

English



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A parent's pocket guide to early childhood development

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Republic of Namibia



For more information about these topics you can visit:

www.RightStart.com.na

www.unicef.org/parenting/

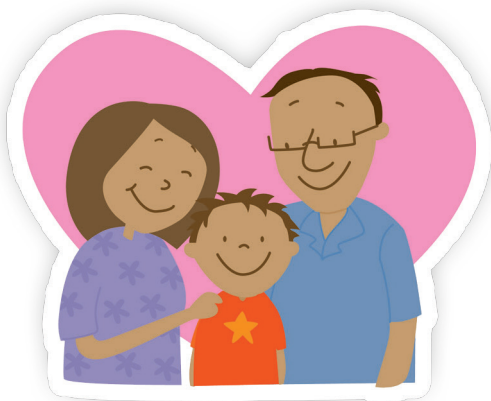
<http://www.mgecw.gov.na/>

<http://www.mhss.gov.na/>

<https://www.moe.gov.na/>

Or visit your local clinic, social services or education office for more information.

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The earliest years of your child's life are the most important for their brain development. Brains start to develop from conception, and the foundations for life-long learning, health and wellbeing are laid down before a child starts school.

That's why its so important to get the early years of a child's life right, because it gives them a better chance of performing well in school and being healthy and happy.

Getting the early years right doesn't have to be very expensive or very complicated. It can be broken down into the following main areas:

- ✓ Health
- ✓ Nutrition
- ✓ Early Learning
- ✓ Responsive Caregiving
- ✓ Safety and Security



Health



Healthy mothers are more likely to have healthy babies

- Go to your clinic as soon as you think you might be pregnant. Visiting the clinic will help to ensure you get the antenatal care you need and will also ensure that mothers who have HIV/ AIDs get additional support.
- Throughout your pregnancy make sure you keep attending the visits to the clinic as advised by your health worker.
- Make necessary preparations that allow you to give birth at a health facility. This will also help you to ensure your baby's birth is registered.

Immunizations

- Children under five need several immunizations to keep them healthy. Ensure that you get all the necessary immunizations once your baby is born.
- Make sure your child has a health passport and keep up to date with their next immunization.

Hygiene

- It is very important to keep yourself, your baby and your environment clean.
- Wash your hand regularly especially after using the toilet or changing nappies and before preparing food.
- Keep food and water well covered.
- Avoid open defecation, build latrines where possible.

Nutrition

Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding is good for both mum and baby. The baby grows big and strong and develops a stronger immune system, and the mum has reduced risks of cancer.
- Breastfeeding should go on for as long as possible, ideally two years.
- For the first 6 months of a baby's life, the baby should only be fed breastmilk. Giving water, tea, or other foods and liquids before 6 months can make your baby sick.



Young child feeding

- At 6 months of age, additional foods can be introduced to a baby's diet, this can include porridge, mashed up fruits and vegetables. If feeding a baby porridge make sure it isn't too watery (it shouldn't fall off the spoon).
- Children should not be left to feed themselves as this puts them at risk of not getting enough food.
- Children should be fed a diverse mix of food to ensure they get all the right vitamins and minerals. This should include a mix of fruits and vegetables, starches (bread, porridge, rice), protein (fish, meat, beans) and some healthy fats.
- Foods high in sugars and fats should be limited (such as sweets, fizzy drinks, fried foods).
- Young children need to eat regularly for their bodies and brains to grow.



Early Learning



Learning through play

- Children learn best when they are playing!
- Through play children learn problem solving, critical thinking, language skills, social skills and coping mechanisms.
- Learning through play starts with parents at home where children play, learn and develop with the support of parents, caregivers, older siblings and family members.
- Play should happen at homes, at ECD centers and pre-schools.
- Playing is great for learning and for the development of children with disabilities. It is an important tool to ensure that children with disabilities participate and are included in society.
- All children must receive the same opportunities to learn and develop in the early years.
- Early learning materials can be found at home and around the community. We can count beans with children, make traditional toys such as tin cars and dolls from makalani nuts, sing songs and play games that help children to learn about colours, shapes and sizes.



ECD centres

- Enrolling children at ECD centres allows them to develop their foundational skills in a social and structured environment.
- However not all ECD centres are equal and parents should check to see if the ECD centre is safe, clean, and encourages play-based learning.
- ECD centres should be registered with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and should be in line with the National Standards for ECD Centres.

Responsive Caregiving



Affection and protection

- Showing love and affection is important for children's emotional development. This helps them to develop strong friendships and healthy relationships later in life.
- Hug your children, tell them you love them, and praise them when they do well.
- Violence and physical punishment can stunt a child's brain development and lead to children becoming violent.
- Parents should speak to their children and provide non-violent punishments for bad behavior.
- Any suspected abuse or neglect of a child should be reported to the police or social a worker.

Social Protection

- All children have the right to a name and a nationality. Be sure to register your child's birth and get their birth certificate.
- Some children, such as those whose parents have low incomes, those with disabilities and children who are OVC, are eligible for child grants and should apply for the grants with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

Fathers involvement

- Both parents should be involved in the development of the child.
- Children who's fathers are actively involved in their lives are more likely to be happy, healthy and successful.
- Even when parents are not in a relationship both parents should be actively involved with the children. Paying maintenance money is important but fathers should also spend time with their children and develop an emotional bond with them.
- Step-parents should treat all children in their household equally.



