

ElternMail Berlin

YOUR BABY AT 3 AND 4 MONTHS OLD

Are you surprised by how fast your baby is changing and growing? You can only marvel at that, can't you? Your baby is now about 3 to 4 months old and discovers many new things, their movements are more purposeful, and your baby is awake longer during the day.

We look forward to accompanying you and your family. As your baby grows, new questions and issues are likely to arise that may be on your mind. In this ElternMail you will find numerous tips, tricks and exciting knowledge about the 3rd and 4th month of your baby's life.



Your ElternMail-Team



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FEELINGS AND NEEDS IN THE NEW PARENTAL ROLE



Settling-in and orientation

This first period is often still about finding each other as a family, whether as a couple or as a single mum or dad. Babies develop incredibly quickly. You notice: That routine with your baby that worked well yesterday might already need to be changed again today.

You probably will have noticed how your baby stays awake longer. As a result, your days may suddenly become more stressful. Doing the shopping and housework, having visitors, going to the doctor, making time for your relationship and so on. You want to do it all, but your baby demands more attention now.

All in all, you are going through an exciting time, but certainly also an exhausting one. You may feel that everything is in disarray at the moment, with no fixed structure to your daily life.

To begin with, it might help you to know: What you are experiencing right now is perfectly normal. Take your time to find new routines and structures and be patient with yourself. Of course, your baby's well-being is very important to you. Still, it is also important for you to take good care of yourself.

Because you can only be there for your baby and your family, if you check in with yourself once in a while, ask yourself how you are feeling, what you might be missing and then take care of yourself.

If you feel that support in your daily life would be good for you, don't hesitate and get help.
(s. services on the last pages)

Togetherness for three - Maintaining a romantic relationship

Expectant parents think a lot about the nursery, the pram, the car seat, about what the baby needs. Far too often, one issue is left out: How are we - as a couple? What will we do to remain lovers? When a child is born, you get to know each other from a completely different perspective. The baby is the centre of attention for the time being and there is less time for the two of you. Your sex life will also change. Feel free to talk openly about what troubles you and try to understand your partner.

Tenderness, mutual appreciation, open conversations, and a division of labour that works best for the two of you, as well as mutual support, will help you feel close and enjoy your time with the baby.

The following might help you as a couple now:

- 1 Be patient with each other and give yourself time to grow into the new role of mother or father. If you are willing to learn and practice together, you can grow even closer as a couple.
- 2 Talk openly about how you imagine the responsibilities of parenting being shared and what is important to you in parenting. Maybe you want to do it differently than your own parents. Nevertheless, make sure you are aware that in stressful moments, the brain switches to „autopilot“ and falls back on a behaviour learnt in childhood. The best prevention is to openly talk about this with each other again and again: How are we seeing ourselves as a mother, a father? What matters to us in terms of sharing the tasks and guiding our baby?
- 3 Be prepared if your partner seems to bond better with the baby than you at first. The baby has a so-called primarily chosen caregiver. Usually, this is the person who spends more time with the baby. If you feel excluded or rejected, talk about this openly in your relationship.
- 4 Most young parents may not only feel love, pride, and a sense of purpose. They may also experience fear and are quick to feel insecure. Am I doing everything correctly with the baby? Encouraging and appreciative words in the couple relationship and mutual support are now food for the soul!
- 5 State your wishes clearly. Because you may be tired and exhausted, it is much harder to guess what your partner needs. Feel free to make it clear how you are feeling and what you need.
Example: „I am exhausted. Please let us take turns changing the diapers tonight.“
- 6 It helps to accept and embrace that the baby will now be the focus for a while, and you will have less time together as a couple. Many couples mention that they miss the togetherness. Feel free to create small moments for just the two of you in your daily life.



Tips and tricks

... for your romantic relationship in daily life



- Hug and kiss frequently and don't forget to smile at each other.
- Take 15 minutes daily to tell each other how you are doing. While you are doing this, practise active listening and give each other mutual appreciation.
- Ask another caregiver, like grandma or grandpa if they could take the baby on a walk. This way you can spend a short time just the two of you.
- Write little love notes on a piece of paper (e.g., „I look forward to seeing you!“).
- Create a good mood with small, loving gestures (such as bringing coffee to bed).

