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“From the terrible two’s to becoming a threenager, every parent needs a survival guide to the pre-school years.”



BOOK

3

Age 2 to starting school

Helping you and your child to grow together as a healthy, happy family

Welcome to the Every Child series of health and wellbeing resources for parents.

Booklet 3:

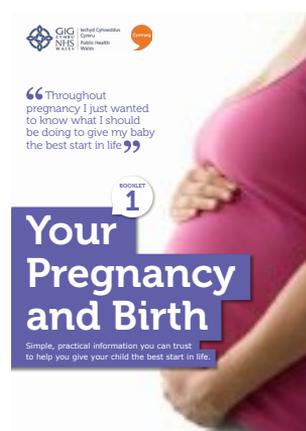
Age 2 to starting school

With you at every step

Every parent's journey looks different, and if you have a toddler, this booklet is for you. It gives you key information to help you support your child as they grow from age 2 to age 4.

Toddlers are full of energy and curiosity, which can be both fun and challenging. This stage can feel like a big change, and many parents find themselves learning new ways to cope and connect with their child.

“Above all, parents want their children to be healthy and happy.”



Your toddler is learning to talk, move, and express themselves, which can be exciting but also tiring. Some days will be easier than others, and that's completely normal. Every parent has moments of doubt — you're not alone, and you're doing your best.

This age is often about trying different approaches to see what works for your family. Your child needs your help to understand their feelings and frustrations. Just like earlier stages,

there will be ups and downs, but your love and care make all the difference.

All parents want their children to be happy and healthy. This booklet is part of a series of parenting resources, which includes tips from other parents and advice from health professionals.

Inside, you'll find helpful information, practical tips, and links to trusted websites and support services. You'll receive more booklets as your child continues to grow.



What's inside this guide

This booklet is all about the toddler years – from age 2 to age 4 – a time full of growth, learning, and big emotions. Your child will start moving more, talking more, and exploring the world in new ways. It's also a time when they might push boundaries and test your patience!

Parents have told us they want clear, helpful advice to support their child's health, development, and wellbeing. This guide includes tips for

handling tricky moments and ideas for what to do when your toddler is being especially demanding.

You'll also find ways to keep your family safe and healthy, and how to create a loving, secure environment that helps your child thrive. If you ever need extra support, we've included suggestions for where to find it. You won't be alone during this stage – your health visitor will still be on hand to help and support you.



Parents and carers

When this booklet talks about 'parents', it means those involved in raising a child. It can mean a single carer or lone parent and those who are raising a child together, whether as partners, co-parenting, or other significant people involved in the child's life.

The information is designed to support you and your parenting partner, as well as other significant adults involved in your child's life. You'll find suggestions on how to support each other through toddlerhood, practical tips for navigating tricky situations, and activities to enjoy together as a family. These shared experiences help build strong foundations for everyone's health and happiness in the long term.

Your health and wellbeing

You are the most important person in your child's life. When you feel well — physically, mentally and emotionally — you're better able to support your child as they grow.

This booklet talks about both the happy and tough parts of parenting, and where to get help if you need it. You'll find tips on looking after your own wellbeing, like staying active, eating well, and building a support network. These things can help you feel more confident and cope better with the ups and downs of parenting.

Your relationships and support networks

Sometimes life brings challenges like arguments at home, mental health struggles, alcohol or drug use, or domestic violence. These can affect both you and your child, even at a

young age. If you or your partner are facing any of these issues, this booklet includes information on where to get help and support.

We've also added advice on practical things like parenting, money, and housing. Getting the right support can make a big difference for you and your family.

Managing the toddler stage

Just when you feel like you've found your rhythm as a parent, your child becomes a toddler — with new needs, growing independence, and big emotions. This stage can bring fresh challenges. Toddlers are curious and full of energy, but they're still learning how to understand the world around them. Their developing brains can easily get overwhelmed, which often leads to meltdowns and tantrums.



This booklet is here to help you make sense of these changes and support your toddler as they learn to manage their feelings and express themselves. Staying calm and connected during tricky moments can make a big difference. And just as important, learning to manage your own emotions shows your child how to do the same — they're watching and learning from you every day.

Happy and healthy families

This booklet covers how to support your toddler's growth from ages 2 to 4. You'll find tips on healthy eating, portion sizes, and hydration to help their brain and body develop. There's advice on meal planning and handling tricky mealtimes.

We also talk about challenging behaviour, daily routines, and potty training. You'll learn how to support

your child's development in a calm, safe environment, and how play, conversation, and understanding their needs can boost their learning, confidence, and communication.

Keeping your toddler safe

This booklet also includes essential advice to help you keep your toddler safe and reduce the risk of harm.

You'll find practical tips on making your home safer, keeping your child safe when you're out and about, and basic first aid for accidents.

There's also guidance on protecting against infections, looking after their dental and eye health, and knowing what to do in an emergency. Plus, we've included information on where to go for the right help at the right time, so you feel supported when you need it most.





Preparing for childcare

Many parents tell us they want clear, simple information about childcare options and how to access them. In this booklet, we explain some of the different childcare settings available, what to think about when choosing one, and what financial support might be available to help you.

We know that choosing a childcare provider or school can feel like a big decision. That's why we have included helpful links, practical tips, and advice to support you and your child as you get ready for this important step.

Accessing information

There are lots of helpful links throughout this booklet that take you to more information online. You can open them on your phone or other mobile devices. For quick access, you can also scan the QR code below to go straight to the main website.

“I don't think anything can prepare you for what the reality is.”



The information in this booklet is correct at the time of publishing – January 2026.

What's covered

Here are the key topics covered in this booklet.

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Raising a happy, healthy child

In this section:

- your child's rights
- your child's brain development
- speech, language and communication
- managing big emotions and feelings
- helping them stay healthy to help them grow



Your child's rights

Raising a child is full of joyful moments — from watching them grow to seeing their personality take shape. This section offers simple, practical ways to support your child's development and help them thrive.

By now, you will have realised that your child is being more active and exploring the world around them – through play, outdoor adventures and new experiences. These moments play an important role in shaping their overall wellbeing and development. Whether they're discovering more about their bodies, learning to express themselves in new ways, or figuring out what they like and dislike, these are big changes for your toddler.

With so much happening, it's natural for them to feel uncertain or overwhelmed at times. Their bodies and minds are full of new feelings and emotions — and while they might sometimes be able to tell you how they feel, other times they may struggle to find the words. That's why it's so important to give them time, space, and reassurance as they navigate these changes in their own way.





You can support them by encouraging creative expression — through painting, drawing, imaginative play, or simply spending time together. These activities can help your child communicate what they're feeling, even when they can't say it out loud. By being present and engaged with them, you'll start to notice the little clues in what they do and say, helping you understand their feelings and needs.

As your child steps into this exciting "new world", having you by their side makes all the difference. When they see that you are really listening to them and interested in what they're thinking and feeling, it helps them feel safe, understood, and happy. Your support and attention show them that they're not alone as they grow and explore.

Parenting is a learning journey, and you're doing a great job. Remember, your Health Visitor is still available to support you with your child's health, wellbeing, and development.

All children are protected by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) till they turn eighteen. These are in addition to the human rights all people have. These rights are there to give children the best chance of growing up happy, healthy, and safe.

All parents want the best for their children. Knowing about their rights can really help us feel more confident as parents — especially when it comes to supporting their health and development as they grow and get ready for school. These rights — like being safe, having a voice, and getting the support they need — apply in all parts of their lives, whether they're in childcare, at school, seeing a doctor, or spending time with family and friends. It's all about helping them feel secure, heard, and cared for wherever they are.

Need to do

As a parent, you play an important role in making sure your child's rights are respected and supported. Visit www.childcomwales.org.uk/uncrc-guide-for-parents



Supporting your child's rights

You can help your child feel happy, healthy, and safe by trying to see the world — and their rights — from their eyes.

Ages 2-3 years — Look at me now!

- Watch me to work out what I am saying or feeling
- I find it easier to talk and play with an adult I know and trust
- Enter "my world"
- Take a real interest in what I have to say or share
- Change can be scary for me
- My body is full of big feelings, I sometimes need your help
- I'm starting to think about my own likes and dislikes
- Give me time and space to play, it is my world
- I'm learning and exploring how my body, things and people work

Ages 3-5 years — Watch me go, here I come

- Start to use some of the bigger words and talk about my rights with me
- Ask me but also try to think about what it is like for me
- Look at all the ways I am communicating with you — not just my words — I have got lots to tell you
- I need you to help me when I find things difficult
- Give me lots of opportunities to learn and try new things
- Hear what I say and act on it
- Allow me to follow my own interests and take the lead
- Support me to express, make, and share my own ideas

For more information about supporting your child's rights, visit www.gov.wales/what-are-childrens-rights-guidance-parents-and-carers

Physical punishment

Children should never be physically punished. Research shows that any type of physical punishment can be harmful. It involves using physical force to discipline a child — such as smacking, hitting, slapping, or shaking — and can cause both physical and emotional harm.

Physical punishment doesn't help children learn self-control or improve their behaviour. Instead, it can hurt them, make them feel scared, angry, or confused, and send the message that violence is an acceptable way to deal with strong emotions. It's also linked to negative outcomes for children as they grow.

Physical punishment and the law

In Wales, the law is clear: **all physical punishment of children is illegal.**

This law protects children's right to feel safe and free from harm, giving them the same protection from assault as adults.

This means that any form of physical punishment — such as smacking, hitting, slapping, or shaking — is against the law. It applies to everyone, including parents, carers, and anyone looking after a child while the parent is away. It also applies to visitors to Wales.

Anyone who physically punishes a child is breaking the law and could be arrested or charged with assault. This law aims to make things simple and clear for families, professionals, and the public, while helping children grow up in safe and supportive environments.

Find out more

For more information and support, visit:

www.gov.wales/ending-physical-punishment-children



Your child's brain development

Your child's brain is growing rapidly — soaking up everything around them like a sponge. From copying your actions to picking up new words and skills, their development at this age is shaped by what they see, hear, and experience.

In recent years, a lot more has become known about how children's brains develop and how their early experiences create the foundations for their future health, wellbeing and learning.

The brain is the control centre for everything; it's not about being clever. Different areas of the brain are responsible for different things, such as movement, language and emotions, and these areas develop at different rates.

While we learn and develop throughout our lives, early childhood is particularly important. Through positive and nurturing interactions with parents and others, the brain can develop vital connections that your child will need to grow, learn and become healthy and happy adults.

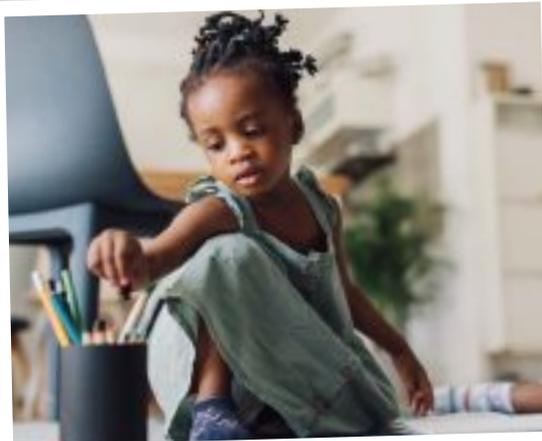
Find out more

To find out more about the importance of early childhood and how your child's brain will be developing, visit **shapingus.centreforearlychildhood.org**

Need to do

For free practical tips and expert advice for all your parenting challenges, visit **www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time**

“It's good to know what stimulates them and helps them develop.”



Supporting your child's development

Your child's brain is growing rapidly — soaking up everything around them like a sponge. You might notice them copying what you do, picking up new words, or surprising you with new skills. At this stage, their brain development is especially sensitive to the world around them, and your role as a parent is key.

Here are some simple, practical ways to support your child's healthy brain development:

A calm, safe and loving home

Children are sensitive to their surroundings. When you stay calm and create a peaceful environment, it helps your child feel settled. They're still learning how to manage big feelings — and they'll often look to you for guidance.



Love and attention

How you respond to your child matters. When you respond with warmth, consistency, and care, it helps your child feel safe and secure — building a strong foundation for learning and emotional wellbeing.



Positive experiences

Everyday moments like smiling, making eye contact, singing, talking, or "cwtching" (cuddling) all help your child's brain form healthy connections. These small interactions are powerful ways to bond and support their development.



Fun and learning activities

Play is essential for brain growth. Whether it's messy play, outdoor adventures, or quiet time with books and songs, these activities help your child explore, learn, and make sense of the world.



Good nutrition

A healthy, balanced diet supports both physical and brain development.



Developmental stages

You know your child best. Every child develops at their own pace. It's normal for young children to be busy and full of energy — It's part of how they grow and learn.

If something doesn't feel quite right or you're unsure about any part of their development, it's okay to ask for help. Your health visitor is there to offer advice, reassurance, and support — you're never alone in this.

To support your child's development, there are key physical and communication milestones most children reach before starting primary school — and there are simple, supportive activities you can do at home to help them along their developmental journey.

“It does sound silly, but I didn't realise the importance on their brains of playing and interacting with them.”



Need to do

Playing is an important part of a happy and healthy childhood and will help with your child's development, for play ideas visit, [playfulchildhoods.wales](https://www.playfulchildhoods.wales)

What to expect around age 2

By around two years old, your child is developing quickly — both physically and in how they communicate.

Physical skills

Your child may be able to kick a ball, run and stop safely, jump with both feet, climb stairs with support, and steer toys around obstacles. They might also drink from a cup, use a spoon, turn book pages, flip switches, and thread beads or pasta. Pretend play, like caring for a doll or cuddly toy, is also common.

Communication skills

At this age, children often enjoy pretend play, name familiar objects, and use words like “me”, “mine”, and “you”. They may start putting two or three words together, follow simple instructions, and tidy up by putting things back where they belong.

Encouraging your toddler’s development

Play is one of the most powerful ways to support your child’s growth. Through everyday activities, your toddler builds physical skills, learns to communicate, and begins to understand the world around them. Here are some fun and simple ideas you can explore together:

- Messy play, water play, and sand play
- Sorting boxes and matching games
- Hammer and peg toys
- Simple jigsaw puzzles
- Building with wooden blocks or model toys
- Looking at picture books together
- Drawing and colouring with crayons
- Using glove puppets for storytelling
- Pretend and imaginative play
- Copying each other’s actions or sounds





What to expect around age 3

By age 3, your child is becoming more confident in their movements and communication.

Physical skills

Your child may be able to walk on tiptoes, climb stairs using alternate feet, stand briefly on one foot, catch a large ball, pedal a tricycle, and climb furniture or play equipment.

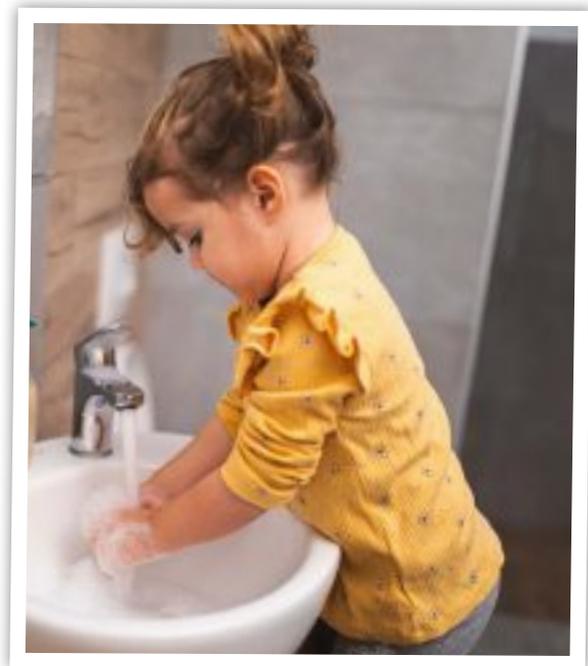
Communication and social skills

They might say their name, age, and sex, count to 10, enjoy imaginative and pretend play, take turns with others, and use words like "me," "you," and "I" correctly. They may also begin to understand sharing, describe pictures in books, and dress themselves in simple clothing.

Encouraging your toddler's development

Play will continue to be a key part of learning and growth. Here are some activities to explore together:

- Trips to the park
- Arts and crafts
- Matching and sorting games
- Pretend and imaginative play
- Building with bricks, boxes, trains, and dolls
- Sensory play (e.g. sand, water, jigsaws, threading, drawing, colouring)
- Talking about feelings using toys



What to expect around age 4

By age 4, your child is becoming more independent and confident in both movement and communication.

Physical skills

Your child may be able to walk up and down stairs using alternate feet, pedal a tricycle or bike with stabilisers, hop, stand on one foot, and throw or catch a ball. They might also climb playground equipment, draw a person with basic features, use cutlery, undo buttons and zips, and begin cutting paper with child-safe scissors.

