



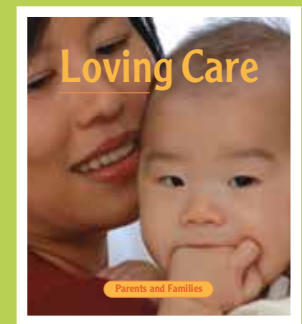
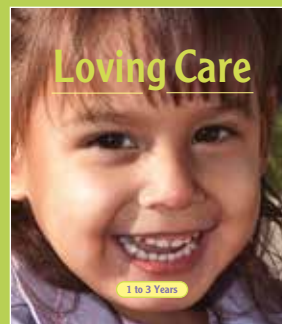
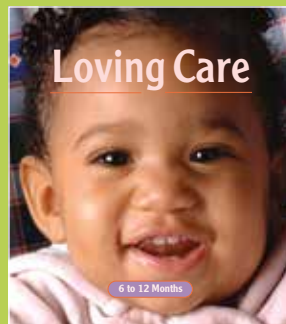
Loving Care

Parents and Families

Loving Care: Parents and Families

Loving Care is a series of four books for parents of children from birth to age 3 developed by Nova Scotia's Department of Health and Wellness. As a public health resource, **Loving Care** focuses on information that will help young families to protect, promote, or improve their health, and to prevent illness, injury or disability.

Three of the **Loving Care** books focus on babies and children at specific ages—**Birth to 6 Months**, **6 to 12 Months**, and **1 to 3 Years**. This book—**Loving Care: Parents and Families**—offers information that will be useful to families whatever their child's age. **Parents and Families** is referred to throughout the other books.



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The information in this book is up to date as of the date of printing. This information is not a substitute for the advice of a health professional.

Loving Care

Parents and Families

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If you need help finding programs and services in your area, call 211.

If you have a problem and don't know where to turn, call the provincial helpline ([contact information, page 136](#)). You can talk to a volunteer who will listen and connect you with the resources you need.

Welcome



Introduction

A new baby creates other new relationships—new parents, new siblings, new grandparents. All of you will be getting used to new roles and new ways of looking at yourselves and each other.

The birth of a baby changes individuals or partners into a family. It takes time, patience, and love for a new family to take shape and settle into a new life together.

As you give loving care to your new baby, don't forget to save a little for yourself and the rest of your family.

This book offers information to help parents meet their own physical, mental, and emotional needs. It also gives some information on helping children and grandparents welcome their new

family member. We hope that it will help you to make your own decisions about what's best for you and your family.

Take care of yourself! Your baby, your family, and all of your relationships depend on your health and well-being.

Added info...

We've written **Loving Care** for the parents of healthy, full-term babies.

If your baby is premature or has health problems or special needs, you can get the specific information you need from your health care providers.

How we decided what to put in these books

There's so much that parents want to know! We couldn't include it all. When we wrote this series of books, we had to decide what to put in and what to leave out.

We chose the information we used based on:

- **Best practices**—ways of doing things that we've learned work well
- **Research**—results of studies into how to promote the health of infants and young children and help them to grow and develop
- **National and provincial government policies, strategies, and key messages**
- **Interviews** with parents from Family Resource Centres across the province
- **Input from experts in a variety of disciplines**, including: child health and development, culturally specific practices, family care, mental health, and many other fields

There are things you **won't** find in these books. For example, we don't give you detailed directions for how to do things like give a bath or change a diaper. These are things we know you'll figure out on your own. We've tried to focus on information that will help you understand your baby so you can respond to their needs and help them grow and develop.

Some of what you read here may sound different from what you heard growing up. It may be different from what your parents did when they were raising you.

Everything in these books is here to help you give your baby the best possible start in life.

Support for families

It's normal for parents to want to talk to someone about their baby and their feelings.

We all need the help and support of the people around us. These are called our "social support networks."

Your social support network is made up of the people that you can depend on in good times and bad. It can include:

- Family and friends
- Elders
- Other parents
- Community leaders
- Spiritual and faith-based counsellors

Many parents find that other parents are one of their best sources of support. You can connect with other parents through Family Resource Centres ([contact information, page 132](#)), play groups, playgrounds, coffee shops, malls, libraries ([contact information, page 138](#)), parks, and other places where parents meet one another. You may feel shy about talking to someone you don't know, but try it. Other parents are probably as eager to talk as you are.

In most communities, there also are programs and support for parents. These are often free of charge and all parents are welcome.

To learn about programs and supports in your community:

- Check bulletin boards, newspapers, and libraries.
- Ask your public health nurse, outreach worker, home visitor, or other parents.
- Call 211

Added info...

Besides being a good place to meet other parents, Family Resource Centres offer many different programs for parents and kids. These include parent education, family counselling and support, children's programs, literacy programs, health and nutrition programs, and employment support.

Family Resource Centres welcome all members of the community.

Health services

If you need more help than informal supports can offer, there are many professionals you can turn to.

Public Health

Public Health works with communities, families and individuals. Its goal is to prevent illness, to protect and promote health, and to help all Nova Scotians achieve wellbeing.

Public Health has many professionals working across the province, at Nova Scotia Health, and in communities. The professionals you are most likely to have contact with include:

- Oral health professionals, such as dentists and dental hygienists
- Home visitors
- Outreach workers
- Public health nurses
- Public health nutritionists

Primary health care

You are receiving primary health care when you visit a doctor or nurse practitioner, consult with a pharmacist, see a midwife or go to a class led by a dietitian at the library.

The word “primary” means first. You receive primary health care from a health care professional who is usually your first contact with the health care system. If you need it, a primary care provider can refer you to specialists and other health services.

You can receive primary health care services from many different kinds of health care providers in many different settings. Primary health care professionals can include:

- Oral health professionals
- Doctors
- Midwives
- Nurses
- Nurse practitioners
- Pharmacists
- Registered dietitians
- Registered physical activity practitioners
- Registered social workers

811

811 answers non-emergency health questions. By dialing 811, you can get information about a health issue or find out if you or your child should see a health care provider.

If you are Deaf or have hearing loss you can use this service by dialing 711 (TTY).

If you or a family member does not speak English, 811 can provide services in French and many other languages, including Arabic, Farsi, and Cantonese.



Added info...

Nova Scotia has a Family Pharmacare Program to help with the cost of prescription drugs. Some families are also eligible for a pharmacare program for low-income children. Contact information for both programs is on [page 138](#).

Respectful health care

There are many different kinds of health services that you may seek out—for example, mental health services, addiction services, family doctors, or clinics.

Talk to your health care provider about what you want and need for yourself and your baby. You have a right to health care that respects your race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, identity, and ability.

If you come from a different culture, ask your health care provider to get a **cultural health interpreter** for your visit.

A **cultural health interpreter** is trained to help you understand and communicate with health care providers when your culture or language is different from theirs.

You are entitled to health care that responds to your individual needs, does not judge you, and allows you to feel safe and respected.

Some people use the term “breasts” and some use “chest” to talk about their body. Similarly, the term “breastfeeding” can be used to explain a method of infant feeding, but some people will prefer “chestfeeding” or “nursing”. You can share your preferences with your health care providers.

Finding help when you need it

If something about your baby doesn't seem right to you, trust your instinct.

You know your baby better than anyone else.

If you're worried, look for help from health services in your community.

There are many people who can help. Keep trying until you find the help you and your baby need. It may take time, effort, and many phone calls.

When looking for help:

- **Think about the problem.** The more clearly you can describe the problem and the kind of help you need, the better chance you'll have of finding it.

- **Start with people and organizations you know.** Ask for suggestions from other parents, people in your support network, your health care provider, public health nurse, or social worker—anyone you can think of. Organizations like a Family Resource Centre, church, friendship centre, or community centre may also have good ideas.

Added info...

The provincial helpline can be a place to start when looking for help. Volunteers will listen and help you find resources and support in your community.

You'll find contact information on [page 136](#).

- **Keep a list of everyone you talk to.** Write down the names and numbers of everyone you call and what they say. Use a scribbler or a notebook so you won't lose your list.
- **Ask for suggestions from the people you contact.** If the person you call can't help, ask them to suggest other places to try.
- **Look for support if you have issues that make it harder to get the information or care you need.**
 - *If you have problems understanding English or French, ask for a translator. Many hospitals and clinics offer this service.*
 - *If you come from a different culture, ask how you can get a cultural health interpreter at hospitals and clinics.*
 - *If you don't read well, ask the health care provider to explain any printed information or directions to you. Or ask for material that's easier to read. It's okay to say, "I don't understand this."*

Consider taking someone you trust with you to appointments if you are concerned that you might not understand everything that's going on.

Keep trying! You and your baby are worth the effort it takes to get the help you need.

Added info...

If you are an immigrant, you'll find contact information for organizations that can help you and your family on [page 127](#).

Added info...

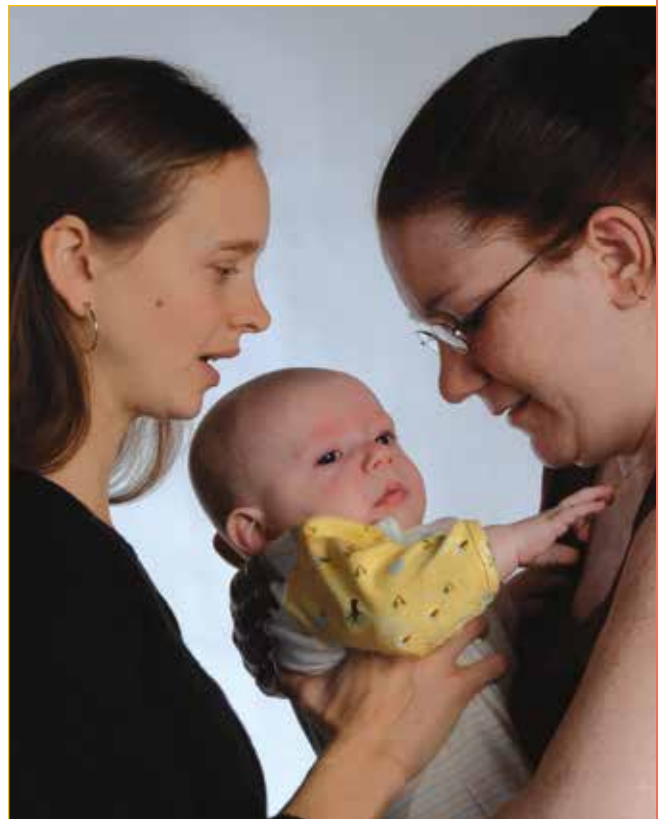
There are no stupid questions!

If you are concerned about your child, don't be afraid to ask questions. You have a right to information about your child's health.

You have a right to ask questions of anyone who has a role in your child's care.

Keep asking questions until you get an answer that you understand.

You can never ask too many questions!





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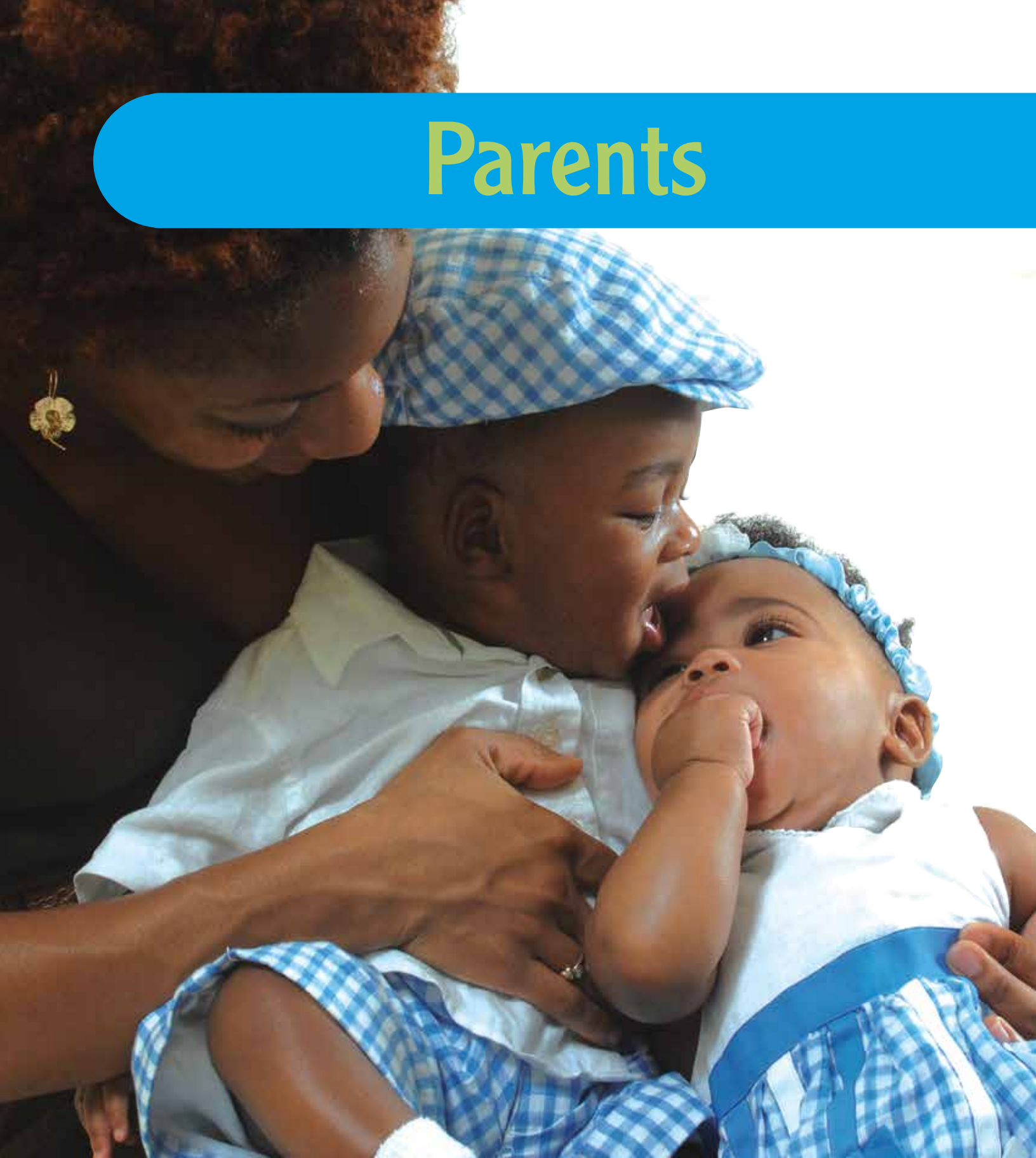
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Parents



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Physical care after childbirth

After you give birth, your body will slowly return to normal. This can take 6 weeks or longer.

It's common to have some physical discomfort after giving birth. Talk to your health care provider about postpartum physical care.

If you've had a cesarean birth, you can also get advice on postpartum care and comfort measures from your health care provider.

All birthing parents have some vaginal bleeding after giving birth. This is a normal part of recovering from childbirth. Vaginal bleeding:

- Can last for up to 6 weeks
- May be dark red and heavy for the first few days

- Will lessen over time and become lighter in colour. You may notice more bleeding when you are more active than usual.

Use pads or panty liners while this bleeding lasts.

Added info...

You need a postpartum check-up about 6 weeks after giving birth. This is an important part of your health care.

Make the appointment with your health care provider as soon as you get home from the hospital.

Baby blues and postpartum depression

Baby blues

Many parents have very mixed feelings that start a few days after their baby is born. This is so common that it has a name—baby blues.

You may feel:

- Let down, disappointed
- Happy one minute and crying the next
- Sad
- Stressed out
- Cranky

- Worried
- Overwhelmed

You may be very tired but still have trouble sleeping.

These feelings are normal. They usually go away in a week or two.

If you feel like this, take care of yourself. Ask for help and support from the people around you. Talk to other parents about how you feel.

Postpartum depression

Postpartum depression is a kind of depression that can happen to parents after childbirth. It is a medical condition.

Postpartum depression can happen to anyone. It does not mean that you're a bad parent. It just means that you need some help to get through a hard time.

Parents with postpartum depression can have many different feelings. These may include:

- Sadness—crying a lot or feeling like you want to cry
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Exhausted—you can't seem to fall asleep and you can't seem to wake up
- Worried, panicky, full of doubts
- Anxious, tense, on edge, angry
- Guilty
- Worthless, lonely
- Confused—can't think clearly
- Having no feelings for your baby
- Feeling like you want to hurt yourself or your baby
- Scary thoughts

Baby blues don't usually last longer than 2 weeks. If you still feel sad or upset after 2 weeks, or if these feelings are getting stronger, look for help. You can contact:

- Your health care provider
- Local emergency room
- Local Public Health office (contact information, page 141)
- Local mental health clinic (contact information, page 139), private counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker
- Reproductive Mental Health Services, IWK Health Centre— 902-470-8098
- Mental health crisis line (contact information, page 140)
- Mi'kmaq crisis line (contact information, page 140)



Sex after childbirth

Your body will need time to heal after childbirth—usually about 6 weeks. Wait until your body is ready before having sex. This may be when any stitches have healed and your bleeding has stopped or is very light in colour and amount.

Many new parents find that they are less interested in sex for a while after their baby is born. You're tired. You may still be sore from the birth. You're busy. You're getting used to being a parent. All of these things can make you less interested in sex. Wait until you feel ready.

Talk to your partner(s) about how you feel. There are ways to be close without having sex. You can kiss, cuddle, massage, and hold each other. You can talk and listen to one another. You can do special things for one another—like running a bath or making a favourite meal.

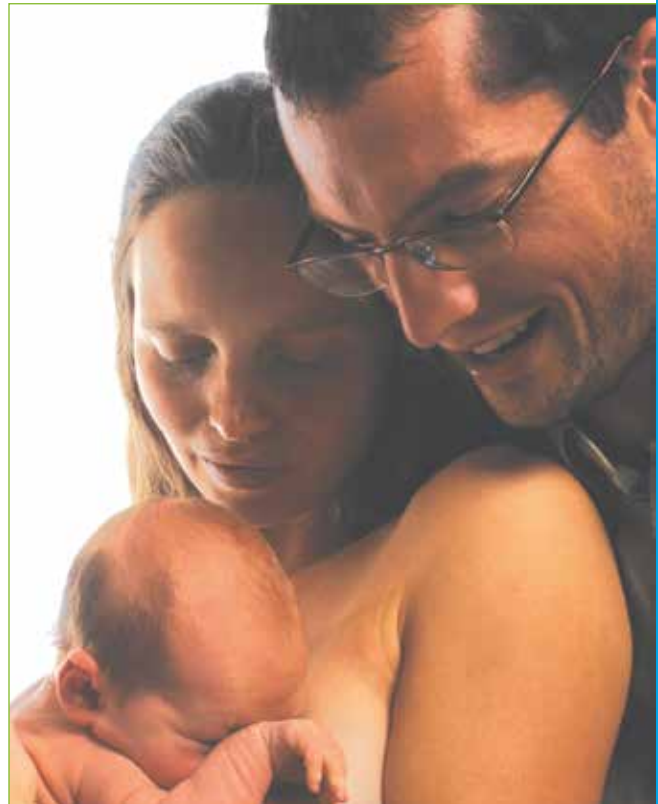
When you're ready to have sex again, start slowly and gently. Tell your partner(s) what feels good and what doesn't. It may help to:

- **Use a water-based lubricant.**

After childbirth, vaginal dryness can be normal. Using a water-based lubricant can make sex more comfortable for both you and your partner(s). You can get lubricant at a drugstore. You don't need a prescription.

- **Try new positions.**

Do what's most comfortable for you now.



Added info...

Some breastfeeding parents find that their breasts leak or squirt milk during sex. This is normal. However, if you want to reduce leaking you can try breastfeeding your baby or expressing milk before you have sex. Or you can keep a towel nearby and press it against your breasts to stop any leaks.

Birth control after childbirth

It is possible to get pregnant weeks or months after having a baby. You may be able to get pregnant before your period returns. You may be able to get pregnant while you are breastfeeding. Your body needs time to recover from pregnancy and childbirth. If you are not ready to become pregnant, use birth control.

There are many different kinds of birth control. Talk to your health care provider or public health nurse, or contact a sexual health clinic for more information.

Your periods

How you feed your baby may affect when your period returns. If you are exclusively breastfeeding, your period may not return for as long as 4 to 12 months. If you are not breastfeeding, your period may return in about 6 to 12 weeks. You can get pregnant without having a period. You can get pregnant while you are breastfeeding.

Added info...

Latex or polyurethane condoms are the only method of birth control that can protect you from STIs (sexually transmitted infections).

Even if you are using another method of birth control, you'll still need a condom to protect yourself from STIs.





Postpartum Care: Partners

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Your important role

Families come in many forms. Whatever shape your family takes, living with a new baby can be tiring and confusing for all new parents.