Safety and Security



Safe and Clean environments

- Children are very susceptible to illness and injury so spaces for children should be kept safe and clean (this includes homes, ECD centres, play areas, outdoor spaces).
- Ensure children are protected from sewage and keep environments free from open defecation.
- Keep areas safe from hazards (broken glass, chemicals, electrical sockets/wires)
- Teach children about road safety and protect them from busy roads.

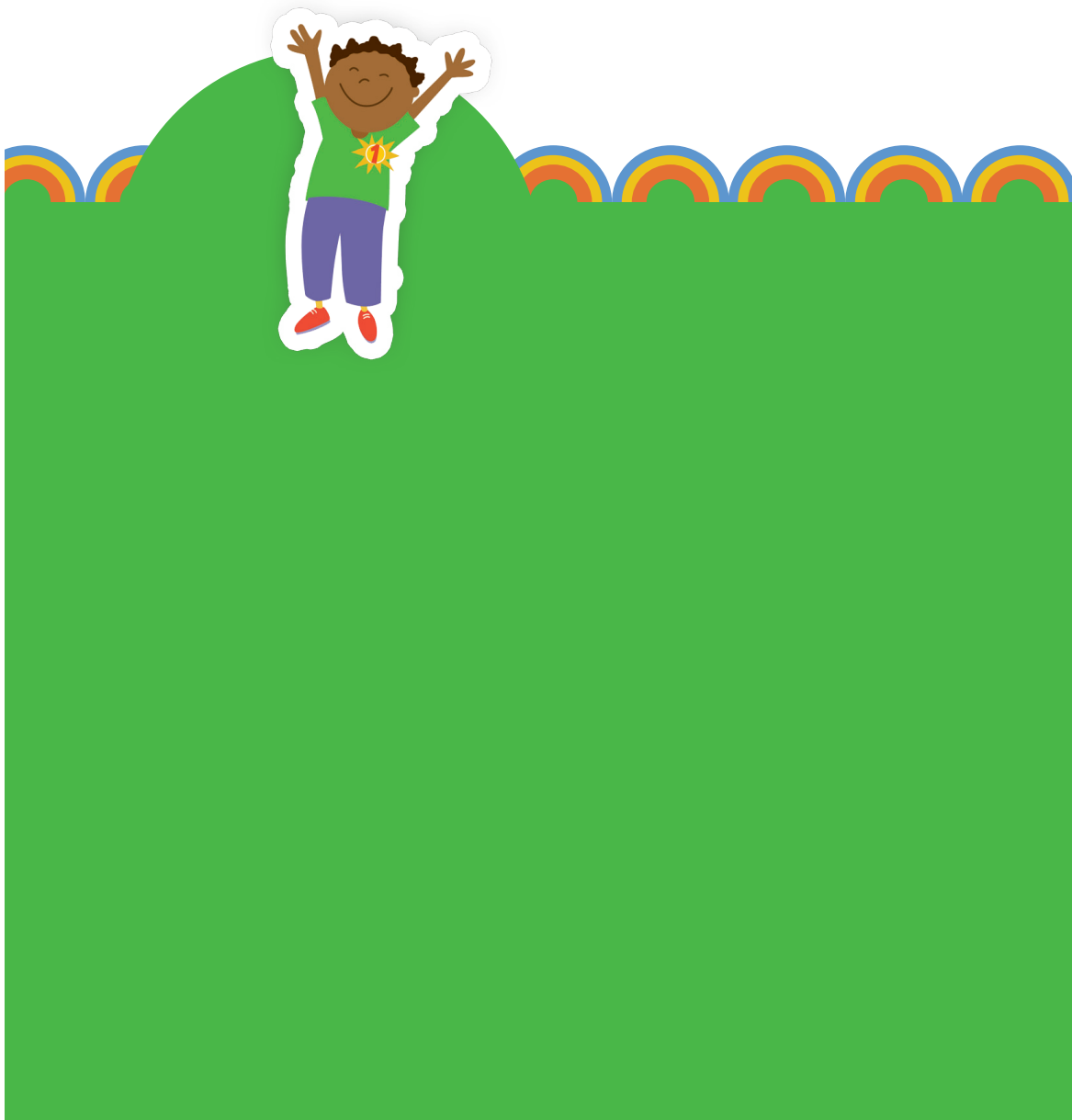
Violence

- Violence is a big problem in our community. Keep children protected from violence and shield them from violence by providing love and care.
- Speak to your children about the risks of child abuse and encourage them to tell you about anything that makes them uncomfortable.
- Teach your children about their 'private' areas on their bodies (genitals and anus) and believe them if they report any instances of inappropriate behavior.
- Remember – it's very rare for children to lie about abuse, and most instances of child abuse are committed by someone known to the child (family member, trusted adult, friend).

Alcohol and substance abuse

- Alcohol and substance abuse in homes increases risk of children being mistreated and can severely impact child development.
- Do not drink or use substances while pregnant or breastfeeding.
- Do not expose children to drugs or alcohol or adults under the influence of substances.
- Protect children from alcohol within communities and keep them away from sheebens.





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