Communication, problem-solving, and behaviour

At this stage, children often know their full name, sing nursery rhymes, enjoy longer stories, and tell their own. They may ask lots of questions, show empathy, play in small groups, and follow more complex instructions. You might also notice them naming colours, calming themselves when upset, and expressing how they feel.

Encouraging your child's development

Here are some fun and supportive activities to explore with your child:

- Outdoor play (e.g. climbing frames, hopscotch)
- Musical games like musical statues
- Construction toys, puzzles, and board games
- Arts and crafts, including playdough
- Picture books and storytelling
- Matching games (e.g. pairs)
- Practising dressing and undressing
- Encouraging independence with toileting
- Simple computer activities using a mouse
- Imaginative play and roleplay

Getting ready for school

To support your child's transition to school, there are a few everyday skills that are helpful to practise at home. Your child may already be confident with some of these, or they might be learning them for the first time:

- following simple instructions
- feeding themselves
- using the toilet independently
- getting dressed
- washing their hands

These skills help build your child's confidence and independence as they prepare for the school environment. For more information, visit www.gov.wales/talk-with-me

Potty training

Every child is different – they learn to walk and talk at different times, and they learn how to use the toilet at different times, too.

Most children are ready to be potty-trained sometime in their second year. The longer you leave it, the harder it can be for your child to learn this new skill and accept not having a nappy on anymore.

You don't need to wait until your child can do everything on their own before starting potty training. Most children learn to control when and where they poo before they learn to control their wee. Start by talking to your child about it, showing them the potty or toilet, and keeping things relaxed and fun.

Accidents are part of the learning process — especially when your child is busy, excited, or upset. Keep spare clothes handy and stay positive. Most children are reliably dry during the day by the time they're around four years old.

Here are some simple tips to help:

Preparation

- Check that your child's poo is soft each day.
- Make sure they're drinking plenty of water.

- Change wet or soiled nappies quickly to help them get used to feeling clean and dry.

Practice

- Try sitting your child on the potty at helpful times — like after waking up, after meals, or when they show signs, they need to go.

Saying goodbye to nappies

- When you feel ready, let your child know it's time to stop using nappies. You can make it a positive moment by saying goodbye to them together.

Praise and encouragement

- Celebrate their efforts, even if they don't get it right every time.
- Use gentle prompts like, "It's potty time," instead of asking, "Do you need the potty?"

Signs they might need to go

- They may tell you directly.
- They might go quiet, fidget, or hide.
- They may crouch or strain.

Need to do

To help your child learn the skills they need to make potty training easier, visit www.eric.org.uk/potty-training





Bedwetting

Bedwetting is very common in children under five — and it usually goes away on its own. You can reassure your child that lots of children wet the bed, it's nothing to worry about, and they will grow out of it.

Here are some gentle tips to help:

- Remind your child to use the toilet before bedtime.
- Make sure they drink plenty of water during the day and eat enough fibre — this helps keep their tummy settled at night.
- Let them know you're happy to help if they wake up needing the toilet.
- Use a nightlight or keep a potty nearby if they're nervous about getting up in the dark.
- Reassure them that accidents are normal and part of learning.

Find out more

For more advice and support on bed wetting visit,
www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/tricky-moments-and-behaviours/bed-wetting

Your child's growing world

Your child's growing world

As your child grows, they'll start forming new friendships and exploring the world around them. These early experiences help them learn how to connect with others, build relationships, and appreciate the diversity of the people they meet.

Through play, conversations, and everyday interactions, your child will meet others from a wide range of families, cultures, and backgrounds. This might include families with different beliefs or traditions, different ethnicities, or families that look different to yours — such as single-parent families, adoptive families, families with same-sex parents (LGBT+), or families where someone has a disability.

Need to know

LGBT+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The plus (+) includes other identities like non-binary, intersex, and asexual. You might also see it written as LGBT, LGBTQIA, or LGBTQ — they all refer to people with different gender identities and sexual orientations.

As your child's communication and curiosity develop, it's a great time to start having simple, age-appropriate conversations about love, family, identity, disability, and culture. These conversations help your child understand and respect others, and encourage kindness, empathy, and acceptance.

For support with these conversations, visit:

- talking with children about LGBT+ guide for parents and carers – Just Like Us: [justlikeus.org/lgbt-guide-for-parents](https://www.justlikeus.org/lgbt-guide-for-parents)
- talking to children about racism – NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/children-race-racism-racial-bullying/?utm_old=racism
- talk with children about disabilities – SCOPE: www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/explaining-disability-to-kids



Speech, language and communication

Every time you play, talk or listen to your child, you're helping them learn to communicate and giving them the best possible start in life.

Your child's brain is amazing, and the small things you do each day — like chatting, singing, or sharing stories — make a big difference now and for their future. Speech, language, and communication skills form the foundations for reading and writing skills.

Below are some reminders of what to expect from your child as they grow and develop, with links to advice and resources that will help you as a parent to support your child's language and brain development.

Remember, you are not alone, if you have any questions or concerns about your child's speech, language or communication development, speak to your health visitor.



Need to know

Talk with Me offers a range of tools, tips and advice to help you support your child's speech, language and communication skills. Find out more at www.gov.wales/talk-with-me

What to expect around age 2

- They can understand longer sentences, like “your shoes are upstairs”
- They are starting to use lots of single words, 50 or more.
- They may not say the different vowels or consonants correctly, like “a e i o u” or “d t b d w” properly.
- They may miss the last sound off words like “hat” might be pronounced “ha”.
- They may miss out sounds where consonants blend, like “green” may be said as “gee” or “dee”, “bread” may be said as “bed” or “beh”.
- They are starting to put some words together to make sentences, like ‘teddy gone’ or ‘Daddy ball’.
- They can play alongside other children.
- They might be starting to share, but it’s quite hard for them.

What to expect around age 3

- Children are using longer sentences like, “I saw Nana” or “I’m going to get a toy car”.
- They may stumble over their words and repeat themselves.
- They are beginning to understand question words like “who?”, “what?” and “where?”.
- They enjoy playing games with other children and know all about taking turns.
- They may struggle doing one thing and listening to an instruction about something else.

What to expect around age 4

- What your child says can be understood even by people who don’t know them well, but they might still find some sounds hard to make, like “l”, “y” “sh” and “ch”.
- Children ask lots of questions, especially “why...?”
- They are beginning to understand colour, number and time words, like “the blue cup”, “show me three fingers”, “we are going tomorrow”.
- They can use their words to tell you about how they are feeling like “sad”, “hungry” and “happy” and about their ideas like “let’s build a den”.
- They are beginning to understand describing words, like “that’s a big rock”, “snails crawl slowly” or “the rain makes our clothes wet”.
- They will play together with others, share resources and communicate.

Supporting your child's speech, language and communication

There are lots of things you can do at home or when out and about to support your child's speech, language and communication skills.

Here are a few tips:

- Help your child learn new words and sentences by adding a word to what you have heard them say. If they say "cat", you can say "yes, the cat's sleeping".
- Give your child time to talk with you. If you are busy, say so and go back to them when you have more time to listen and join in with them.
- Give your child time to process what you have said to them. This helps them to process what you have said and time to respond to you.
- Talk with your child about what they are doing rather than asking them lots of questions. Questions can make a child feel pressured to talk.
- Look at storybooks together and talk about the pictures. Sharing books with your child helps them to learn new words.
- Let your child lead play time and let them talk about what they're doing. This helps their creativity and encourages brain development.
- Remove background noises or distractions to help them concentrate.
- Make time to listen to music, sing, and use silly voices with your child.

This is a great way to have fun and encourages brain development.

- Repeat the correct version of what the child said without asking them to copy you. For example, if they say "I got fips from the sop", you could reply, "You got crisps from the shop – lucky you!"

“I didn't read to her, but my Mum did and then she'd come out with all sorts of stuff and I'd be, like, 'Where did she learn that?' and my Mum would say that it was from a story that she did with her.”

Need to know

If you are concerned about your child's speech, language and communication, you can contact your health visitor or speak to staff at your child's childcare setting.

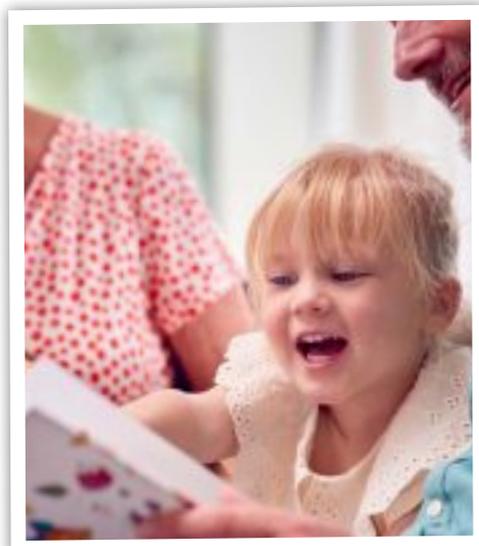
Taking time to share stories

Sharing stories with your child — even for just a few minutes a day — can make a big difference now and in the years to come. Sharing stories with your child helps them to:

- Feel calm and connected
- Learn new words and ideas
- Do better at school
- Build imagination and creativity
- Understand others and develop empathy

The Book Trust Cymru offers lots of great tools to help make reading fun at home and to help you choose the next book to enjoy with your child. You can find out more at www.booktrust.org.uk/about-us/booktrust-cymru

You don't need to buy lots of new books—your local library can help you find books to share with your child, free of charge. To find your local library, visit www.gov.wales/find-your-local-authority



Need to know

There are lots of services across Wales to help your child with their speech, language and communication skills.

The Family Information Service is available for parents to contact if they would like advice and support with regards to local services. Visit www.gov.wales/find-your-local-family-information-service

Developing language skills

Bilingual: a bilingual person can speak **two languages**. For example, a child who speaks English at school and Welsh at home is bilingual.

Multilingual: a multilingual person can speak **more than two languages**. For example, someone who speaks English, Welsh, and Polish is multilingual.

Being able to understand and speak more than one language is a wonderful skill! It can help them:

- stay connected to their culture
- chat with family members
- make friends and feel part of their community

Most bilingual and multilingual children have one language they feel more confident using — this is called their preferred language. Speaking with your child in the language you feel most comfortable using helps them learn to communicate confidently and clearly. Learning two or more languages won't confuse your child. In fact, it can help them grow and learn in exciting ways.

Find out more

For more information on introducing your child to other languages in your home, visit www.gov.wales/talk-with-me

Welsh at home

Living in Wales means your child will naturally hear and see the Welsh language all around them — on signs, in songs, at childcare and school, and in the community. Children are brilliant language learners, and the earlier they're exposed to Welsh, the more confident and comfortable they'll become using it.

You don't need to be fluent yourself to support your child's bilingual journey. Creating a Welsh-friendly environment at home can make a big difference. Small, everyday moments are powerful opportunities to introduce the language in fun and meaningful ways.

Simple ways to bring Welsh into daily life:

- **Sing Welsh rhymes and songs** during routines like bath time, bedtime, or car journeys.
- **Share bilingual books** or listen to Welsh audiobooks and stories together.
- **Play simple games** using Welsh words — like colours, numbers, or animals.
- **Use Welsh phrases** in everyday conversations, even just a few words at a time.
- **Point out bilingual signs** when you're out and about — they're everywhere in Wales!



The more your child hears and uses Welsh, the more natural it will feel. And remember, it's not about perfection — it's about creating positive, playful experiences with the language. For more ideas and support on starting your bilingual journey, visit www.gov.wales/cymraeg-for-kids

Managing big emotions and feelings

Tantrums are common in children! This is a normal (but often frustrating) stage of development. As they grow, their tantrums will become less common as they develop the skills to manage their big emotions and feelings.

Usually, children have tantrums because they're beginning to have lots of feelings, but don't always know how to express them. Understanding the reasons and emotions behind your child's challenging behaviour doesn't mean you can ignore it, but it does help you work out how to respond. Also, knowing what is considered "normal behaviour" at different stages and in different circumstances helps you know whether you might need extra help.

Your role as a parent at this stage of your child's development is to help them learn how to behave — as well as how not to behave. It works best when you have a warm and loving relationship with your child and a supportive and positive atmosphere at home. If your child feels secure and loved, it will help them to learn how to manage frustrations and stay calm, just like you.

“Look around you and realise there are 10 other toddlers throwing tantrums at the same time!”

Need to know

Remember to never use physical punishment against a child. It is not effective, can cause lasting harm and is illegal in Wales. For more information visit, www.gov.wales/ending-physical-punishment-children

Need to do

If you are feeling stressed and angry a lot of the time, talk to your health visitor or GP, who will connect you with additional help and support.

Need to know

To learn more about tantrums and other challenging behaviour (e.g. biting or whining) and how you can guide your child's behaviour, visit **www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/booklets-and-information-sheets-to-support-parents/big-book-feelings**

Here are some things to try:

Talk with your child

Before a change, like going somewhere new or meeting a different adult, take a moment to tell your child what's happening. Let them know where you're going, what you'll do, and who you'll see. This helps them feel more prepared and can prevent upset.

Teach your child what behaviour is expected

Children learn by watching what you do. Setting a good example will help your child learn. For example, if you want your child to sit down to eat, sitting down together to eat family meals can help children learn this behaviour.



Helping your child to understand their feelings

As your child gets older, it's important to talk with them about how they feel. This helps them learn the words for different emotions and understand what those feelings mean. It also helps them notice how their actions affect others and how other people might be feeling too. These are important skills that will support them in school and as they grow up.

Praise your child for good behaviour

Praise is when you tell your child what you like about them or their behaviour. When your child gets praise for behaving well, especially if it comes with a cuddle, they will want to repeat that good behaviour in the future.



Set clear limits

Part of calm, fair discipline is about setting clear boundaries and limits on children's behaviour. When you use boundaries in the same way and for the same behaviour every time, your child knows what to expect.

Plan around their meal and nap times

Children can easily become overwhelmed when they're tired or hungry (or both), so try to ensure that they stick to their regular meal and nap times as much as possible and try not to over-excite them before they are due to eat or go to sleep.



Plan ahead

Try to work out the situations where your child might behave in challenging ways. For example, if your two-year-old always gets bored at the supermarket and won't sit in the trolley, you could plan ways to keep them entertained. Try getting them to count the fruit as you choose it, or take your child's favourite book for them to look at while they sit in the trolley.

Managing your own feelings

This is an important part of creating a warm and loving family environment. Parents tell us that it can be hard when children behave in challenging ways. It's normal to feel frustrated, stressed and angry.

If you can manage your own feelings in positive and healthy ways — for example, by staying calm, taking a few deep breaths, or even taking a break if you need to — you give your child a great example of how to behave.



Take a break

If you find yourself getting stressed and angry, and you don't know how to relieve your feelings, put your child in a safe place and take some time out until you feel calmer.

Parenting styles

Every parent's approach to parenting is different, and you may use a combination of these styles based on the situation. It is generally recommended to use a **positive parenting style** to help reinforce good behaviour from your child. You should **never use physical punishment**; it does not work, causes harm to your child, and is against the law.

Positive parenting

This style combines clear guidance with empathy and responsiveness. You set boundaries and guide your child, while also listening to their feelings and respecting their individuality. Think of it as "leading by example" — building trust, encouraging independence, and nurturing emotional wellbeing.

Strict parenting

This style involves setting clear rules and routines, with firm expectations about behaviour. It can be especially helpful in situations where safety is critical — such as road safety, cycling on the street, or playing near water (like rivers or the beach). Being clear and consistent helps children understand boundaries and stay safe.

Permissive parenting

This style is more relaxed and often involves giving in to your child's demands. It can happen when you're feeling tired, overwhelmed, or focused on other responsibilities. While it may offer short-term ease, it can sometimes lead to confusion about limits and expectations.

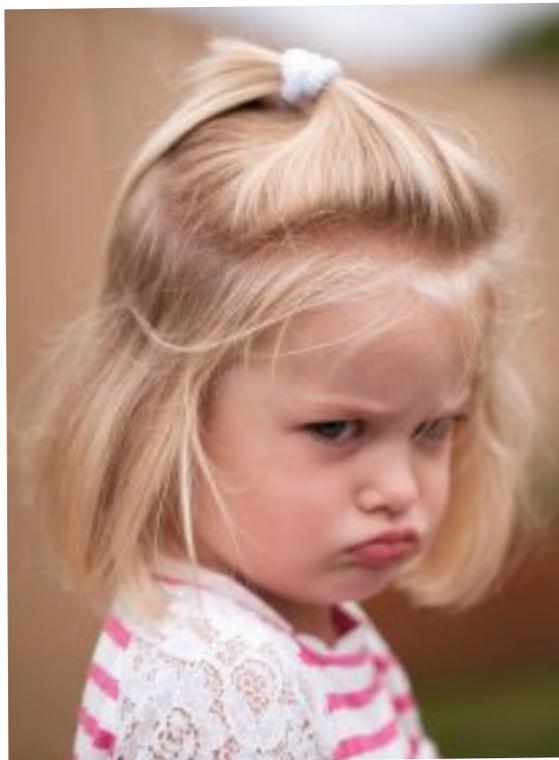
Uninvolved parenting

This style may emerge when life feels too busy or stressful — like when work demands make it hard to be fully present. You might find it difficult to switch off or engage with your child's needs. Recognising this can be the first step toward reconnecting and finding balance.