You need to get to know—and learn to take care of—your new baby. This takes time and effort.

You may sometimes feel a bit left out. You may also feel helpless once in a while. You may feel the urge to “fix” things when your partner is struggling. Becoming a family takes time, thought, and lots of talking. You and your partner(s) will need to work together to support and help one another.

Remember that you are special to your baby. You are your baby’s parent. It’s your job to be a full partner in loving, caring for, and raising your child.

- **Share baby care.**

No one “just knows” how to take care of a baby. Your baby depends on you for loving care.

- **Be an active parent.**

Spend time alone with your baby. Get to know them. Learn what makes them smile. Figure out what they want when they cry. Hold them. Smile at them. Talk to them. Sing to them. Show them that they can trust you to love them and to be there when they need you.

- **Talk about your feelings.**

New parents often have mixed feelings. You can feel proud, happy, worried, relieved, left out, and tired—all at the same time.

Added info...

There are many different kinds of families and many different relationships in which people love and raise children as partners and families.

- You and your partner(s) may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or straight.
- You may be transgender, two-spirit, intersex, non-binary, queer, or cisgender.
- You may be non-monogamous or monogamous.
- You may be living with your partner(s) or living apart.
- You may be birthing your baby, adopting, or fostering.
- Your baby may be born through surrogacy.
- You may be raising a grandchild.
- You may be living on your own, or sharing a home with other family members.

We hope that all those who are welcoming a new baby—or babies—into their lives and families will feel included here.

Talk to your partner(s). Tell them how you feel. Listen to them when they tell you how they feel. Becoming a parent can be stressful. Being able to talk to each other will help you be better parents. It will also strengthen your ties to each other.

- **Support your partner.**

Pregnancy and birth are hard on the body. It will take time to recover physically and emotionally. Some parents experience the “baby blues.” Your partner(s) will need your help, support, and understanding.

Some parents develop more serious postpartum depression. Read the information about postpartum depression on [page 12](#) of this book. If your partner(s) show(s) any signs of depression, help them to get the help they need.

Breastfeeding gives your baby the best possible start in life. It contains exactly what babies need to grow strong and healthy. It protects them from allergies and illness. It can take time for parents and babies to learn to breastfeed. Your support and encouragement make a big difference, especially if breastfeeding is not common in your family or community.

It takes time for you to learn how to best support your partner(s). Be kind and patient. Ask your partner(s) what they need and want. By supporting your partner as they breastfeed, you are giving your baby the best possible start in life.

- **Build a loving family.**

Spend time with your baby and partner(s). Do things together that you all enjoy. Grow together into a loving, supportive family.

Having a baby is one of the biggest changes you and your partner(s) will have in your lives. You will grow as a parent over time. The more you put into being a parent, the more you will get out of it.

Added info...

After childbirth, it may be a while before your partner is ready to have sex again.

Their body needs 6 weeks or longer to recover from childbirth. They're tired. Learning to be a parent can be stressful.

- **Be patient.** There's no need to rush. You can stay close physically by kissing, cuddling, and massaging one another. When your partner is ready for sex, start slowly. Be careful and gentle. Let them tell you what feels good.
- **You can use a water-based lubricant if your partner experiences vaginal dryness after childbirth.** This can make sex more comfortable for you and your partner(s). You can get lubricant at the drugstore. You don't need a prescription.
- **It is possible to get pregnant weeks or months after having a baby.** If you and your partner(s) are not ready to become pregnant, use birth control. There are many different kinds of birth control. Talk to your health care provider or public health nurse, or contact a sexual health clinic for more information.

Latex or polyurethane condoms are the only method of birth control that can protect you from STIs (sexually transmitted infections).

Even if you and your partner(s) are using another method of birth control, you'll still need a condom to protect you from STIs.



Single Parenting



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And baby makes two

Being a single parent is not unusual. Many parents find themselves raising a baby without a partner.

All of the advice in this book on taking care of yourself physically and mentally is especially important for you as a single parent.

Don't forget to take some time for yourself away from your baby. Accept offers for childcare from friends and relatives you trust.

Your baby has only you to depend on, so your health and well-being are important.

- **Find people to talk to.**

Sometimes just saying what's worrying you out loud can help you think things through. Having someone who will listen to you and pay attention to what you say is important for everyone. Sometimes you just need a friend, neighbour, or family member who knows and cares about you. Sometimes you need to talk to a counsellor, public health nurse, social worker, or spiritual or religious leader.

- **Ask for help when you need it.**

You'll have questions and worries. All parents—single or not—need help and support sometimes. Other parents and single parents are a great source of information and support. So are your friends and family.

- **Look for support in your community.**

Look for single-parent support groups, Family Resource Centres ([contact information, page 132](#)), and parent-child play groups.

All of these people and groups—like friends, family, community groups, and Family Resource Centres—become part of your social support network. They are the people you can depend on in hard times. They are the people who will help you when you need it, and who know you'll do the same for them.

This kind of network can make a big difference in your life and in your child's life.



When parents don't live together

There are many reasons why the parents of a child may not live together.

Each parent has a different and important role to play in a child's life. Whether they live together or not, all parents share the same goal—to raise a happy, well-adjusted child.

To do this, it's important to:

- **Put your child first.**

Your relationship with your child is your most important relationship. Even though you might be angry or resentful of the other parent(s), it's important to think about—and do—what's best for your child.

- **Allow your child to love and be loved by their other parent(s), if this is possible.**

Children do best when they have a healthy relationship with their parents. This isn't always possible, but when it is, it is helpful to respect and support the other family members' roles in your child's life. This may not always be easy, but it's important for your child's development and happiness that you are polite and treat their family members with respect. It is harmful for children to see their parents fighting. No matter how you feel about your child's other parent(s), it's important to separate these feelings from your feelings about your child. Your child learns by watching what you do. How their parents treat one another when they are upset or angry will be a model for your child to follow.

Added info...

Many parents who don't live together need support to deal with their feelings. They may need help to agree on how to parent their child.

You may find that you need counselling, legal advice, a support network, or other kinds of help.

Look for the help you need. Your health and happiness are important to your child. Taking care of your own needs and finding ways to work respectfully with your child's family members are important for your child's health and happiness.

To find out about support services in your community, talk with your health care provider, a Family Resource Centre ([contact information, page 132](#)) or your local Public Health office ([contact information, page 141](#)).

You'll find information about Family Court and the Family Law Information Centre on the Justice Department website ([contact information, page 132](#)).

If you are leaving an abusive relationship, you'll find information on child custody and access in "Safely On Your Way", a resource from the Nova Scotia Domestic Violence Resource Centre ([contact information, page 130](#)).

- **Work together to give your child consistent parenting.**

Young children need to know what to expect. Change is difficult for them. Parents need to agree on things like rules, limits, and bedtimes for their child. This can be difficult and you may need professional help to work out a parenting plan.

- **Don't use your child as a way to get even.**

Keep your child out of your problems with the other parent(s). Don't use your child as a weapon against the other parent(s). Don't try to keep the other parent(s) away from your child because you're angry about something else they have done.

When your child lives with you

It is helpful for your child's development for their parent(s) to be a part of their life, if they are available and able to provide safe and loving care.

- **Support your child's other parent(s) to be a part of their life.**

For example, suggest going to health care provider appointments, taking your child to visit grandparents, or going to childcare meetings.

- **Encourage your child's other parent(s) to keep in touch in between visits.**

For example, through phone calls, e-mail, or sending postcards.

Sometimes it isn't possible for the other parent(s) to have a role in your child's life. Whether the reason is illness, abuse, or lack of involvement from the other parent(s), your child needs to know that:

- It isn't their fault.
- They will always be taken care of and loved.

Being the main caregiver for a young child isn't easy. Look for help and support from friends, family and other parents. You'll find information on finding help and support in the "Welcome" section of this book.



CAUTION!

Sometimes issues of abuse or illness may mean that it isn't safe for your child to be with, or have contact with, the other parent(s). In this case it's up to you to protect your child.

When your child lives with the other parent(s)

When you don't live with your child, it's important to remember that your child needs you. Even if your child is still a baby, you are setting a pattern for your life together. You need to show your child that you are someone they can depend on and trust.

Be patient. Don't give up. The more time you can spend together, the better. It takes time, effort, and love to develop a close bond with a child. You are building a relationship that will last a lifetime.

There are many things you can do to be part of your child's life.

- **PLAN to spend time with your child.**

Spending time with you is an important part of your child's life. Make the time you spend with your child an important part of **your** life, too. Organize your life to make it happen.

- **Do what you say you're going to do.**

For example, if you tell your child you'll be there for a birthday party, be there. Be a person your child can depend on.

- **Do things together.**

You don't have to do anything special. You don't have to give your child treats. Talk, play, and do everyday things together. What your child wants most is just to be with you.

- **Keep in touch.**

Send your child cards, letters, postcards and e-mails. Talk on the phone. Let your child know you think about them when you're not together.

If you need help in learning how to care for your child, ask for it. All parents need to learn about feeding, giving baths, changing diapers, dressing, and caring for a child. Family and friends can be good sources of information.

Join a parents' group and spend time with other parents. Their advice and support can be a big help. Family Resource Centres are often a good place to find parent groups ([contact information, page 132](#)).





Parenting Together



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Sharing parenting

As parents and partners, you share many things—your love for your baby, your concern for their welfare, your desire to be good parents.

It's also important that you share in the day-to-day work of caring for your baby. When you feed, bathe, change diapers, dress, rock, and play with your baby, you're letting them know that you love them. Your baby needs to know that they can count on loving care from their parents.

Decide with your partner(s) how to share the work of caring for a home and baby.

Every family is different, so the ways you find to share in raising your baby will be different too. These suggestions might make it a bit easier for you to work things out.

- **Parents need to give each other equal opportunity to learn how to take care of the baby.**

Some parents may feel more comfortable with doing things like changing, washing, feeding, and comforting their baby. It is normal for it to take time to feel comfortable with these new skills. It can be hard to let go and give your partner(s) a chance. It can be even harder to stand back and let your partner(s) do things differently than you would. Try not to criticize. Try not to step in and take over while your partner(s) is (are) caring for the baby. Your baby needs their parents.

- **It is important to keep trying.**

It can be easy to back off and let someone else do it, especially if they criticize how you change a diaper or comfort your baby. Try not to take it personally. Maybe they can do the job faster, but remind them that you need to learn, too. Tell them that you'll all be better off if you know how to take care of your baby.

- **It's not just baby care that parents need to share.**

You need to share all the work of caring for each other, a home, and a baby. This means finding a way to share things like cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry, baby care, and work outside the home. When parents find ways to share the work, they have more time to share the fun of being a family.

- **Parents need to keep talking.**

Talk about how you feel. Your partner(s) can't read your mind. If you're feeling overworked, say so. If you're feeling left out, say so. Talk about how you can help and support each other.

- **Parents need to respect each other's "parenting style."**

No two parents are alike, even when they're the parents of the same baby. Many new parents are surprised to find that they and their partner(s) have different ideas about how to raise their baby. They may not always agree about the best way to handle things like crying or bedtimes.

This means that they have different styles of parenting—they will do things differently and see their child in a different way.

The key is to respect each other's parenting style and find a way to work together. It's confusing for children to get different treatment from each parent. It upsets them to hear their parents disagreeing about what to do.

Working out your differences now, when the baby is small, will help you to understand each other's point of view as your baby gets older and new issues come up. This takes time, patience, and lots of talking about what's important to each of you.

Being in a relationship

Most people find that having a baby is a happy, but stressful, event. It can put a strain on any relationship. You put so much energy and effort into being good parents, there's often little left over for each other.

Your relationship with each other is important—to you and to your baby. Happy parents make happy families.

- **Talk to each other.**

Talk about what you've done all day. Find something to laugh about together. Talk about your worries and fears. Even if you only have a few minutes a day, this will give you a chance to connect with one another.

- **Spend time together.**

It doesn't matter what you do, where you go, or whether you go anywhere at all. Just being together is the goal. Even an hour together can be fun.

- **Say something nice to each other every day.**

Everyone needs to feel appreciated and loved. At least once a day, thank your partner(s) for doing something. Tell them what a great job they're doing as a parent. Say, *"I love you."* Don't take one another for granted. Remind yourselves about what you love about each other.

- **Touch each other.**

Touch is a way of showing love. A back rub, a foot rub, a kiss, a hug, a touch on the hand all say *"I love you"* without words.





Parent Care



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Take care of yourself

Babies bring love and joy. They also bring change.

A baby changes how everything happens in your home and your life. Becoming a parent changes how you look at yourself and how you see your place in the world.

Change is very tiring, even when you welcome it.

Most parents are surprised at how tired and overwhelmed they feel for the first few months.

Caring for a baby takes a lot of physical and mental energy. It seems like your baby needs your care, love, and attention every minute of the day—and most of the night. It's easy to feel as if being a parent is taking over your entire life.

Remind yourself that this time in your life is really very short—even if sometimes it doesn't seem that way. Enjoy it!

It's not selfish to take a little time for yourself. You're still a person as well as your baby's parent. You'll take better care of your baby when you take care of yourself.

- **Get as much sleep as you can.**

Rest when your baby sleeps. Turn off the phone. Hang a note on the door that says, "Do not disturb. Baby sleeping." Getting in a nap while your baby sleeps can be difficult if you also have a toddler to care for. You can try to time your toddler's naps to match your baby's. You can also try snuggling down to read or spend quiet time with your toddler while your baby sleeps. Maybe you'll both drift off to sleep together.



- **Don't do anything you don't have to do.**

You can make a list of chores from most important to least important. Do only the things that you **MUST** do to take care of yourself, your baby, and other children.

- **Ask for help when you need it.**

Take help when it's offered. Family, friends, and neighbours can help with jobs like food shopping, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Make a "wish list" of things you'd like help with. That way, you can ask for what you need or when someone offers to help, you'll remember what you need most.

- **Find someone to talk to.**

Other parents are a great source of information, ideas, and support. You'll feel better knowing you're not the only one with questions, feelings, and problems.

Playgrounds, coffee shops, malls, libraries, and parks are some good places to meet other parents. You may feel shy about talking to someone you don't know, but try it. Other parents are probably as eager to talk as you are.

- **Join a group for parents.**

Look for parents' groups, mothers' groups, fathers' groups, play groups, and Family Resource Centres ([contact information, page 132](#)) in your community. Community centres, churches, temples, and mosques often offer parent and play groups.

- **Make some time for yourself every day.**

Try to find some time to be alone. Do something that makes you feel good. Go for a walk or a run. Take a shower or bath. Watch a TV show. Talk to a friend. Read.

- **Take care of your own health.**

Most parents take good care of their baby's health—sometimes better care than they take of their own. Your baby and family need you well and strong! Taking care of your health is important for you and your family.



Double Check

Preventing illness is an important part of taking care of yourself. You'll find contact information for cancer prevention resources on [page 137](#).



Added info...

Your health and your environment

Part of taking care of yourself is taking care of your environment. There are many factors in the indoor and outdoor environment that can affect both your health and your children's health.

If you have questions or concerns about environmental issues—like air or water quality in your home or community—contact Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change ([contact information, page 140](#)).

Immunizations

Immunizations are not just for babies and children.

Keeping your own immunizations up to date will protect your health as well as your child's.

Every adult should get:

- Flu vaccine every year
- A tetanus and diphtheria shot every 10 years
- A pertussis shot (whooping cough) once as an adult, especially if they are in regular contact with infants and young children

These vaccines are free to all Nova Scotians.

If you have never had measles, mumps, rubella (German measles) or chickenpox, and have never been immunized for them, you should get these immunizations as well.

You can check the **Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults** on [page 120](#) to find out what immunizations your child and other family members need, and when to get them.



For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website (<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf>) or scan this code:



Talk to your health care provider about getting the immunizations you need. If you do not have a health care provider, such as a family doctor, to provide childhood immunizations, contact 811.

Added info...

All pregnant people should receive the tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine during every pregnancy, regardless of when they have had their last Tdap vaccine. Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is particularly dangerous for infants who are too young to receive their first dose of vaccine, which is given at 2 months. When Tdap vaccine is given in pregnancy, the pregnant person will pass on temporary immunity to their baby.

Ideally, pregnant people should get the Tdap vaccine sometime between 27 and 32 weeks of their pregnancy. Pregnant people who did not get the vaccine during those weeks can still receive it anytime before their baby is born.

Smoking and vaping

One of the best things you can do for your own health—as well as for your baby’s—is to not smoke or vape.

Many parents stop smoking or vaping before their baby is born because they know that smoking or vaping can hurt their unborn baby. It’s important for your own health—as well as for your baby’s—to remain a non-smoker or non-vaper after your baby is born.

Smoking or vaping can harm the health of your infant. Infants whose parents smoke often show increased signs of stress and irritability. Smoking can also harm the long-term health of your child. For example, children whose parents smoke have a higher risk of developing diabetes and certain problems related to thinking and learning. Talk with your health care provider about quitting smoking and/or vaping.

Five reasons why you might be tempted to smoke or vape again and some things you can do instead.

1. People around you are smoking or vaping and you can’t resist.

It can be very hard to stay quit if your partner(s) or others living with you still smoke or vape. Friends and family who smoke or vape can also make it difficult for you. Ask for their help. Ask them not to smoke or vape around you or your baby. Ask

them not to offer you cigarettes or e-cigarettes. Ask a few close friends or family members to be your support system—people you can call on for help when you want to smoke or vape.

2. Smoking or vaping reminds you of what your life was like before you had a baby to look after.

Being a parent may be harder than you think it will be. Everything is different. You may feel tied down. You may be more tired than you thought you’d be. It can make you long for the fun and freedom you used to have.

Find ways to have fun now. Play with your baby. Take them for walks. Make friends with other parents. Join a play group. Find a babysitter and go out. Do something you enjoy with someone you like being with. Take care of yourself. Do things that make you feel good about yourself and your new life.

3. You think that smoking or vaping will help you handle your feelings and stress.

There is stress in everyone's life. There are other ways to handle stress than by smoking or vaping.

You'll find some ideas on [page 40](#) of this book.

It can be harder to stop smoking or vaping if there is a lot of stress in your life.

Stress can come from many places. For example, you can feel stress from poverty, feeling alone, or from discrimination you face because of your race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Services that can help you stop smoking or vaping are available in a number of languages. The people who offer these services will respect your ethnicity, culture, race, sexual orientation and gender.

4. You think you can just smoke or vape a little—just one puff or one cigarette/e-cigarette.

One of the things that people do to stop smoking or vaping is to smoke fewer and fewer cigarettes or e-cigarettes over a period of time. Unfortunately, the opposite thing starts to happen when you smoke or vape "just one." Gradually you will smoke or vape more and more until you are back to where you were before you quit.

If you have started smoking or vaping again, think of it as a "slip," not a failure. Becoming smoke- or vape-free is a process. It may take many tries to be smoke- or vape-free. You've quit before. You can do it again.

When you feel the urge to smoke or vape:

- Think about why you stopped smoking or vaping in the first place. Smoking and vaping are still bad for your health and your baby's health.

- Stay away from places and activities that make you want to smoke or vape. For example, if you smoke or vape when you meet friends for coffee, meet them somewhere else where you won't be tempted to smoke or vape.
- Do something else. Eat a carrot. Brush your teeth. If you want to smoke or vape after eating, get right up from the table. Go for a walk or do something you enjoy.
- Remind yourself of how much better you feel when you stop smoking or vaping.
- Call a friend and talk when you feel like smoking or vaping.

5. You didn't really want to quit in the first place and only did it because you—or your partner—were pregnant.

Quitting during pregnancy was a wonderful gift—to yourself and to your baby. You gave them a healthier parent. You kept them safe so they could grow and be healthy. They still need your protection.

Tobacco smoke is just as bad for your baby now as it was during pregnancy—maybe worse. When a person—or anyone around them—smokes during pregnancy, the smoke they breathe in affects the baby. Now, your baby breathes in even more smoke—the smoke their parents exhale as well as the smoke from burning cigarettes.

This second-hand smoke is very bad for children's health. When their parents smoke, children have more:

- Ear infections
- Colds and sore throats
- Asthma
- Lung infections
- Allergies
- Coughing and wheezing
- SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

Added info...

Sometimes people think vaping will help them quit smoking, but a lot of people who vape continue to also smoke cigarettes. Vaping during pregnancy can harm the baby's growth and health. Vaping can increase your exposure to harmful chemicals.

Vaping around your baby can expose them to these harmful chemicals too. E-cigarette vapour or aerosol also contains chemicals. Do not use e-cigarettes in your home, car, or near your child or pet.



Double Check

Protect your children from second- and third-hand smoke.

You'll find information on this in any one of the other **Loving Care** books.

