

## everyday activities to encourage the development of children 0 - 2

Babies grow and develop more in the first few years of life than at any other time, babies learn to roll over, sit up, crawl, walk, talk, develop language skills, communicate and develop relationships with others and an awareness of the world around them. Parents are their child's first and foremost important educator and research shows that being involved in your child's learning has a significant impact on their educational achievement with benefits that follow them into adult life. Recent research into babies' brain development has helped us to understand the importance of a child's first few years and the impact early experiences can have on their development progress.

We understand that parents of babies and young toddlers have many demands on their time so the aim of this factsheet is to offer you a range of ways in which you can support your child using the resources you have in the home and by using your usual daily routine that will naturally maximise learning possibilities.

### working with your child's key person

#### what is a key person?

- A member of the nursery/pre-school staff team with responsibility for settling your child into the setting
- A key person is chosen to match your child's attendance pattern to provide continuity of care and development
- They will develop an individual learning plan for your child and record their progress
- They will work with parents to learn about your child's home routines
- The key person will wish to hear about their routines, their likes and dislikes, their achievements, see photographs and hear your news from home, so that this can be put into your child's personal learning journey and they can plan further learning opportunities within the nursery and suggest ideas for at home.

When your baby/toddler enters an early years setting they will be allocated a key contact, this person is often referred to as the key person. Babies and toddlers need to build strong relationships with their carers, this allows them to feel secure, explore their environment and take risks with confidence, knowing that a trusted adult is there to support their learning, to present new challenges in a safe environment and offer praise and encouragement, all of which help to build their confidence and self esteem. Sharing your knowledge and experience of your child, with a key person in the setting will enable the key person to fully understand your child so they are able to build on and improve their learning experiences and build strong bonds between your family and the setting.

## the indoor and outdoor environments

- Get down on the floor to your baby or toddler's eye level to see what they are seeing
- When friends and family visit don't be tempted to put the children in front of the television or in another area to play, include them in the chats or encourage them to play nearby and involve the visitors in their play. This will provide a good role model for developing social skills, e.g. interaction with adults and/or different ages of children, it will also build your child's vocabulary with a range of new words that they can experiment with later
- Have toys and books accessible to your toddler
- When out in your community point out the things that you can see and talk to your child about them, i.e. local shops, birds or transport. This will widen your child's vocabulary as well as giving them a sense of their community
- Have quiet times at home by turning off the TV and minimizing distractions and noise, where possible, so that your child can concentrate on the task at hand and develop their concentration and listening skills
- Both indoor and outdoor environments are important for your child's development so try to ensure you and your child spend time outdoors each day.

## developing language

Language development is the key to all other areas of learning and development and an important tool for life. The most important and simple way you can support your child's language development is to talk, talk, talk to your child. Young babies will listen intently to their parents' voices and will store all of the vocabulary that they hear. They will hear how you use language to communicate with a range of different people and will recognise the different tones you use when you are happy, excited or upset. All of this will help your child to understand how language is used.

## stages of language development

(Information taken from: Children's Communication Skills from Birth to Five Years, Belinda Buckley and Early Years Care and Education, Penny Tassoni and Kath Bulman.)

### 0 - 3 months

Cries  
Looks at people, toys  
Facial expressions - smiling/frowning  
Looks at person talking  
Startle response to loud, sudden noise  
Cooing/gurgling

### 3 - 6 months

Crying/laughing  
Babbling  
Recognises own name  
Looks at what an adult is looking at  
Takes part in back-and-forth vocalization games with adults  
Explores objects by looking and touching  
Seems to recognise names of family members

### 6 - 12 months

Stops activity when their name is called  
Looks towards speaker who calls their name  
Tuneful babbles  
Gestures (usually points) and vocalizes to request things  
Gives object to another person when asked to  
Understand several object names  
Responds appropriately to some verbal requests ('say bye-bye')  
Begin to use early words

### 12 - 24 months

First words appear at around 12 months  
Understands some longer sentences  
Starts to put two words together e.g. 'bye-bye dog, daddy come'  
Starts to say no  
Vocabulary increases.

