

# Baby playtime

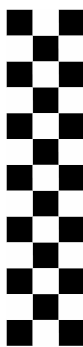
Play is a crucial way for babies to explore and learn about themselves, the world, and the people around them. Playtime with your baby doesn't require expensive toys but should involve connecting through eye contact, facial expressions, changes in your tone of voice, and sharing words of encouragement. These simple actions create a powerful combination of love and bonding. Through play, your baby will experience the joy of being with others. By the end of the first year, the volume of your baby's brain will have doubled in size, aided by the sensory learning they have been exposed to within the world around them.

## PLAY IDEAS FROM BIRTH TO ONE YEAR

- **Tummy time** - This is a great way to build your baby's upper body strength right from birth. Start by placing your baby on your chest when they are unlikely to fall asleep. Gradually increase the duration of tummy time and progress on to the floor, laying your baby on a mat with a cushion for support.



- **Black and white patterns** - Babies take time to see and understand colour. They are stimulated by the high contrast between black and white. Using a black card and a white chalk pen you can create simple patterns and pictures to show your baby. Watch as they focus on the patterns and follow the page with their head as you move it, helping strengthen the muscles in your baby's neck and head.



- **Books and songs** - Reading and singing to your baby will greatly improve their early literacy skills. Books will help them understand that words have meaning and are linked to images. Songs will introduce rhythm and communication skills. You can borrow books from your local library and nursery rhymes can be found online. Alternatively, you can create your own songs and stories!



- **Tissue boxes** - Allow your baby to pull each individual tissue out of the box. You have the fun job of putting them all back in again!



- **Treasure basket** - This activity taps into your baby's natural sense of curiosity and need for exploration. Fill a wide, shallow baby-friendly basket or container with various household items and loose parts. You could include kitchen utensils, sponges, scrubbing brushes, toothbrushes, plastic bottles, spoons, ribbon, dishcloths, or other clean, safe items you can find at home. Change and check the objects regularly and choose items carefully, appropriate to the age and stage of your child. Avoid small items which could pose a choking hazard or be poked into their nose or ears.

- **Baby massage** - This is a relaxing activity for your baby to enjoy after their evening bath as part of their bedtime routine. Apply natural oil or lotion to your fingertips and rub between your palms. Apply the oil or lotion to your baby's skin using gentle motions across different areas of their body in circular or swiping motions.

- **Mirror** - Babies love faces, especially those of their parents and caregivers. Your baby can learn to track movements and develop their muscles when reaching and rolling towards their reflection. Encourage your baby to point to different parts of their body, work on imitation skills by pulling funny faces, or try performing a puppet show in front of the mirror.



For younger children always be aware of choking – toys/loose parts intended for children under 36 months must not present a choking risk. A test can be carried out using a 'small parts cylinder' (toys or parts of toys/loose parts that can fit entirely inside the cylinder are identified as choking hazards).