Added info...

Stopping smoking or vaping is worth the effort. You can find support from your health care provider or by calling Tobacco Free Nova Scotia.

Tobacco Free Nova Scotia offers free phone support and information about programs and services to help you stop smoking or vaping, or to help you smoke or vape less.

Phone: 811

Tobacco Free Nova Scotia Online is an interactive web-based service available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. The website features motivational messaging, secure chat with a counsellor, online forums and other resources.

Website: tobaccofree.novascotia.ca

Alcohol and cannabis

Alcohol, cannabis and other drugs become a problem when your use of them affects your own well-being or the well-being of the people around you. They can affect your ability to give your children the love and care they need.

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug and it has health and safety risks. Many long-term chronic health conditions such as breast cancer and heart diseases have links to alcohol. The more you drink, the greater the risks. Women are at a greater risk of harm from alcohol than men.

If you drink alcohol, you can use the alcohol consumption guidelines from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction to help reduce your risk of long- and short-term negative health effects. You'll find a copy on [page 119](#).

There is no safe amount of alcohol or cannabis use during pregnancy.

Alcohol can cause your baby a lifetime of physical, mental, learning and behaviour problems. Using alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of problems for your baby called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD can affect your child's body, mind and behaviour. It can also cause learning challenges. A child with FASD has difficulties with language, poor impulse control, and problems paying attention and using good judgment. These issues can affect their success in school and all other areas of life. Being exposed to alcohol also increases the risk that your baby will have a birth defect. Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a specific condition that falls under the umbrella of FASD, with specific characteristics such as facial abnormalities and certain problems with behaviour, thinking, and learning, such as trouble paying attention.

It is safest not to drink any alcohol during pregnancy. The risks to your baby are greatest if you drink heavily while pregnant. However, researchers have not been able to find any level of alcohol use that is safe during pregnancy. Studies suggest that even low to moderate alcohol use at any time during pregnancy may increase the risk of miscarriage and of long-term problems for your child. For example, your child may grow more slowly during the first year of life and may have learning and behaviour problems. If you drank alcohol during pregnancy, or are continuing to drink alcohol during pregnancy, talk with your health care provider.

Using cannabis during pregnancy may affect a child's birth weight, alertness, brain development, behaviour and mental health into adolescence and early adulthood. The more cannabis is used during pregnancy, the more it affects the baby's developing brain. The effects may be permanent. If you are using cannabis during pregnancy for any reason, including medical reasons, talk to your health care provider about your options.

Using alcohol and cannabis can affect your ability to safely parent, as use of these drugs can reduce your alertness and ability to respond to your child. If you have alcohol, cannabis, — including edible cannabis in any form — or any other drugs in your home, make sure they are stored in a locked cabinet out of your child's reach.

You are an important model for how your children learn about alcohol, cannabis and other drugs. For example, if your children see you drinking moderately, chances are better that they will also be moderate drinkers when they grow up. You can show your children that they don't need alcohol to have a good time by having social gatherings that don't include alcohol.

Look for help if you think alcohol, cannabis or other drugs are hurting you, your family or your children. You don't have to deal with this alone. There are counsellors, community organizations and other services that you can talk to.

For more information on Mental Health and Addictions support, contact 211.

Look for help from:

- Addiction Services ([contact information, page 123](#))
- Alcoholics Anonymous / Al Anon
- Narcotics Anonymous
- Gambling Support Network (1-888-347-8888)
- Public Health ([contact information, page 141](#))
- Health care providers

If you have problems with addictions of any kind, you owe it to yourself and your children to get the help you need.

Added info...

It can be harder to deal with an addiction if there is a lot of stress in your life.

Stress can come from many places. For example, you can feel stress from poverty, feeling alone, or from discrimination you face because of your race, gender, or sexual orientation.

The people who offer addictions services will respect your ethnicity, culture, race, sexual orientation and gender.

If you need interpretation services, you can ask your addictions counsellor for a cultural health interpreter.

Added info...

Gambling can also put you at risk for health and financial problems that can hurt you and your children, friends and community. Gambling can be addictive. Talk with your health care provider or call 211 for support if you have concerns about how gambling might be affecting your life and health.

Mental health

Self-esteem

Self-esteem—feeling good about yourself and what you do—is important for parents. Part of your job as a parent is to help your children feel good about themselves. You do this with your loving care and by responding to their needs. This teaches children that they matter. It builds their self-esteem.

It's a lot easier to help your children feel good about themselves when you feel good about yourself.

Being a parent is a tough job. Parents learn as they go—and everyone makes lots of mistakes. It's easy to feel bad about everything that goes wrong. It's easy to think that everyone else is a better parent or a better person than you are.

One way to build your self-esteem is to focus on what you do right.

- **Think about the good things in your life.**

Be proud of what you do. Make your baby laugh. Give a friend a hug. Smile—at yourself, at your baby, at your partner(s), and your friends. A smile makes everyone feel better. Helping others feel good about themselves can make you feel good, too.

- **Be fair to yourself.**

Nobody does everything right, every time. When things go wrong, you might find yourself thinking, *"I'm stupid,"* or *"I'm useless."* Stop yourself right there. Instead say, *"I'm smart. I can handle this."* Build yourself up. Believe in yourself.

- **Do things for yourself.**

Make plans. Set goals. Take small steps toward reaching them. Give yourself a pat on the back for every little step that gets you closer to your goal.

Added info...

You may find it hard to respond to your child with the love and care they need. There are many reasons for this—for example, you may have had a difficult childhood yourself.

Working to understand and seeking support for your own feelings can be an important step in building a loving bond with your baby.

If you are worried about this, talk to a health care provider or Family Resource Centre. They can help you get the support you need ([contact information, page 132](#)).

Stress

New parents may feel stressed for many reasons.

- You're tired.
- You may feel overwhelmed by everything that needs to be done. For example, when the house is dirty, the laundry piles up and you can't seem to get to it.
- You have less time—for yourself, for your partner(s), your other children, your job.
- You may have concerns about money, jobs, or housing.
- You're getting advice about parenting from everyone you know. And they're all telling you something different.

These ideas have helped other parents handle the stress in their life.

- **Take care of yourself.**
Eat well and get the rest you need.
- **Slow down.**
Relax. Have a cup of tea. Take a few minutes for yourself.
- **Go for a walk.** Get some fresh air.
- **Learn to say “no.”**
Having too much to do can cause a lot of stress. Focus on doing what needs to be done. Say “no” to other things.
- **Find someone to talk to.**
This could be a friend, partner, family member, or someone you trust. Don't keep your feelings bottled up.

- **Look for help if you need it.**

There is lots of help in the community—for example you can try:

- Public Health offices
([contact information, page 141](#))
- Mental Health Services
([contact information, page 139](#))
- Family Resource Centres
([contact information, page 132](#))
- Support groups
- Income supports ([contact information, page 138](#)) and debt and budget counselling ([contact information, page 130](#))

- **Solve the problems you can.**

Concentrate on the things that are important to you. Try to let other things go.

Depression

Depression is an illness. It can happen to anyone. It doesn't mean that you're a bad parent.

Depression is like a grey cloud over your spirits. Nothing you do seems to make you feel better. You're not interested in the people or things you used to care about.

When you are depressed, you might feel:

- Helpless and hopeless
- Sad—crying a lot or feeling like you want to cry
- Exhausted—you can't seem to fall asleep and you can't seem to wake up
- Anxious

- Tense, on edge, angry
- Guilty
- Worthless, lonely, full of doubts
- Confused—can't think clearly
- Worried, panicky

Look for help if you feel like this for more than 2 weeks. You can contact:

- Your health care provider
- Local emergency room
- Local Mental Health clinic
([contact information, page 139](#)), private counsellor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker
- Reproductive Mental Health Services, IWK Health Centre—902-470-8098
- Local Public Health office
([contact information, page 141](#))

Depression can be treated. It's important for you—and your family—that you get the help you need.

CAUTION!

If you feel like you might hurt yourself or your child, or if you have scary thoughts, you need to act quickly.

- See a health care provider or go to the emergency room **right away**
- Call the mental health crisis line ([contact information, page 140](#)) or Mi'kmaq crisis line **right away** ([contact information, page 140](#)).

Perinatal/postpartum anxiety

Perinatal or postpartum anxiety is frequent intense worry or fear that can happen during pregnancy or after the birth of a baby. Perinatal anxiety can start during pregnancy or in the first year after the birth of the baby. Some parents worry more than usual that something bad will happen, or have uncontrollable thoughts about harming their baby, either accidentally or on purpose. Anxiety disorders may also make you feel physically unwell.

Signs and symptoms of anxiety include:

- feeling dizzy, sweaty, or shaky
- having gas, constipation or diarrhea
- feeling short of breath, panicky or like your heart is racing
- getting easily startled
- feeling restless or moody
- avoiding family, friends and activities
- having trouble sleeping

Any parent can have perinatal anxiety. Anxiety may cause you to check on your baby all the time or to avoid doing day-to-day things, like driving with your baby in the car. Some parents feel ashamed about being less than overjoyed about pregnancy or parenting.

If you've had anxiety or depression or gone through trauma in the past, or if there's someone in your family who has had mental health issues, you may be at greater risk for perinatal anxiety. Lack of sleep and not enough support may make your anxiety worse. If you are experiencing any of these feelings, talk with your health care provider or contact Public Health ([contact information is on page 141](#)).

Anger

All parents get angry. Anger is a normal emotion and everyone feels it. Getting angry doesn't mean that you're a bad parent. It doesn't mean that you don't love your children. It means that you're human.

What's important is learning to express your anger in ways that won't hurt your children. It is frightening for children to see a parent get angry. It can be frightening for a parent to feel that they are losing control.

You can find ways to handle your anger that won't hurt you, your children, or anyone else.

What's really making you mad?

Not enough money. Not enough time. Not enough sleep. A bad job or no job at all. Noisy neighbours. Trouble in a relationship. Fights with your own parents. Car trouble.

Everyone has things in their life that can make them frustrated and angry.

Parenting is a big part of your life, but it's not the only part. Sometimes the real cause of your anger has nothing to do with your children. What they do is just the trigger that sets off the anger you feel about other things.

It's important to understand the real source of your anger so that you won't take it out on your kids.

In order to deal with your anger, you need to know what's causing it. Sometimes this is easy to see. Sometimes it's not. You may need to talk to a counsellor who has experience in helping people deal with their anger.

Family Resource Centres ([contact information, page 132](#)), women's centres ([contact information, page 143](#)), and other community organizations may offer anger management programs or be able to help you find one. Look for the help you need. You and your children are worth it.



What to do when you feel angry

Learn to notice when you START to get angry.

Anger has stages. It builds up bit by bit. Sometimes anger builds up slowly. Sometimes you can get very angry, very fast.

It can be very helpful to notice when you're starting to get angry and do something about it before you explode.

The stages of anger are:

1. **You feel bothered by something:**
The kids are being very noisy, and you have a headache.
2. **You feel more upset:**
You ask them to quiet down and they don't.
3. **You get angry:**
You tell them to be quiet **now**. The noise gets louder.
4. **Now you're really mad:**
You start yelling. They start screaming.
5. **You're ready to explode:**
You want to hit someone or something!

Act BEFORE you get angry.

When you notice that you're getting upset or angry:

- **Stop.**
Take a deep breath.
- **Think.**
What's going on? Why are you getting angry?

- **Decide what to do.**
What do you want to happen? What do you want your child to learn? What can you do to get closer to that goal?
- **Do it.**

Take a time-out if you feel yourself losing control.

- **Leave the room.**
Be sure your baby or child is in a safe place. If your child is old enough to understand, you can say, "*I'm getting angry. I need a time-out to calm down.*" This not only spares your children seeing you explode, it also shows them what to do when *they* get angry.
- **Do whatever you need to do to calm down.**
Take deep breaths. Lie down and close your eyes. Make faces in the mirror.
- **Return to your children when you feel in control.**

CAUTION!

It is **NEVER** okay to hit or shake your baby or child.



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Added info...

If you need help finding programs and services in your area, call 211.

If you have a problem and don't know where to turn, call the provincial helpline (contact information, page 136). You can talk to a volunteer who will listen and connect you with the resources you need.

Families



Family Care



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Eating for wellness

“Wellness” means feeling good—in your body, your mind, and your emotions. It means having people around who care about you.

Eating well helps us to feel well. Food fuels our body, mind, and spirit.

When you feel well, you feel good about yourself. You have the energy you need to live your life and give your children the loving care they need.

Added info...

You'll find good advice about the foods you need to feel well and be healthy in **Canada's Food Guide**.

You'll find information from **Canada's Food Guide** in the “Resources” section in the back of this book.

How do you feel about food?

Food means different things to different people. You may have happy memories linked to food, like baking cookies with your grandparent, eating dinner with your family, or big holiday meals. There may also be some unhappy memories, like being forced to clean your plate or being punished by being sent to bed without dinner.

How you think and feel about food will affect how you feed your children and what you teach them about food and eating. You are your children's most important teacher and role model. It can be helpful to think about where your eating habits and ideas about food have come from. Then you can decide which of these you want to share with your children.

You can start by asking yourself some questions about your own childhood.

- Did your family eat meals together?
- Did you watch television while you ate?
- Did your parents encourage you to try new foods?

Added info...

Who decides what you eat?

We are surrounded with so much information about food and so many food choices that it can be hard to decide what's best for you and your family.

Advertisements for fast food, junk food, and expensive brands can make it difficult to make choices about how to spend your food budget. Even very young children are affected by these messages.

As a parent, it's important that you understand your own values around food. Be aware of the influence that marketing can have on your food choices.

For information on marketing to children, see [page 53](#).

- Did you prepare food together?
- Did you grow some of your own food in a garden?
- Did you have to eat everything on your plate?
- Did your parents encourage you to eat just until you were full, even if there was still food left on your plate?
- Did you have to finish certain foods—like vegetables, for example—before you could have dessert?
- Was food ever in short supply when you were growing up?

- Were there times when there wasn't enough food to go around?

Can you think of other ways that food affected your childhood?

Use these questions as a way to start thinking and talking about how your ideas about food were formed. Think about how you want your children to think about food and eating. Talk about these issues with everyone who lives with—or eats with—your children.

Decide what you will do to make eating well a happy part of your family's life.

Family meals are a time for sharing

Mealtime can be a time to share and to learn—to talk about the day, to catch up with one another, and to learn about the food you're eating together. Making this time together an important part of your family life can make eating well fun for everyone.

Sharing family meals doesn't just mean eating together. It can include everything involved in getting the meal on the table. Even small children can share in:

- Deciding what to eat—offer healthy options for your children to choose from. For example, an apple or a pear, peas or carrots.
- Shopping—avoid the snack aisle when shopping with children!
- Preparing or cooking the meal
- Setting the table

- Eating
- Cleaning up

Keep mealtimes calm and pleasant. This isn't the time to argue or fight. Turn off the TV and focus on one another.

Added info...

Families come in many different shapes and sizes.

When we say "family" we mean people who care about one another. They may or may not live together, but they are important in each other's lives.

Your family can be you and your baby or can include whoever you want it to.

What you can do to make eating for wellness part of your children's life

- **Be a good example.** Eat well yourself. Sit down and eat with your children.
- **Have regular meal and snack times.** You are in charge of when your child eats. Don't offer food just to keep your child happy. Don't use food as a reward or punishment.
- **Encourage children to eat, but don't force them.** Trust them to eat the amount of food they need to grow and be healthy.
- **Involve the whole family in planning and preparing meals.** Give your children happy memories of their own.
- **Offer healthy foods for snacks and at meals.** You are in charge of what you buy and what you offer your children.
- **Make mealtimes family times.** Turn off the TV and enjoy sharing a meal and spending time together. Make feeding times for babies and mealtimes for children times for learning, sharing, and love.
- **Offer new foods.** Give your children the chance to try new tastes and textures.

Steps toward eating for wellness

- **Small changes can make a big difference.**

Learning to eat for wellness takes time. You can do it slowly by making small changes in the way you eat. For example, you can try:

- Eating more fruits and vegetables
- Drinking more water every day
- Eating more whole grain breads and cereals
- Choosing snacks lower in fat and sugar

- **Look for ways to eat well for less money.**

Look around your community for lower-cost food choices. You can try farmers' markets, local trading systems, and community gardens. Foods grown close to home are fresher because they get from the field to your table faster. Supporting local markets and community gardens also helps build your community. You'll learn more about food and meet new people. And it can be a lot of fun!

Shop for basic foods from *Canada's Food Guide*. You'll save money by buying fewer pre-packaged and convenience foods.

- **Learn more about cooking.**

Cooking is a skill. Everybody learns by watching others, asking for advice, and trying. Cooking and eating simple, nourishing meals together can be fun for the whole family. It will give your children a good start toward a lifetime of healthy eating.

- Pick basic, easy recipes.
- Shop for healthy, basic ingredients.
- When your children are old enough, let them help with shopping and cooking.
- Share the food by eating together as a family.

Community kitchens and local cooking programs can help you learn how to cook for less. Look for information about these programs from Family Resource Centres, local supermarkets, and other parents. Talking with other parents and family members can be a good way to get ideas for shopping and cooking. Your local library will have many cookbooks you can borrow. You can also get good information from registered dietitians.

- **Eat well when you eat out.**

Eating out once in a while is a treat everyone enjoys. To make healthy choices when eating out:

- **Choose milk or water to drink.**
- **Choose menu items that include healthy foods.**
- **Look for choices that are lower in fat, sugar, and salt.** Look for foods that are steamed, broiled, baked, roasted, poached, or stir-fried. Ask for salad dressing, sauces, and gravy on the side.
- **Eat only as much as you need.** Some restaurants serve very large amounts of food—more than one person can eat. Don't force yourself to eat it all. Take what you can't finish home for later.

- **When you're pressed for time, plan meals in advance.**

Being a parent and raising a family takes a lot of time. When you also work outside of the home, time can be in very short supply. Planning ahead can help you make sure you—and your family—eat well.

- **When you cook, double the recipe.** Freeze half for another day.
- **Pick a day and make several meals to freeze for later.** This can be fun if you do it with a friend.

- **Plan for more than one meal at a time.** For example, make extra for supper and use the leftovers for lunch the next day.
- **Focus on healthy snacks.** When time is short, you may miss a meal once in a while. Make sure you have healthy snacks on hand so you and your children don't fill up on less healthy foods. Carry healthy foods with you when you're out. Fruit, cereal bars, and whole grain crackers are healthier choices.



Double Check

You'll find information about preparing and storing food safely in "Family Food Safety" on page 60.

Added info...

Sometimes getting enough healthy food to meet the needs of your family can be a challenge. At one time or another, this can be true for anyone. These times can be very stressful.

Check out groups in your community that can offer support with food options—for example, cooking clubs, community gardens, and other programs. Call the provincial helpline ([contact information, page 136](#)), your local Family Resource Centres, local farmers' markets, food banks, and other service agencies to learn about resources in your community.

Many groups in Nova Scotia are working on projects and ideas to improve access to local food in the community and welcome volunteers.

Being active

Fitting exercise into life with a young family can be a challenge. But believe it or not, the more active you are, the less tired you'll feel.

You need about 30 to 60 minutes of activity each day to stay healthy. You don't need to get it all at once. Ten minutes here and there of walking, climbing stairs, or active play with your child add up over the day.

- **Walk whenever you can.**

You can walk even during the winter. Start with a 10-minute walk—gradually increase the time. Walk to the store. Walk to do your errands whenever you can. Look for walking paths near your home. Take your kids with you.

- **Play with your children.**

Roll around on the floor together. Dance around the room holding your baby.

- **Look for activities or programs where you live.**

You might find exercise classes or parent and child activities. You can contact your local recreation department, community centre, or YM/YWCA ([contact information for Recreation Nova Scotia, page 141](#)).

The benefits of being active are endless—for you and your family. You'll be healthier and feel happier. And spending active time together will bring you closer to one another. Start slowly. Do more over time. You'll feel better and be an active example for your children.



Screen time

Children learn best and have the most fun playing with people and exploring their world.

There is a lot of research showing that sitting a child in front of a TV or computer screen won't help their brain develop. This is true even for shows that are made for young children. In fact, the more time a baby or young child spends watching TV or videos, or playing video games, the more likely screen time is to have a bad effect. Children who spend time with TV, videos, and video games learn fewer words and have more difficulty focusing.

Screen time—with TV, videos, and computers—can't replace your love and attention. Screen time can't replace the benefits your child gets from playing.

To help your child develop:

- **Limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV or videos, or playing with video games.**

If your child watches TV or videos, watch with them. Talk to them about what you're seeing and hearing. The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends that families limit the amount of time they spend watching TV or videos to less than 1 to 2 hours per day. Other experts suggest that no screen time at all is best for children under 2 years of age.

