

CONNECTING TOGETHER: PLAYING

Speaking for the Baby x SMS4dads Campaign

By the time that they are born, babies' brains are wired to connect with you. If you spend time together, getting to know each other early on, it helps create a strong bond between you. Maybe pick a routine that you can be expert at. Bath time might be one to try. Dads are often home in time to bath their baby. This might be special dad and baby time, and a way to become the expert in what baby likes best in the bath. Playing and laughing together can help relax both of you.

Bathtime fun!

Bath time is when you can bond with me by splashing and laughing and hugging me in my towel.



Lots of attention

It is not possible to spoil a baby with too much attention or by giving them too much smiling and affection. The small interactions with you playing or soothing and comforting helps build safety and trust. You are letting baby know that if they need something you will try to meet their need. But you are also teaching your baby about what they are feeling. Babies will watch your face to see what you are feeling and that helps them figure out their own feelings.

Current neuroscience tells us that repeatedly soothing an upset baby develops pathways in their brain for soothing when upset and these pathways get stronger over time with repeated experiences. In other words, the more you can help them find soothing comfort in the early days, weeks and months of life the stronger those parts of their brain will develop, and the easier baby will be able to find a sense of calm when they get upset into the future.

Enjoying each other

There are lots of benefits for both you and your baby when you are enjoying each other.

Good for baby:

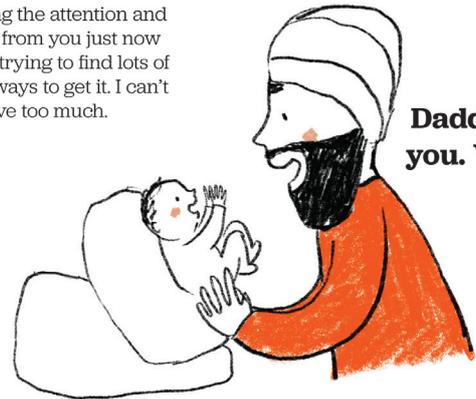
- Feeling good when you are near
- Learning ways to communicate
- Learning how to take turns
- Finding ways to be funny and enjoy each other
- Helps them get to know themselves, what they enjoy

Good for dad:

- A mood boost playing with baby
- A way to get to know what baby likes—what makes them giggle
- Increased confidence spending time with baby
- Stronger bond with baby

I love your attention, Dad!

I am loving the attention and affection from you just now dad. I am trying to find lots of different ways to get it. I can't have too much.



Daddy loves you. Yes I do.

Peek-a-Boo



When you hide your eyes while playing peek-a-boo I think you have disappeared.



When you take your hands away it's magic. This gets me every time Dad.

Floor time fun!

Playing with me on the floor might help us connect. Singing, making funny faces, talking and walking are all good ways to play with me now dad.



Peekaboo!

Written by A/Prof Richard Fletcher and Dr Bronwyn Leigh for SMS4dads and the Centre for Perinatal Psychology.

Illustrations by Jess Racklyeft for the Speaking for the Baby Campaign.