(This is meant as a general guide as each child develops at their own individual pace.)

Babies will begin communicating long before they have learnt to speak. They will use facial expressions (smiling/frowning), they will cry to let you know they need something, they may kick their arms and legs in excitement, they will begin to make cooing and gurgling noises to practice communication and as they grow and develop they will point to objects that they want. It is important to respond to any attempts at communicating that your baby makes, when they 'babble' talk back to your baby to show them that you are interested and listening to their communication attempts.

## mark making

The term mark making means a child's first attempts at writing and it is important that they have lots of opportunities to practice mark making as this will help them with both reading and writing later. You may already have noticed that young children become naturally curious about patterns that they make and their first attempts are often when sitting in a high chair after a meal, they may use their fingers in the spills on the tray to make patterns (they may pour liquid out of their beaker and then begin to make marks). Do not rush to clean up the spills, let your child explore the patterns and mark making opportunities, join in and talk to them about the shapes that you are making, what they look like or what they mean to them.

## mark making activities

Paper and crayons

Finger paint on  
a sheet of foil

Paints or soapy bubbles  
on a flat mirror

Tracing patterns or  
letters in a tray of  
sand/lentils or rice



Use cornflour (mixed  
with water) to make  
shapes that disappear

Driving cars through a  
plate of paint and then  
over a piece of paper

Chalkboard  
and chalk

## writing

Writing is an important communication tool and the opportunity to practice should begin at the earliest stage. Whenever you are writing provide your young toddler with paper and crayons so that they can copy you, writing shopping lists, letters, emails and texts that you write. This will help them to understand that we write for a range of reasons and that writing can have an important purpose.