- **Don't keep the TV on all the time.**

It will distract your child while they're playing and learning. Even if your child doesn't seem to be paying attention to it, TV can still be distracting.

- **Encourage your child to be active.**

The more time a child spends in front of a screen, the less time they spend in active play. Children need at least 2 hours of active play every day.

Playing alone, playing with you, doing things for themselves, and being active are more important for your child's development—in mind and body—than any video, TV show, or computer game.



Marketing to children

Marketing aimed at children is everywhere. Its goal is to encourage you to buy certain products. You'll find marketing on TV, on the internet, and in movies, games, and video games. For example, you'll see the characters from children's favourite TV shows on food, clothing, sheets, towels, video games, toys, diapers, vitamins, books, and many other products. Many of the most heavily advertised products promote violence and focus on unrealistic beauty standards. They push children to grow up before they are ready.

Marketing both shapes and reflects our society. It can affect children's values and beliefs. It is very difficult to protect your child from all marketing.

What you can do is:

- Be aware of it.
- Think about how what your child hears and sees compares to the values you want to share with them.
- Limit your child's exposure to messages you don't agree with. It's up to you to decide what TV, video games, and movies your child sees. For example, turn off the television. The fewer messages your child sees, the less influence they will have. Make sure that everyone who cares for your child knows your rules about what they can watch.
- As your child gets older, talk to them about the messages they see and hear. Help them figure out what's true and what isn't.

Your child learns from your example. Follow your own values when deciding what you buy and what you allow your child to see and hear.

Added info...

Marketing is aimed at parents too. You may feel pressure to buy things for your child from the media and from other parents. Think about whether you will—or will not—let this pressure influence the choices you make.



Family safety

Infant feeding emergency preparedness

Infants and young children are especially vulnerable during emergencies. It is important to be prepared with a plan for how you will feed your infant if an emergency happens.

Emergencies can create challenges for infant feeding. For example, in an emergency such as a natural disaster or storm, you may lose access to running water for drinking or to wash your hands. You may lose power to your stove and fridge. You may need to evacuate your home, leaving most of your belongings behind.

Having a plan for how you will feed your infant is one of the first steps you can take to keep your infant healthy during an emergency. Make that plan now,

so that you are prepared. It is never too early to develop an emergency infant feeding plan.

Breastfeeding continues to be the best infant feeding option in an emergency.



Double Check

For more information on how to prepare for infant feeding in emergencies, see Nova Scotia Health's Parenting Support web page. Websites are only available when you have power, so be sure to check out this information in advance of storms so you can prepare.

Preventing falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital visits for babies and children. Babies and children can fall when they kick, wiggle, roll and push against furniture and other surfaces.

Falls are preventable. Here are some ways you can keep your baby safe:

- Supervision is the best way to prevent falls in children. Never leave your baby alone unless they are in a safe crib, cradle, bassinet or playpen.
- Place car seats, changing pads, baby chairs and bassinets on the floor rather than on a counter or table.
- Use safety straps and harnesses.

Falls can happen when your baby is climbing the stairs, on furniture or at the playground. To keep your baby safe:

- Put gates at the bottom and top of stairs.
- Put guards on windows.
- Move furniture away from windows.
- Make sure your baby's crib mattress is on the lowest level.
- Make sure balcony doors are always locked.

See the "Falls" section in **Loving Care: Birth to 6 Months**, and the "Falling" sections in **Loving Care: 6 to 12 Months** and **Loving Care: 1 to 3 Years** for more information on fall prevention related to different ages and developmental stages.

Fire safety

To prevent injuries and death from fires:

- **Keep a fire extinguisher within reach in the kitchen.**

Read the information that comes with it. Check the “best before” date often to be sure it hasn’t expired.

- **Store matches, lighters, lighter fluid, gas, and candles out of reach of children.**
- **Have smoke detectors in your home.**
 - Be sure all smoke detectors in your home have the ULC stamp of approval.
 - Read and follow every step of the manufacturer’s directions when you install your smoke detectors.
 - Install smoke detectors outside each bedroom and sleeping area and on every level of your home, including the basement.
 - Test them regularly to be sure they are still working. Check the batteries when the time changes in the Spring and Fall.

- For more information on smoke detectors contact Consumer Product Safety ([contact information, page 142](#)).

- **Have a fire escape plan.**

If a fire should ever happen, you and your family will need to get out of your home quickly. Thinking this through in advance can save your lives.

For information on fire safety, fire prevention, and escape plans, contact your local fire department.

Added info...

Emergencies like floods and hurricanes don’t happen often, but when they do, it’s good to be prepared.

You can get information about emergency planning from the Red Cross and the Department of Health and Wellness ([contact information, pages 140 and 142](#)).

You’ll find information on feeding your baby in an emergency on Nova Scotia Health’s Parenting Supports web page.

Car seats

Car seats save lives. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can lower the risk that your child will be hurt or killed in a crash by 70%. Look for a car seat that has the Transport Canada safety mark.

In Nova Scotia, it is the law that your baby must be in a car seat whenever they are in a car or truck. Protect your child by using a car seat on every ride, including when travelling with grandparents, caregivers or in taxis.

You’ll find information on how to choose and install car seats in *Keep Kids Safe: A Parent’s Guide to Car Seats*. You’ll find a copy in the “Resources” section in the back of this book.

CAUTION!

Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a few minutes.



Look for this safety mark.

Sun safety

No matter what their race or skin colour, all children need protection from the sun.

Babies' and children's skin burns easily and needs protection whenever you go outside. Babies and children can get a sunburn even on cloudy days. They can also get a burn from light reflected from sand, snow, water, or concrete.

To protect your child from the sun:

- **Keep your child in the shade.**

It's especially important to keep them out of the sun between 11 am and 4 pm when the sun is strongest.

- **Cover up.**

Physical sunblocks—like clothing and hats—are your best protection against sunburn. Keep your child covered in lightweight clothing. Protect their eyes with sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays.

Be sure your child wears a hat that:

- Shades the face, back of the neck, and ears
- Is easy to keep on
- Is made from tightly woven fabric. This allows less UV radiation to pass through.

Your child also needs to be protected from the sun while in a stroller or baby carrier.

- **Use sunscreen.**

Read sunscreen packages carefully. Look for a sunscreen that:

- Is SPF 15 or higher
- Protects against both UVA and UVB rays—this is sometimes called “broad spectrum sunscreen”
- Is waterproof
- Is non-irritating and hypoallergenic

Sunscreen has an expiry date. Check to be sure it's still good before you use it.

Put sunscreen on 20 minutes before you go out. Sunscreen that contains zinc oxide or titanium oxide will protect your child right away. It doesn't need to be applied 20 minutes before you go out.

When you apply sunscreen be sure to cover any skin that's showing. This includes face, ears, nose, back of the neck, and the tops of the feet. Kids are squirmy! It's easy to miss a spot.

Don't put sunscreen around children's eyes—it can sting.

Reapply sunscreen often when you're outdoors—at least every two hours.



Added info...

Days at the beach and special events like Canada Day picnics can be fun for the whole family. But if you're not careful, a long day outdoors can lead to sunburn.

Remember: Keep your child covered, take breaks from the sun, reapply sunscreen often, and carry water with you.

CAUTION!

Sunscreen is not recommended for infants under 6 months old, because they can rub it in their eyes and mouth. No sunscreen is safe at this age.

CAUTION!

Some sunscreens contain insect repellent. If you are using this kind of sunscreen, treat it like an insect repellent, not a sunscreen. Follow the directions on **page 58**. If you want to use a separate sunscreen and repellent at the same time, apply the sunscreen first. Wait 20 minutes. Then apply the insect repellent. Follow the directions on **page 58**.

CAUTION!

Babies under 1 year should not be in direct sunlight outdoors.

Protect them in a covered stroller, under an umbrella, or in the shade. Be sure that they wear a hat, sunglasses and clothes that cover their arms and legs. Use sunscreen to protect them from reflected sunlight.

Overheating

Infants and small children overheat easily in hot, humid weather. Overheating can cause serious health problems.

Nova Scotia Health and Wellness issues Humidex and Health Advisories when the weather is hot enough to cause concern. Listen for these on local radio and TV stations on very hot days.

During hot weather, feed your baby more often to keep them hydrated. You can offer water to babies older than six months and to children. During hot weather, be sure your toddler takes a break and has a drink of water often.

Insect bites

Mosquitos

Mosquito bites are not only itchy and unpleasant, they can also carry serious illnesses.

The best way to prevent bites is to keep mosquitos away from your child.

- Avoid places where there are likely to be lots of mosquitos.
- Stay inside at dawn, dusk, and early evening. This is when mosquitos are most active.
- In places where there are likely to be mosquitos, dress in long-sleeved, light-coloured clothes made from tightly woven fabric.

- Use mosquito netting around strollers.



Using insect repellent

- **Birth to 6 months:**
 - Do not use insect repellent on babies under 6 months.

- **6 months to 2 years:**
 - Use insect repellent only when there is a good chance that your child could be bitten.
 - Use products labelled 10% DEET or less.
 - Apply insect repellent only once a day. It will protect for about 3 hours.
- **2 to 12 years:**
 - Use products labelled 10% DEET or less.
 - Apply insect repellent no more than 3 times a day. Each application will protect for about 3 hours.

Ticks



Photo enlarged
 Top row: nymph, male and female Blacklegged ticks.
 Bottom row: male and female dog ticks

The ticks that cause Lyme disease have been found in Nova Scotia. Only Blacklegged ticks may carry the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease.

If you are concerned about ticks, be sure the insect repellent you use for yourself and your child says on the label that it is effective against ticks.

To protect against ticks:

- **Cover as much skin as possible** when walking, working, or playing in places where ticks are found. Be sure you and your child wear enclosed shoes. Tuck shirts into pants. Tuck pant legs into socks. Dress in light-coloured clothes. This will make it easier to see ticks.
- **Check yourself, your child, and pets after being outdoors in grassy or wooded areas.**
 Check clothes. Check all parts of the skin—including armpits, groin, and scalp.

If you find a tick, remove it right away.

- Grasp the tick with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible.
- Gently and slowly pull the tick straight out. Don't jerk, twist, or squeeze it.
- To avoid infections, clean the skin where the tick was attached with soap and water, rubbing alcohol, or hydrogen peroxide. Contact your health care provider if a rash or flu-like symptoms develop after a tick bite.

If you find a tick or would like more information about ticks, contact your local Public Health office ([contact information, page 141](#)) or check the Nova Scotia Health website on [page 140](#) for a link to the pamphlet, *Lyme Disease: Protect yourself from tick bites*.

Added info...

When you use insect repellent:

- **Read the label carefully.** Follow the directions exactly.
- **Do not put repellent on a child's face and hands.** This makes it less likely that they will get it in their eyes or mouth. If your child does get insect repellent in their eyes, rinse with water.
- **Do not put repellent on sunburns, open wounds or scraped or scratched skin.**
- **Apply as little repellent as possible.**
- **Apply the repellent on bare skin or on top of clothing.** Never use it under clothing.
- **Apply insect repellent only where there is lots of fresh air—not in a closed space.** Never use it near food.
- **Wash away the insect repellent with soap and water** when your child no longer needs to be protected.

Safety around animals

Pets

Never leave a baby or small child alone with a pet in your home or in anyone else's home. If you visit a home where there are pets, check with the pet owner to be sure the home is safe for children and the pet is comfortable around them. Talk to your vet about the best way to keep babies and small children safe around pets.

Your child is much more likely to get salmonella if there are reptiles in your home. It's safest to remove all pet reptiles—like turtles, lizards, and snakes—from your home.

Wash your hands after handling pets, reptiles, animal waste, or fish food.

Wash your child's hands after they play with animals. Keep cat litter boxes out of reach.

Wild animals

Wild animals are best enjoyed at a distance. Keep your child away from them—even those that seem tame. Don't encourage your child to feed wild or stray animals.

Rabies

Rabies is a rare, but very serious, disease that can be passed to humans—usually through the bite of an infected animal. If rabies isn't treated, it is almost always fatal in both animals and humans.

To protect your family from rabies:

- Get your pets vaccinated. Don't let pets roam freely where there are wild animals.
- Feed your pet inside. If you feed them outside, remove uneaten food as soon as your pet has finished eating.

- Close garbage can lids tightly. Easy-to-open cans attract wild animals.
- Teach your child to never touch or pet wild animals or animals they don't know—even if the animal seems tame or friendly.
- Keep wild or stray animals out of your home or cottage.
- Never feed wild animals.
- Never try to nurse a wild or stray animal. A sick animal could have rabies.

Bats can carry rabies. See a health care provider if you or your child have been bitten by a bat or were in direct contact with a bat's saliva or brain tissue.

If you would like more information about rabies, contact your local Public Health office ([contact information, page 141](#)).

CAUTION!

See your health care provider if your child gets any kind of injury from an animal.

Family food safety

Food safety is important. Food poisoning can make anyone sick. It can make babies and small children **very** sick. You can prevent food poisoning by being clean and careful when you handle, prepare, and store food.

Keep things clean.

Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water:

- Before and after you handle food
- Before you feed your baby or child
- Before you eat

Keep your kitchen and everything you use to prepare food clean.

- Wash your kitchen counters with hot water and detergent before and after preparing food. Use paper towels or a clean dishcloth. Change the dishcloth every day.
- Wash everything you use to prepare food with detergent and hot water. Rinse them with hot water and let them air dry. Or you can wash them in the dishwasher. This includes cutting boards, bowls, pots and pans, utensils, can openers, and blenders.

Added info...

For extra protection, you can sanitize your counters, cutting boards, and utensils with a mixture of 5 mL (1 teaspoon) of bleach in 750 mL (3 cups) of water.

This is very important after preparing raw meat or poultry.

Handle food carefully.

Thaw food in the refrigerator, not on the counter. You can also thaw food in the microwave if you will be cooking it right away.

Wash all fresh vegetables and fruits under running water.

Wash fruit by rubbing it with your hands. Use a brush to scrub firm vegetables and fruits—like potatoes, carrots, and melons.

Keep raw eggs, meat, fish, and poultry away from other foods.

Keep them separate in your shopping cart, in your refrigerator, and while preparing food.

- Wash your hands, knife, and cutting board in hot water and detergent after you cut up raw meat, fish, or poultry. Do this **BEFORE** you touch other foods or use these utensils with other foods.
- If you can, use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and fish, and a different cutting board for foods like fruits, vegetables, and bread.
- Wash plates and bowls that have held raw meat, poultry, fish, or eggs before putting any other food in them.

Added info...

You can't see, smell, or taste the bacteria that cause food poisoning.

Cook food carefully.

- **Cook meat and poultry using a meat thermometer.**

Safe temperatures are:

- Pork, Veal, Lamb: 71°C (160°F)
- Ground Meat: 71°C (160°F)
- Whole Chicken/Turkey: 82°C (180°F)
(Check the temperature in the thickest part of the thigh without touching a bone.)
- Chicken/Turkey with stuffing: 74°C (165°F) (Check the temperature in the centre of the stuffing.)
- Chicken/Turkey pieces: 77°C (170°F)
- Ground Poultry: 74°C (165°F)
- Beef Steaks/Roasts:
 - 63°C (145°F) medium rare
 - 71°C (160°F) medium
 - 77°C (170°F) well done

- **Cook eggs and fish all the way through.**
- **Cook sprouts thoroughly.**

It's not safe to eat raw sprouts because they can't be washed well enough to remove all the germs.

Added info...

Fruit juice, cider, milk, and milk products should be pasteurized.



Double Check

To find out more about food safety, check the references listed on [page 136](#).

Store food carefully.

- **Store food that can spoil in the refrigerator.**

This includes: fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, and dairy foods—like milk and cheese. Put all raw meats on the lowest shelf of the fridge. Put ready-to-eat foods on the shelves above.

- **Store food in unopened cans and jars in a cool, dry place.**

Don't use food from cans that are dented, leaking, or bulging. Don't use food from jars with loose or bulging lids. If you buy a lot of canned foods at once, write the date on the can. Use them within 2 years or before their "best before" date. Once you've opened the can or jar, store the food in the refrigerator.

- **Serve food as soon as it's cooked.**

Don't let leftovers or any kind of prepared food sit around at room temperature for longer than 2 hours. Refrigerate or freeze them right away.

- **Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.**

This is especially important when traveling, or at picnics, buffets, and barbecues. Use a freezer bag to keep food cold away from home. If you have any doubt about whether a food is safe, don't eat it.

Safe drinking water

Water is the best drink for your child between meals and snacks. Make sure your water is safe for your child and family to drink.

Well water

If you get your water from a well be sure to have it tested before your child drinks it.

If you are not sure that your water is safe, give your child bottled water.

Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change recommends that your well water be tested every 6 months for bacteria and every 2 years for chemical content. A good time to test your well water is after snowmelt in the spring. You may also need to test your well water after a flood.

For more information about safe drinking water and to find out what tests you need, how to do them, and what the results mean contact Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change ([contact information, page 140](#)). For information on what to do if your well is flooded, see the natural disasters and severe weather information on

the Department of Health and Wellness website ([contact information, page 140](#)). Do not use water from roadside or natural springs. This water is not tested. It is not a safe water supply.

Lead in water

Whether you get your water from a well or a municipal water supply, if there is lead in your pipes, pumps, or plumbing, Health Canada recommends that you let your cold water tap run for about 5 minutes every morning—or just flush your toilet. This will flush out lead and copper that could build up in the water overnight.

Hot water will draw out more lead and other minerals that may be in your plumbing. Always use cold tap water for drinking, cooking, filling your kettle, and mixing formula.

Some municipalities in Nova Scotia keep track of which houses get their water through lead pipes. You can call your municipal water supply to see if they know whether your pipes contain lead.

Lead poisoning

Lead-based paint

Lead-based paint is a serious health hazard. Lead poisoning can cause anemia. It can also damage the brain and nervous system, resulting in learning disabilities.

Lead-based paint is especially dangerous:

- When it is chipping or flaking
- When it is in a place that a baby can reach or chew on

If your home was built before 1960 it is likely that it has lead-based paint.

If your home was built after 1980, paints used indoors would be lead-free, but there may be lead in the paint used on the outside.

If your home was built after 1992, both indoor and outdoor paints will be lead-free.

If you think there is lead-based paint in your home, contact the Atlantic Canada Poison Centre for advice on what to do ([contact information, page 142](#)).

For more information on lead-based paints, contact Health Canada ([contact information, page 142](#)).

Lead in toys

Canada has laws that regulate the amount of lead in children's toys. You can check with

Consumer Product Safety to find out about any toys that have been recalled because of high levels of lead ([contact information, page 142](#)). Family Resource Centres also often have information about product recalls ([contact information, page 132](#)).

Life changes—loss and grief

Grief is what you feel when you lose something you value. Grief is a normal and natural response to loss.

The birth of a baby and the early days and weeks of parenting can be times of great stress and intense feelings. You can feel loss, as well as gain, as you become a parent. There are many new feelings to deal with. It's also a time when old feelings of grief and loss are often stirred up.

Everyone faces loss at some time in their life. Most of us understand and expect grief when someone dies. We grieve the death of a loved one or the loss of a baby through miscarriage, stillbirth, or SIDS. There is grief at the loss you feel after an abortion.

There are lost hopes and dreams when a relationship breaks down or a family breaks up.

There is a feeling of loss when you find things don't work out the way you planned or hoped—for example, when a baby is born prematurely or has medical problems or disabilities.

When you lose a job, when a pet dies, or when you move away from friends, or friends move away from you, you suffer a loss.

Everyone feels grief when they lose something they value. All losses need to be grieved.

It doesn't help to hide feelings of grief. It doesn't help to ignore them and hope they go away. Grief is a kind of pain that will pop up later if you try to ignore it. You need to work through your grief in order to get on with your life.

It's important to find healthy ways to express the grief you feel when you lose someone or something that's important to you. Otherwise, you may take your feelings out on yourself or others. When people can't express the grief they feel, they can become angry or abusive, use alcohol or drugs, or develop illnesses.

Talking with friends, family, Elders, or community or spiritual leaders can help. You can call the provincial helpline for information about resources in your community. Talk with a health care provider if you think you need professional help to deal with grief.

Helping small children handle grief

Babies and small children feel loss and grief too. They feel grief when they lose or are separated from someone they are attached to—like a parent, grandparent, sibling, or caregiver.

Babies and small children don't understand why people they are attached to are no longer a part of their life. They don't understand about death or separation. They don't understand why a parent isn't around anymore. They don't understand why you have moved away from their grandparents. They don't understand why the caregiver they like is no longer at daycare. But they feel grief at the loss.

Change is difficult for small children and they feel the loss that change can bring as grief.