An exercise for couples:

Maybe the following exercise can be helpful to find your roles by asking each other the following questions. It is best to list them spontaneously. Here are some examples:

PARTNER 1	PARTNER 2
What do I not want to do without? I want to keep doing my sport.	What do I not want to do without? I am determined to pursue my career.
What am I missing at the moment? To be able to take some time off and rest so that I can continue to develop professionally, even with a child.	What am I missing at the moment? Some time to myself.
What do I want for my relationship right now? I would like to see a clear division of tasks so that we can manage the household together.	What do I want for my relationship right now? I would like more appreciation.
I feel loved, when you hug me.	I feel loved, when you tell me that you love me.
...	...

As you both become clearer about what you need and what you are willing to do, it often becomes visible how you can be there for each other. Describe exactly what you want from the other person, formulate I-messages instead of accusations. Young parents often plan everything but their relationship. But that is exactly what is important: that your relationship is given as much space as your child and your job. If need be, with an entry in the calendar.

Tips for single or separated parents

- Organise support from your community, if possible (e.g., neighbours, friends, new acquaintances from the antenatal class).
- Make use of the support provided by the youth welfare offices.
- Use the services of the family centres and neighbourhood clubs (see services on the last pages).

Give your baby space to entertain themselves

First laugh, first outing, first story-telling, first movements – all exciting. But to be honest, mothers and fathers are waiting just as eagerly for something else, e.g., the first shower without time pressure. Or to finally being able to make a more relaxed phone call.

If your baby is happy, feel free to give them space to entertain themselves (e.g., discovering their little hands) and use this time – without feeling guilty – for yourself or for you as a couple.

YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPMENT

For guidance, here is an overview of the different areas of your baby's development.

Movement - Hearing - Sight - Smell - Speech

Being honest: Every mother, every father knows the pride of seeing their child do better than other children of the same age. However, the sneaking "higher, faster, further" in the baby's development is not in the spirit of our human nature. Each child develops entirely at their own pace. Therefore, try not to compare your baby with other children. If you are unsure, just ask your paediatrician at the next U-examination.

That's what your baby would say:

"I want to belong and be with you!"

"I am curious and want to discover the world for myself."

"I have my own pace and roll over when I am ready."

"I am curious to perceive what is happening around me."

"I need you - I need security, nurturing and the freedom to explore."

Motor development - how your baby moves

Your baby can hold their head upright in the prone position and control their movements more and more. Watch your child and you will see how they can move their hands, arms, and fingers more purposefully. They might practise touching their little hands or bringing their hand to their mouth. If you take your baby from the supine position up into the sitting position, they will move their head on their own and will even be able to turn it freely.

Most children don't yet roll over at month 3. The first rolling usually happens from 4 to 6 months. Children then first roll over onto the side and then on the stomach. The reverse rolling is first observed starting at 7 months - more likely at 8 months. This is why you will learn more about rolling over in the next ElternMails

Attention: Still, please never leave your baby unattended on elevated surfaces such as the changing table, sofa or edge of the bed and always keep a protective hand on your child. In addition, it's important to make sure that your baby doesn't sit in a baby seat too often, as this can inhibit movement development. To protect your baby's spine, you should not raise the backrest of the pram.

What your baby can already hear

During months 3 and 4, babies start to look for sounds in their field of vision. This is how they link hearing and sight. Your baby intentionally turns their head in the direction from which they have heard something. At the U-examination, your baby's hearing will be tested. This can help developmental delays which are related to hearing.