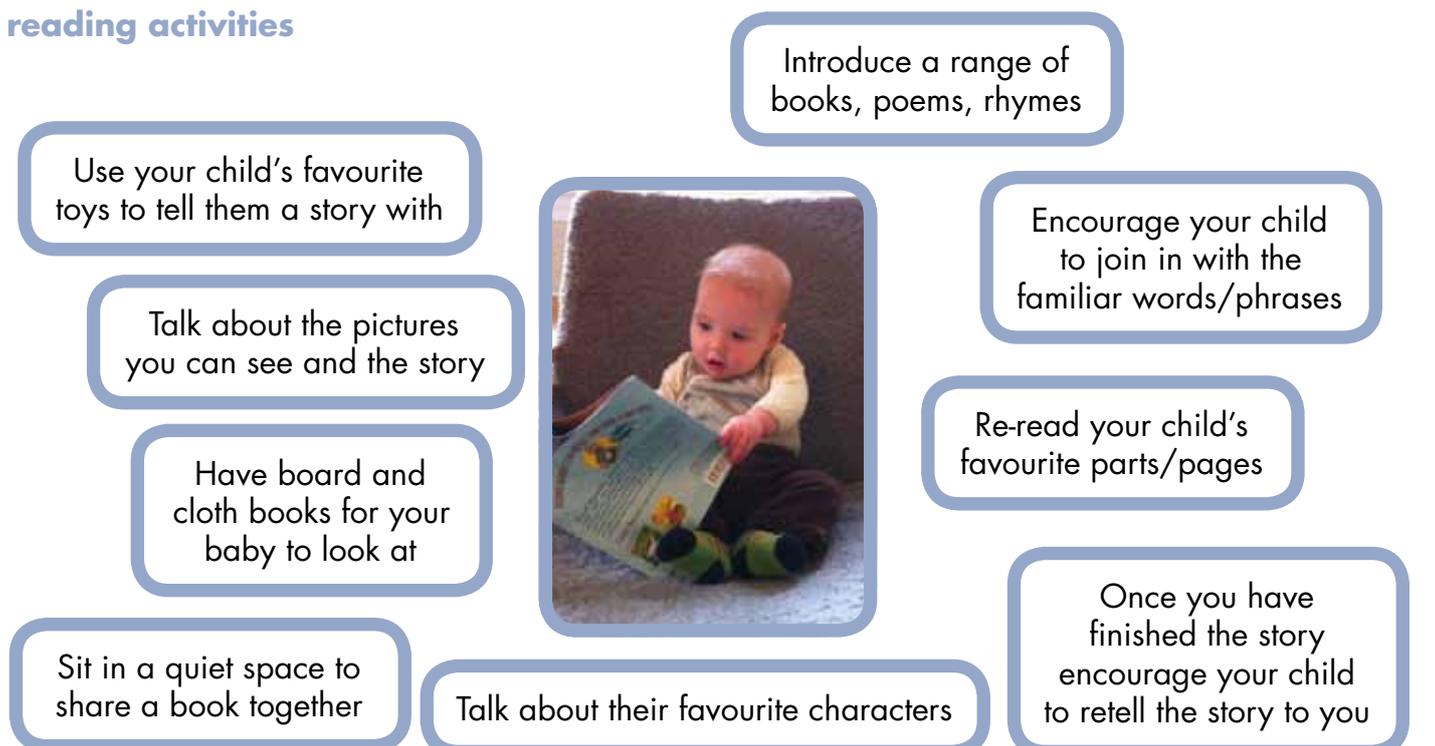
### writing activities



## reading

Reading is important and helps to develop a child's vocabulary, their listening skills, to understand that print has meaning and that reading is a pleasurable experience. Sharing a story with your child makes a huge impact on their reading ability and interest in reading books for pleasure. Babies will love to hear their parent's voice no matter what you are reading to them. Never worry about reading a story perfectly to your child; they will enjoy sharing time with you and looking at the pictures together.

### reading activities



## language and communication

One in five children under the age of four has a television in their bedroom and parents reported that watching television in their bedroom has replaced a bedtime story. (*Mintel research reported in Daily Mail March 2011*). Watching television/DVD is a very passive activity (it requires no interaction between you and your child) where as reading is very interactive (talking about the pictures and story, joining in with the familiar words/phrases) so try to read a story to your child every day to give them the benefits mentioned above. Keep your books and stories in a place that your child can access independently and introduce waterproof books at bath time.

### language and communication activities

Sing nursery rhymes and favourite songs together

Waterproof books and alphabet letters at bath time

Use paintbrushes and pots of water outdoors

Talk to you child about what you are doing during your day

Chalk for drawing outdoors



Visiting the library to choose books or attend story time sessions

Take time to listen and respond to your child when they are playing independently, ask them about their play

Magnetic alphabet letters on the fridge/freezer

Paper and pencils available at all times

Observe the signs in your community and point out things you see, local shops, birds, types of transport

Take part in physical exercise every day with your child (go for a walk, go down to the park, throw a ball, dance to your favourite music together)

Swimming in the local pool

Tearing paper into strips

Playing soapy water with whisks and jugs

Put objects just out of reach from your baby's grasp so they can to stretch

Provide a space so your baby can crawl around freely

Play games that encourage physical activity and increase their heart rate

Clean and disinfect all utensils that you use with your child, i.e. bottles, cutlery, dummies/soothers, highchairs

## physical exercise

Rolling out pastry

Explain to your child that washing their hands with soap will help to remove the germs and they can flush them away down the sink

Wash your own hands before preparing meals and after changing your babies' nappy to stop the spread of germs



## good hygiene

## healthy eating

Sit and eat your meals together so you can be a good role model for your child in eating a range of healthy foods and sharing conversations and making mealtimes fun, relaxing social occasions

Introduce new tastes/textures one at a time

Be creative when encouraging your child to eat new/healthy foods – make food picture (faces), add food colouring to change colours, puree vegetables and mix into the gravy