Babies and small children can't tell you how they feel. They show grief by:

- Having problems eating or sleeping
- Acting younger than their age—for example, toddlers who have been toilet trained may start wetting their pants again
- Being fussy or very quiet
- Throwing tantrums
- Being very clingy, fearful, or insecure
- Being very difficult to soothe

Double Check

For information on helping your child deal with separation or divorce, see *"When parents don't live together,"* page 22.

You can help your baby or small child through grief by being there. Spend extra time with your child. Offer lots of loving care—rocking, hugging, cuddling. Be patient. Talk with them about what is happening.

It also helps to stick to your child's routines for eating, sleeping, and playing so that the rest of their life is as normal as possible.

Talk with a health care provider if you are concerned about how your child is dealing with grief.



Sharing your values and traditions with your children

Values

Our values are beliefs that we learn as children. Values can change as we grow and develop. They guide us in the choices we make and how we live our life.

Our values are shaped by our family, our culture, our religion, our spiritual beliefs, our community, and our experiences.

You can have values about many things:

- How you treat other people
- How you think children should be raised
- How important material things are to you
- The importance of family
- Relationships between partners

Sharing your values with your children is part of being a parent.

The first step in sharing your values with your children is to have a strong and loving bond with them. Children learn the most from the people they care most about and are most strongly attached to. Building this bond of love and attachment starts at birth.

As a parent, you have the closest bond with your children. You are their most important teacher.

You share your values with your children by living those values every day. Children follow your example—they are more likely to copy what you do than to copy what you say. If you respect others, your children will learn from your example to treat others this way.

Parents are teaching their children values all the time—whether they know it or not. If you are

parenting with a partner, sharing parenting, or living with other adults, it's important that you talk together about your values and work out what you want to share with your children. Ask yourself:

- What are the values you learned from your family when you were growing up? Which of these are still important to you? Are there any you'd like to change?
- What are the values you'd like your children to have?
- What can you do to encourage these values?

Once you've worked out your values—either on your own or with others—be confident that you have the ability to share them with your children.

It's also a good idea to talk about values with everyone who takes care of your child. It's important that they all know the values you would like to see in your child's daily life.

Added info...

In a multi-racial and multi-cultural society, it's important that children know about, and feel good about, all parts of their heritage.

If you have adopted a child from another race or culture, it is important that you help them learn about and be proud of both your values and traditions and the traditions of their own race or culture.

If your child is biracial, it's important that they feel connected to and proud of both parts of their identity.

Traditions

Traditions are customs or practices that are passed down in families. Story time and bedtime routines, holidays and celebrations, and songs and games are a few of the kinds of traditions that are passed along in families.

Every culture and religion has beliefs and stories that can be scary for children. Be thoughtful about how you introduce these ideas, stories, and traditions to your child.

Families have different traditions. If you are parenting with a partner or partners or sharing parenting, it's important for you to talk about and decide on the traditions and practices that will be good for your baby and family. You may want to start some traditions of your own!

Added info...

Positive values—like honesty, kindness, and helpfulness—can make a family strong and help children grow and learn.

But unhealthy values—like a belief that hitting a child or another family member is okay—can hurt the entire family.

There are community resources available to help families understand and develop healthy values. Contact a Family Resource Centre ([contact information, page 132](#)), Public Health office ([contact information, page 141](#)), or health care provider if you have concerns about the values your children are learning.

Family violence

Family violence is abuse that happens in a family or other close relationship. It can happen to anyone and in any kind of family. Women, trans and nonbinary people, Indigenous women, women living in northern rural and remote communities, women with disabilities and people who are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community are most at risk of experiencing this kind of abuse.

Abuse can happen at any time, but it often starts—or gets worse—during and soon after pregnancy.

If you are being abused, you may feel afraid. You may feel helpless and worthless. You may feel like a failure. You may think that it's all your fault. These feelings can make it hard to look for help.

If you are being abused, you should know that:

- The abuse is **NEVER** your fault. You do **NOT** deserve it.
- **NO ONE** has the right to abuse you.
- Children are hurt by seeing or hearing abuse in their family. This is true even if they are not physically abused themselves.
- Physical and sexual assault are crimes. It's also a crime to **threaten** physical or sexual abuse.
- **You are not alone.** There are people who can help you.

If you are being abused, you will need help and support to work out what you want to do. Talking to someone you trust is a good first step. When you look for support, you are entitled to service that doesn't judge you and that respects your needs.

You can also look for help and support in your community. Try:

- Shelters and housing services ([contact information, page 130](#)), women's centres ([contact information, page 143](#))
- 811 or the provincial helpline ([contact information, page 136](#))
- Police
- Support groups
- Domestic abuse intervention programs

Added info...

Child abuse is a crime.

It is child abuse:

- **When someone hurts a child.** Child abuse can be physical—hitting, shaking, or other injuries. Abuse can be sexual, verbal, or emotional. Neglect—*not taking care of a child*—can be abuse. It is abuse if a child sees or hears others being abused.
- **When a parent doesn't protect their child** from another person's abuse.

The law says that if you know or think that a child is being abused, you must report it to the police or to Child Protection Services ([contact information, page 128](#)).

If you have a good reason for thinking a child is being abused, but it turns out you're wrong, you won't get into trouble for reporting abuse.

- Legal aid
- Counselling services
- Clergy
- Medical services

Whatever you decide to do, your safety and your children's safety are what matter most.

You'll find more information about what to do if you are being abused in *Making Changes*, a booklet from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women ([contact information, page 130](#)). You can get a copy from your local Family Resource Centre or Public Health office ([contact information, page 141](#)).

Added info...

Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, or financial.

It is abuse if anyone:

- Scares or threatens you
- Yells at you
- Calls you names
- Hits or hurts you physically
- Throws or breaks things
- Stops you from seeing your family or friends
- Demands sex
- Questions everything you do
- Tries to control everything you do
- Controls all the money and family finances
- Tells you the abuse is your fault
- Threatens to hurt or kill people or pets you care about

Siblings



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A little baby makes big changes

No matter what the age of your other child—or children—a new baby makes big changes in their life. It can take time for a sibling to get used to it all.

Children can think, “Everyone is always too busy to play. My parents are always tired. Everyone makes a fuss over the baby. The baby gets presents and I don’t. Someone is always telling me to be quiet or I’ll wake the baby. It’s no fun at all!”

Bonding with a new baby takes time for siblings, just as it can take time for parents. Children who feel loved themselves will find it much easier to love their new baby.

To make it easier for other children:

- **Before the arrival of their new sibling, talk to your child about babies.**

Tell them how little and helpless babies are. Tell them about all the things they can do because they’re big now. Look in libraries ([contact information, page 138](#)) for children’s books about new babies.

- **Bring them something when you bring the baby home.**

This could be a small gift or a book from the library. Young children may like their own baby doll to bathe, dress, and take care of.

- **Be patient.**

Small children may begin to act like a baby again. This is normal and will pass. Keep your children’s routine as normal as possible. Give them time to get used to the changes a new baby brings. Show them that you love them just the way they are.

CAUTION!

Never leave a small child alone with a baby. Children don’t know how easily a baby can be hurt.

Teach your children some rules for baby safety:

- Always be very gentle.
- Only grown-ups can pick the baby up.
- Never put anything in the baby’s nose, eyes, mouth, or ears.
- Don’t give the baby any toys without checking with a grown-up.



Helping children get along together

Your toddler may be learning to get along with a new baby. Your older children may be learning to get along with your toddler.

Getting used to a crawling baby

Older children are often fine with a new baby until the baby starts to crawl or move around on their own. Suddenly, little hands are grabbing toys, knocking over blocks, and ruining games.

A baby's new ability to move around may upset an older child, but it can also be a risk for the baby. Toys that are safe for an older child may be dangerous for a younger one—especially if the baby is at the age where everything goes into their mouth.

This is a difficult time for a toddler. To help make it easier:

- **Respect your toddler's feelings.**

Listen when they tell you how upset they are. Let them know that you understand. Let them know that it's okay to be angry and to say so. But it's not okay to hit or hurt when you're angry.

- **Don't expect a toddler to share.**

Toddlers are just beginning to understand things like playing nicely together and cooperation. They don't really understand sharing until they are about 4 or 5. Even then, it's hard to do. Learning to share can take a long time.

- **Look for ways to use play space fairly.**

Toddlers have a right to toys of their own and babies need to be safe from toys that could hurt. Toddlers also need some time to play without being bothered. When children share a play space, this can call for some planning. You can:

- Have toddlers do things like puzzles, colouring, and playing with small toys on the kitchen table or some other place where a baby can't reach.
- Give toddlers a special shelf or cupboard where they can keep toys that the baby shouldn't touch. Help toddlers learn to put their toys away when they're not playing with them.
- Play with the baby while toddlers are playing to give them some peace.

- **Help toddlers learn ways to get along with a baby.**

Show toddlers how to "trade" toys with a baby. When the baby grabs a toy, show them that offering another toy works better than just grabbing it back. Another approach is to help toddlers to wait a few minutes and watch what the baby does. Most of the time, the baby will lose interest in the toy very quickly and the toddler can get it back without fuss. Toddlers are just beginning to learn patience and cooperation, so you may have to show your toddler these things many times.

- **Find things children can do together.**

For example, you can help them make music together. The baby can shake a rattle while toddlers play a drum or ring a bell. Or you can all build towers for the baby to knock down.

- **Never expect a toddler to look after another child.**

A crawling baby needs an adult watching at all times. Toddlers shouldn't be playing alone where you can't keep an eye on them, either. Leaving them alone together isn't safe.

Added info...

What you say and do is important because it has a big impact on how your children feel about themselves and each other.

Remember: Your children may not remember what you say. They may not remember what you do. But they'll never forget how you make them feel.

Sibling rivalry

Living with siblings isn't always easy. But children learn a lot from one another. They learn to share, to get along, and to solve problems.

These lessons take time. When your children are small, it's up to you to help them learn to live together. Your children will be siblings for the rest of their lives. Help them get off to a good start.

- **Include your children in helping to care for a baby.**

If your children want to help you with the baby, let them. Talk about what a baby needs and how they can help. Even young toddlers can help by bringing you a diaper when you change the baby. An older child can talk to the baby while you're changing a diaper. Or tell a story while the baby is breastfeeding. Praise your children when they're being helpful.

Giving older children these kinds of little jobs around the home can help them feel important in the family. Make sure there is

no chance that a sibling could hurt the baby, even by mistake.

Helping older toddlers to understand what the baby needs can help them be patient. For example, *"The baby will need a nap this afternoon, but we can go to the park when they wake up."*

- **Spend some special time every day with each of your children.**

Talk to them. Listen to them. Play with them. Do something they enjoy—play a game, go for a walk, read a book. Even if it's only a few minutes, it can make a big difference to your child. This isn't always easy to do, but it's very important that each child knows that you love them.

When there's a new baby in the family, your older children need to know that you still love them and that they're still special to

you. Help them feel good about themselves. This is especially important for an older child who is missing all the time you had together before the new baby came along.

- **Give each child lots of love and affection.**

Make sure that each child gets lots of hugs, kisses, cuddles, and snuggles. All siblings have times when they don't get along. But they'll be more likely to get along at least some of the time if they are sure that you love them all equally.

- **Show your children how to get along together.**

Children learn by watching what you do. When you play with your children, say "Please" and "Thank you." Show them how

to cooperate and take turns. They may be too young to actually do any of this yet, but as they get older, they will remember these lessons. It's also important that your children see you and your partner, or other adults, solving their problems and arguments in ways that are polite and respectful. If your own disagreements involve yelling or door slamming, your children will behave the same way.

- **Don't compare children.**

Find things to admire and praise in each of your children—how polite they are, how well they draw, how fast they run. But avoid saying things like, "Why can't you be quiet like Sam?"





Grandparents



Grandparents are learning too 75

Grandparents are learning too

If this is your first baby, your parents will be learning to be grandparents while you're learning to be a parent.

You have to work out what kind of parent you'll be. They have to work out what kind of grandparents they'll be.

Some grandparents want to spend lots of time with their grandchildren. Others don't. Some want to babysit. Others don't. Some are full of advice about how you should parent. Others are happy to let you learn on your own.

If you get along well with your parents, this can be a happy time.

If you and your parents have different ideas about raising children, it can be very stressful.

Our understanding about what's healthy and safe for children has changed a lot since your parents were raising you. Many of the things you do as a parent will be different from what they did. Talk to your parents to help them understand what you are doing and why. Share your values about parenting with them.

Be polite, but be clear. You are the parent. It's up to you to decide how to care for your baby.

Added info...

Be sure that your parents know not to smoke around your children, either at home or in the car.



CAUTION!

Children should never travel in any car, truck, or van unless they are in a car seat. This includes grandparents' cars. Be sure that grandparents have the right car seat for your child's age and size and that it is properly installed in the car. You'll find more information on how to choose and install car seats in ***Keep Kids Safe: A Parent's Guide to Car Seats***. You'll find a copy in the "Resources" section in the back of this book.

Leaving your child with other caregivers. 78
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Added info...

If you need help finding programs and services in your area, call 211.

If you have a problem and don't know where to turn, call the provincial helpline ([contact information, page 136](#)). You can talk to a volunteer who will listen and connect you with the resources you need.

Other Caregivers



Leaving your child with other caregivers

Whether or not you plan to return to work or school while your children are still small, sooner or later you'll need to leave your baby or toddler with another caregiver. Every parent needs a break once in a while!

Starting sometime around age 6 months, most babies and toddlers begin to understand how important you are to them. They don't want to let you out of their sight. This can make it very difficult for both of you when you have to leave your child with a babysitter or other caregiver.

Long before you have to leave them, help your child get used to the idea that they can trust others to care for them and that they can trust you to return.

- **Help them get used to other adults.**

Try to bring lots of other people into your child's life—friends, relatives, neighbours—so that they start to feel comfortable with different people.

- **Help them learn that you always come back.**

Some babies and toddlers need to see or touch you to feel safe. Try playing peek-a-boo or hiding games to help your child understand that when they can't see you, you are still there and will always come back. For example, hide behind a sofa or door for a few seconds and say, "Where am I?" several times. Then pop out and say, "Here I am!" Over time, increase the length of time you hide to a minute or so. You can also let your child be the one who hides.

- **Help your child feel secure.**

Spend time with them. Give them lots of love and attention. Let them know that they're important to you. Help them learn to do things for themselves. Praise them when they do well. The more secure your child feels, the easier it will be for them to let you go for a little while.

When you leave your child with another caregiver:

- **Let your child spend some time with the caregiver before you leave.**

It may be worthwhile to hire the sitter to spend an hour or two with your child while you're there too. This will give them time to get to know one another. It will also give you a chance to show the sitter around your home. They will need to know things like where your child sleeps, where food and clothing are kept, where the exits are, and how to lock the doors. It will also give you a chance to see how the caregiver reacts to your child.

- **Stay calm and relaxed.**

If you show that you are upset and worried about leaving, your child will feel it and become more upset.

- **Don't sneak out.**

Tell your child when you're leaving. Give them a hug and kiss. Tell them you love them and that you'll be back soon. Let them wave good-bye—even if they're crying. Smile and wave back.

- **Expect tears.**

Your child would rather you didn't leave. They'll show it by clinging and crying. Be patient. Stay calm.

- **Leave a list for the caregiver.** They will need to know things like:

- Where you'll be and how to reach you
- Who to call in an emergency
- Bedtimes and bedtime rituals
- Favourite toys and games
- What and how to feed your child
- How to calm your child if they cry
- Information about any allergies or medical conditions



Added info...

Finding a babysitter to care for your children occasionally

Finding someone you trust to care for your children while you go out isn't always easy.

- Ask friends, family and neighbours for suggestions.
- Check with local junior and senior high schools. Teachers and guidance counsellors may know students who want to baby sit.
- Check with local youth groups or church groups.

Ask the sitter for the names of other families they have worked for. Call and ask if they are happy with the sitter.

In some communities, teens can take babysitting classes from community agencies. You may feel more comfortable leaving your child with someone who's had this training.

Going back to work or school

If a parent has decided to return to work or school, they may feel conflicting emotions as the time to return approaches. For example, you may need to return to work because you need the income, but find the thought of leaving your baby every day hard to bear. Or you might be happy to be going back to school or work, but may wonder if this will affect your baby's development.

Whether you stay at home or return to work or school is a decision you have to make for yourself. What you do will be based on what you and your family need.

Research shows that children can do well both in families where a parent stays home with them and in families where others care for them while their parent—or parents—work outside the home. What matters is that children have consistent, good quality childcare, as well as time and love from their parents.

Planning a return to work or school

Returning to work or school is a big change for you and for your child. Planning ahead can help make the change easier for everyone.

Before you return to work or school

- **If you have freezer space, make double or triple size batches when you cook.** Freeze the extras for busy days.
- **Start your child in childcare a week or two before you return to work or school.**

This will give your child a chance to get used to childcare. You may find that it helps to stay with them for the first day. Then leave them

there for longer each day. Many programs have a routine to gradually introduce children to their centre.

Your child may cry when you leave. This is normal. In fact, you may find that they cry more each day for the first week or so. Some children don't start to cry until the second or third week. Your child cries because they start to understand that you're going to leave them. Be patient and consistent. Your child will slowly settle into the new routine.

Starting childcare early will also give you a chance to work out morning routines and figure out how much time you'll need to get everyone ready each day.

On work or school days

- **Do as much as you can the night before or before your child gets up in the morning.**

For example, pick out clothes for you and your child. Get breakfast ready. Pack lunches, diaper bags, or whatever you need to take to work or school.

- **Leave lots of time to get ready in the morning.**

Small children can take quite a while to get up and get dressed, especially when they want to do everything for themselves. The more you try to rush them, the slower they get. Set the alarm early enough to allow plenty of time so no one starts the day feeling rushed or stressed.

- **Develop a morning routine.**

Children find routines very reassuring. Getting up, getting washed and dressed, and eating breakfast in the same way every day lets your child know what to expect. Try not to make TV part of your morning routine. For more information, see “Screen time,” page 52.

- **Pick up your child on time.**

Your child should be able to depend on you. However, life happens. If you’re going to be late, make sure you contact the childcare staff or your caregiver.

- **Develop an evening routine.**

Many parents find that coming home from work can also be very stressful—you’re tired, your child is tired, chores are waiting, laundry needs to be done, dinner needs to be cooked. It can be helpful to have some routines for this time of day, too. For

example, you could set aside a little time to spend with your child. Do something you both like—cuddle up with a book, walk around the block, have a warm bath. Whatever helps calm everyone down.

If your child is hungry, give them a healthy snack while you get dinner. Spending this time with your child will make it easier for them to cooperate while you get dinner.

Added info...

You’ll find information about continuing to breastfeed while working or going to school in **Breastfeeding Basics**. You can get a copy from your local Public Health office (contact information, page 141).

Finding quality childcare

Look for childcare early!

If you are thinking about childcare for your new baby or for your older children, start looking long before you think you’ll need it.

In Nova Scotia, childcare can be regulated or unregulated.

Regulated childcare

Regulated childcare can be offered in licensed childcare centres or in approved family day care homes.

Regulated childcare centres and family day care homes must offer children a program that is right for their age and that will support their growth and development.

They must have clear policies for parents that outline things such as:

- The fees they charge parents
- How they handle dropping off and picking up children
- Their approach to child development and care

They must follow rules about:

- The number of children they care for
- The number of adults caring for the children
- Staff training
- The kinds of food they feed the children
- Programs they offer
- General health and safety practices

There are a limited number of regulated childcare spaces—especially for infants—and they fill up fast. You'll need time to find out what's available where you live.

Added info...

Parents may be able to get government subsidies to help them pay for regulated childcare services.

Contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ([contact information, page 140](#)) to find out if you are eligible for the childcare subsidy program.

Licensed childcare centres

There are about 400 licensed childcare centres in Nova Scotia. Most of these accept children 18 months or older. A few offer care to infants.

In Nova Scotia all childcare centres are regulated and must be licensed. To get a licence, they must meet the requirements of the *Day Care Act* and Regulations.

The Department of Community Services inspects all licensed childcare centres every year. The most recent inspection report should be posted on the parent bulletin board in the centre. You can also find this information on the Community Services website under the Child Care Directory ([contact information, page 127](#)).

Added info...

All licensed childcare centres and approved family day care homes must display a sticker at the main entrance. The sticker shows parents that the service provided is regulated.



Double Check

You'll find contact information for a list of licensed childcare centres and family home day care agencies on [page 127](#).

If you have concerns or complaints about licensed childcare, call Childcare Licensing Services ([contact information, page 127](#)).

Approved family day care homes

In Nova Scotia, the Department of Community Services licenses agencies to approve care providers who offer childcare in their homes.

To be approved, a family day care home must meet the requirements of the *Day Care Act* and Regulations.

