

Fathering

The importance and benefits of Fathers and other main men in a child's life



SureStart

Southern Board Area

There are huge benefits to children of all ages having a significant male adult who is positively involved in their lives.

NOTE: Throughout this short leaflet we will use the term 'Fathers'. This also includes other significant males or 'Main Men' in a child's life.

When To Become Involved?

Positive male involvement at any stage in a child's life is beneficial for both baby's and mums wellbeing. However men can become involved in a child's life from very early on, even from early pregnancy. Scans and research show that even in the womb, babies respond to familiar voices.

'Fathers are more than just second adults in the home; involved fathers bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring. (Dr David Popense).

Talking to your baby or child (even in the womb) can help to establish a bond between you, this can be the case whether you are the Father, Mother, Uncle, Grandparent or Step-Parent.





Reading Stories

Even before your child can understand the stories you read, they will enjoy looking at pictures as well as listening to your voice. There is some re- search to suggest that children who are read to on a daily basis will have longer attention spans.

Bathtime

During bath time you can describe your child's body parts and emotions as well as sing songs and rhymes to make this an enjoyable experience.

Ball Games

This is a great way to enhance your child's physical development and co-ordination. Simply rolling a ball back and forth to your baby or as your child gets older you can move on to kicking a ball to each other.



Why Become Involved?

Baby's brains develop at a tremendous rate even in the womb, the first two years of their life is when most of their brain development will happen. This is sometimes referred to as 'Hard Wiring', this is basically building the blocks for all future learning . This future learning includes walking and talking, reading and writing and how your child will respond and cope emotionally in new and challenging situations.

As a Father you can play an invaluable role in your child's life to build a good foundation for learning all these new skills. Evidence has shown that children who have a good bond or attachment with their parents and who receive appropriate stimulation for example through play and interaction have good foundations for learning.

Psychologists agree that babies with secure attachments or bonds to their parents, or other significant carers have better chances to develop into happy, successful and well-adjusted children and adults.

Fathers have as much to take on adjusting to their new role as mothers do so men need to be fully included in preparations for the birth of a baby.



Getting Involved & Staying Involved?

There are many ways you can get involved in your child's life from when they are in the womb and after they are born. All of the activities described here are excellent ways to enhance attachment and bonding. Whether you are playing together or simply talking to your child they will be learning new skills, finding out about the world and most importantly, having fun with you!

During Pregnancy

As a father or expectant father take up any opportunities to get involved in antenatal or parenting classes (details can be obtained from your midwife or local Sure Start).

Also talk to the 'bump', this may seem strange but your child will get to know the sound of your voice and begin to develop a relationship with you even in the womb.

After The Birth

Skin-to-skin time:

Is holding a baby with your skin against their skin usually soon after birth. This is not just for mummy's! Let your midwife know if you are interested in this. This helps your baby get to know you and your smell and you get some one to one time with them. If you have been talking to them whilst in the womb they will recognise the sound of your voice.



Early Childhood



Baby massage: This is using gentle touch to promote relaxation with your baby. It can help you to learn about your baby's likes and dislikes, whether your baby is tired, hungry and how your baby is trying to communicate with you,

this is sometimes called baby cues. (It is thought that massage strengthens attachment between the baby and their parent. Not only that, but massage may help babies' digestive and circulatory systems develop.)

Infant Swimming Programmes



Provides another opportunity for skin to skin contact which strengthens the bond between you and your baby. It's fantastic for your baby's health and development. Each lesson provides a complete physical workout,

strengthening your baby's heart and lungs and in turn aiding development of the brain.

Peek-A-Boo

Simply playing with your baby's blanket, putting it over your head and pulling it off again. In this game you hide and then you come back! This is not only fun for both of you but also helps to strengthen your babies emotional sense of predictability and trust in you.

Tickle time

Babies are very sensitive to touch and often love being tickled. Try tickling your baby after a bath or when changing a nappy. Smiling will encourage your baby to laugh in response.

'Fathers, just like Mothers, matter'



Where you can go to get more information and support...

