

TOOL 4

Early Moments Matter: Providing a Caring Environment for Your Child



BACKGROUND

The early years in a child's life build the foundation for their growth and development. This early brain development determines how your baby thinks, learns, and behaves and in the long run, determines their ability to succeed in life. This period offers a once in a lifetime opportunity to shape a child's ability to learn, grow and contribute fully to society. The brain develops most rapidly from conception to three years. Interacting with your child and healthy, stimulating environments build a healthy brain. Children need good health, nutrition, security, and safety as well as opportunities for early learning to grow well. Parents have a critical role in shaping the right environment for their children in the first three years of life that establish their capacity to learn, adapt to change and develop.

Purpose of this Guidance

This advice is designed to help parents and caregivers for children 0-3 years appreciate the importance of early moments for child growth and development.





HOW TO

Provide Caring Environment for Your Child?

- Give them proper nourishment. Only mother's milk for the first six months
- Monitor their growth and take them for necessary immunization dose
- Know the importance of touch, cuddle and hug them
- Talk to them and make sure you look them in the eye
- Play simple games, sing and wave bye bye
- Wash your hands with soap after visiting the toilet, before handling or preparing food, before eating, before breastfeeding and after changing nappies
- Protect them from child abuse, emotional or physical violence
- Keep children away from environmental hazards
- If your child experiences any forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation, whether by other family members, caregivers, strangers or neighbor, **CALL Childline on 116 or Msasa on 08080074 or seek assistance from a local Police Station Victim Friendly Unit or Village Health Worker.**

Care for your Child during COVID-19 Outbreak

As a parent, you want to do everything you can to protect your child. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has brought new challenges for families across the world. Here are some of the best ways to keep your family safe.

- It is a stressful time – take care of self and support the children
- Always answer their questions truthfully. Think about how old your child is and how much they can understand
- COVID-19 has changed the daily schedule of everyone, yours as well as of your child's. Make a new schedule
- Allow your child to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know
- Your child may be scared or confused. Set aside quality time to spend with your child. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them
- Model for a child's behavior, make hand washing with soap and hygienic practices fun
- Try and catch bad behavior early. Do not show anger – pause and think and then act/respond
- Use this as an opportunity to learn something new with your child!
- Explain that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks, where they are from, or what language they speak
- There are a lot of stories going around. Some may not be true. Use trustworthy sites like the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and the World Health Organization to get information.



HOW TO

Care for Your Child for Brain Development

Early Stimulation: Love, Communicate and Play

Birth – 1 week



1 week – 6 months



6 months – 9 months



Your baby's brain is like a sponge, whatever you teach gets absorbed.

9 months – 12 months



12 months – 2 years



2 years and above



**Every child is different.
Look at what your child is doing. Praise your child for his/her effort.
Encourage him/her to do something that is a little more difficult.**



Key Contacts

- If your child experiences any forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation, whether by other family members, caregivers, strangers or neighbor, **CALL Childline on 116 or Msasa on 08080074 or seek assistance from a local Police Station Victim Friendly Unit or Village Health Worker**



Hey Zimbabwe!

Have questions about **COVID-19**?
We have answers

text hi to
the whatsapp number
+263 714734593

Ministry of Health and Child Care official Zimbabwe COVID-19 information Hub supported by

World Health Organization

unicef

If you have questions about COVID-19, text **HI** to WhatsApp number **(+263 714 734 593)** or **SMS (2019)**.



What to do when you get sick?

If you start having symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, shortness of breath, or fever equal to or greater than 38°C, or signs of fever e.g. shivering, flushed skin, excessive sweating) :

- Isolate yourself from others
- Immediately call “**2019 or 393**” and describe your symptoms and travel history and follow their instructions.



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