Family Home Day Care Agencies are inspected once a year by Community Services. Each Agency regularly inspects the day care homes it approves. The most recent inspection report should be posted in the day care home.

Unregulated childcare

Unregulated childcare is another option. When children under age 5 are present, a person may legally provide care in the home for up to 6 children. This number includes the caregiver's own children and does not increase if more than one caregiver is present. If you are concerned about the number of children in the home, contact Childcare Licensing Services ([contact information, page 127](#)).

Unregulated childcare is often offered by a relative, friend, or neighbour. An unregulated caregiver may have training in early childhood education, but this is not required.

Some unregulated caregivers have policies for parents to follow and offer good programs for the children. However, they are not required to do this.

Added info...

Contact Family Resource Centres ([contact information, page 132](#)) or Community Services ([contact information, page 128](#)) for information on quality childcare in your area in French or English.

You'll find more information about finding and choosing quality childcare on the Department of Community Services website ([contact information, page 127](#)), or from a Family Resource Centre ([contact information, page 132](#)), or a licensed childcare centre.

Added info...

Most children cry a bit when they start childcare. It's their way of protesting this change in their life. This is normal and usually passes quickly.

However, some kinds of behaviour may be cause for concern. Talk with the caregiver if your child:

- Seems consistently unhappy
- Continues to cry every morning
- Begins to behave in ways that are different from usual

If you're not happy with your caregiver's response:

- Spend some time at the childcare home or centre. Watch what goes on. Drop in for lunch. Drop in at different times during the day.
- Talk with other parents to see if they share your concerns.

If you still have questions, call your regional Community Services Office ([contact information, page 128](#)). You can talk about your concerns with the Early Childhood Development Consultant.

If you have any reason to think that your child—or another child—is being abused, you must report it to the local child welfare agency ([contact information, page 128](#)). You can speak with a social worker without giving your name.

Choosing childcare

Quality childcare—whether it is regulated or not—should offer children a happy and safe place to play, grow, and learn.

Childcare in your home

If you plan to hire someone to care for your child in your home, get to know the caregiver in advance. Spend some time together in your home. This will allow both you and your child to get to know the caregiver. It will give you a chance to tell them about your routines and what you expect.

Always ask for a list of references to contact before hiring a person to provide childcare in your home.

Childcare outside your home

Whether you are considering care in a centre or in the caregiver's home, arrange to visit in advance. Get an idea of the daily routines and activities being offered. Look at how children and adults treat one another. Try to get a feel for whether or not it's the kind of childcare you're looking for.

Take a notepad and pen when you visit. Write down your thoughts about the visit. Note any questions or concerns that you would like to discuss in more detail with the caregiver. Talk with other parents whose children have been cared for in the home or centre.

Here are a few things to think about when choosing either **REGULATED** or **UNREGULATED** childcare outside your home:

- Is the home or centre warm and welcoming?
- Is it well-organized, clean, and safe for the children?
- Is it clear who is in charge and who you should speak to when you have questions or concerns?
- How do the caregivers treat each other?
- How many children are present? Are there enough adults to meet the needs of the children?
- Do the caregivers speak to the children kindly? Do they seem to like and care about the children? Do they know the children's names?
- How do the caregivers handle behaviour issues?
- What do the children do all day? Is there a daily routine?
- Do the activities include indoor and outdoor play? Active play and quiet play? Are there lots of different toys and activities?
- Are outdoor play areas clean and safe?
- Are there animals in the home or centre or nearby—for example, in the next yard?
- Are there activities for children of different ages?
- Can the children make their own play choices both indoors and outside?
- Are the children playing and enjoying themselves?
- Are the meals and snacks nutritious? Are they offered to the children in a respectful way?

- Does the home or centre reflect and welcome the different cultures, races, abilities, and families of the children in your community?
- How does the home or centre support children learning to use the toilet?

If you are considering UNREGULATED childcare, ask these questions, too

All of these things are taken care of in licensed childcare centres and approved family day care homes.

- Who will be caring for your child? What experience and training do they have? Do they have First Aid and CPR training? Have they been screened through the Child Abuse Registry? If there are other adults in the home, have they been screened through the Child Abuse Registry?
- How much does it cost?
- Will you get tax receipts for childcare fees?
- How are parents involved? Are there regular meetings? Will you get an update about your child every day?
- Will you get a written copy of the rules and policies? For example, what if your child gets sick? What if you're late picking them up? What about holidays? What if the caregiver gets sick?
- Can you visit whenever you like?
- Does anyone in the home smoke?
- Are there toilets and sinks close to where the children play?
- If the day care home uses well water, is the water tested regularly? (See page 62 for information on water safety.)

Ask yourself

Would you feel good about leaving your child here?

Would your child be happy here?

Added info...

Once you find care for your child, be an active participant.

- Go to parent meetings.
- Look at the information posted on the parent board.
- Drop in for visits.

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Added info...

If you need help finding programs and services in your area, call 211.

If you have a problem and don’t know where to turn, call the provincial helpline ([contact information, page 136](#)). You can talk to a volunteer who will listen and connect you with the resources you need.

Resources



Canada's Food Guide

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day

**Have plenty of
vegetables and fruits**

Eat protein foods

**Make water
your drink
of choice**



**Choose
whole grain
foods**

Information in this section was taken from Canada's Food Guide.

For more information on Canada's Food Guide, please visit food-guide.canada.ca/en/

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Healthy Food Choices

Make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day.

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.

- Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat

Limit highly processed foods. If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts.

- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no added sodium, sugars or saturated fat
- Choose healthier menu options when eating out

Make water your drink of choice

- Replace sugary drinks with water

Use food labels

Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices

Healthy Eating Habits

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.

Be mindful of your eating habits

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

Cook more often

- Plan what you eat
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

Enjoy your food

- Culture and food traditions can be a part of healthy eating

Eat meals with others

Be mindful of your eating habits



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/be-mindful-of-your-eating-habits/

Being mindful of your eating habits means being aware of:

- how you eat
- why you eat
- what you eat
- when you eat
- where you eat
- how much you eat

Being mindful can help you:

- make healthier choices more often
- make positive changes to routine eating behaviours
- be more conscious of the food you eat and your eating habits
- create a sense of awareness around your everyday eating decisions
- reconnect to the eating experience by creating an awareness of your:
 - feelings
 - thoughts
 - emotions
 - behaviours

Cook more often



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/cook-more-often/

Cooking and preparing food can support healthy eating habits. Cooking allows you to:

- learn new skills
- rely less on highly processed foods
- control the amount of sauces and seasonings
- make foods that you and your family like and will eat
- save money by avoiding extra money spent on meals eaten out
- choose healthy ingredients like:
 - fruits
 - vegetables
 - whole grain foods
 - protein foods
 - choose protein foods that come from plants more often

Enjoy your food



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/enjoy-your-food/

The benefits of enjoying your food include:

- tasting the flavours
- being open to trying new foods
- developing a healthy attitude about food

Knowing that you are making healthy food choices can increase your enjoyment of food.

Enjoying your food includes:

- socializing at mealtime
- enjoying shopping for food
- preparing and cooking food
- growing or harvesting your own food
- getting to know the people that grow or produce your food
- involving others in meal planning, preparation and clean up

Eat meals with others



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/eat-meals-others/

Enjoying healthy foods with family, friends, neighbours or co-workers is a great way to connect and add enjoyment to your life. It can provide many benefits and contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

By eating with others you can:

- enjoy quality time together
- share food traditions, across generations and cultures
- explore new healthy foods that you might not normally try

Food is often a main part of celebrations and special events. However, eating with others doesn't have to be saved for special events.

Use food labels



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/using-food-labels

Different types of information may be available on food packages. This information can help you make informed choices about healthy and safe foods.

Nutrition facts table: provides information on serving size, calories, certain nutrients and % daily values (% DV). The % DV can be used as a guide to show you if the serving of stated size has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

- 5% DV or less is a little
- 15% DV or more is a lot

Ingredient list: lists all of the ingredients in a food product by weight. The list starts with the ingredient that weighs the most and ends with the ingredient that weighs the least.

Nutrition claims: includes nutrient content claims and health claims. All foods with a claim must meet certain criteria but some foods may not have a claim even though they meet the criteria.

Food allergen labelling: provides information to help you avoid specific food allergens or sensitivities.

Date labelling: provides information on how long your unopened food product will last and the safety of certain products. The most common types of dates are "best-before", "packaged on" and "expiration" dates.

Limit foods high in sodium, sugars or saturated fat



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/limit-highly-processed-foods/

If you eat highly processed foods, try to:

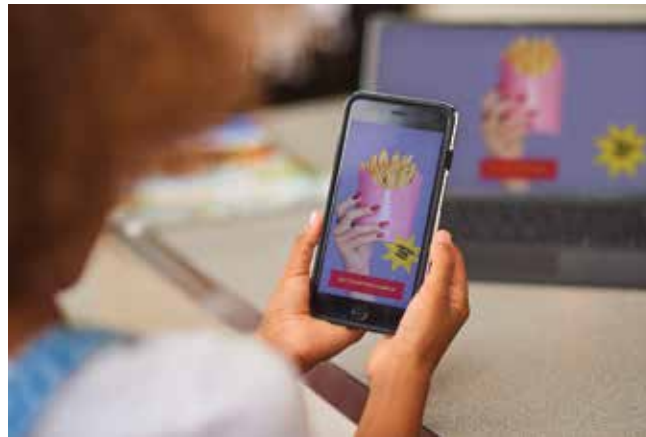
- eat them less often
- eat them in small amounts
- replace them with healthier options

You can:

- replace sugary drinks with water
- try not to keep highly processed foods at home
- choose healthier menu options when eating out
- choose less processed foods, such as:
 - leftover baked chicken instead of deli meats
 - steel-cut oats instead of sweetened instant oats

- make homemade versions of your favourite highly processed foods:
 - try a healthy muffin recipe to replace store-bought muffins
 - make your own frozen dinners by choosing a healthy recipe and freezing it in meal-sized portions
- stock your kitchen with healthy snacks. Try quick and easy options like:
 - nuts
 - fruit
 - carrots
 - hard-boiled eggs
- plan your meals and snacks in advance to include:
 - vegetables and fruit
 - whole grain foods
 - protein foods
- limit the use of highly processed spreads and dressings in your meals and snacks
- use the food label when grocery shopping to make informed choices

Be aware of food marketing



food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices

Food marketing is all around us. You likely receive a constant stream of changing and often conflicting messages about food. This can make it hard to make healthy food choices.

Food marketing can impact you in many different ways. It is designed to:

- create food trends
- encourage you to:
 - buy certain foods or drinks
 - buy foods in order to get promotional items such as:
 - loyalty points
 - tickets to movies or sports events
 - coupons for future food purchases
- create links between certain foods or brands and a particular lifestyle
- build brand loyalty so you will continue to purchase from a particular store or products with a brand name

Keep Kids Safe

A Parent's Guide to Car Seats



Choosing and using the right car seat.



For safety's sake...

Your child should be in a properly installed car seat whenever they ride in any car. This includes riding in taxis or in grandparents' or babysitters' cars.

Use this information to help you learn how to install and use car seats in your own car, van, truck or SUV. Your car seat instructions and car owner's manual will have information specific to your own car seat and vehicle.

Please note: When we use the word "car" it includes cars, vans, trucks and SUVs.

Choosing and Using the Right Car Seat

When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can reduce the risk that your child will be hurt or killed by 70%. Car seats and booster seats save lives.

For a car seat to protect your child:

- Use a car seat that meets Transport Canada's safety regulations.
- Choose the seat that is right for your child's age and size.
- Put the seat in your car the right way.
- Buckle your child in the seat correctly every time.

Once you've chosen the right car seat for your child's age and size, you can use the checklists in this booklet to be sure that:

- You put the seat in your car the right way.
- You buckle your child into the seat correctly.

The kind of seat children need changes as they grow. Don't be in a rush to move your child from one kind of seat to the next. Make sure that your child is old enough and big enough to be safe in the next stage of seat.

If you are using an old or used car seat, check that:

- it has all of its parts including the instruction manual
- it is not visibly damaged in any way
- it is not older than the manufacturer's expiry date
- it has never been in a crash



Look for this safety mark

For safety's sake...

Never ride with a baby or child in your arms or on your lap.

Never leave a child alone in a car.

Objects in the car can fly around and injure people during a crash or sudden stop. Be sure everything in your car is strapped down or stored in the trunk.

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Rear-Facing Seats **8**

Babies need a rear-facing seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear facing is safest for young children. Many seats can be used rear facing until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds).



Forward-Facing Seats **12**

Children must be at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds) before they move to a forward-facing seat. They must continue to use this seat until they weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs up to 30 kg (65 pounds).



Booster Seat 16

Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a booster seat. A child should also be at least 4 years old. It's safest for children to use a booster seat until they are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.



Seat Belt 18

Children are not ready for a seat belt until they are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall. They must be tall enough for their legs to bend over the edge of the seat while sitting up straight.

Where to find more help 21



For safety's sake...

When you buy a car seat:

- **Read and follow the directions that come with your car seat.** Every brand of car seat is a little different. Each will come with an instruction booklet.
- **Send in the registration card or register online** when you buy a car seat. If you do this, the manufacturer can let you know if there are any recalls or problems with the seat.
- **Check with Transport Canada** to see if there are any recalls on the seat you plan to use. You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 21.

The Safest Spot in Your Car



The safest spot for your child is in the back seat of your car. Even when your child no longer needs a car seat or booster seat, they are safest in the back seat until age 13.

Airbags are dangerous for children. Even without an airbag, children are much safer riding in the back seat.



For safety's sake...

If you don't have a back seat:

- It is **never safe** to put a rear-facing infant seat in a seat with an active front air bag. This includes airbags that use a weight sensor.
- If you can disable the airbag with a key or switch you may be able to install your child's seat in the front passenger seat. Remember to re-activate it for an adult passenger. Check your vehicle manual for more information.

The middle seat of a truck is not a safe place for a child, because they would be too close to the driver's airbag.

Airbags are dangerous for children.

To find out if it's okay to use a car seat in the front seat of your car:

- Check your owner's manual
- Call your car's manufacturer
- Call Transport Canada
(You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 21.)



The middle seat

If your car will allow it, the middle of the back seat is the safest place. The side positions are also safe. The middle position is NOT the safest if you cannot get a tight and secure installation in that spot.

In many cars you can only use the Universal Anchorage System (page 13) or the lower anchors to install a seat on the sides. You can still use the seat belt to install the car seat in the middle. Check your car owner's manual for more information.

For a child in a booster seat or seat belt, the middle seat is no longer the safest when:

- **There is a lap-only belt.** A booster seat can only be used with a lap AND shoulder belt. A child in a seat belt is not safe with a lap-only belt. Choose a seat with a lap and shoulder belt.
- **There is no head support.** A child needs head support to the tops of their ears. This support can come from a high-back booster seat or a tall seat back or the car headrest.

Types of Car Seats

Rear-facing Seats

A rear-facing seat gives the best protection for your child's head, neck and spine in a sudden stop or crash.

A rear-facing only car seat can be used from birth until at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Some rear-facing only seats can hold a larger baby and can be used up to 18 kg (35 pounds). Check the label on your seat for weight and height limits.

These seats can be carried with a handle and are then attached to a base that stays in the car. Most models can also be installed without the base.

A convertible car seat can be used rear facing for longer and can then be used as a forward-facing seat. Most models can be used rear facing until your child weighs at least 18 kg (40 pounds), and there are a few that can be used rear facing for even longer. Check the label on your seat for weight and height limits.



Rear-facing only car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Forward-facing Seats

Once your child outgrows their larger rear-facing seat, they will need a forward-facing seat with a 5-point harness to keep them safe.

Children must use a **forward-facing car seat with a 5-point harness** until they weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing seats can hold children up to 30 kg (65 pounds). It is safest to keep your child in a seat with a 5-point harness until they are ready for a booster. In order to use a seat with a 5-point harness longer, look for a seat with high weight and height limits.

Some seats can be used as a booster seat once the harness is outgrown.



Forward-facing car seat

Booster Seats

Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a **booster seat**. A child should also be at least 4 years old and have the maturity to sit in a booster seat correctly. Your child should use a booster seat until they are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall and fits the seat belt correctly without a booster seat.



High-back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using a Rear-Facing Car Seat



Rear-facing only infant car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Babies must use a rear-facing seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear-facing car seats provide the best protection for your baby or toddler's head and neck.

Many babies start off using an infant seat with a handle and then move to a convertible seat later. Most convertible seats can be used in the rear-facing position until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds). Check the label on your seat for height and weight limits. It is okay for your baby's feet to touch the back of the car. It is safest to keep your toddler rear-facing for as long as they still fit in their larger convertible car seat.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seat belt to install the seat in the middle instead.
- Put the UAS/LATCH strap through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base. Connect the car seat's UAS/LATCH strap to the UAS anchors in the car.
- Push down hard on the car seat or base and pull the UAS belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.

If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.

If you are using a lap-only belt to install:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a rear-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Push down hard on the car seat or base and pull the seat belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.
- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again.



Lift the cover to get easier access to pull the strap tight.



Push hard. Use your hand or a knee.



Rear-facing only seat without the base



Locking clip in use

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a rear-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for rear facing on the car seat or base and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the infant car seat or base. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible.
- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.
- Not all seat belts lock in this way. When you pull your seat belt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out again, it doesn't lock and you will need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place. Only use a locking clip on a buckle that can slide along the belt.

If you find that a tight shoulder belt is tipping the car seat to the side, you may leave the belt unlocked and use a locking clip instead.

How to use a locking clip



Place within 2.5 cm (1 inch) of the edge of the buckle.



Squeeze belts through each prong of clip.



Locking clip lies flat and should look like the photo.

Where should the HANDLE go?

For some rear-facing only seats the handle will need to be **up** in the car. For other seats it will need to be tucked **down** behind the seat. For some seats the handle goes to **another position** at the baby's feet. Follow the instructions for your seat.



Make sure that the angle is correct for your rear-facing car seat

Rear-facing seats need to be installed at a reclined angle. If a seat is too upright it is not safe for newborns and young babies who need to be tilted at an angle to keep their heads lying back.

- Check the labels on the seat to see if it is at the right angle in the car. You may find a line that should be level with the ground or there might be a guide that can only be read when the car is parked on flat ground.
- Adjust the angle of your seat. Some seats have a way to adjust the seat to be more reclined. If the seat is still too upright or does not have another way to adjust the angle, you should check the instruction booklet to find out if you may add a rolled towel or pool noodle to change the angle of your seat.
- Some seats can be installed more upright for an older baby or toddler. Check your labels.



Check the angle of your rear-facing car seat.



Check the instructions to find out how to change the angle of your seat.

2. Put your child in the seat

- The shoulder harness should be threaded in the car seat as shown in the instructions. Choose the slot that is even with or slightly below your child's shoulders for rear facing.
- The child's bottom should be placed all the way back.
- Buckle the harness over the child's legs.
- The chest clip should be level with your baby's armpits.
- The shoulder harness should stay on your baby's shoulders.
- Pull the harness snug. You should not be able to pinch the harness together at the shoulder.
- Do not use snowsuits, bunting bags or head-huggers that did not come with the seat.



Add a blanket over top, once baby is buckled.



The harness should be snug. You should not be able to hold a pinch.

Using a Forward-Facing Car Seat



Children must be at least 1 year old and weigh more than 10 kg (22 pounds) before they move to a forward-facing seat. There is no rush. It is safer to keep your child in a rear-facing convertible seat for as long as they still fit.

Children must use a forward-facing car seat until they weigh 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward-facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds). Look for a seat with a high weight and height limit so that you can use a harnessed seat longer.

Before you install the car seat, put your child in the car seat to see how the harness straps fit. The harness straps should come out of a slot that is level with or above your child's shoulders.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seat belt to install the seat in the middle instead.
- Put the UAS/LATCH strap through the marked pathway for forward facing on the car seat. Connect the car seat's UAS strap to the UAS anchors in the car.
- Push down hard on the car seat and pull the UAS/LATCH belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is.

If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.

If you are using a lap-only belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a front-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the car seat. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Push down on the car seat and pull seat belt tight. Push hard.
- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).



Belt path is behind child's back.



Lift cover to pull strap easier.



Always attach the top tether to the anchor point for that seat.



Tether anchor

- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. It is never safe to use a forward-facing car seat without a tether.

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:



Push hard. Use your knee.

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a forward-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway for forward facing on the car seat and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the car seat. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible.
- Not all seat belts lock in this way. When you pull your seat belt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out, it doesn't lock and you will need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place. Only use a locking clip on a buckle that can slide along the belt. *How to use a locking clip* is on page 10.



Locking clip used on a forward-facing car seat.

- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, use a locking clip. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side or front to back more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Pull the tether strap tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. It is never safe to use a forward-facing car seat without a tether.

If you find that a tight shoulder belt is tipping the car seat to the side, you may leave the belt unlocked and use a locking clip instead.

2. Put your child in the seat

- The shoulder harness should be threaded in the car seat as shown in the instructions. Choose the slot that is even with or above your child's shoulders for forward facing.
- The child's bottom should be placed all the way back.
- Buckle the harness over the child's legs.
- The chest clip should be level with your child's armpits.
- The shoulder harness should stay on the child's shoulders.
- Pull the harness snug. You should not be able to pinch the harness together at the shoulder.
- Do not use bulky coats, snowsuits, or any items that did not come with the seat.



You should not be able to hold a pinch of the harness together at the shoulder.



Using a Booster Seat

**For
safety's
sake...**

When the booster seat is empty, buckle it in place or take it out of your car. A loose booster seat can bounce around in a sudden stop or crash.



Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) before moving into a booster seat. Your child should also be at least 4 years old and have the maturity to sit straight and tall in order to use a booster seat safely. Your child must also have the maturity to never meddle with or unbuckle the seat belt. There is no rush. Some car seats can be used with a 5-point harness until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds).

Children should continue to use a booster seat until they are 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall and fit the adult seat belt correctly. Most children are between 10-12 years old when they reach this height.

Adult seat belts are too big for a child's small body. A booster seat lifts your child up so that the seat belt fits safely across the strongest bones and away from the soft belly.

A booster seat also helps the shoulder portion of the belt to fit. When the shoulder belt is uncomfortable a child may move it off their shoulder and tuck it unsafely under the arm or behind the back.

Booster seats can be used only in seats with a lap AND shoulder belt. There are two kinds of Booster Seats:

- **High Back:** These seats support the child's head in cars with low-backed seats or no headrest in the car.
- **Backless:** They are safe in cars with high seat backs or headrests.

All children need support behind their heads to the top of their ears. This support can come from a high-back booster seat, a tall seat back or a car headrest. If the child's ears are above, they may need a different booster seat with a higher back.

1. Put the seat in your car

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a booster seat in your car.
- Follow the instructions that come with your booster seat.
- Put the booster seat in the back seat of your car.

2. Put your child in the seat

- The lap belt is low and snug over the hips.
- The shoulder belt crosses the middle of your child's chest. Your child could be hurt or killed if the shoulder belt is behind their back or under the arm.



High-back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using a Seat Belt



For safety's sake...

Children are safest in the back seat, away from an active airbag, until they are 13 years old.

When a child reaches 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall they may be ready to use a regular seat belt. Most children are between 10-12 years old before they reach this height. There's no rush to move to a regular seat belt.



Children are ready for a seat belt when:

- They are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.
- Their knees bend at the edge of the seat while sitting up straight with their back against the vehicle seat.
- The lap belt stays low and snug across their hip bones.
- The shoulder belt fits across the middle of their chest and rests between their neck and shoulder. It should NOT be across the child's neck, behind the back or under the arm.
- They can sit this way for the whole trip without slouching.

If your child does not fit the seat belt in your car, they still need a booster seat. A child may fit well in one car and still need a booster seat in another car.



To Find Out More



For more information and resources on car seat and booster seat safety contact:



www.childsafetylink.ca

phone: (902) 470-7036 or

1-866-288-1388

(toll free in the Maritimes)

Email: childsafetylink@iwk.nshealth.ca

Find us on



For product advisories or recalls:

Transport Canada

tc.canada.ca

Search for "Child Restraint Notices"

phone: 1-866-995-9737 (toll free)

We would like to thank the parents and children of Saint John, NB and Halifax, NS for posing for these car seat and booster seat photos.

Aussi disponible en français

Partners in Children's Safety



Drinking less is better

We now know that even a small amount of alcohol can be damaging to health.

Science is evolving, and the recommendations about alcohol use need to change.

Research shows that no amount or kind of alcohol is good for your health. It doesn't matter what kind of alcohol it is—wine, beer, cider or spirits.

Drinking alcohol, even a small amount, is damaging to everyone, regardless of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, tolerance for alcohol or lifestyle.

That's why if you drink, it's better to drink less.

Alcohol consumption per week

Drinking alcohol has negative consequences. The more alcohol you drink per week, the more the consequences add up.

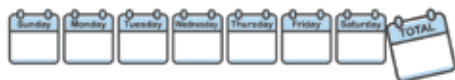


Aim to drink less

Drinking less benefits you and others. It reduces your risk of injury and violence, and many health problems that can shorten life.

Here is a good way to do it

Count how many drinks you have in a week.



Set a weekly drinking target. If you're going to drink, **make sure you don't exceed 2 drinks on any day.**

Good to know

You can reduce your drinking in steps! Every drink counts: any reduction in alcohol use has benefits.

It's time to pick a new target

What will your weekly drinking target be?



Tips to help you stay on target

- Stick to the limits you've set for yourself.
- Drink slowly.
- Drink lots of water.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Choose alcohol-free or low-alcohol beverages.
- Eat before and while you're drinking.
- Have alcohol-free weeks or do alcohol-free activities.

For the most up-to-date version of the schedules, check the Department of Health and Wellness website (<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf>) or scan this code:



Routine Immunization Schedules for Children, Youth & Adults

The vaccines listed on these schedules are given free of charge.

Children, youth and adults with high-risk conditions may require additional doses and be eligible for additional vaccines. For more information, talk to your health care provider or call your [Public Health office](#).

Childhood Vaccines

| | Schedule | | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | 2 months | 4 months | 6 months | 12 months | 18 months | 4-<7 yrs |
| Influenza* | | | * | | | |
| DTaP-IPV-Hib Diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), polio, and Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| RV Rotavirus | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Pneumo Conj. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Men C Conj. Meningococcal group C conjugate vaccine | | | | ✓ | | |
| MMRV Measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Tdap-IPV Tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (whooping cough), and polio vaccine | | | | | | ✓ |

* Every flu season for all children 6 months of age and older. Children under 9 years old getting their first flu vaccine need 2 doses.

School Vaccines

| | Grade 7 | |
|---|---------|---|
| HPV Human papillomavirus vaccine (2 doses) | ✓ | ✓ |
| Hepatitis B Hepatitis B vaccine (2 doses) | ✓ | ✓ |
| Tdap Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine | ✓ | |
| Meningococcal Quadrivalent Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine (Groups A, C, W, and Y) | ✓ | |

Adult Vaccines

| | Schedule | |
|--|------------|-------------------|
| | All Adults | Adults 65 & older |
| Influenza Every influenza season | ✓ | |
| Enhanced Influenza Every influenza season | | ✓ |
| Tdap* Tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine (One dose in adulthood, 10 years after previous receipt of tetanus containing vaccine.) | ✓ | |
| Td Tetanus, diphtheria vaccine (Every 10 years) | ✓ | |
| Pneumococcal Conj. Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine | | ✓ |
| MMR Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (2 doses for those born in 1970 or later) See the NS Vaccine Publicly Funded Eligibility Policy for additional eligibility. | ✓ | |

* Regardless of age, Tdap should be offered with every pregnancy.

Revised May 2024

Health appointments for your child covered by MSI

Dental

Children should begin regular dental visits by their **first birthday**.

MSI covers basic dental care for children from birth up to the end of the month in which they turn 15.

Once a year, the MSI Children's Oral Health Program covers:

- One dental recall examination
- One fluoride treatment
- Two x-rays

- Fillings
- One other preventive service—includes, but may not be limited to, brushing and flossing instruction, and/or cleaning. Check with your dental office about current services covered by MSI, as coverage options may change, or check the Department of Health and Wellness website for the Children's Oral Health Program.

As well, MSI covers sealant application on permanent molars. In some cases, MSI also covers a second fluoride treatment. Check with your dental office to see if your child qualifies for a second fluoride treatment paid for by MSI.

Vision

Routine Vision Exam

MSI covers a routine comprehensive eye examination **once in a 2-year period** for children who have not yet reached their 10th birthday.

You can take your child to any optometrist in the province for this appointment.

A comprehensive eye exam looks at all aspects of a child's vision function, including how well the eyes focus up close, how the eyes work together and the overall health of the eyes. Even if your child has 20/20 vision, they still need to have an eye exam.

Hearing and Speech-Language Pathologists

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia is a provincially funded resource for testing and treating hearing, language, and speech-related issues in Nova Scotians of all ages. The audiologists and speech-language pathologists can help with any hearing, language, and speech-related challenges you or your child may have, from prevention to diagnosis to treatment.

These services are free with a valid Nova Scotia Health Card (MSI). You can refer yourself or your child. You do not need a referral from a doctor or other professional.

Most newborns in Nova Scotia have their hearing tested before leaving the hospital. If your baby did not have their hearing tested as a newborn, contact Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia to make an appointment as soon as possible. Even if your newborn had their hearing tested, consider getting their hearing tested again if you have any concerns or questions. You may also want to have your child's hearing tested if they have:

- a close family history of hearing loss
- frequent middle ear fluid and/or ear infections
- certain illnesses that may cause hearing loss, such as meningitis
- certain medical conditions, or if they take certain medications that can cause hearing damage
- facial or skull differences, such as cleft lip and palate

Speech and language skills develop over time. Every child will develop at their own rate. For more information on what to expect from your child at different ages, visit www.hearingandspeech.ca. If you have **any** concerns about your child's communication skills, contact Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia by calling the toll-free number 1-888-780-3330 or by email at info@nshsc.nshealth.ca

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Addictions: Alcohol, Drugs, Gambling, and Smoking

Addiction Services

- **Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line**
(Toll free, available 24/7):
1-888-429-8167
 - **Mental Health and Addictions Intake**
(You can speak to someone Monday–Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Voicemail evenings, weekends, and holidays.):
1-855-922-1122
 - **Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions**
Website: mha.nshealth.ca/en
-

Alcohol and Other Drugs Resources

- **Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions**
Website: mha.nshealth.ca/en
*For phone numbers see **Addiction Services***

Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling Association of Nova Scotia

Phone (902) 379-2262

Website: nadaca.ca

Gambling Resources

- Addiction Services

Website: mha.nshealth.ca/en

*For phone numbers see **Addiction Services***

Smoking Resources

- Tobacco Free Nova Scotia

Phone 811

Website: tobaccofree.novascotia.ca

- Pregnets

Website: nicotinedependenceclinic.com/en/pregnets/home

- Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions

Website: mha.nshealth.ca/en

*For phone numbers see **Addiction Services***

Breastfeeding

Call your local Public Health office (*page 141*) for information on where you can get support for breastfeeding. First Nation community health centres (*page 137*) offer breastfeeding support for families living in First Nations communities.

- La Leche League Canada

Website: lllc.ca

Indigenous

- Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq
Phone (902) 895-6385
Website: cmmns.com
- Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre
Phone(902) 420-1576
- Native Council of Nova Scotia *Locations in Truro, Liverpool and Sydney*
Phone 1-800-565-4372 (Toll free)
Website: ncns.ca
- Native Women's Association (Truro)
Phone(902) 893-7402
Website: facebook.com/nsnwa
- Office of L'nu Affairs
Phone(902) 424-7409
Website: novascotia.ca/abor
- Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq
Phone(902) 539-4107
Website: unsm.org

Acadian

- Fédération des Femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse
Phone (902) 433-2088
Website: ffane.ca
- Acadian Affairs and Francophonie
Phone (902) 424-0497 Toll free: 1-866-382-5811
Website: acadien.novascotia.ca/en

African Canadian

- Black Cultural Centre
Phone (902) 434-6223 Toll free: 1-800-465-0767
Website: bccns.com
- Health Association of African Canadians
Phone (902) 405-HAAC (4222)
Website: haac.ca

- Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs
 - Halifax
Phone(902) 424-5555
 - Sydney
Phone..... (902) 563-3735
 - Website: ansa.novascotia.ca
-

2SLGBTQIA+

- Egale Canada — Atlantic
Phone 1-888-204-7777
Website: egale.ca
 - Gay Halifax
An on-line listing of NS - and Atlantic-based groups and services supporting LGBTQ communities.
Website: gay.hfxns.org/GroupsAndServices
 - Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project
Phone (902) 444-3206
Website: nsrap.ca
 - P-Flag
Chapters in Bridgewater, Halifax, Middleton, Sydney, Windsor, and Yarmouth
Website: pflagcanada.ca
*To find a local chapter, select **Contact Us** and enter your postal code.*
 - Pride Health
To speak to a clinical nurse specialist:
Phone (902) 487-0470
Website: nshealth.ca/content/pridehealth
 - The Youth Project (age 25 and under)
Phone(902) 429-5429
Website: youthproject.ns.ca
 - *Respect and Self Esteem: talking about sexual orientation & gender identity with our kids. A brochure.*
Website: rainbowhealthontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/Talking-with-kids.pdf
-

Newcomers and Immigrants

- Office of Immigration
Phone (902) 424-5230 Toll free in NS: 1-877-292-9597
Website: novascotiainmigration.com

Translation and Interpretation

- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia
Translation and Interpretation Service
Phone (902) 423-3607
Website: isans.ca/program/translation/

Community Services and Child Development

Childcare

You can find information about childcare in your community through your local Public Health office (page 141), Family Resource Centre (page 132) or on the Department of Community Services website: novascotia.ca/coms

- Early Childhood Development Services
To find information about regulated childcare and approved home day care:
Phone (902) 424-3430

You can also check the Directory of Childcare Services at:

Website: nsbr-online-services.gov.ns.ca/DCSONline/ECDS/loadSearchPage.action

- Licensing Services
If you have questions or concerns about regulated childcare, you can contact a licensing officer at:
Phone 1-844-896-2494 (Toll free)
Website: novascotia.ca/coms/licensing
- Child Care Subsidy
Contact a childcare subsidy case worker at a regional office of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (see page 140) or download an application form.
Website: ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/families/childcaresubsidy.shtm/

Child Welfare Services

Website: novascotia.ca/coms/departement/contact/childwelfareservices.html

District Offices

- Annapolis District Office (902) 532-2337
 - Antigonish District Office (902) 863-3213
 - Cape Breton-Victoria District Office (902) 563-3400
 - Colchester District Office (902) 893-5950
 - Cumberland District Office (902) 667-3336
 - Digby District Office (902) 245-5811
 - Guysborough District Office (902) 533-4007
 - HRM District Offices
 - Halifax (902) 425-5420
 - Dartmouth (902) 424-3298
 - Sackville (902) 869-3600
 - Hants District Office (902) 798-2289
 - Inverness-Richmond District Office..... (902) 625-0660
 - Kings District Office (902) 678-6176
 - Lunenburg District Office (902) 543-4554
 - Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services
Eskasoni and Indian Brook offices serve all 13 Nations. You'll find their contact information on [page 130](#).
 - Pictou District Office (902) 755-5950
 - Queens District Office..... (902) 354-3525
 - Shelburne District Office (902) 637-2337
 - Yarmouth District Office (902) 742-0700
-

Community Services Regional Offices

Annapolis, Digby, Hants, Kings, Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties

- Western Regional Office (902) 679-6715

Antigonish, Colchester, Cumberland, Guysborough and Pictou counties

- Northern Regional Office (902) 755-7023

Halifax Regional Municipality

- Central Regional Office (902) 424-4754

Cape Breton, Inverness, Richmond and Victoria counties

- Eastern Regional Office (902) 563-3302

You can connect with local Community Services offices through:

Website: novascotia.ca/coms Click on the map.

Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services

To find the Early Intervention program nearest your home:

Phone 1-844-292-6730

Website: nsecdis.ca

To contact local program offices:

- Amherst (902) 667-8244
- Baddeck (902) 295-2504
- Dartmouth..... (902) 423-2686
- Digby (902) 245-1900
- Eskasoni (902) 379-8003
- Glace Bay (902) 849-3429
- Guysborough (902) 533-2694
- Halifax..... (902) 423-8575
- Indian Brook..... (902) 236-2322
- Kentville..... (902) 678-6111
- Lawrencetown..... (902) 584-2000
- Liverpool (902) 354-5890
- Lower Sackville (902) 864-5251
- Lower South River..... (902) 863-2298
- Mahone Bay..... (902) 531-3500
- Membertou (902) 562-1153
- Pointe-de-l'Église (902) 769-5853
- Port Hawkesbury..... (902) 625-0396
- Sheet Harbour..... (902) 885-2946
- Shelburne..... (902) 875-4067
- Sydney..... (902) 567-0991
- Truro (902) 843-6060
- Tusket (902) 648-2522
- Westville..... (902) 752-1016
- Yarmouth (902) 742-3366

Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services

- Bear River (902) 467-3970
- Eskasoni (902) 379-2433 or 1-800-263-8300 (Toll free)
- Indian Brook..... (902) 758-3553 or 1-800-263-8686 (Toll free)

Debt and Budget Counselling

- Credit Counselling Services
Phone.....1-888-753-2227
- Debtor Assistance Program
Phone.....(902) 424-5200 Toll free: 1-800-670-4357
TTY: 1-877-404-0867
Website: beta.novascotia.ca/programs-and-services/consumer-protection

Family and Intimate Partner Violence

Child Protection Services

- *Evenings, weekends, and holidays:* 1-866-922-2434 (Toll free)
- *Day time:* see **Child Welfare Services** for a list of district offices for phone numbers ([page 128](#))
Website: beta.novascotia.ca/report-child-abuse-or-neglect

Transition Houses

You can find information about family violence as well as links to transition houses across Nova Scotia on the website of The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia.

Website: thans.ca

You can also contact the Transition House Association by phone: 1-855-225-0220 (Toll free, 24/7)

Resources

- Making Changes: A Book for Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Abuse
A resource for women who have left, are thinking of leaving, or who have previously been in an abusive relationship.
PDF: https://women.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/2024/MakingChanges_2024_Jan19_WEB1.pdf
- Neighbours, Friends, and Families
A public education campaign to raise awareness of the signs of domestic violence so that people close to an at-risk person or an abuser can help.
Website: <https://women.novascotia.ca/NFF>

Transition Houses In Communities

Amherst

- Autumn House
Phone: (902) 667-1344
Crisis/Helpline: (902) 667-1200
(will accept collect calls)

Antigonish

- Naomi Society
Phone: (902) 863-3807
Crisis lines:
 - Local: (902) 863-3807
 - Weekend Crisis/Helpline: (902) 867-4229

Bridgewater

- Harbour House
Phone: (902) 543-3665
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 543-3999
 - Toll free: 1-888-543-3999

Digby and Digby County

- Juniper Digby Outreach Services
Phone: (902) 245-4789
Crisis/Helpline: (902) 245-4789

Halifax

- Bryony House
Phone: (902) 429-9001
Crisis/Helpline: (902) 422-7650
(will accept collect calls)

Kentville

- Chrysalis House
Phone: (902) 679-6544
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 679-1922
 - Toll free: 1-800-264-8682

New Glasgow

- Tearmann House
Phone: (902) 928-0774
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 752-0132
 - Toll free: 1-888-831-0330

Port Hawkesbury

Serves Richmond County, Inverness County and Town of Port Hawkesbury

- Leaside Transition House
Phone: (902) 625-1990
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 625-2444
 - Toll free: 1-800-565-3390

Sydney

Serves Sydney, Cape Breton County and Victoria County

- Cape Breton Transition House
Phone: (902) 562-3864
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 539-2945
 - Toll free: 1-800-563-2945

Truro

- Third Place
Phone: (902) 893-4844
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 893-3232
 - Toll free: 1-800-565-4878

Yarmouth

- Juniper House
Phone: (902) 742-4473
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 742-8689
 - Toll free: 1-800-266-4087

See next page for First Nations Transition Houses

First Nations Transition Houses

Millbrook

- Mi'kmaq Family Healing Services
Mainland Nova Scotia
Phone: (902) 893-8483
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 863-8434
 - Toll free: 1-800-565-4741

Waycobah

- Waycobah Family Healing Services
Cape Breton Island
Phone: (902) 756-2922
Crisis/Helpline:
 - Local: (902) 756-3440
 - Toll free: 1-800-565-3440

Family Law and Family Courts

Family Law Information Centre

Department of Justice, Court Services Division:
Supreme Court (Family Division)
Website: nsfamilylaw.ca

- **Halifax Regional Municipality**
3380 Devonshire Avenue
Phone: (902) 424-5232
- **Sydney**
136 Charlotte Street, Main Level
Phone: (902) 563-5761

Parent Information Program

This program offers information for parents who are going through the Family Court or Supreme Court (Family Division) to deal with issues of custody, access and child support.
Website: nsfamilylaw.ca/programs-services/parenting-information-program-pip

Family Resource Centres

Check the *Directory of Nova Scotia Family Resource Centres*:

Website: novascotia.ca/coms/families/prevention-and-early-intervention/family-resource-centres.html

You can also contact *Public Health* (page 141) for other Family Resource Centres and resources in your community.