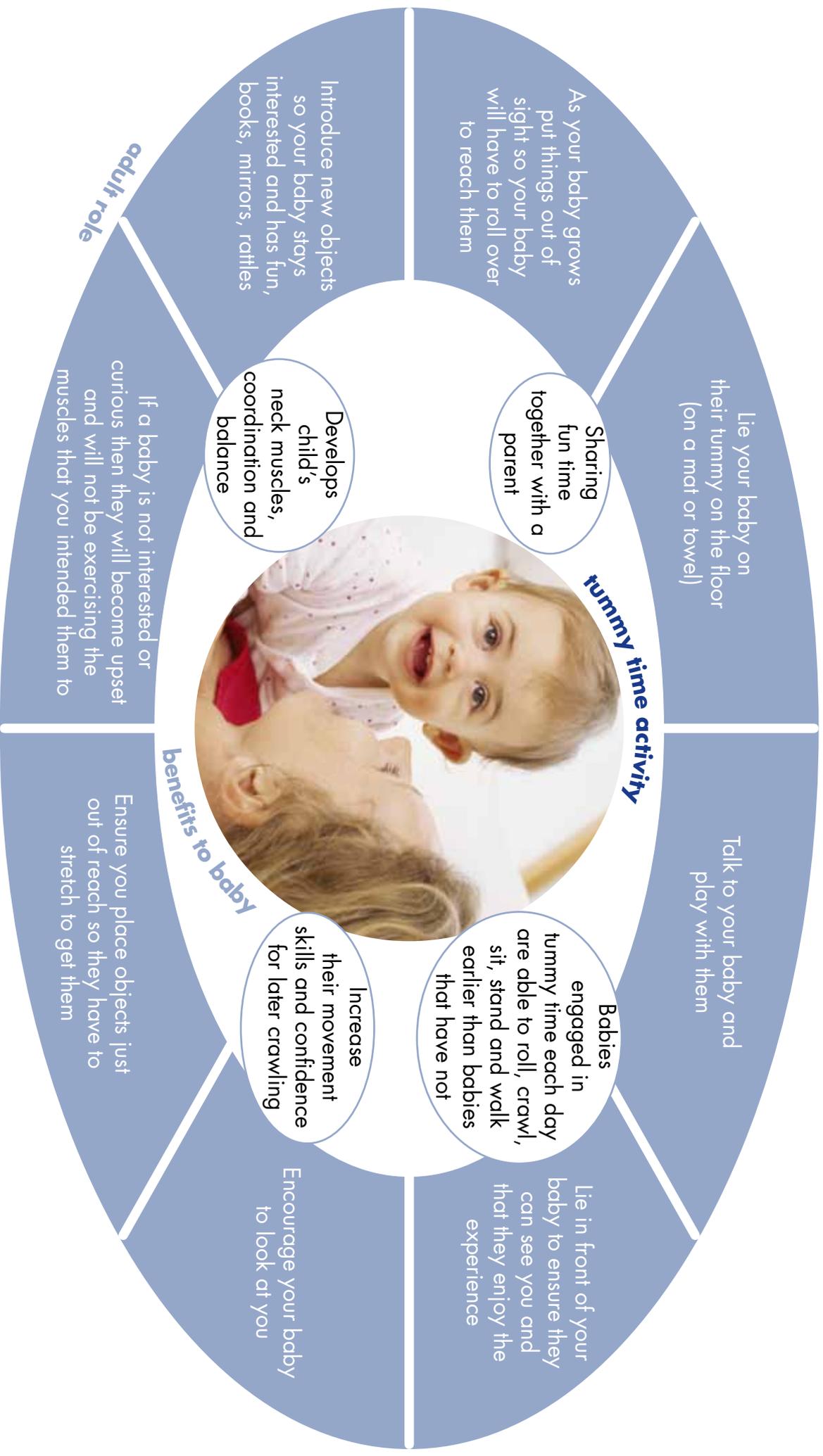
Introduce hand washing routines to your toddler before meals and after messy play or toileting. Whilst washing your hands together sing your child's favourite nursery rhyme twice before rinsing, this will endle a good clean and will remove germs present

Starting good hygiene routines at this early age will help develop good hygiene routines, particularly when children attend a childcare setting or school where illness and infections can spread easily if hygiene routines are not followed

Once you begin to wean your baby then introduce your child to a range of healthy foods (do not give up if your baby or toddler does not like the new food at first as it often takes a couple of attempts to get used to new tastes/textures)

## physical development

Babies spend a lot of time lying on their backs in cots, pushchairs, car seats etc. Recent research showed that 19% of mothers with children under six never put their baby on their front to play. Lying your baby on its 'tummy' each day can have huge benefits.