For further advice on parenting styles visit
www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/parenting-styles

Challenging behaviours

“I talk to her and tell what we’re now going to do, you know, like walking out of a café or shop and why.”



It’s normal and common for children to have big feelings that can lead to behaviours like tantrums, crying, shouting, or not listening. Using positive parenting tips can help you manage these behaviours. Finding a parenting style that suits you and your child can encourage good behaviour and help them feel supported.

When children feel safe and understood, they’re more able to express themselves. Taking time to talk, listen, and play with your child helps them learn about their feelings and interests and builds a strong bond between you.

Find out more

For more tips and advice, visit www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-listen

Helping them stay healthy to help them grow

Every child has the right to grow up happy, healthy, and safe. This means having access to clean water, nutritious food, a safe and clean environment, and protection from harm.

As a parent, you play a vital role in supporting your child's health and happiness through good nutrition and active play, which are key to their health and development — both now and in the future.

Eating well for growing bodies

Between the ages of 2 and 5, children should be eating the same foods as the rest of the family, following the **Eatwell Guide**. Homemade meals are ideal — you know exactly what's in them, and they help your child enjoy similar foods to everyone else.

Exploring a variety of foods early on can reduce fussy eating later and build healthy habits for life. Making food fun — through play, helping with cooking, or using storybooks and songs — can encourage curiosity and confidence around new foods.

For recipe ideas for family meals, visit www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes

Need to do

To help you get the right balance of different food groups across your meals see the Eatwell Guide online, www.gov.wales/eatwell-guide





Need to know

Children aged 2–4 are still learning how to chew and swallow safely. Always supervise them while eating and prepare food in ways that reduce choking risks — such as cutting grapes, cherry tomatoes into quarters and chop or flake nuts and seeds. For more advice on food choking hazards, visit www.food.gov.uk/document/early-years-food-choking-hazards

Food allergies

Some foods are more likely to cause allergic reactions. These foods include cow's milk, eggs, foods that contain gluten, including wheat, barley, and rye, peanuts and other nuts, soy, fish and shellfish.

If you think your child is reacting to any food, you should seek medical advice as soon as possible (**see Section 2**).

Speak to your health visitor or GP for advice on food allergies.

How much should my child eat?

Many parents tell us it can be hard to know exactly what their child should be eating and how much — especially now that they are growing, learning and are burning more energy!

Understanding how much to give to your child can sometimes be confusing. An easy way to get the right portion size is to use your child's hand as a guide — as your child grows so will their portion size. **Don't forget, smaller hands mean smaller tummies.**

Find out more

For further information on allergies, visit: www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/food-allergies-in-babies-and-young-children

For more advice, visit

- www.firststepsnutrition.org/eating-well-early-years
- www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/what-to-feed-young-children

Adult and child portion size chart



Your palm



One handful



Your fist



Your full hand



Two cupped hands



Your two fingers

Young children need **3 meals a day and 2–3 healthy snacks**, made up of a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

Fruit and Vegetables are really important for children — they provide the vitamins, minerals and fibre needed to grow and stay healthy.

- Aim for a minimum of 5 different portions of fruit and vegetables per day — as meals and snacks.
- Don't forget that fresh, frozen, dried and tinned all count — just make sure these are in fruit juice and not syrup.
- 1 portion = what they can hold in their hand!

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy

- Aim for 4–5 portions throughout the day — they should make up around 1/3 of the food served each day.
- Choose higher-fibre or wholegrain options when you can or even leave the skin on your potatoes for extra added fibre.

- They can include snacks such as breadsticks, pitta breads or rice cakes.

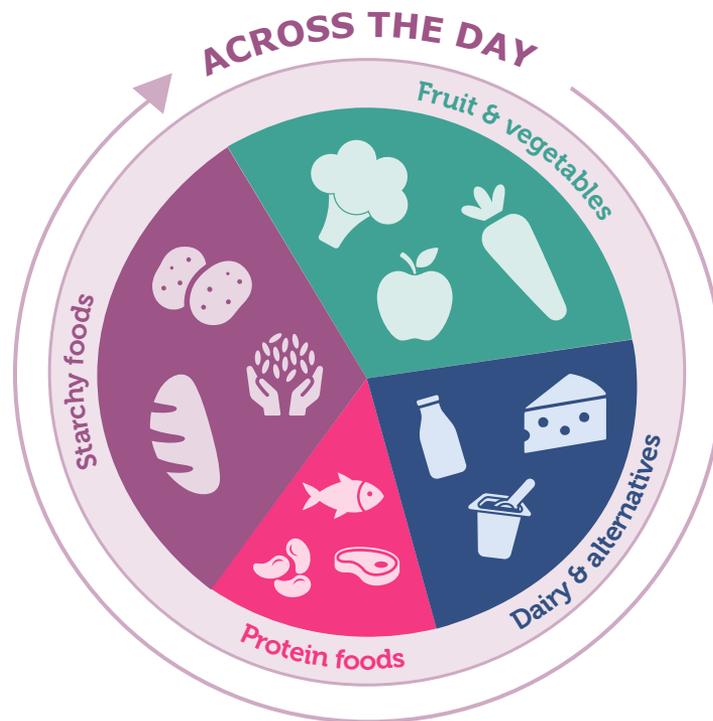
Dairy or alternative foods contain calcium for strong bones and teeth

- Three portions a day will give your child the calcium they need.
- This includes cheese, yoghurt, or milk — 100ml/ 3oz of milk or dairy alternatives, 60g of yoghurt, 15–20g of cheese.
- Plant-based alternatives are available — if you wish to include these, always choose varieties that are fortified with vitamins and minerals, including calcium and iodine.

Beans, Pulses, Fish, Eggs, Meat and Other Protein foods are essential for your child's growth and development

- Aim for 2–3 portions of protein foods each day.
- Don't forget beans, lentils, chickpeas, and nuts are a great option for increasing fibre.
- Aim to include a variety throughout the week.

Balanced Eating for 2-4 Year Olds



Tip: Hands are a great way to know when to increase the portion size for your child, as their hands grow so do their tummies!

Fruit & vegetables

5 portions a day

1 portion =  child's **handful**

Dairy & alternatives

3 portions a day

1 portion =  child's **fingers**

Protein foods

2–3 portions a day

1 portion =  child's **palm**

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein foods

Starchy foods

4–5 portions a day

1 portion =  child's **fist**

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

For more advice, visit www.nhs.uk/baby/weaning-and-feeding/what-to-feed-young-children

Understanding changes in appetite

It's completely normal for children's appetites to change from day to day. During growth spurts, they might seem hungry all the time. Other days, they may not be very interested in food — and that's okay. As long as your child is growing well and seems healthy, try not to worry too much — there will be good days and not too good days, but achieving balance over the week is best.

Children have small tummies (about the size of their clenched fist!), so they need to eat every few hours. Small, regular, healthy meals and snacks are best — they're less overwhelming and more suited to their energy needs.

It's also common for children to go through phases with food. One week, they might love something, and the next, they won't touch it. This can be frustrating, but it's a normal part of learning about food. Try not to pressure them — just keep offering a variety of healthy options. It can take several tries before a child accepts a new food.

Need to know

Dried fruit, such as raisins, should be given to your child with meals, rather than as a snack in between, as the sugar they contain can cause tooth decay.



Helping your child to eat well

Here are some tips from parents and professionals to support healthy eating habits:



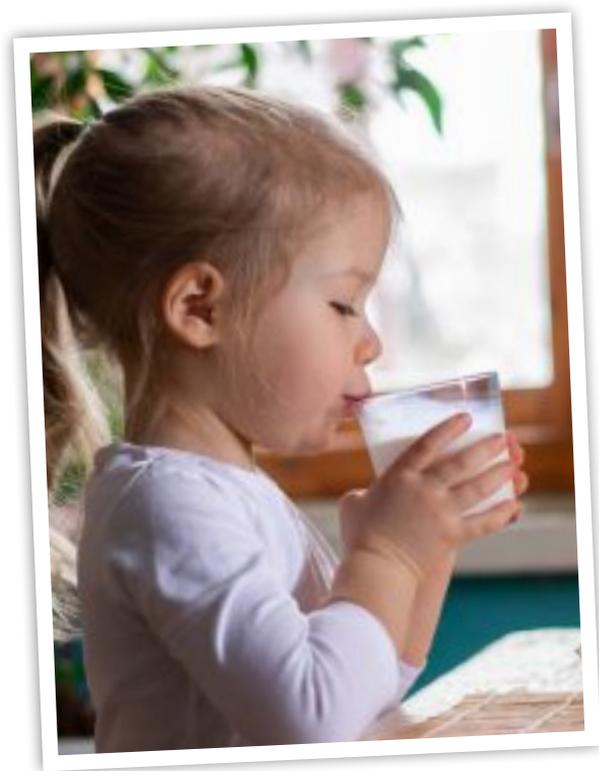
What helps

- **Offer variety.** Offer your child new foods on a regular basis. It may take several tries over days or weeks, but repeated exposure helps them accept new foods and reduces mealtime stress.
- **Keep portions small.** A few different foods on the plate can encourage curiosity without overwhelming them.
- **Make it colourful and fun.** Bright colours and different textures (like raw and cooked fruit or veg) can make meals more appealing.
- **Include fruit and veg.** Aim for five child-sized portions of fruit and vegetables each day — try to include at least two with their main meals.
- **Choose healthy snacks.** If your child is hungry between meals, offer things like fruit pieces, veggie sticks, or mini-sandwiches.
- **Eat together.** Sit with your child at mealtimes and eat the same food. Children love to copy adults, and seeing you enjoy the food encourages them to try it too.
- **Regular mealtimes.** Having regular mealtime like breakfast, lunch and dinner can help to prevent hunger and tiredness.
- **Make it fun and safe.** Involve your child in simple kitchen tasks like washing vegetables or stirring. It builds interest and confidence.
- **Plan ahead.** Involve your child in the shopping to help encourage choice and independence. A regular shopping routine helps with meal planning, saves money, and reduces the temptation to buy less healthy foods.



What to avoid

- **Don't add salt** to meals — young children's kidneys can't handle it.
- **Avoid adding sugar** to foods — it can damage growing teeth and make it harder for children to enjoy other flavours.
- **Limit processed foods** like ready meals, takeaways, and salty snacks.
- **Never force your child to eat** or get upset if they refuse food. Appetites, likes, and dislikes change from day to day — it's all part of learning.
- **Avoid using food as a reward or punishment** — this can lead to unhealthy habits later in life.
- **Don't ignore fullness cues** — if your child turns away, pushes food away, or says "no," they're probably full.



Need to know

Some parents with a child under 4 can get help to buy healthy food and milk. Find out if you can apply at **www.healthystart.nhs.uk**

Healthy snacking

Snacks are a great way to give your child extra energy and nutrients between meals. Think of them as mini-meals — they should include the same healthy foods you'd offer at breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

For healthy snack ideas, visit www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-snacks

Smart snacking tips

- **Use real food.** Offer snacks made from the same healthy ingredients you use at mealtimes — like fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, dairy, and protein-rich foods.
- **Go for colour and crunch.** Fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins and minerals that support your child's growth and protect against illness — and they make great snacks!
- **Try unsweetened options.** Plain yoghurt or fromage frais are healthier choices than sweetened versions.
- **Keep it simple.** Healthy snacks can be as easy as veggie sticks, fruit pieces, oatcakes, or mini sandwiches.



What to avoid

- **Keep sugary snacks to a minimum.** Foods like biscuits, sweets and ice cream provide few nutrients and can cause health problems such as tooth decay.
- **Avoid salty and processed foods.** Ready meals, crisps, and other salty snacks aren't suitable for young children.
- **No added salt or sugar.** Don't add salt or sugar to meals — many foods already contain these. Too much salt and sugar can be harmful to young children.
- **Be cautious with pouches.** Fruit purées in pouches are high in sugar. Never give them as snacks or let children suck directly from the pouch — a single pouch can contain the equivalent of 3 teaspoons of sugar.

“It’s a family time so, it’s important because you talk to each other.”



Why eating together helps

Eating together as a family is about more than just food — it’s a chance to connect, build routines, and support healthy habits. Family mealtimes can help your child:

- learn social skills like sharing, taking turns, and sitting with others
- understand hunger and fullness
- build confidence and interest in different foods
- develop speaking and listening skills through conversation
- feel secure in a routine, which can reduce stress for everyone

even one shared meal a day can make a big difference.

Need to know

Foods high in fat, salt and sugar such as chocolate, biscuits, cakes, crisps and fried chips are not needed in the diet. If you do include these foods, keep the portion sizes small and don’t have them too often.

Find out more

To make finding healthier snack swaps for you and your family, download the free NHS Food Scanner

www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-snacks/#fs-app

For tips on managing mealtimes, visit, **www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/booklets-and-information-sheets-to-support-parents/advice-sheet-on-managing-mealtimes**

Keeping your child hydrated and healthy

Water and milk are the best drinks for your child — they're all your little one needs to stay healthy and hydrated. Drinking a good amount can help deal with common problems such as constipation, poor concentration and alertness.

Water is perfect for quenching thirst and keeping your child refreshed throughout the day. It's free, natural, and tooth-friendly.

Milk is also important. From age 1, children can have pasteurised whole or semi-skimmed cow's milk. Goat's and sheep's milk are also suitable options. If you prefer not to give dairy, your health visitor or GP can help you choose the best dairy-free alternative to make sure your child still gets the nutrients they need.

Breastfeeding is beneficial for as long as you and your child wish. It supports both yours and your child's

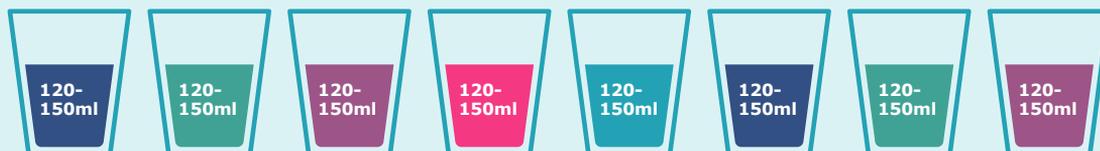
health. For support, call the National Breastfeeding Helpline on **0300 100 0212** or speak to your health visitor.

Formula milks (including infant formula, follow-on formula, "growing-up" or other "toddler" milks) are not required for children aged 1 to 5 years. Speak to your health visitor or GP for more advice.

Need to know

Do not give rice drinks to children under the age of five. They can contain unsafe levels of arsenic.

Your child needs to drink around **6–8 cups a day**



Children drinks are around **120–150ml**



Try to limit or avoid sugary drinks like:

- squash (including cordial)
- fizzy drinks
- milkshakes
- fruit juices
- slushies
- smoothies

These drinks can contain a lot of sugar, which increases the risk of tooth decay and can affect your child's overall health. If you give your child fruit juice or smoothies, it's best to offer them with meals, not as a snack between meals. It's also best not to give tea or coffee to children under 5.

Need to know

Slush ice drinks often contain high levels of glycerol (E422). Children under 7 should not have slush drinks with glycerol — it can cause headaches, sickness, or even more serious effects.

Healthy, happy and active children

Active children are happy, healthy and ready to learn – they even sleep better! Moving every day and sitting still less will help your child grow strong, build confidence, and feel good.

Children under 5 should be active for at least **3 hours (180 minutes)** each day. That might sound like a lot, but it adds up quickly through play, everyday movement and family activities – even something as simple as walking to the park or local shop instead of driving.

The activity doesn't need to happen all at once. Short bursts throughout the day, indoors or outdoors, are perfect. These can include:

- **light activity** – like walking, standing up and moving around
- **energetic activity** – like running, jumping, skipping or hopping
- **active play** – like climbing, riding a trike or scooter, splashing in water, chasing games, or kicking a ball

You don't need special equipment or lots of time to help your child stay active. Everyday routines can be full of playful opportunities that support movement, learning, and connection.