Community Family Resource Centres

Amherst

- Maggie's Place (Cumberland County)
11 Elmwood Drive, Amherst
Phone: (902) 667-7250

Annapolis Valley-Hants County

- Kids Action Program
Offers programs in several sites.
Phone: (902) 582-1375

Antigonish

- Kids First (Antigonish County)
27 St. Andrew's Street, Antigonish
Phone: (902) 863-3848

Bridgewater

- Family Support Centre (Lunenburg County)
156 York Street, Bridgewater
Phone: (902) 543-1301

Chester

- Chester and Area Family Resource Centre
8 Tremont Street, Chester
Phone: (902) 275-4347

Digby

- Digby County Family Resource Centre
1 Birch Street, Digby
Phone: (902) 245-2300

Guysborough

- Kids First (Guysborough County)
105 Queen Street, Guysborough
Phone: (902) 533-3881

Halifax Regional Municipality

- Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre
3499 McAlpine Avenue, Halifax
Phone: (902) 454-9444
- Chebucto Family Centre
3 Sylvia Avenue, Halifax
Phone: (902) 479-3031
- Eastern Shore Family Resource Centre
5228 Highway 7, Suite 203, Porters Lake
Shopping Centre, Porters Lake
Phone: (902) 827-1461 or 1-866-847-1461
(Toll free)
- Fairview Family Resource Centre/Parent 'n Tot
3524 Dutch Village Road, Halifax
Phone: (902) 443-9569
- Family SOS
7071 Bayers Road, Suite 337, Halifax
Phone: (902) 455-5515

- Memory Lane Family Place
22 Memory Lane, Lower Sackville
Phone: (902) 864-6363
- Musquodoboit Valley Family Resource
Centre
12280 Highway 224, Middle
Musquodoboit (*above Haverstock
Pharmacy*)
Phone: (902) 384-2794
- North End Parent Resource Centre
5475 Uniacke Street, Halifax
Phone: (902) 492-0133
- Parents and Children Together Resource
Centre
1114 Cole Harbour Road, Suite 102,
Dartmouth
Phone: (902) 434-8952
- Preston and Area Family Resource
Centre
East Preston Business Centre, 1900
Highway 7, Suite 501, East Preston
Phone: (902) 462-7266
- The North Grove
6 Primrose Street, Dartmouth
Phone: (902) 464-8234

Kentville

- Kings County Family Resource Centre
503 Main Street, Kentville
Phone: (902) 678-5760

Lawrencetown

- Family Matters (Annapolis County Family
Resource Centre)
10 Middle Road, Lawrencetown
Phone: (902) 584-2210

Liverpool

- Queen's County Family Resource Centre
108 College Street, Liverpool
Phone: (902) 354-7176

New Glasgow

- Kids First Family Resource Centre
(Pictou County)
110 Provost Street, New Glasgow
Phone: (902) 755-5437

New Ross

- New Ross Family Resource Centre
4689 Highway 12, New Ross
Phone: (902) 689-2414

Shelburne

- King Street Family Resource Centre
35 King Street, Shelburne
Phone: (902) 875-3256 or
1-800-563-3256 (Toll free)

Sydney

- Cape Breton Family Place Resource Centre
106 Townsend Street, Sydney
Phone: (902) 562-5616

Truro

- Maggie's Place (Colchester County)
1027 Prince Street, Truro
Phone: (902) 895-0200

Windsor

- Family Resource Centre of West Hants
61 Morison Drive, Windsor
Phone: (902) 798-5961

Yarmouth

- Parents' Place—Yarmouth Family Resource Centre
34 Barnard Street, Yarmouth
Phone: (902) 749-1718

Acadian/Francophone Family Resource Centres

Clare

- La Pirouette – Head office
450 Patrice Road, Church Point
Phone: (902) 769-5854

Halifax

- La Pirouette
500 Larry Uteck Boulevard, Halifax
Phone: (902) 832-3785

Isle-Madame

- La Pirouette
3435 Route 206, Petit-de-Grat
Phone: (902) 226-3319

Par-en-Bas

- La Pirouette
360 Route 308 North, Tusket
Phone: (902) 648-3071

First Nations Family Resource Centres

Halifax

- Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre
2161 Gottingen Street, Halifax
Phone: (902) 422-7850
- Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre
2158 Gottingen Street, Halifax
Phone: (902) 420-1576

Military Family Resource Centres

You can reach a MFRC by telephone 24/7 at: (902) 427-7788.

Greenwood

- AVM Morfee Centre, 24 School Road, Building 83, Greenwood
Phone: (902) 765-5611

Halifax

- Piers Military Community Centre, Building WP 106, Homefire Crescent, Windsor Park, Halifax
Phone: (902) 427-7788

Shearwater

- Hampton Gray Memorial Centre, (just off Labrador Avenue)
12 Wing Shearwater
Phone: (902) 720-1885

Sydney

The Halifax MFRC operates a part-time office in the garrison at Victoria Park in Sydney.

- 1 Desbarres Street, Victoria Park, Sydney
Phone: (902) 563-7100 ext. 7107

Family Supports

Adoptive and Foster Families

Adoptive parents can contact a local child welfare agency to be connected with supports such as peer mentors and support groups. You'll find contact information for Child Welfare Services in **Community Services and Child Development** (page 128).

- Adoption Resource Central
Website: familyhelper.net/arc
- Directory of Services for Adoptive Families
Website: novascotia.ca/coms/families/adoption/DirectoryofServices.html
- Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia
Website: fosterfamilies.ns.ca

First Nations Family Supports

- First Nation Community Health Centres
See **Health Care** (page 137)
- Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services
See **Community Services and Child Development** (page 130)
- Native Council of Nova Scotia
Child Help Initiative Program (CHIP)
Locations in Truro, Liverpool and Sydney
Phone: 1-800-565-4372 (Toll free)
Website: ncns.ca

Multiple Birth Families

- Parents of Multiple Births Association
Website: pomba.ca

Young Parents

- Kids Help Phone (Under 20 years)
Phone: 1-800-668-6868 (Toll free)
English and French. Monday through Friday.
Website for 24 hour service: kidshelpphone.ca

Food and Nutrition

Feeding During an Emergency

Website: novascotia.ca/nse/environmental-health/weather-food-safety.asp

Food Banks

- *Feed Nova Scotia is a charitable organization that helps feed hungry people by collecting and distributing food to more than 150 member agency food banks and meal programs, while at the same time striving to eliminate chronic hunger and poverty through research, awareness and support programs.*

Telephone: (902) 457-1900

Website: feednovascotia.ca

Food Safety

- *Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change*
Website: novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/
 - *Health Canada offers more information about mercury levels in seafood.*
Website: hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/chem-chim/envIRON/mercur/cons-adv-etud-eng.php
-

Nutrition

- *Reading Nutrition Facts labels:*
Health Canada website: food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/using-food-labels/
 - *Nutrition During Pregnancy and for Baby*
Website: nshealth.ca/pregnancy/public-health-pregnancy-supports
-

Helpline

If you have a problem and don't know where to turn, contact the Toll-free Helpline. The Helpline is a confidential service. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Trained staff and volunteers can help connect you with the resources and support you need.

In the Halifax area: (902) 421-1188 TTY: (902) 443-2660

In other areas of Nova Scotia, call Toll free: 1-877-521-1188 TTY: 1-855-443-2660

Cancer Resources

- Cancer Information Service
Phone: 1-888-939-3333 (Toll free)
(Monday to Friday, 9 am to 6 pm)
- Testicular Cancer Canada
Phone: 1-514-890-8000, ext. 24131
Website: www.testicularcancer.ngo
- Canadian Cancer Society
Website: cancer.ca
- Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program
Phone: 1-866-599-2267 (Toll free)
Website: nshealth.ca/cancer-care-program-0

Need a Family Practice Registry

The Need a Family Practice Registry is a provincial list for people without a family doctor or nurse practitioner.

Phone: (902) 424-3047 or Toll free at 1-877-731-1931

Website: needafamilypractice.nshealth.ca/

First Nation Community Health Centres

There are Community Health Centres in all First Nations communities in Nova Scotia.

- Acadia Health Centre
(Gold River Reserve and Yarmouth)
Phone: (902) 627-1245
- Afton-Paq'tnkek Health Centre
Phone: (902) 386-2048
- Annapolis Valley First Nation Health Centre
Phone: (902) 538-1444
- Bear River First Nation Health Centre
Phone: (902) 467-4197
- Chapel Island Medical Centre
Phone: (902) 535-2961
- Eskasoni Health Centre
Phone: (902) 379-3200
- Glooscap First Nation
Phone: (902) 684-9788
- Indian Brook Health Centre
Phone: (902) 758-4507
- Membertou Wellness Clinic-Mawpltu
Welo'Itimkew'kuom
Phone: (902) 564-6466
- Millbrook Health Centre
Phone: (902) 895-9468
- Pictou Landing Health Centre
Phone: (902) 752-0085

French-Speaking Health Professionals

You'll find a list of health professionals who offer primary health care services in French at:
Website: novascotia.ca/dhw/repertoire-sante

811

Registered nurses will give you advice and information. They can also provide reassurance about general health issues and questions. Services are available in English and French. Services in other languages are offered through a third party interpretation service and include, but are not limited to, Arabic, Farsi, and Cantonese. If you are Deaf or have hearing loss and would like to access this service, call 7-1-1 (TTY).

Phone: 811

Website: 811.novascotia.ca

MSI Children's Oral Health Program

Phone: 1-888-846-9199 (Toll free)

Phone in Halifax Regional Municipality:
(902) 832-3253

Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres

Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centres are located in 25 communities across the province. They offer services in English and French.

To find one near you:

Website: hearingandspeech.ca

Pharmacare

- Family Pharmacare Program
Phone: 1-877-330-0323 (Toll free)
Website: novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare
- Low Income Pharmacare for Children
Phone: 1-866-424-1269 (Toll free)
Website: novascotia.ca/coms/families/Pharmacareforchildren.html

Income Support

- Department of Community Services
([contact information, page 128](#))
Website: novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income_assistance
- Employment Insurance
Phone: 1-800-206-7218 (Toll free)
- The HEAT Fund
This program is for individuals and families facing an emergency heating crisis situation – where there are no sources of heat or no financial resources to obtain heat.
Phone: (902) 422-3435
Website: salvationarmy.ca/maritime/home/programs/heat/

Libraries and Literacy

Libraries

Regional libraries

You'll find a list of all regional libraries at:
library.novascotia.ca

- South Shore Regional Library
(902) 543-2548
1-877-455-2548 (Toll free)
- Western Counties Regional Library
(902) 742-2486
- Annapolis Valley Regional Library
(902) 665-2995

- Colchester-East Hants Regional Library
(902) 895-0235
OR within Atlantic Canada
1-888-632-9088 (Toll free)
- Cumberland Regional Library
(902) 667-2135
- Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library
1-866-779-7761 (Toll free)
- Eastern Counties Regional Library
(902) 747-2597
- Cape Breton Regional Library
(902) 562-3279
- Halifax Public Libraries
(902) 490-5744

IWK Family Resource Library

- 5850/5980 University Avenue (Level 2), Halifax
Phone: (902) 470-8982

Literacy Programs

- Literacy NS
The website has a link to literacy programs across the province, including Francophone and Indigenous.
Website: ns.literacy.ca/find_a_literacy_program.htm
- Read to Me Program:
Phone: (902) 470-6683
Website: readtome.ca
- Équipe Alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse
Offers literacy programs for Acadian and francophone adults and families.
Phone: (902) 648-0501
Website: eane.ca

Mental Health Clinics and Crisis Support

The hotlines below are toll-free and available to help 24/7, or go to your closest emergency department.

- **Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line:** 1-888-429-8167
- **Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868
- **Emergency:** 911
- **Suicide Crisis Helpline:** 988

Mental Health and Addictions Intake

If you need help with a mental health or addiction concern.

You can speak to someone Monday–Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Voicemail evenings, weekends, and holidays.

Phone: 1-855-922-1122

Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions

Mental health and addictions professionals are available to provide support, programs and services to Nova Scotians across the province.

Website: mha.nshealth.ca/en

IWK Health Centre

- Mental Health Program Central Referral:
(902) 464-4110
- Reproductive Mental Health: (902) 470-8098

Crisis Telephone Support

- Mental Health Crisis Line
Phone: 1-888-429-8167
- Mi'kmaq Crisis Line
Phone: 1-855-379-2099

Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health Centre

Nova Scotia Health and IWK websites are a good source of information about local programs and services.

- Nova Scotia Health
Website: nshealth.ca
- IWK Health Centre
Website: iwkhealth.ca

Provincial Government Departments

Department of Community Services

*For a listing of regional offices see **Community Services and Child Development** (page 128)*

Website: novascotia.ca/coms

Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change

Phone: 1-877-9ENVIRO (1-877-936-8476)

Website: novascotia.ca/nse

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Website: ednet.ns.ca

Department of Health and Wellness

For information and resources on health promotion and health care in Nova Scotia:

Website: novascotia.ca/dhw

Public Health

Immunizations

You'll find immunization schedules at:

Website: novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Routine-Immunization-Schedules-for-Children-Youth-Adults.pdf

Lyme Disease and Other Communicable Diseases

For information on Lyme disease and other communicable diseases:

Website: novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc

Public Health Offices

- Amherst 1-800-767-3319 or (902) 667-3319
- Antigonish (902) 867-4500 ext. 4800
- Baddeck (902) 295-2178
- Barrington Passage (902) 742-7141
- Berwick (902) 542-6310
- Bridgewater (902) 543-0850
- Cheticamp (902) 224-2410
- Digby (902) 742-7141
- Elmsdale (902) 883-3500
- Glace Bay (902) 842-4050
- Guysborough (902) 533-3502
- Halifax Regional Municipality
and Eastern Shore (902) 481-5800
- Inverness (902) 258-1920
- Liverpool (902) 543-0850
- Lunenburg (902) 543-0850
- Meteghan Centre (902) 742-7141
- Middleton (902) 542-6310
- Neil's Harbour (902) 336-2295
- New Glasgow (902) 752-5151
- New Waterford (902) 862-2204
- North Sydney (902) 794-2009
- Port Hawkesbury (902) 625-1693
- Shelburne (902) 742-7141
- Sydney (902) 563-2400
- Truro (902) 893-5820
- Wolfville (902) 542-6310
- Yarmouth (902) 742-7141

Recreation and Physical Activity

Physical Activity

Active for Life

Website: activeforlife.com

Recreation Nova Scotia

Check this website for information about programs and services in your community.

Website: recreationns.ns.ca

Safety

- Child Safety Link
Phone: (902) 470-6496 or 1-866-288-1388
(Toll free)
Website: childsafetylink.ca
- Consumer Product Safety (For information about product recalls)
Phone: 1-866-662-0666 (Toll free)
Website: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety.html
- Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change
Being prepared for and staying safe during natural disasters and severe weather
Website: novascotia.ca/nse/environmental-health/emergencies-and-extreme-weather.asp
- Health Canada (For information about lead-based paint)
Website: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/environmental-contaminants/lead/lead-information-package-some-commonly-asked-questions-about-lead-human-health.html
- Health Canada (For information about children's sleepwear flammability guidelines).
Website: canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/legislation-guidelines/guidelines-policies/guide-children-sleepwear-flammability-requirement.html
- Public Health Agency of Canada — Safe Sleep for Your Baby
Website: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/childhood-adolescence/stages-childhood/infancy-birth-two-years/safe-sleep/safe-sleep-your-baby-brochure.html
- Atlantic Canada Poison Centre (For non-emergencies and information about poisons)
Phone: 1-800-565-8161 (Toll free)
In HRM: (902) 470-8161
Website: atlanticcanadapoissoncentre.ca
In an emergency: 911
- Safe Kids Canada
Website: parachute.ca/en/
- Transport Canada (For car seat safety information)
Phone: 1-800-333-0371 (Toll free)
Website: tc.canada.ca/en/road-transportation
(Click on **Child car seat safety**)
- Canadian Red Cross Society — Nova Scotia
Phone: (902) 423-3680
Website: redcross.ca
- St. John Ambulance — Nova Scotia
Phone: (902) 463-5646 or 1-800-565-5056
Website: sja.ca

Sexual Health Centres

Amherst

- Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland County
82 Church Street, Amherst
Phone: (902) 667-7500
Website: sexualhealthmatters.ca

Bridgewater

- Sexual Health Centre Lunenburg County
109 Logan Road, Unit 1B, Bridgewater
Phone: (902) 527-2868
Website: southshoresexualhealth.com

Halifax Regional Municipality

- Halifax Sexual Health Centre
7071 Bayers Road, Suite 302, Halifax
Phone: (902) 455-9656
Website: hshc.ca

Kentville

- The Red Door—Adolescent Health and Support Centre
(Offers services to clients up to age 30)
35 Webster Street, Suite 202, Kentville
Phone: (902) 679-1411
Website: thereddoor.ca

Sheet Harbour

- Sheet Harbour Sexual Health Centre
Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital
22637 Highway 7, Sheet Harbour
Phone: (902) 885-3693

Stellarton

- Pictou County Centre for Sexual Health
279 Foord Street, Stellarton
Phone: (902) 695-3366

Sydney

- Cape Breton Centre for Sexual Health
Phone: (902) 919-4922

Women's Centres**Antigonish**

- Antigonish Women's Resource Centre
Kirk Place, 219 Main Street, Suite 204,
Antigonish
Phone: (902) 863-6221

Bridgetown

- The Women's Place
38 Queen Street, Bridgetown
Phone: (902) 665-5166

Halifax Regional Municipality

- Dalhousie Women's Centre
6286 South Street, Halifax
Phone: (902) 494-2432

Lunenburg

- Second Story Women's Centre
22 King Street, Lunenburg
Phone: (902) 543-1315

New Glasgow

- Pictou County Women's Centre
503 South Frederick Street, New Glasgow
Phone: (902) 755-4647

Sheet Harbour

- LEA Place Women's Centre
22709 Highway #7, Sheet Harbour
Phone: (902) 885-2668

Sydney

- Every Woman's Centre
102 Townsend Street, Sydney
Phone: (902) 567-1212

Truro

- Central Nova Women's Resource Centre
535 Prince Street, Truro
Phone: (902) 895-4295

Yarmouth

- Tri-County Women's Centre
238 Main Street, Yarmouth
Phone: (902) 742-0085

Thanks!



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Parent Health Education Resource Working Group (2008-2011)

- **Jennifer Macdonald**, (Co-chair), Provincial Health Educator, Department of Health and Wellness
- **Kathy Inkpen**, Family Health Coordinator, Department of Health and Wellness
- **Bonnie Anderson**, Public Health Nutritionist, Capital Health
- **Susan DeWolf**, Family Support Worker, Extra Support for Parents Volunteer Service, IWK Health Centre
- **Natasha Horne**, Community Program Coordinator, Dartmouth Family Centre
- **Sherry MacDonald**, Public Health Nurse, Guysborough Antigonish Strait & Cape Breton District Health Authorities
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- Kids First Family Resource Centre, Guysborough
- Dartmouth Family Centre, Dartmouth
- Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre, Truro
- Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre, Amherst
- Supportive Housing for Young Mothers Advisory Board, Halifax
- East Preston Family Resource Centre, East Preston
- Native Council of Nova Scotia, Liverpool
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- Tanya Poulette, Community Health Nurse, Membertou Wellness Centre
- Judith Purcell, Prevention Coordinator, Cancer Care Nova Scotia

- Melissa Reede, Outreach Worker, Juniper House, South West Nova Transition House Association, Yarmouth, and facilitator of *Crossroads of Parenting and Divorce* (A purchased program from Active Parenting Publishers)
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Alderney Gate Public Library
 Cole Harbour Place
 Cyclesmith
 Dartmouth Family Resource Centre
 East Preston Day Care Centre
 Halifax Central Library
 Halifax Grupo de Capoeira
 Halifax Osteopathic Health Centre
 Halifax Waterfront
 Izaak Walton Killam (IWK) Health Centre
 Maritime Museum of the Atlantic
 Parade Square
 Peter Green Hall Children's Centre
 Planet Organic Market
 Point Pleasant Park
 Porters' Point

Radisson Suite Hotel Halifax
 Supportive Housing for Young Mothers
 Taproot Farms
 The Discovery Centre
 The Public Gardens
 Victoria General Hospital (Farmers' Market)
 Village of Chester Public Beach

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Thanks!



Loving Care



*All four Loving Care books
can be downloaded at:*

nshealth.ca/parenting-supports

Loving Care is given **free of charge**
to all new parents in Nova Scotia.

Loving Care



Parents and Families

2024

