baby has 100 billion brain cells but few connections (synapses) between these cells. It is your love, affection and closeness that help wire up the connections.

In your baby's first years of life, connections develop at an extremely fast pace. From birth to age two your child will form 700 new connections per second.

As these connections build, your child will develop skills like holding a toy, crawling, taking a first step and saying their first words.

What does your baby's brain need to develop well?

Your baby needs you to help their brain grow well. You don't need to do anything complicated or have expensive toys.

- **Love and attention** – When you respond to your baby in a loving and consistent way, you can help their brain connections to be made. Try to respond to your baby when they cry. They will learn that the world is safe, and will feel secure.

- **Positive experiences** – When your baby babbles, cries or smiles, and you respond with eye contact, a smile, a song, words or a cuddle, this helps build connections in the brain. This back and forth contact helps build healthy brain connections which helps your child to develop.
- **Fun activities** – Time spent playing gives your baby new experiences which ‘feed’ their brain. This is better than time spent watching TV and using smart technology. Talking, reading and singing are all fun and easy ways to help your baby’s brain to grow.
- **A safe, calm and loving home** – When you are relaxed, your baby is more likely to feel calm too. The part of the brain which helps your baby control or calm feelings, like anger, is not well developed before the age of three. Your baby is not old enough to do things on purpose or control their actions. When your baby is upset or distressed they need you to help them calm down.
- **Things kept the same as much as possible** – Find a routine that works for your family.
- **Good food** – Breast milk gives your baby the best start. Whether you breastfeed or use formula, feeding is a great time for brain-building, by making eye contact, singing, smiling and having a cuddle. As your baby grows, be sure to offer them a healthy diet. This helps their brain grow.

You’re the most important part of your child’s life

- Your emotional well-being has a big affect on the emotional state of your child’s brain. Finding ways to relax and manage your stress can help. Getting a break may help you cope with everything.
- The quality of your relationship with your partner is very important whether parenting together or co-parenting apart. Healthy communication between you and your partner can reduce stress in your family.

Where to get advice and support

Universal parenting support and advice is provided by midwives, health visitors, GPs and your local authority. Early help programmes such as Flying Start and Families First are also available.

Look after yourself. Meeting up with other parents can be great for your wellbeing. Your local **Family Information Service** (www.fis.wales) will be able to tell you what’s on in your area.

For positive parenting tips and expert advice, visit: gov.wales/giveittime