Physical activity for early years (birth – 5 years)

Active children are healthy, happy,
school ready and sleep better



BUILDS
RELATIONSHIPS
& SOCIAL SKILLS



MAINTAINS
HEALTH &
WEIGHT



CONTRIBUTES TO
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
& LEARNING



IMPROVES
SLEEP



DEVELOPS
MUSCLES
& BONES



ENCOURAGES
MOVEMENT
& CO-ORDINATION

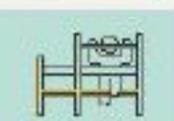
Every movement counts



PLAYGROUND



JUMP



CLIMB



MESSY PLAY



THROW/CATCH



SKIP



OBJECT PLAY



DANCE



GAMES



PLAY



TUMMY TIME



SWIM



WALK



SCOOT



BIKE

Move more. Sit less. Play together

UK Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines 2011 Start Active, Stay Active: www.bit.ly/startactive

Here are some simple ways to make daily life more active and playful:

Make the everyday more fun

- Turn chores into games — unpacking the shopping can become a “kitchen disco” with music and dancing.
- Add movement to routines like brushing teeth or tidying up by turning them into silly challenges or races.
- Use “boring” tasks as chances to play — this keeps your child engaged and helps them stay active throughout the day.

Play together and be a role model

- Children learn by watching you. Show them how to be active, patient, and playful — even during tricky tasks.
- Join in with their play when you can. It builds connections and shows them that play is important.

Encourage hands-on and imaginative play

- Offer messy play activities like play-dough, finger painting, or water play.
- Provide props for pretend play like toy phones, hats, dress-up clothes, or kitchen utensils, to spark imagination.
- Let your child choose what to play with — giving them options builds confidence and independence.

Support social and creative skills

- Play simple turn-taking games like rolling a ball or building a tower together.
- Offer chances to draw, colour, or paint using crayons, pencils, or washable markers.
- Make time for physical play — walking, running, climbing, and exploring indoors or outdoors all help build strength and coordination.

Sitting still and screen time

To help children grow up healthy, they need to sit less and play more!

Screens — like smartphones, tablets, and TVs — are part of everyday life. While they can be fun and educational, **too much screen time can affect your child's development, wellbeing and sleep.**

Over a (24-hour) day, the time your child spends **sitting still, using screens** all adds up — and each plays a role in their overall health. Young children especially need lots of time to move, play, and connect with others.

Too much sitting — especially in front of screens — can affect your child's:

- motor skills (used for writing, balance, and coordination)
- communication and eye contact
- attention span and brain development
- creativity and problem-solving
- sleep quality



For children aged 2–4

- **Avoid long periods of sitting still** — children shouldn't be restrained (e.g. in a pram or highchair) or inactive for more than an hour at a time.
- **Limit sitting screen time** to no more than an hour a day — less is better.
- **Swap screens for stories** — quiet time with books and shared storytelling are great alternatives.
- **Support healthy sleep habits** — children at this age need 10 — 14 hours of quality sleep each day (including naps), with regular bedtimes and wake-up times.

Need to do

When your child is sitting still, reading and sharing stories are much better choices. They help build language skills, spark imagination, and strengthen your bond, www.gov.wales/talk-with-me

Making screen time “you and me time”

You don't have to cut out screens completely. With a few simple steps, you can help your child build a healthy relationship with technology:

- **be active together.** If your child is watching videos or playing games, join in! Dance to music, copy movements, or talk about what they're watching.
- **set gentle limits.** Clear, consistent boundaries help children stay active, sleep better, and develop healthy habits around screen use.
- **follow their interests.** Show interest in what they enjoy online. This helps avoid battles and gives you a chance to connect and encourage speech and communication.

- **be a positive role model.** Children learn by watching you. Keep your own screen use in check — especially around your child — and make sure it doesn't take away from family time or outdoor play.

Find out more

For further advice about making screen time healthier visit, hwb.gov.wales/keeping-safe-online/screen-time/a-family-guide-to-talking-about-screen-time



Play, play, play!

Every child has the right to play — and to choose how they play. It's not just about keeping them busy. Play is how children learn, grow, and make sense of the world around them.

“It does sound silly, but I didn't realise the importance on their brains of playing and interacting with them.”

Whether they're splashing in puddles, building towers, getting messy with paint, or dressing up, play helps children explore, imagine, and develop important skills.

Making time for outdoor play isn't just fun — it's really important for your child's development and wellbeing. Playing outside helps children grow stronger physically and supports their mental and emotional health too.



Outdoor play doesn't have to have structure or cost anything. It can be as simple as:

- nature hunts (find a leaf, a stick, something yellow...)
- running, jumping, or rolling down a hill
- splashing in puddles or playing with water
- chalk drawings on the pavement
- ball games or chasing bubbles
- climbing at the park or balancing on a log

The simple joys of nature — like hearing leaves crunch underfoot, watching birds fly overhead, or smelling fresh grass and trees — can help children feel calm, curious, and connected to the world around them.

The more your child plays - inside and outside- the more confident they'll become. And the more confident you'll feel supporting them. Play boosts their senses, thinking, and emotions. By joining in and encouraging different types of play, you're helping your child build creativity, confidence, and skills that will last a lifetime.

For play ideas indoors and outdoors, visit playfulchildhoods.wales/

Sleep and bedtime

Alongside healthy eating and being active, sleep is important for your child's growth and development. Finding the right routine for getting ready for bed that works for you and your child will make a huge difference.

Creating a calm bedtime routine can make evenings smoother and help your child get the sleep they need for healthy growth and development.

Need to know

Active play, especially outdoors, can help children feel good but it also helps them sleep better.

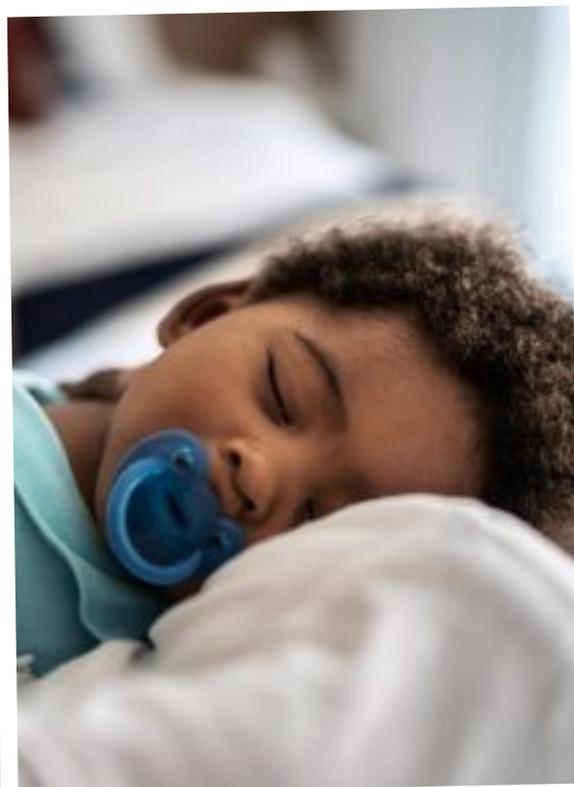
Find out more

For tips on starting or maintaining healthy routines, visit www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time

Why routines matter

Having a consistent daily routine — especially around bedtime — helps children feel safe and know what to expect. It supports emotional wellbeing and helps them get the right amount of sleep for their age and stage of development.

Routines can also make everyday life easier for you and your child. They help with transitions, reduce stress, and create a sense of calm and structure.



A routine that could make bedtime easier

Turn off screens 2–3 hours before bed

Digital devices (like phones, tablets or TVs) can make it harder for children to settle. Encourage your child to put away screens well before bedtime to help their brain prepare for sleep.



Tooth brushing time

Remind your child it's time to brush their teeth. Younger children will need help, and you can make it fun by singing a song or using a colourful toothbrush.



Dim the lights

Lowering the lights in their bedroom helps signal that it's time to wind down. A soft nightlight or lamp can create a cosy atmosphere.



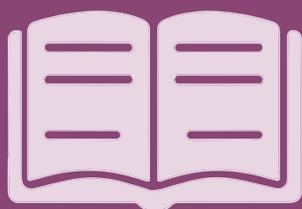
Pyjama time

Let your child know it's time to change into their pyjamas. You can make this part of the routine playful by letting them choose their favourite ones.



Story time

Invite your child to choose a book to share together. Whether it's a short picture book or a chapter from a longer story, this quiet time helps them relax and feel close to you.



End with comfort and connection

After the story, finish the night with a cuddle, a goodnight kiss, and a few gentle words to help them feel safe and loved.





Keeping your child safe and well

In this section:

- what to do in an emergency
- caring for your sick child
- NHS services and care
- preventing illness
- preventing serious harm



What to do in an emergency

Knowing what to do in the event of an emergency could make a big difference.

CPR means cardiopulmonary resuscitation. CPR is a life-saving technique used when someone's heart stops beating or they stop breathing. It helps keep blood and oxygen flowing to the brain and other vital organs until emergency help arrives.

Primary Survey is a quick way to find out how to treat any life-threatening conditions a casualty may have in order of priority. You should use DRABC to do this:

D Check for **Danger**

R Check for a **Response**

A Open **Airway**

B Check **Breathing**

C Check **Circulation**

Remember: Your health visitor will be able to help you with advice and support on how to keep your child safe and well, including first aid.

Find out more

To see how to perform DRABC visit,
www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/child-cpr

If your child is unresponsive and not breathing normally, you should call 999 for emergency help and perform child CPR straight away. To see how to perform CPR on a child, visit www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/child-cpr

If your child is unresponsive but breathing normally, you should put them in the recovery position and call 999 for emergency help. To see how to put your child in a recovery position, visit www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/child-recovery-position

When a child is choking, their airway is partly or completely blocked, meaning that they may be unable to breathe properly. They might be able to clear it by coughing, but if they can't, you will need to help them straight away. To see how to help a choking child, visit www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/child-choking

Seizures are also known as convulsions or fits. They can happen for many reasons. To find out what to look for and what to do, visit www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/febrile-seizure and www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/seizure

First aid

Knowing what to do and how to take care of any cuts and bruises, or more serious injuries, is important to help keep your child safe and well. Having a basic first aid kit at home and when you are out and about can help you respond quickly to emergencies.

First Aid kits provide items to help treat cuts, grazes, bumps and bruises that your child may experience at home or whilst out playing. Using the checklist below, you can check what items you have at home and what they are used for.

Basic first aid skills

Taking a course in basic first aid for children could help to save a life in an emergency. To learn first aid skills for your children and family, visit:

- British Red Cross website www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid
- Resuscitation Council UK www.resus.org.uk
- St Johns Ambulance Cymru www.sjacymru.org.uk

Home first aid kit check list



Waterproof plasters

Plasters help protect skin from bacteria entering, and help the skin heal.



Crepe bandage

Bandages wrap an injured part of the body.



Alcohol-free wipes

To clean a graze or wound.



Triangular bandage

Secures any injured areas in place before medical attention. They will help to keep things secure whilst waiting for further medical assistance.



Sterile dressing pads

To prevent blood from coming out of a wound and stop bacteria from coming into the wound.



Tough cut scissors

To cut through clothing to assess an injury.



Sterile eye pads

To treat the eye when dust or liquids get into your child's eye.



Safety pins

To secure bandages together.



Sterile gloves

Prevents any bacteria on your hand entering any open wounds.



Tape

Use tape to secure any bandages that you may need to use.

Caring for your sick child

You know your child best and will know if something is out of the ordinary. Sometimes their illness is obvious; they may have visible symptoms such as a runny nose, but other times it isn't so easy. Some symptoms can be treated at home, whilst others are more serious and will require medical help and advice.

You know best

Many common childhood illnesses can be treated at home, but it is important to trust your instincts and seek advice if you are concerned. Common signs and symptoms that your child might be ill include:

- a high temperature (above 38°C)
- drowsiness
- rash
- irritability or crying more than usual
- not eating or drinking as much
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- flushed or pale cheeks
- cough
- runny nose or eyes
- wheezing and breathing difficulties



Need to do

Why not photocopy these pages and keep them in a handy place, such as on your fridge door, or take a photo of them on your phone so that you can find them quickly in the event of an emergency.

“I always know when my little one is coming down with something. He’ll start off by being off his food and a bit cranky. He gets colds and coughs quite often but seems to get over them within a day or two. Kids seem to bounce back so quickly.”

Find out more

for more information and advice on looking after your sick child, visit, 111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/I/article/lookingafterasickchild

How to identify serious infections early

Measles, meningitis and sepsis are very serious illnesses that can affect anyone very quickly. Meningitis and sepsis are rare, but measles is becoming more common amongst young children in Wales. It is important to know the signs and symptoms and get medical help quickly.

If you are concerned that your child may have a serious infection you should speak to your GP or call NHS 111. In an emergency call 999.

Measles is an infection caused by a virus and can spread between children very easily. Your child can be protected from catching measles if they have had two doses of a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) containing vaccine.

Need to know

NHS Wales has a free skin rash tool that can help identify the type of rash on your child. Visit 111.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/SkinRashes

Common signs and symptoms of measles

- High temperature
- A runny or blocked nose
- Sneezing
- A cough
- Red, sore, watery eyes

For more information on measles, visit

111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/m/article/measles

Other signs of measles.

- Small white spots may appear inside their cheeks or in their mouth.
- A rash on their face and behind the ears, which appears after a few days, following cold-like symptoms. Raised non-itchy spots where the rash appears, which join to form blotchy patches.



Need to know

The measles rash will look different on different skin tones. The darker the skin the harder it is to see. If you are worried about your child don't wait for a rash to appear — seek medical help.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles

Image credit: © Crown copyright

Meningitis is caused by an infection in the lining around the brain (the meninges), which can cause dangerous swelling.

Sepsis is an extreme and life-threatening response to an infection that affects the whole body.

Many types of bacteria can cause meningitis or sepsis. Some bacteria can produce both at the same time. People can experience both conditions at the same time. Sepsis can occur as a reaction to any kind of infection.

Need to know

The meningitis rash will look different on different skin tones. The darker the skin the harder it is to see. If you are worried about your child don't wait for a rash to appear — seek medical help.

Common signs and symptoms of meningitis and sepsis

- A high temperature
- Cold hands and feet
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- Breathing quickly
- Muscle and joint pain
- Spots or a rash that does not fade when you roll a glass over it
- Headache
- A stiff neck
- Blue, pale or blotchy skin, lips or tongue – On brown or black skin, blueness may be easier to see on the lips, tongue or gums, under the nails, on the soles of the feet or palms of the hands or around the eyes
- A dislike of bright lights
- Being very sleepy or difficult to wake
- Fits (seizures)



We wish to acknowledge Meningitis Research Foundation for giving permission to use their photographs. Image credit: Meningitis Research Foundation — www.meningitis.org

Treating your child at home

Many of the common illnesses your child might experience, such as headaches, tummy aches, earaches or cold symptoms, can be treated at home first. You can access medication for these symptoms from your local pharmacy; they may also be able to help you choose the best treatment for your child's symptoms.

High temperature or fever

To find out your child's temperature, you need to use a digital thermometer, which can be bought from pharmacies.

If your child has a fever (38°C or more), help them stay hydrated by giving them plenty of water. If they are unwell, give them some children's paracetamol or ibuprofen, making sure you follow the dosage and "how to use" instructions on the package.

If they are drinking plenty, but not passing water, or still have a **temperature** after being given paracetamol, seek medical advice.

Severe allergies

An allergy happens when your child's immune system reacts strongly to something usually harmless, like certain foods, pollen, or pets. Symptoms may be mild (like a runny nose or rash) or very serious (like breathing trouble or anaphylaxis). If you think your child has an allergy, and it is not an emergency, contact your local GP.

Need to do

If your child has a high temperature, you can usually look after them at home. The temperature should go down over 1 – 4 days. For guidance on what to do if your child has a high temperature including a fever visit: **[111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/f/article/feverinchildren](https://www.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/f/article/feverinchildren)**

If your child is having an allergic reaction, then this often appears within minutes, though mild symptoms may take a few hours. Watch for:

- Sneezing, runny/blocked nose, itchy eyes, rashes (hives or eczema)
- Tummy pain, vomiting, diarrhoea
- Wheezing, coughing or difficulty breathing
- Swollen lips, tongue, and throat
- General feeling unwell alongside other symptoms

If your child is having a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) you should call 999 immediately. Signs and symptoms to watch out for include:

- swelling of tongue or throat
- struggling to breathe, noisy breathing, wheezing
- pale or blue lips or skin, confusion or collapse

Treating a minor burn or scald

A **burn** can be caused by dry heat, such as contact with fire, a hot iron, or exposure to the sun.

A **scald** can be caused by contact with wet heat, like steam or a hot cup of tea.

If someone receives a burn or scald, your priority is to cool the skin as quickly as possible and seek medical advice.

To find out what to look for and what to do, visit www.sja.org.uk/first-aid-advice/burns-and-scalds

Common medications for children (as seen above for Treating a minor burn or scald)

Paracetamol is a common painkiller. It is often used to treat headaches, stomach aches, earaches, and cold symptoms. It can also be used to bring down a high temperature (fever). It is available for children as a tablet or as a syrup. Taking too much paracetamol can be dangerous.

