Why bonding with your baby *is so important*

You've probably heard that bonding with your baby is important—but did you know it's not just about feeling close? Bonding helps shape your baby's brain and overall health for life. When babies interact with their caregivers—especially their mothers—through eye contact, gentle touch, or loving child-like speech, their bodies release a special hormone called oxytocin, sometimes called the "love hormone." This hormone helps build trust and closeness in relationships.

When you cuddle, look into your baby's eyes, talk to them in a gentle voice, or comfort them with your touch, your baby's body releases a hormone called oxytocin—sometimes called the "love hormone." This hormone helps your baby feel safe, loved, and connected. It also builds trust and supports healthy relationships as they grow.

Oxytocin also activates a special part of the nervous system, the vagus nerve, which helps calm the body, support digestion, lower stress, and keep the immune system balanced. Simply put, bonding moments help your baby feel better both emotionally and physically.

Even very young babies—just two months old—show brain activity in areas responsible for social connection when they experience warm, loving interactions. Brain scans have shown that when babies make eye contact or hear baby talk, the part of the brain that helps them connect with others (called the medial prefrontal cortex) lights up.

The bottom line? Bonding with your baby isn't just about feeling close—it actually shapes how their brain and body develop. It affects their emotional, physical, and mental health for life.

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What to do

SIMPLE STEPS FOR PARENTS



TOUCH

Tactile input (touch) can increase an infant's vagal tone, bonding, and ability to adapt to their environment. Gently rubbing their back, legs, and arms is soothing and can help build vagal tone.

CONNECT WITH BABY

Journal (especially mom) messages and thoughts to your baby during the prenatal period. The journal can act as a beautiful keepsake to give to your child when they are older.



BE ONE

Although you may not be able to see it, infants are very perceptive of their surroundings and emotions. The perception of their environment will either foster healthy or unhealthy development of their sensory-motor systems. Work hard to be present and fully engaged with your child and make every attempt to "leave the world behind you" during these special times of bonding and engagement!

EYE-TO-EYE CONTACT

Take advantage of situations that afford caregiver-infant eye-to-eye contact and mix these situations up to include a variety of different environmental experiences.





DON'T TEXT AND BREAST FEED

Drop your phone and be fully engaged during feedings. This means no texting and breastfeeding (brexting), or social media/technology, etc.

ENGAGE IN INFANT-DIRECTED SPEECH

Make reading and engaging with your child, using infantile forms of speech, a regular part of your daily bonding time together.



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