## supporting physical development

Children learn by being active and this develops the child's positive sense of wellbeing so try to make each part of your day an active time.

Provide areas to encourage your baby to explore movement, to pull themselves up and to crawl and climb freely. Space should not be a barrier for physical activities as you do not need a large space to do the following activities

- Make up a small box/basket of natural resources from around your home, i.e. ribbons, containers, wooden spoons, crinkly paper, natural sponge, empty baby milk containers and clothes pegs and offer the box/basket to your baby or toddler (sit the baby next to the basket so they can reach in and choose what they wish to play with). You can regularly change the contents of the box/basket to ensure your child stays interested and explores new items. This will support your child's physical skills as they explore natural objects from around the home
- Dough, clay and plasticine are good for young children to manipulate and this helps their small muscle development. Buying dough can be very expensive so you can mix flour and water together and add food colouring if you have it. This mixture offers the same benefits as the expensive alternatives. Give your child rollers, cutters and various sized utensils to poke, prod and make patterns with in the dough

When you are outdoors try to add a little extra time onto your journey so that you can give your toddler the chance to get out of their pushchair and walk with you

- Sing songs that encourage movement, i.e. head, shoulders, knees and toes. (babies and toddlers)
- With your toddler you can ask them to follow your lead and jump, hop or skip on the spot or touch their feet/nose/ears etc.
- You can sit on the floor and roll a ball to your toddler and encourage them to roll it back to you
- Ask your toddler to hide their eyes while you hide one of their toys, then together you can search around the room until you find the missing toy
- Use a box or washing up bowl as a target and get your child to throw a ball (or a rolled up pair of socks) into the target

Take your baby out for a walk each day so they can take in their sights and sounds and smells around them

- Touch parts of your babies body and name them as you play, toes, hands etc.
- If you have access to a garden then try to offer your child a chance to play outdoors each day. During winter weather wrap you child up warmly, put on a pair of wellies and take them outside so that your child can experience the different weather elements and experience splashing in puddles, crunching through autumn leaves and snow on their face. This will keep children healthy, develop their physical skills and support their understanding of the effect that snow, rain and wind can have
- Use music to encourage your baby and toddler to explore moving their body, you can join in too and share the activity.

These activities will encourage physical movement, co-ordination and balance and help introduce them to new language whilst you have fun together.

## supporting your child's personal, social and emotional development

Taking your child out into your community, visiting friends/relatives will support your child's social skills. They will learn important interaction and communication methods by mixing with a range of different adults and children. They will begin to get a sense of themselves as a person and begin to realise that they are an individual with their own right with likes and dislikes. Being a confident, self assured child comes from being able to make your own decisions and choices and benefits them in later life.

- Offer choices, "Would you like a banana or an apple for snack?" "Which jumper would you like to wear today?"
- With young babies you can support this by offering a choice of two toys and observe which one your baby reaches for
- Do not overload your toddler with choices, begin with one at a time and give them lots of time to make their decision. This will help your child be confident with the decisions they make.

### further information

[www.parentcentre.gov.uk](http://www.parentcentre.gov.uk)

[www.becomingdomestic.co.uk/2006/10/28/how-to-make-playdough-no-cook-recipe/](http://www.becomingdomestic.co.uk/2006/10/28/how-to-make-playdough-no-cook-recipe/)

[www.bhf.org.uk/healthychildren](http://www.bhf.org.uk/healthychildren)

[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/Change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/Change4life)

[www.netmums.com/activities/arts-and-crafts/treasure-baskets](http://www.netmums.com/activities/arts-and-crafts/treasure-baskets)

### about NDNA

National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) is the national charity and membership association for children's nurseries across the UK.

**NDNA's vision** is a society where all children and families receive the best-quality care and learning that enable them to reach their full potential. **Our mission** is to support the delivery of best-quality care and early learning for children across the UK

NDNA offers a range of expert advice and information for parents who are looking for childcare. Information includes; tips on choosing a nursery, a search facility to find an NDNA member nursery in their area, information on early education, and advice on affordable childcare.

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VAT No. 123353839 published April 2012

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