Ibuprofen is a common painkiller. It is often used to treat pain and inflammation (swelling), including cold symptoms, toothache, sprains, and to reduce a high temperature. It is available for children as a liquid (oral suspension) or as a chewable capsule. Taking too much ibuprofen can be dangerous.

Find out more

For more information on medicines for children, visit 111.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/pregnancy/babyhealthmedicines

Do not give your child more than the maximum daily dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen.

If they take too much, contact 111 for advice.

Need to do

Speak to your local pharmacist on how to use medication safely.

Accessing the right care, in the right place, first time

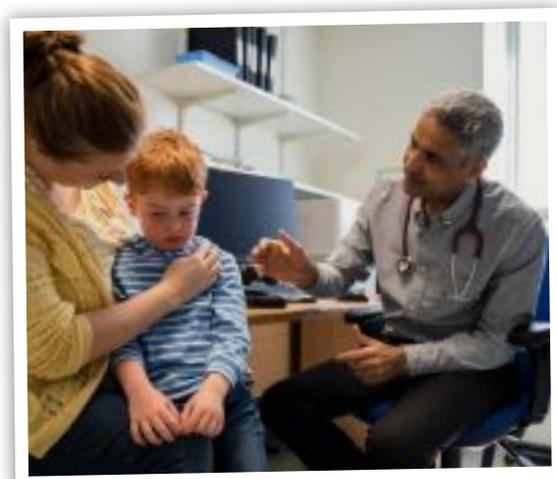
It can be hard to know what to do and who to call when your child is unwell.

When to call an ambulance

In an emergency, trust your instincts. If you think your child is seriously ill or injured, call **999** for an ambulance.

Some of the reasons to call 999 may include if your child:

- stops breathing or is having severe difficulty breathing
- won't wake up or is unresponsive
- has a spotty, purple-red rash that doesn't fade when you press a glass against it
- has a fit for the first time, even if they seem to recover
- has a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)
- is seriously injured



Need to do

To find your local health services, visit **111.wales.nhs.uk/localservices**

When to call NHS 111 Wales

If your child is feeling unwell and it is not an emergency, then you can contact NHS Wales on freephone **111** for advice on the symptoms your child has, what to do next, or if you are not sure which service to use. **Do not use the NHS Symptom checker for children under 12 years old.**

When to visit your local General Practice

Your local general practice provides different types of health services such as care and treatment, referrals to other health services, support with managing longer-term conditions, out-of-hours services, screening, and vaccinations. These services can be delivered by GPs, Nurses or other trained health professionals.

You may want to visit your local General Practice if your child:

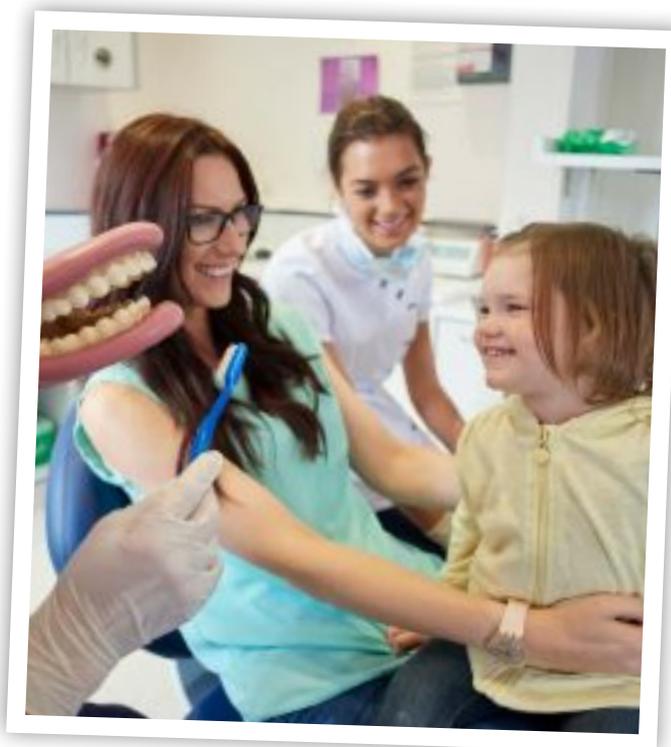
- has a temperature or fever that lasted for five days or more, or symptoms worsen after seeking advice and using medication
- has a persistent cough lasting longer than two weeks
- has signs of an infection
- has throat pain that lasts longer than three days with high fever and they're generally unwell.
- symptoms do not improve or worsen following advice and treatment from other trained professionals
- develops an allergy

When to visit your local Pharmacist

Your local pharmacist can provide free advice and treatment for a range of minor medical problems. They can help you treat common illnesses such as coughs, colds, skin rashes, bites, aches and pains.



Your local pharmacist will also be able to advise if you need to see another medical professional, like a GP, Optometrist, Dentist or Nurse.



When to visit your local Dental Practice

Your local dental team can give advice on how best to look after your child's teeth to protect them from decay and help you manage this. Dental services can be delivered by a Dentist, Dental Hygienist, Dental Nurse or other trained dental professionals.

NHS Dental care is free for children, and regular check-ups will ensure that your child's teeth and gums are healthy as they grow. If you have not got a dentist for your child, find and register for a dental practice at 111.wales.nhs.uk/localservices

Preventing illness

Children tend to pick up minor illnesses easily, such as coughs and colds, as they can spread quickly amongst young children, whilst their immune systems are still developing. However, some illnesses can be prevented through good habits, routines and keeping up to date with vaccinations.

Your child's immunity

Vaccinations save lives! Being vaccinated is one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself and your child from serious illnesses. Most parents ensure that their children are immunised in line with the routine vaccination programme. By doing this, as a parent, you are protecting them from a number of serious diseases.

Need to know

Immunisation is what happens after a vaccination — it helps the body build protection (immunity) from the disease. Vaccinations are usually given as an injection, a spray up the nose or drops into the mouth.

As a parent, it can be upsetting to see your child being given an injection. There may be a few tears (sometimes it's not just the little ones that cry!), but they won't last long, whereas these vaccinations will give your child many years of protection against a range of serious — and potentially fatal — diseases. Here are three good reasons to have your child vaccinated:

- vaccinations are quick, safe and extremely effective
- once your child has been vaccinated against a disease, if they do catch it their body can fight it off better
- if a child is not vaccinated, they're at higher risk of catching the illness and becoming very ill from it

You may have seen negative stories about vaccinations spread online through social media, but they are usually not based on any scientific evidence. Not vaccinating your child puts them at risk of serious illness! For more information on immunisation and vaccinations for your child, visit phw.nhs.wales/vaccines

Need to do

Your child's vaccine status and being up to date with them are important in preventing illness. If your child has missed their routine vaccinations, talk to your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor as soon as possible to arrange for your child to get up to date with their routine vaccinations.



Take a fresh look at hygiene

Keeping your child's toys clean

Don't forget to clean your child's toys! While there isn't much you can do about toys at play groups, wash the ones at home regularly. Most soft toys can go in the washing machine, and the rest can be washed just like your dishes, with washing-up liquid and a cloth.

Prevent spreading germs — use tissues rather than your hands to catch coughs and sneezes

Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing and coughing can reduce the spread of germs. Teach your child how to prevent germs from spreading through "catch it, bin it, kill it". This helps them learn when they want to sneeze, to reach for a tissue so they can catch the germs, bin the tissue, and after they've binned the tissue, wash their hands.

Keep surface free from germs

Keeping surfaces across the home clean helps to prevent the spread of germs. Surfaces like the table, door handles, toilet flush and even your phone or tablet should be cleaned regularly. You can use soap and water or an antibacterial wipe to clean your home surfaces or digital devices.

Hygiene at mealtimes

Now that your child is regularly eating solid foods and exploring new tastes, it's a good time to reinforce healthy

habits around food and hygiene. These simple steps can help keep mealtimes safe and enjoyable:

- **wash and dry your hands** before preparing meals and snacks
- **wash your child's hands** before they eat — it helps prevent the spread of germs
- **clean bowls, spoons, cups, and containers** using hot, soapy water, and dry them thoroughly
- **cook food properly** and allow it to cool to a safe, lukewarm temperature before serving
- **wash fresh fruit and vegetables** like apples and carrots before offering them
- **avoid reheating cooked food more than once** — this helps reduce the risk of foodborne illness

Keeping your home and car smoke-free

If you, your partner or other household members are smokers, stopping smoking is the best thing you can do to protect your own health and the health of those around you. Second-hand smoke is breathed in when someone nearby is smoking tobacco. Second-hand smoke is especially harmful, whether it's in the home or in the car. Children exposed to smoke in their environment, including sharing a bed with a parent who smokes (even if not smoking in the bedroom), are at greater risk of chest infections, ear infections, and asthma.

If you smoke or live with someone who does, quitting is the best way to keep your child safe and healthy. If quitting isn't possible right now, or if visitors to your home smoke, then smoking outside and away from the house can help reduce the risk to your child.

Keeping your home free from damp and mould

Children are more sensitive to damp and mould. Living with damp and mould can cause your child to sneeze, have a runny nose, red eyes, a skin rash and can cause asthma attacks. Damp and mould are caused by too much moisture. This can be caused by a leaking pipe, water entering the home from rain or from condensation.

You may see signs of black mould around the windows, near doorways or in rooms like the bathroom. You can reduce the amount of moisture in your home by putting lids on pans when you are cooking, opening windows for ventilation, such as in the bathroom or kitchen, and avoiding drying clothes indoors — if you need to do this, keep the room ventilated and the door shut. Most shops sell products to treat mould – be careful to follow the health and safety instructions. If you live in rented accommodation, speak to your landlord about your concerns.

HEIPA FII
STOPIO
-
HELP ME
QUIT

Need to know

Children who grow up with smokers are much more likely to go on to smoke! For more information and advice, contact NHS Help Me Quit on **0800 085 2219**, or visit **www.helpmequit.wales**

Looking after teeth and gums

As your child gets older, it is important to maintain good oral hygiene for healthy gums and teeth. Good oral health is an important part of your child's wellbeing. Healthy teeth and gums will help your child's physical, social and learning development.

To make sure your child's teeth and gums are healthy, your child will need help brushing their teeth **until they reach age 8**. When you brush their teeth, you will do a more thorough job of cleaning.

Brushing teeth doesn't have to be a battle — it can be fun! Try making it part of your child's daily routine, like before bed.

You can use silly sounds to help them brush:

- say **"tee"** to clean the front teeth
- say **"ahhh"** to reach the back ones

Or turn it into a mini dance party! Let your child pick their favourite song to brush along to. Music makes it more enjoyable and helps them brush for the right amount of time.

Need to do

Even at two years old, your child will benefit from regular dental check-ups. Visit your dentist regularly and follow their advice. If you have not got a dentist for your child, access NHS dental services on the NHS dental portal at dhw.nhs.wales/product-directory/our-digital-services/dental-access-portal

Need to know

Never add sugar to any food or drinks you prepare or share with your child. Sugar or foods and drinks with high sugar content, can cause tooth decay.

If you find brushing your child's teeth challenging, try different positions such as:

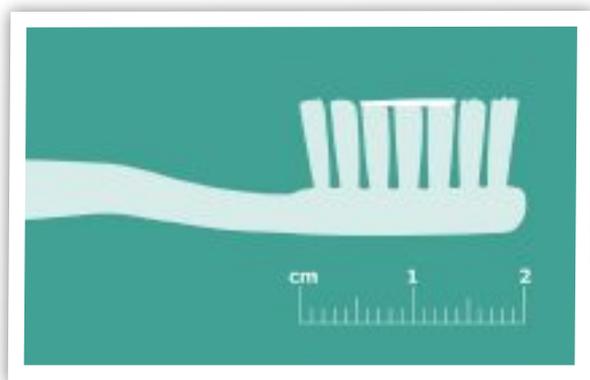
Sitting on your lap

Standing up

In the bath or shower

For more tips on tooth brushing visit, www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/tricky-moments-and-behaviours/tips-on-tooth-brushing

Fluoride helps to strengthen teeth and prevent tooth decay. The amount of fluoride that is in the toothpaste can be found on the side of the tube. You should use a toothpaste that contains no less than 1,000 parts per million (ppm).



For **children under 3**, you should use a thin smear of fluoride toothpaste on their brush



For **children over the age of 3**, use a pea-sized amount toothpaste instead.

Brushing your child's teeth twice a day - in the morning and last thing at night will keep their teeth and gums healthy. It's important to make sure that the teeth are brushed properly each time.

SPIT, DON'T RINSE once you've finished toothbrushing - this will help the fluoride in the toothpaste protect the tooth surface from decay. Instead of rinsing with water, just encourage your child to spit out the excess toothpaste and wipe their face clean.



Your school may take part in a supervised toothbrushing programme through **Designed to Smile**. Even if your child joins a toothbrushing programme, such as Designed to Smile, it is still important that they brush their teeth at home twice a day, especially before bed! If you want more information about Designed to Smile, visit:

phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/designed-to-smile/information-for-parents-and-carers

Keeping eyes healthy

Good eyesight is crucial for your child to be able to develop and reach their full potential, both socially and in school. During these early years, your child's eyes are still developing, so treating any issues early can make a difference now and later.

Need to know

Children under 16 can access free NHS sight tests at local opticians in Wales. Find your nearest here: 111.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/?s=Optician&pc=n&sort=default



Attending routine eye checks will help you and your child understand their vision. Some children may have their vision checked at a school sight review (**see Section 3**), but you should still take your child for routine sight tests regularly at an optometrist.

In addition to having regular sight tests, here are a few things you can do to help keep your child's eyes healthy.

- Be outdoors more — regular play and exercise can help with eye health — just two hours a day will make a difference.
- Eat and drink healthily — eating healthily and staying hydrated is important for the eyes (**see Section 1**).
- Protect their eyes from the sun — using good-quality sunglasses for your child will make a difference. Check that the sunglasses have the 'CE' quality mark and the British Standard BS EN 1836:2005
- Protect their eyes from digital devices — keep screen time to a minimum. Use night settings as much as possible on devices and turn off digital devices at least an hour before bed (**see Section 1**).

Preventing serious harm

Since the start of your parenting journey, you and your family have been creating a secure and loving environment for your child, keeping them safe and helping them grow. As they grow and explore, you may find it more challenging to keep an eye on them.

Child safety

Accidents do happen! Now that your child is more confident, walking (even running) around the home and with endless energy, you may find it hard to keep your eyes on their every move.

With this new freedom, accidents happen, and they might have the occasional bump, touch something hot, or cut themselves on something sharp. This can lead to your child feeling hurt and upset, and sometimes they may even need to see a health professional at your local health service, such as a GP, minor injury unit or at a hospital. The following section gives you some guidance on how to keep your home safe for your child.

Find out more

For more information and advice on keeping your child safe around the home visit capt.org.uk

Need to do

Check if your fire alarms are working regularly. Contact the Fire and Rescue Service for fire safety advice. Find your local Fire and Rescue Service here www.gov.wales/find-your-local-fire-and-rescue-service



Remember, not all children do things at the same age, but here's some advice on what they may begin to do and what you can do to help avoid any accidents.

I might fall

- If I climb **the stairs**. Use a safety gate.
- If I am in my **highchair**. Use a five-point safety harness.
- Out of the **window**. Move things I may climb on, away. Use window locks to keep me away from windows and balconies.
- Off my **trike, bike, or scooter**. I should wear a helmet.
- Off a **trampoline**. Use a safety net or cage so I don't fall onto the ground.
- When exploring and climbing on **objects and furniture**. I must be supervised.

I might suffocate or get strangled

- With **nappy sacks or bags**. Keep them out of reach and in a storage container.
- With **deflated balloons**. Keep in a secure place.
- In **blinds and curtain cords**. Tie up blinds and curtain cords so there's no hanging loop.
- In **charging cables**. Secure together with a zip tie and clip off excess plastic.

I might get poisoned

- If I swallow **chemicals** such as **detergents, washing-up liquids, washing pods and medicines**. Keep out of reach and in a secure container.
- From **lead**. Contact a plumber to check for broken pipes or plumbing concerns.
- If I swallow **button batteries**. Keep out of reach and in a secure container.
- If I swallow **nicotine fluids** like vape liquids. Keep out of reach and in a secure container.

I might drown

- In **1 inch (2.5 cm) of water**. Don't leave me unsupervised in a bath or pool, or places with a lot of water.
- If I **swim** too far away from adults. Keep children close and use buoyancy aids like armbands.

I might choke

- By **swallowing small items, like coins, buttons and toy accessories**. Keep out of reach and in a secure container. Check that items are child-safe and not broken.
- On **foods that aren't cut up properly**. Cut foods like carrots into thumb-length batons and grapes cut in half.

I might get burnt

- If I get too close to a **source of heat**. Keep me away from the oven or fireplaces.
- If I touch something that gets **hot**. Keep me away from **hair straighteners, kettles, irons, hot drinks, matches and lighters**.
- If I play with **fireworks** or stand too close to fireworks. Always supervise me and follow safety advice.
- If the **bath water is too hot**. Add cold water first, then hot. Test with your elbow or the back of your hand.

I might burn my insides

- If I swallow a **button battery** or get one stuck in my ear or nose it may leak and burn my insides. Always keep button batteries out of reach.

I might get bitten

- If I am left by myself with **pets or animals**. Never leave me alone with them.

We might have a fire

- If after you **smoke, cigarettes aren't put out completely**. Dispose of cigarettes carefully and wait for the embers to go out.
- If things like **pots and pans** for cooking are **left unattended**. Don't leave food cooking unattended.
- If **candles, tea lights and fires aren't put out**. Don't leave flames unattended.

We might get carbon monoxide poisoning

- If we have a **carbon monoxide (CO) leak**. Have your boiler checked by a registered gas engineer and fit a CO monitor in your home near a cooker, a gas or wood fire, or the boiler.

Around the home

Being aware of the dangers that exist around the home and thinking ahead can prevent the type of accidents that can lead to serious injury.

Button batteries

Button batteries should be kept away from children. They can be easily swallowed and are extremely dangerous, especially if they get stuck in a child's food pipe. A chemical reaction can also take place, which can cause internal bleeding and possible death.

Children and animals

Many families have pets, and whilst most animals can be very tolerant of young children, it's still important to be aware of the dangers that animals can pose to young children. Pets can spread bacteria that could be harmful to your child, and even the most trustworthy pet can lose its patience if poked in the eye by a child. Where possible, use safety gates to keep pets like a dog away from your child, and only allow them to be in the same room together under your close supervision. Never leave a young child unsupervised with a dog, even for a moment, no matter how well you know that dog.

Other injuries

Sometimes things break in the house, like plates, cups and glasses. To prevent serious harm or injury, you



Need to know

If you suspect your child has swallowed a button battery, call 999 or take them to the nearest A&E department immediately. For information on the safety risks of button batteries, please visit [capt.org.uk/button-battery-safety](https://www.capt.org.uk/button-battery-safety)

should ask your child to leave the room while you clean up. Your child may want to help you, but it will be easier and safer for you to do it by yourself. Start by picking up the larger pieces first with a dustpan and brush, and then use a vacuum to suck up the very small pieces. Dispose of the pieces into a separate bag, secure it and put it straight in the bin.

Keep sharp objects, like knives, secured away and out of sight and reach from your child to prevent serious harm. Use safety gates and cupboard latches to help prevent accidents around the home.

If you have a pond in your garden, place a fence around the edge of it to prevent your child from slipping or falling in.

When out and about

Being aware of the dangers that exist when you are out and about with the family and planning will ensure that your family time outside of the home is fun and safe. Although you can't plan for everything, the following section will help you think about some of the more common places you visit.

Chemicals and poisons

Household products and medicines are dangerous for children. Common cleaning products, such as washing liquids and pods, along with household

cleaning fluids, need to be secured by being locked away and out of sight and reach from your child. Other household products, such as car antifreeze, garden sprays, should also be kept away from your child.

If you have medicines in your house, even paracetamol, these should be stored in a secure container and out of reach of your child.

If you don't have locks at home, keep these products high up, out of your child's sight and reach, and always put them away straight after using them.

“There are all sorts of information we need, even like about the plug-in air fresheners. They burnt my child because she sucked it, and she had blisters on her mouth.”



Bathing your child safely

Bath time can provide lots of opportunities to continue bonding and having fun with your little one, and will form part of your bedtime routine. Follow these simple steps to always ensure the safety of your child at bath time.

- Use a non-slip bathmat or bath stickers to help stop your child from slipping in or out of the bath.
- Have everything you need close by, so you don't have to leave the room, e.g. towels, wash washcloth, cleaning lotions, a new nappy and clean clothes.
- Check the bath water temperature before putting your little one in the bath. The water shouldn't be too cold or too hot. To do this, dip

your elbow into the bath water and it should feel the same as your body temperature.

- Never leave your child alone in the bath, not even for a second. Children can drown in 1 inch (2.5 cm) of water, with no noise or struggle. Never leave them in the care of an older child, as they may not know what to do if something goes wrong.
- Pull the plug the moment bath time is over.

“Bath time isn't just about cleanliness it can be fun and a great time for learning about water too.”

Being safe on pavements

Whether you're popping to the shops, going on a family walk or exploring a new area on holiday, it's important to make sure your child is safe on pavements.

If using pushchairs or buggies, always check that the brakes work and that they're properly unfolded before you use them. If buying a second-hand pushchair, make sure there's no damage, such as sharp edges or torn fabric that could hurt or choke your

child. If your child is in a pushchair or buggy, keep your child harnessed at all times to prevent them from falling out, and never leave them unattended.

Child safety harnesses can be used when you are walking to keep your child safe and close.

From an early age, you can help your child understand the dangers of the pavement and the road — use Stop, Look, Listen, and Think to teach your child road safety.



STOP

When you approach a crossing stop before you come to the edge.



LOOK

Always look both ways, checking for cars, bikes, lorries and other vehicles.



LISTEN

Listen for vehicles too. You may be able to hear them before you see them.



THINK

Is there enough time for you to cross the road safely?

This infographic has been informed by publicly available information from RoSPA. For further details, please visit www.rospa.com

Being safe in cars

Child seats save lives! By law, all children must use a car seat that fits their weight and size. A car seat should be used on every car journey — even short ones.

It is best not to use a second-hand car seat, as it may have hidden damage from a previous car crash.

Always fasten the straps correctly, following the manufacturer's instructions, to keep your child safe and secure.

Find out more

For more advice on choosing the right car seat, visit www.rospa.com/road-safety/road-safety-information/vehicle-safety/car-seats

“I was concerned about what type of car seat ... How do I know if it's the right one for the car and them?”

Being safe on bikes, trikes and scooters

Teaching your child how to be safe when out on their wheels will help them learn important skills and keep them road safe. Here are some ways to keep your child safe whilst out on their bikes, trikes and scooters,

- Your child should wear a helmet every time to prevent any serious head injuries. Go to a trusted store for a properly fitted helmet.
- Until your child is confident on the pavements, keep play time with bikes, trikes and scooters in parks and children's play spaces.
- Help your child identify risks early, such as other children playing on bikes, trikes and scooters.
- Help your child to be aware of their surroundings, by identifying possible risks such as a river, dogs or other people using the area, such as a cyclist.

Being safe around water

Water is everywhere, every day — from bath time, household chores, playtime and exploring out and about. It is important to be aware of the risks of water and teach your child early about how to safely be around water.

Learning to swim is a life skill and helps your child stay safe around water. Check with your local pool to see if they offer swimming lessons.

When your child is in water — like a pool, beach or river — armbands, swim jackets, and float vests can help keep them afloat. Make sure they're the right size and your child knows how to use them properly.

Always watch your child closely around water, like at the beach. Make sure they don't go in deeper than waist height for their size. If you're at the beach, ask lifeguards where the safe areas are before going into the sea.

Need to know

To prevent harm to your child, you should always supervise your child around water! Remember, adults can drown in just two inches of water and with young children, it's only one inch.

Find out more

For more advice on keeping your child safe around water, visit www.rospa.com/health-and-safety-resources/keeping-kids-safe-hub/drowning-prevention





Understanding which setting for what time

In this section:

- childcare choices
- planning for Primary School
- preparing for childcare and school



How childcare can support you and your family

Childcare gives your child a safe and fun place to play, make friends, and explore new things. Playing with other children helps them feel more confident and learn how to get along with others. It also supports their development — helping them learn to talk, think, move, and feel good about themselves as they grow and discover the world around them.

As your child is getting older, you may be considering childcare. There might be many reasons for choosing childcare and you may have lots of questions going through your mind, like: how do you know it's a good choice? How close is it to my home? How do I know which one is best for me and my child? Be reassured, the following section will help to provide you with the information you need to help you choose the right childcare for you and your child and help you prepare for this next milestone.

As a parent, using childcare can give you a bit more space to do what you need, whether that's going to work, starting a new course, or just having some time to rest. It can help you find a better balance between work and

family life, and for some families, it may also help boost your household income. Some parents use childcare so they can work more hours, while others find it helpful for a short break now and then — all of which can make a positive difference to family life.

Find out more

For more information on nursery education for three- and four-year-olds in Wales, visit: hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-wales-information-for-parents-carers-and-learners

Need to know

Care Inspectorate Wales is the organisation that makes sure childcare and play settings are safe for your child. For more information on Care Inspectorate Wales and approved childcare settings visit, **digital.careinspectorate.wales/directory**

Support to help with the cost of childcare

Childcare can seem expensive, but there may be financial support available to help you with the childcare costs.

Universal Credit: supports working parents to get help towards the cost of living, including childcare. Find out if you are eligible for Universal Credit www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit

Tax-Free Childcare scheme: helps working parents with the cost of childcare. Find out if you are eligible for Tax-Free Childcare www.gov.uk/get-tax-free-childcare

Childcare Offer for Wales: provides up to 30 hours of combined nursery education and government-funded childcare a week, for up to 48 weeks of the year. This is for working parents, or parents who are training or in education and have children aged 3 or 4. Find out more www.gov.wales/get-30-hours-childcare-3-and-4-year-olds

Flying Start: is a Welsh Government programme that offers extra help to families with children under the age of 4 who live in some of the areas that need the most support. To check if it's available in your area, visit www.fis.wales

Student Support: undergraduate students may be eligible for a childcare grant of up to 85% of childcare costs through Student Finance Wales. Find out if you are eligible online. www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/tuition-fee-and-living-cost-students/what-s-available/childcare-grant

Local schemes: in some areas, there may be support available to children with additional learning needs. To find your local support services, visit www.fis.wales

See Section 4 for more support on managing the family finances.

Understanding the childcare options for you and your family

Knowing which setting to choose can feel overwhelming, so start by considering what childcare support you need. There are various types available depending on your circumstances. Some options are listed below.

Mudiad Meithrin: provides Welsh-medium playgroups, nurseries and support groups for children. This includes Cylchoedd Ti a Fi (baby and toddler groups), Cylchoedd Meithrin (Welsh-medium playgroups), and day nurseries.

Playgroups (sometimes also called a pre-school): provide childcare for children aged 2, up to school age. They are often based in community centres or schools.

Childminders: can be a flexible approach to balancing your child and family needs. They can offer support part-time and full-time, before and after school, as well as wrap-around care (where they can drop off or collect your child from school).

Open Access Play Work: these settings can be operated by local authorities or community groups and are run by trained staff. Children choose how and when they want to play, and playworkers supervise the children when they are on site.

Day Nurseries: provide full-day care for your child up to 10 hours a day. Nurseries provide play and learning opportunities for children at different ages and stages of development.

Crèches: offer temporary childcare to parents who may be using the same premises, such as for exercise classes. They can be run by local councils, local communities or run privately.

Parent and Toddler Groups: are informal sessions where parents and carers, with their child, can go to have fun, play and meet new people. Parents and carers stay with the child and are responsible for their child.

Need to know

Welsh-medium childcare settings mainly communicate in the Welsh language. For more information, visit www.meithrin.cymru/ymuno-a-chylch/?lang=en

How to choose the right childcare setting for you and your child

Choosing childcare is a big step for both you and your child. Taking time to explore your options can help you feel confident and find a setting that suits your family's needs.



Rhwydwaith Ysgolion Cymru
sy'n Hybu Iechyd a Lles
Welsh Network of Health and
Well-being Promoting Schools

When choosing childcare — like nurseries, childminders, or playgroups — look for settings that support your child's health and wellbeing. Healthy pre-schools go beyond care, promoting good habits, emotional wellbeing, and a positive community environment.

A good starting point is with some research.

- Search online for the different types of childcare in your area. The Choose Childcare website is a good place to start: **[choosingchildcare.org.uk/](https://www.choosingchildcare.org.uk/)** **[childcareinformation.wales.gov.uk/](https://www.childcareinformation.wales.gov.uk/)** **[choosingchildcare.org.uk/](https://www.choosingchildcare.org.uk/)**
- Speak to other parents, friends, or family members about their experiences of different types of childcare and ask for recommendations.
- With a list made of settings, visit their websites and social media pages to get a feel for their approach.
- When you have a shortlist, arrange visits to a few settings to see how they work and how your child responds to them!

Use this checklist to help make choosing easier:

“Sometimes just a couple of hours a week childcare can help you ... Just knowing that you will get 2 hours a week just for yourself ...”

Childcare choice checklist

Practical things to check



- Is the setting a healthy pre-school?
- Is the setting registered with Care Inspectorate Wales?
- Is it close to home or work?
- Are the opening hours suitable for your schedule?
- What are the costs and is help available (e.g. funded hours)?

Things to look for during a visit



- Are staff warm, welcoming, and engaging with children?
- Do children seem happy, safe, and busy?
- Is the space clean, safe, and well-organised?
- Are there activities that support play, learning, and wellbeing?

Questions to ask



- How do they support children's emotional wellbeing/development?
- What routines do they follow (meals, naps, play)?
- How do they communicate with parents?
- What happens if your child is upset or struggling to settle?

Final thoughts



- Does the setting feel right for your child?
- Will your child feel safe, supported, and able to thrive there?

Planning for primary school

Children start reception in September after they turn 4. You will need to apply for a primary school place a year before your child starts school, so thinking about what school is best for you and your child will be important.

Your local council can:

- help you understand what school is right for you and your child,
- help you understand the registration (admission) process for selecting your preferred school location, and
- provide you with advice on when and how you need to register your child for school.

Estyn is the organisation that checks how well schools in Wales are doing. They visit schools to see what's working well and what could be better. To find out more visit, **estyn.gov.wales**

To search for your local council and the process for registering for a school visit: **www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/how-to-apply**



Need to know

All primary school children in Wales can access free and healthy school meals. For more information, visit **www.gov.wales/universal-primary-free-school-meals-upfsm**

Understand your options



- What type of school do you want your child to go to — for example, community, faith school, Welsh-medium, English-medium
- Do you want a free (state) school or an independent school (fee-paying)

Location & catchment area



- Check if the school is within your local authority's catchment area
- Consider travel time, walking routes, and parking availability
- Use your local council's website to find nearby schools

School performance & values



- Review the school's mission, values, and approach to learning
- Read the school's Estyn report
- Understand how and what your child will learn

Questions to ask



- Ask about the learning environment both inside and outside the classroom such as play, sport, school trips
- Ask about support for any additional learning needs
- Ask about breakfast clubs and after-school care
- Ask about the school day, such as start and end times, lessons and breaks

Final thoughts



- Think about your child's personality and learning style
- Consider class sizes and the overall school environment
- Consider school start and end times
- Attend open days and arrange a school visit with your child
- Talk to other parents about their experiences

Preparing for childcare and school

Every child grows and learns at their own pace — some walk or talk earlier than others, and that's completely normal. As a parent, one of the most important things you can do is help your child build new skills through everyday play, communication and routines. This helps prepare them for the next steps, like starting school, and supports their confidence, independence, and wellbeing.

Supporting your child

Supporting your child to learn new skills is an important part of parenting. At times, they may surprise you with their new confidence and independence through playing on their own or with other children! But they will still need you to help them explore and make sense of the world, boundaries and emotions. Helping them learn new skills will help them in school, such as using the toilet, washing their hands, and brushing their teeth.

You still have an important role in shaping their communication skills through play, your interactions and communication with them. Helping them with communication at home, such as mark making, writing, listening and speaking, will help them with their confidence as they start school.

Most children by age 3 can understand simple stories with pictures and understand simple “who”, “what” and “where” questions, such as “where is the cat?” or “what colour is the cat?”. **(See section 1 for more information on speech, language and communication)**

Need to do

Check your child's vaccinations before starting childcare or school! Contact your GP to check their vaccination status - this helps protect them from serious illnesses.

There are things you can do as a parent and as a family at home to help your child continue to develop and thrive as they start this next exciting milestone, including those below.

- **Talk with your child about what to expect:** what their childcare or school will look like, what they may expect when starting nursery, what they might be learning, and the friends that they will make.
- **Use books and words to explain change:** using books from your local library such as "First Day at Nursery/School" or using words through "look, say, sing and play" can help to explain to your child about their new routines and any emotions they may feel.
- **Talk with your child about their day:** what will happen in the morning, how you will get there, breaktimes, what lunch and snacks they will have, what time home time is and who will meet them.
- **Encourage and practise different skills:** you can help their independence by encouraging and practising new skills such as putting on shoes, packing their "school" bag, using the toilet and washing their hands.
- **Build confidence in basic numbers, letters and words:** Practice writing and spelling out loud their name and basic numbers can help build confidence. Developing their communication can also help them to explain how they are feeling, such as "happy" or "sad".
- **Listen to them about their thoughts, imagination and feelings:** this will help them to improve their confidence and feel supported by you as you listen and interact with them and provide age-appropriate instructions, helping them develop ahead of starting a childcare setting or at school.

As a parent, you can also talk to your childcare provider or school about arranging a transition session to help your child settle in. You may be able to attend with your child to make the experience more comfortable.

“I didn't realise how important it was to read from a young age... so we need this information and to know why it's important.”

Need to do

If you feel that your child may be struggling with speech, language, and communication, emotions or self-care skills such as toileting, speak to your health visitor or GP for support and guidance.

Find out more

For more information on your child's development turn to Section 1 or, visit www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/supporting-your-child-when-they-start-nursery-or-school for further tips and support

“I didn't want to go to school ... but hugs help. — Child”



Looking after yourself as a parent or caregiver

In this section:

- continuing your parenting journey
- your relationships and your family
- being a working parent
- finances and budgets
- family Planning
- your health and Wellbeing



Continuing your parenting journey

It's natural to want to put your child first — but looking after your own wellbeing helps you enjoy parenting more and supports your child's growth and development. Whether you're adjusting to new routines, managing emotions, or finding your rhythm, support is available to help you and your family thrive.

Parenting brings joy, curiosity, and plenty of learning — for both you and your child. As your child grows and explores, it's normal to feel stretched or unsure at times. You don't need to be perfect — just present, caring, and kind to yourself.

You might be adjusting to new routines, returning to work, or navigating childcare. These changes can bring mixed emotions, and it's common to compare yourself to others. **Remember:** every family is different, and feeling uncertain doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong.



Where to find parenting help and support

Here are some useful resources to support you on your parenting journey.

Practical advice for everyday parenting challenges. From managing routines to responding to your child's behaviour, knowing where to turn for advice can make a huge difference. Find practical advice and tips here www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/supporting-you

Embracing the joys and challenges of parenting. Whether it's dealing with tantrums, sleepless nights, or the demands of everyday life, remember that you're not alone. Support and information on managing biting, potty training, routines, and mealtimes is available to help you navigate these challenges. Explore resources here: www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time

Managing your emotions as a parent. Parenting can bring a rollercoaster of emotions. Taking care of your emotional wellbeing is crucial not only for your health but also for how you respond to your child. Find support tips through Parenting Give It Time: www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/make-time-to-look-after-yourself-and-manage-stress

Family challenges and parenting support. Family life can be tough. Use Family Lives free parent line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call: **0808 800 2222** or visit www.familylives.org.uk

Local parenting support and activities. For a range of local information, advice and assistance for your family, from behaviour, childcare, housing, and local services, contact your local Family Information Service: www.gov.wales/find-your-local-family-information-service , or to find local and national organisations and services that can help you and your family, visit www.dewis.wales

Support for dads. For useful information on helping fathers to be even more supportive dads to their children and to their partner. The Fatherhood Institute has resources and guidance, visit www.fatherhoodinstitute.org

Finances and budgeting

“You might not know that you’re getting the right benefits or even not know you are entitled to claim.”

Managing money as a parent can feel stressful at times. Whether you’re working, out of work, studying, or training, it helps to plan ahead so changes to your budget don’t cause problems later. Small steps like making a budget, checking what financial support you can get, and asking for help when you need it can make a big difference.

Financial support and advice

Healthy food and milk

If you have a child under 4, check if you’re eligible for the NHS Healthy Start Scheme at www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Budgeting and debt advice

If you need help or advice on money, budgeting or debt, visit Citizens Advice at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales, and Money Helper at www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Check what you are entitled to

There are benefits and financial support available for parents, including help with childcare costs. Use the online support tools at Teulu Cymru www.gov.wales/teulu-cymru

Gambling support

If gambling is affecting your finances or wellbeing, visit www.gamcare.org.uk

Your relationships and your family

Healthy relationships are an important part of looking after yourself as a parent. They support your wellbeing and help create a safe, secure environment for your child to grow and thrive.

Having trusted friends, family, or community connections around you can make a big difference. Most parents need a bit of extra help during this stage — and that's completely normal. Asking for help — or saying yes when it's offered — can make a big difference and help you give your child the best start in life. Support can come from family, friends, or other networks, and will look different for everyone. The support you need will change as your child grows.

You might need help with:

Your health and wellbeing

Money or housing issues

Benefits you might be entitled to

Spending quality time with your child

Time for yourself or with your partner

Support with other responsibilities

Need to know

If you don't have support when you need it, speak to your health visitor or contact your local Family Information Service. Visit Teulu Cymru to find services near you
www.gov.wales/teulu-cymru



“We all need help at some point – it’s OK to ask for help. Sometimes you don’t want to go to your doctor, you just need a chat with someone, even another mum.”

Parenting on your own or co-parenting

Families come in all shapes and sizes. While many parents don’t plan to raise children on their own or co-parent, life circumstances can change — and that’s okay. What matters most is how you support your child through these changes and look after your own wellbeing along the way.

Separation or changes in family structure can bring new challenges, but also opportunities to grow and adapt. Learning how to manage these transitions positively can help you make the best decisions for your family.

“It’s hard work being a parent, especially if you are on your own. Try and make some time for yourself during the day, even 30 minutes can make a difference ...”

Where to find help and support

Gingerbread — help and advice for co-parenting or single parents:
www.gingerbread.org.uk or call **0808 802 0925**

Parenting. Give it Time — advice for co-parenting and managing separations: www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/co-parenting-and-relationship-support

Cafcass — guidance on managing parenting dynamics, difficult conversations and accessing support: www.cafcass.gov.uk

Grandparents and extended family

As your grandchild grows, your role may shift — from helping with school runs to offering emotional support. Whatever your involvement, you're a key part of their life and a role model they learn from.

Children often copy the behaviours they see around them. If you're thinking about making changes to support your own wellbeing, check out the section on looking after yourself as a parent or caregiver for helpful tips.

Sometimes, you may be asked for advice or support — or find yourself navigating differences in parenting styles. These conversations can be tricky, even with your own experience.

Find out more

For tips and advice on supporting your family as a grandparent, visit:

www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/taking-care-you-and-your-family-grandparents





Healthy relationships

Relationships can change as you move through different stages of parenthood — and that’s okay. Taking time to nurture these relationships helps you feel supported and gives your child a strong foundation.

Children learn by watching and listening to the adults around them. They copy how you speak, behave, and manage emotions. Creating a safe and supportive environment — even during tough times — helps your child learn how to communicate and grow.

Young children often express emotions through behaviour. They’re still learning how to understand and manage big feelings, and they need your help to feel safe and supported.

When your child is showing challenging behaviour, try using the 7 Cs to guide your response:

“... My ‘missus’ had quite a bit of stress with my eldest and then the second one came and I just closed myself off. I didn’t interact with her or the little one and it’s taken a while to get that back.”

When your child is showing tricky behaviour, try using the **7 Cs** to restore some calmness and understanding:

1**Consider:**

how can I be with my child during this moment?

2**Calm yourself:**

take a breath, count to 10, or step away briefly

3**Calm your child:**

offer comfort and space, then talk calmly

4**Curiosity:**

ask yourself what might be behind the behaviour (HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired?)

5**Connection:**

help your child understand their feelings — “I think you’re tired and that’s why you’re throwing your toys ...”

6**Correction:**

set a gentle limit — “Let’s put the toys away and have a rest.”

7**Connect again:**

rebuild closeness with a hug, story, or shared activity. It’s okay to say sorry and move forward together.

Relationship conflict

It's normal for parents to have disagreements sometimes, and most children will see this without being harmed. What matters most is how you handle these moments. The way you talk, listen and reconnect during conflict can make a big difference - for you, your partner, and your child.

Here are some practical tips for managing disagreements:

- **talk openly** – share how you're feeling and look for ways to ease stress. Sometimes, a hug or spending time together can help.
- **stay calm and respectful** – if things get heated, take a break and agree to talk later when you're both feeling calmer.
- **be kind and caring** – small gestures and kind words help everyone feel safe and supported, especially during tough times.

Most families experience ups and downs. When conflict becomes frequent or intense, it can affect the overall mood and atmosphere at home. Children are sensitive to the feelings and behaviours around them, and ongoing tension can make them feel unsettled or anxious.

If your family is facing challenges – such as relationship changes, emotional strain, or other pressures – support is available. These experiences don't define your family or your future. With the right help and support, families can navigate difficult times and build resilience together.

Need to do

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police. If you can't talk and are calling on a mobile, call 999 and press 55 and your call will be put through to the police.

Find out more

For more advice on relationship conflict visit:
www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/relationship-advice/relationship-problems#cr39455

Where to find help and support

If you're finding your relationship particularly difficult or need extra support, you're not alone. Speaking to your health visitor or accessing professional advice can help you feel more supported and informed.

Relationship Support

- **Relate** — offers counselling and advice for individuals and couples: www.relate.org.uk

Domestic Abuse Support

Support is available for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, regardless of gender or identity.

For women:

- **Refuge** — www.refuge.org.uk or call their free National Domestic Abuse Helpline, **0808 2000 247**
- **Welsh Women's Aid** — www.welshwomensaid.org.uk or call their Live Fear Free Helpline, **0808 8010 800**

For men:

- **Men's Advice Line** — mensadviceline.org.uk or call **0808 8010 327**
- **ManKind Initiative** — www.mankind.org.uk or call **0182 3334 244**

For LGBT+ individuals:

- **Galop** — www.galop.org.uk or call: **0800 999 5428**

Addiction and Mental Health Support

- **Alcohol, drugs, or gambling** — visit www.dan247.org.uk for substance use support, or www.gamcare.org.uk for gambling advice
- **Mental health support** — visit www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru-mind-in-wales for information, resources, and support services

Being a working parent

Many parents find that going back to work is a big milestone; however, adjusting to the new routine as your child is developing can be a challenge. It may feel, at times, that you are the family manager!

Lots of parents with children manage to juggle work and parenthood successfully. But balancing the changing routine of your young family and work can sometimes feel overwhelming. You may be asking questions to yourself like, “Will everything else be ok at home?” or “Will my child be ok whilst away from me?”.

Many people find it useful to talk to other parents for tips on how to balance work, life, and the needs of their child. What you can learn from others who have been in your position can be invaluable, and they may be able to help with things like finding a reliable childcare provider.

Having access to the right information can help you think about what is best for you and your young family. Just remember that every family is different, and while it might be hard at first, you will establish your own routine and balance in time.



Need to know

Breast milk that's been cooled in the fridge can be carried in a cool bag with ice packs for up to 24 hours.

Breastfeeding and work

You can continue breastfeeding as long as it is working for you and your child.

When you are ready to wean your child from the breast, you can ask your Health Visitor to signpost to the Infant Feeding Team or call the **24-hour National Breastfeeding Helpline on 0300 100 0212**.

Find out more about their services here: **www.nationalbreastfeedinghelpline.org.uk/our-services**

For information on breastfeeding and work, visit: **www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/breastfeeding-and-bottle-feeding/breastfeeding-and-lifestyle/back-to-work**

Know your options for returning to work

Whether you are considering part-time, full-time, or flexible work, it's important to explore all your options. Careers Wales provides advice on

ways to return to work, including tips on flexible working and wrap-around care options to suit your family.

Learn more at **careerswales.gov.wales/plan-your-career/options-for-returners-to-work**

Help for Returning to Work After a Career Break

Going back to work after a break can feel hard, but help is available to build your confidence and make the change easier. Guidance on balancing family and work, including managing childcare, is on the Welsh Government's Parenting site.

Get tips and advice at **www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/the-work-family-balance-act**

Need to know

Remember that you can formally request flexible working, such as part-time hours, job-sharing, compressed hours, or hybrid working. These arrangements can help you find a routine that works for you and your family. Speak to your employer for more information.

Finding and using wraparound care

Childcare availability, flexibility, and costs can vary depending on where you live. Finding the right childcare environment is important for their wellbeing and your peace of mind. Family Information Services in Wales can give advice and help you find childcare that works for you.

Find your local Family Information Service here www.gov.wales/teulu-cymru

Taking the next steps

Returning to work is a personal journey, and every family's needs are different. By using the resources and support available, you can make the right choices for you that balance your plans for work and your family's wellbeing. This will make going back to work a positive and rewarding experience for the whole family.

“There can be so many adjustments you have to make when you go back to work, not just getting used to the job, it's making sure everything else is ok at home. That the shopping gets done and cooking and what you eat and stuff.”



Your health and wellbeing

Taking care of your physical health and mental wellbeing is one of the most important things you can do — not just for yourself, but for your child too. When you feel well, you're better able to support your child to grow steadily, develop new skills, and thrive.

Now is an important time for building healthy, happy habits. As your child explores the world around them, they'll start to notice — and often copy — your actions, routines, and words. This makes it a great time to reflect on your own habits around screen time, eating, smoking, and alcohol, and think about the kind of example you want to set.

By prioritising your own wellbeing, you're also nurturing your child's wellbeing. A healthy, supported parent helps create a healthy, secure environment for a child to grow.

You Matter Too. Being a parent is one of the most rewarding — and sometimes most demanding — roles in life. Your wellbeing matters. It's about how you feel, how you cope day to day, and how connected and supported you are.

Looking after yourself isn't selfish — it's essential. When you feel balanced and supported, you're better able to

enjoy your time with your child and respond to their needs with patience and care.

Wellbeing includes your physical health, emotional balance, relationships, and sense of purpose. It's shaped by sleep, nutrition, movement, connection, and having time for yourself — even in small ways.

Looking after your own wellbeing helps you:

Feel more confident in your parenting

Cope with stress and challenges

Enjoy time with your child

Be emotionally available and responsive

“If you're not in a fit state mentally, how are you going to look after them?”

Ways to support your physical health

Small everyday choices can make a big difference.

If you **smoke**, quitting is the best thing you can do to improve your physical health.



Eat regular, balanced meals and drink plenty of water to stay energised.

Keeping active helps your body manage stress and boosts your mood.

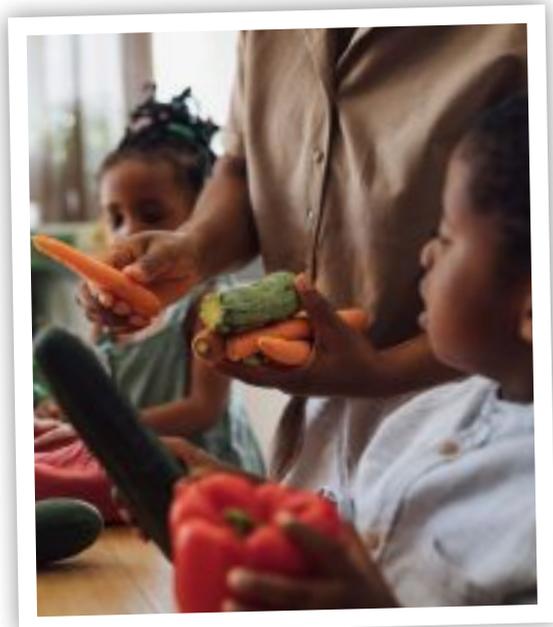


Avoid using alcohol or drugs to cope with stress — they can make things harder in the long run.

Mental wellbeing is about how you think, feel, and respond to everyday life. It includes your ability to manage stress, connect with others, and feel confident in yourself and your role as a parent or caregiver.

Supporting your mental wellbeing can help you:

- stay calm and patient
- feel more connected to your child
- make everyday decisions with more ease
- build resilience and self-compassion



Ways to support your mental wellbeing

Here are some simple, proven ways to support your mental wellbeing.

Connect with others. Spend time with people who make you feel safe, relaxed, and valued. Talking things through with someone you trust can help you feel more positive and less alone.



Be active. Physical activity helps reduce stress and boosts your mood. It doesn't have to be intense — walking, dancing, or playing outside with your child all count.

Take notice. Pause and appreciate the small things that bring you joy. Whether it's a moment of calm, a smile from your child, or the sound of birdsong — these moments help lift your mood.



Keep learning — trying something new or rediscovering an old interest can build confidence and give you a sense of achievement.

Spend time outdoors. Natural light and fresh air can help you feel calmer and more grounded. Time in nature — even a short walk — can support your mental and emotional health.



Give to others. Acts of kindness, big or small, can help you feel more connected and purposeful. Supporting others can also boost your own wellbeing.



Need to do

If you're feeling stressed or frustrated, it's okay to take a moment for yourself. Placing your child somewhere safe and giving yourself a short break can help you reset.

Support services

If things feel overwhelming, it's okay to reach out — your health visitor, GP, or support organisations are there to help. Here are some useful services.

- **C.A.L.L. Helpline** – free emotional and mental health support: call 0800 132 737
- **NHS Wales** – for urgent mental health help: call 111 and press option 2
- **Hapus** - for wellbeing tips and resources [hapus.wales](https://www.hapus.wales)
- **Samaritans** - if you're struggling with thoughts of suicide, you're not alone, and help is available: call 116 123

Smoking

As parents, we all want our children to grow up happy and healthy. If you, your partner, or anyone else in your household smokes, quitting is one of the most important things you can do to protect your child's health — as well as your own.

Second-hand smoke—the smoke breathed in when someone nearby is smoking — is especially harmful to young children. There is no safe level of exposure. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at greater risk of chest infections, breathing difficulties, asthma, and allergies. They are also up to four times more likely to become smokers themselves later in life, increasing their risk of developing serious illnesses such as cancer.

The only way to fully protect your child and others from second-hand smoke is to quit smoking. If you or someone in your household is thinking about quitting, getting support can make a big difference. **Help Me Quit** offers free, friendly services to help you stop smoking for good. You can trust them to support you every step of the way.

Need to know

Smoking in a car (vehicle) with a child or young person under the age of 18 present is illegal. Drivers and passengers who break the law could face a £50 fine.
ash.wales/campaign/smoking-in-cars

If quitting isn't possible right now, you can still reduce the risk to your child by keeping smoke well away from your home and car.

This includes:

- always smoking outside, at least six steps (about 3 metres) away from doors and windows
- asking visitors to smoke outside
- never smoking in the car, or allowing others to do so — even with the windows open

Quitting smoking is the best way to protect your family's health and enjoy life's special moments together.



If you want help with stopping smoking or vaping, contact NHS Help Me Quit on **0800 085 2219**, or go to **www.helpmequit.wales**

Need to know

If your child swallows any nicotine product (like vape liquid or nicotine spray), it can make them feel sick or vomit. Small children are especially at risk of serious harm if they swallow a lot. If your child seems unwell or you think they've swallowed something, call NHS 111 or your GP. In an emergency, call 999.

Vaping

If you don't smoke, don't vape! Whilst vaping is safer than smoking, it is not harmless, and the long-term effects of vaping are not yet fully understood.

Most vapes contain nicotine — the same addictive substance found in cigarettes. Nicotine can cause cravings and withdrawal symptoms, making it hard to stop once you start. It can also affect sleep, concentration, mood, and mental health.

We don't yet know all the long-term health effects of vaping, especially for young people whose bodies and brains are still developing. Children and young people should not use vapes.

Even being around vaping devices can be risky for small children. If you vape, make sure all devices and liquids are stored safely and out of reach.

Alcohol and drugs

As your child grows and settles into more regular routines, you might find yourself wanting to relax with an occasional drink. **There is no completely safe level of drinking.** If you find yourself needing alcohol to unwind, or you're drinking more than 14 units a week (about a bottle and a half of wine or six pints of beer), it's a good idea to speak to your health visitor or GP for advice. To keep health risks low, **it's recommended to stay under 14 units per week.**

Children notice more than we think. If you drink or use drugs around your child, they may start to copy your behaviour. Alcohol and drugs can make it harder to notice what your child needs. You might be less patient, less focused, or less likely to play and talk with them — and these everyday moments are really important for their development.

Find out more

For more info on alcohol and health, visit
111.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/LifestyleWellbeing/Alcohol

Need to know

If you or your partner have had a drink, taken any medicine, or consumed any illegal or street drugs, you must never bring your child into your bed (co-sleeping) as it may put your child at risk.



Need to do

For free and anonymous help or advice for drugs or alcohol, you can contact DAN 24/7 **0808 808 2234** or visit **dan247.org.uk**

Guidelines state that to keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week.

How many units are in your drink?



2.2
units

**One
pint**

Of beer/lager/
cider (4% ABV)



2.2
units

**Glass
of wine
(175ml)**

(12.5% ABV)



9.8
units

**Bottle
of wine
(750ml)**

(13% ABV)



1
unit

**Measure
of spirits
(25ml)**

(40% ABV)

Being active

As your child grows and develops, it will be important to continue to look after your own physical health so that you can keep enjoying activities on your own, but also with your active child.

Regular physical activity can protect you from heart disease, Type II Diabetes, and some cancers. It can also benefit your mental health, help you maintain a healthy weight, and improve your general wellbeing.

For a healthy heart and mind, it is important to be active. You can start small and gradually do more. Activities include running, walking, playing sports, cycling, swimming, and even climbing stairs.



Need to do

To maintain good physical and mental health, aim to be physically active every day. For advice and exercise suggestions, visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise

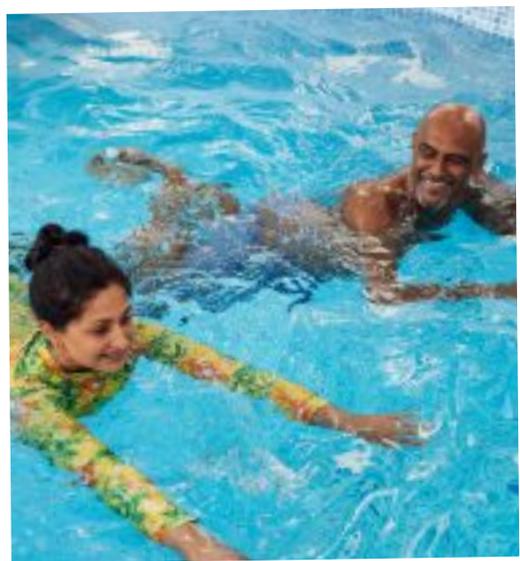
To keep your muscles, bones, and joints strong, it's important to break up any sitting time, such as watching TV, lounging on the sofa, or sitting at a computer or desk. Building your strength through activities like lifting weights (even carrying bags). Yoga and dancing will help with balance and flexibility.

It may feel challenging to include activity in your routine, and on some days, you may find it difficult to find the energy to do additional physical activity — so set manageable goals, start small, and build up over time. You may find it easier to think about planning the activity around your family.

Finding what works and is fun for you and your family will benefit everyone. It will mean that your child can learn about the importance of physical activity whilst making happy memories of fun family times together.

Some simple ways to add activity to your day

- It's not just about sport — walking shorter journeys on your own or as a family count.
- Take the stairs whenever you can.
- If you do have to drive, park further away from the entrance to get some extra steps.
- Everyday housework counts.
- Look out for parent/carer-friendly exercise groups in your area or arrange to go for a walk with other parents/carers regularly.
- Turn up the music and have a kitchen disco at home with the family.
- Reduce your time sitting or on a screen — this will be good for you and will benefit your children too, as they are likely to mimic your actions.
- Break up sitting by moving, stretching, climbing the stairs, or doing some squats.



Need to know

Losing some strength as we age is a natural process but increasing our activity levels can help us to maintain our strength, condition, and balance. This is important for everyone and can be especially important for older parents, caregivers, and grandparents if their current activity levels are low.

Physical activity for adults and older adults

 Benefits health	Reduces your chance of	Type II Diabetes -40%
 Improves sleep		Cardiovascular disease -35%
 Maintains healthy weight		Falls, depression etc. -30%
 Manages stress		Joint and back pain -25%
 Improves quality of life		Cancers (colon and breast) -20%

Some is good, more is better

Make a start today: it's never too late

Every minute counts

Be active

at least

150

minutes
moderate intensity
per week

increased breathing
able to talk



OR

or a combination of both

at least

75

minutes
vigorous intensity
per week

breathing fast
difficulty talking



to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

Build strength

on at least

2

days a week



Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity



For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls

Improve balance

2 days a week



UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

Healthy eating

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health and can help you feel your best. It is really important that you remember to eat regular, healthy meals to keep yourself well.

Healthy eating is also about having a positive relationship with food and what food means to you. This includes when, why, and how you eat, and your enjoyment of food, too. Try to enjoy eating a varied, healthy, balanced diet together as a family. This will inspire and encourage your child and help them to grow steadily and thrive.

Need to know

For Eatwell Guides based on the African & Caribbean, South Asian or Vegan diet — please ask your GP or Health Visitor for more information.



Here are some useful points to healthy eating

Aim for a minimum of five different portions of **fruit and vegetables** per day — as meals and snacks.

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. These should make up about a third of the food you eat. Choose higher-fibre, wholegrain varieties when you can.



Dairy and alternative are a good sources of protein and vitamins. They're also an important source of calcium, which helps to keep our bones strong.

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein foods are essential for your child's growth and development.



Include **protein** at every meal, e.g. beans, pulses, chickpeas, daal, fish, eggs, meat-free mince, soya and lean meat.

Try to include two portions of sustainable **fish** every week, one of which should be oily, e.g. sardines, mackerel.

Choose **unsaturated oils and spreads** and eat in small amounts.

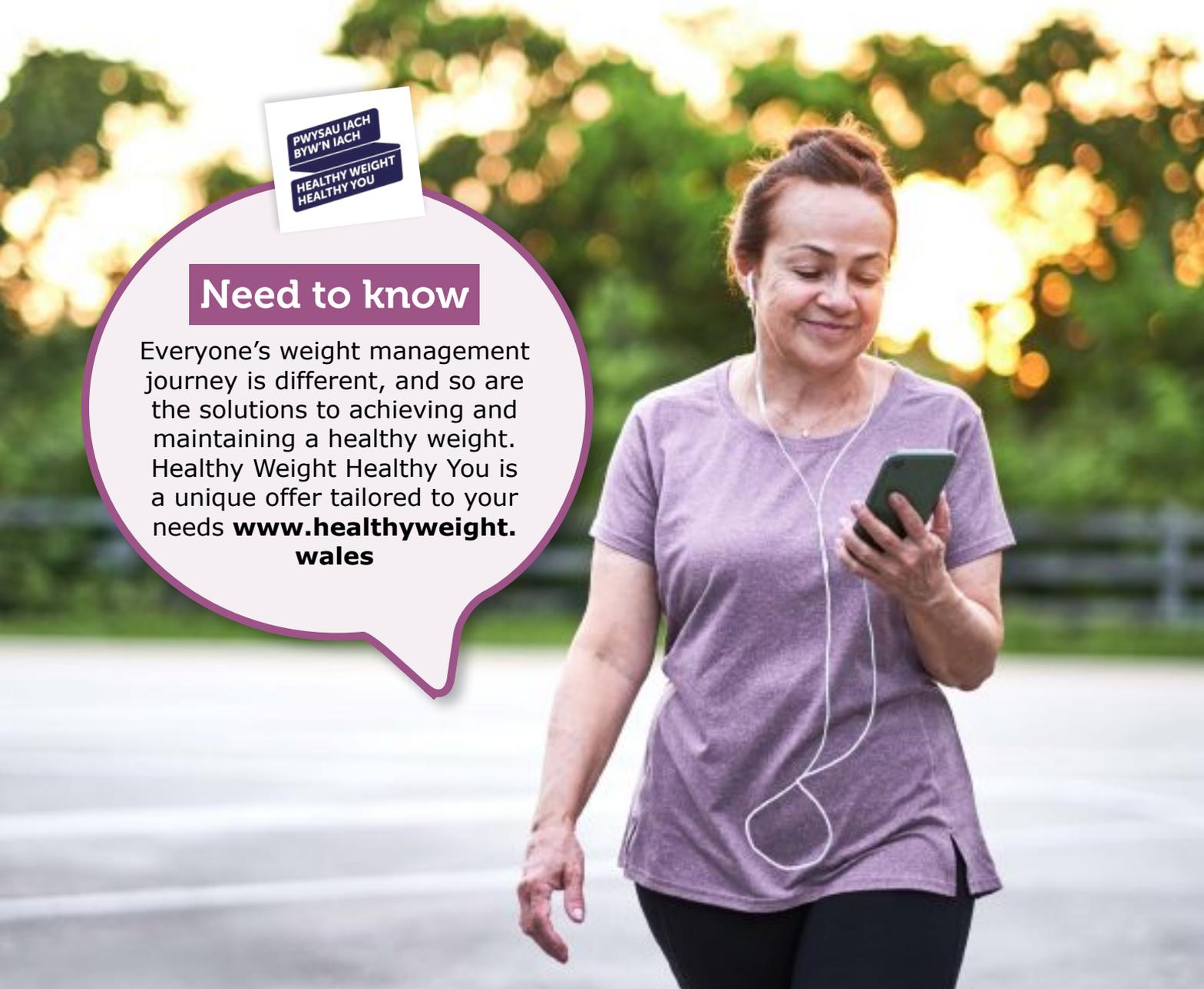


Try to drink **6–8 glasses of water per day**. Liquids like tea, coffee, and juice do count towards this. Go for lower sugar options when you can.

If eating foods and drinks **high in fat, salt, or sugar**, try to have these less often and in small amounts.







PWYSAU IACH
BYW'N IACH
HEALTHY WEIGHT
HEALTHY YOU

Need to know

Everyone's weight management journey is different, and so are the solutions to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Healthy Weight Healthy You is a unique offer tailored to your needs **www.healthyweight.wales**

Healthy weight

From pregnancy to now, your body shape and weight have changed. Feeling good about yourself is important for your overall mental health and wellbeing. Being comfortable with your body can help with managing your weight. When you have a healthy body image, you can find it easier to eat healthily and have more confidence to participate in physical activity. When you are ready to make changes to your weight, speak to your health visitor or GP, who can provide you with advice on how to do this healthily.

Screening

Taking part in cervical screening (also called a smear test) when you are invited is something that you can do to look after your health. Women and people aged over 25, who have a cervix, and are registered with a doctor as a female, will be invited to attend cervical screening every five years.

During your pregnancy, you may have missed your cervical screening, so it is important to let your doctor know so that an invitation can be arranged for you to get up to date.



Sgrinio Serfigol Cymru
Cervical Screening Wales



Need to know

Going for a smear test is your choice, you can choose to have the test at your doctor's surgery or at some sexual health clinics, and you can request to have the test taken by a woman. For more information about cervical screening, visit phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/screening/cervical-screening-wales

Family planning

Having a second or subsequent child can bring more joy to your family. Planning for the right time is an important decision for you, your partner, and your family.



Planning another pregnancy?

If you are thinking about another baby, you can increase your chances of getting pregnant if you and your partner are in good health. A poor diet, smoking, drinking, and unhealthy working conditions can all affect your fertility.

Folic acid

It is important to take a 400 It is important to take a 400 microgram (mcg) folic acid tablet every day for two to three months before trying

to get pregnant, and once pregnant, up until the twelfth week of your pregnancy. Some people are advised to take a higher dose, and you can speak to your GP, health visitor, or consultant if you want advice on this.

Folic acid reduces the risk of having a baby born with defects of the brain, spine, or spinal cord, such as spina bifida. Folic acid supplements are available from most supermarkets or pharmacists.

As well as taking a supplement, it is a good idea to eat foods naturally high in folate (the natural form of folic acid), such as leafy green vegetables, as well as foods with added folic acid, like cereals and bread.

Medicines and drugs

Some medicines and drugs can harm your baby if you take them while you're pregnant. If you or your partner takes medication regularly, talk to your doctor about any possible effects on fertility or pregnancy before you start trying for a baby, or as soon as you find out you're pregnant. Also, check with your GP or pharmacist before you take any over-the-counter medicines.

Healthy weight

Being a healthy weight can improve your fertility and your chances of getting pregnant. If you put on weight during your last pregnancy, it's good to get to a healthy weight if you can. For more information and support on how to achieve or maintain a healthy weight, visit

www.healthyweight.wales

Smoking

If you are trying for a baby, quitting smoking is the best thing you can do. Stopping smoking can help improve your chances of getting pregnant. Contact Help Me Quit on 0800 085 2219 for information and support on quitting smoking.

www.helpmequit.wales

Alcohol and drugs

It may be more difficult for you to get pregnant if you (or your baby's other biological parent) drink heavily or use drugs. Speak to your GP for help and to access support about reducing your alcohol or drug use. For further information on alcohol and drug use, visit www.dan247.org.uk

Screening and vaccinations

Ask your GP if you are up to date with your screening and vaccinations – this will ensure that you are healthy before you become pregnant and help to protect against diseases that can cause illness in you or your unborn baby. For more information, visit phw.nhs.wales/vaccines

Need to know

Being as healthy as possible will increase your chances of getting pregnant. Speak to your GP for advice on planning for a healthy pregnancy.

Not currently thinking of adding to your family?

To prevent an unplanned pregnancy, it's important to practice safe sex through contraceptives. There are different types of contraception, so if you haven't done so already, speak to your GP about your contraceptive options and family planning advice. For more information, visit:

www.111.wales.nhs.uk/contraception

Emergency contraception can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or if the contraception you have used has failed. You can access emergency contraceptives from some pharmacies and from your local sexual health service. To find your local service, visit: www.111.wales.nhs.uk/localservices



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