What your baby can already see

Your child can see with both eyes at the age of 3 to 4 months, which means that objects and outlines that your baby sees are now merged into one image. You may have noticed that your baby is now following you and your movements with their eyes. This is a major step in visual development. More and more, your baby will intentionally look at objects, people, or animals at a distance of about 2.5 metres. In addition, your child looks at their own hand and plays with it. Therefore, try to avoid using a baby gym too much. It can distract your child from discovering their own body and environment at their own pace, and it can overwhelm your baby. You can find some suitable game ideas on p. 6.

What your baby can smell

At about 1 month, your baby can already recognise and associate some smells, and after 3 months, they are able to recognise familiar or unfamiliar people by their smell.

Tip: As a caregiver, avoid strong-smelling perfumes, aftershaves, deodorants, etc. in the first few months so as not to irritate your baby.





How your baby talks - the first babbling stage

From birth, your baby can distinguish different speech melodies and voices.

Between 1 and 4 months, your baby is in the so-called first babbling stage.

Your child tries out sounds and tones (“are-are”) and expresses themselves by cooing, squealing, and whooping. Crying doesn’t always sound the same, but indicates different needs (hunger, pain, discomfort).

You can intuitively promote speech development with your attentive behaviour:

- Use language to accompany what you are doing: describe what you are doing at that moment, e.g., when you are changing, dressing, or washing your baby.
- Maintain eye contact and be close to your child’s face (approx. 30 cm distance). This way your baby can easily detect your facial expressions and gestures.
- Speak in a higher pitch and with a pronounced verbal melody. Your baby feels seen and heard when you imitate their cooing or babbling. Example: “Are you making brabrabra? What are you talking about? Is that fun? I’m glad.”

Keep the following in mind if your child is growing up learning more than one language:

- 1 Each parent always speaks the language with their child that they know best. Among themselves, parents can of course speak the language of their choice.
- 2 Stick to one language within a conversation with your child and don’t mix languages.



Good to know:

Children learn languages more easily

Certain areas of the brain are linked more strongly at certain times and are therefore also more receptive to learning. When children are born, they can distinguish and imitate sounds from all languages. This is an ability we have lost as adults. The early years, up to and including the end of primary school, are particularly important for speech and language development

The developmental spurt - week 12

Around week 12 (1-2 weeks earlier or later), children make a big leap in their development. The 12-week growth spurt is often very powerful but rather brief. It usually lasts only a few days to a week. Now it is time to take a deep breath and lovingly accompany your child. After a successful growth spurt, you will be able to see your child’s new developmental milestones.

How do you recognise the spurt?

- Increased crying and whining, including screaming fits
- Strong need for closeness and attention
- Changes in appetite and drinking behaviour (e.g., restless drinking, more or less hunger)
- Restless nights

This is what you can do:

If you are in a relationship, you can support each other by giving each other space. It helps a lot to be able to take turns looking after the baby during this time so that the partner can take a breath and recharge their batteries. If you are a single parent, get support from family, friends, or outside help (s. services on the last pages).

Talk to others about the stressful time.

You probably realise: They’ve all been there. The sympathy of other parents can often be more helpful than any amount of advice.

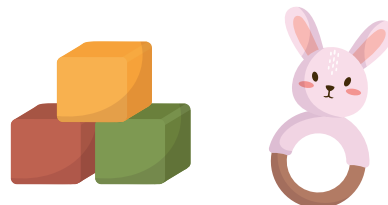
Because so much is changing in a child’s brain during this growth spurt, outside stimuli and impressions should be reduced as much as possible, e.g.:

- Refrain from too many appointments and exciting activities.
- Spend a lot of time with your baby in familiar spaces.
- If possible, spend a lot of time outdoors. Maybe there is a small and quiet park nearby?
- Calm music and lots of physical contact can also help to relieve increased anxiety and tension.

When it comes to nutrition, extra patience is called for:

- Don’t stubbornly stick to the usual intervals and routines.
- Take your cue from your baby’s appetite. Take it easy if your baby is only drinking a little - their digestion may be a little upset at the moment, as the mind and gut are closely connected.

PLAYING WITH YOUR BABY



“I’m not that much of a baby mum” / “... a baby dad” – sound familiar? Some mothers and fathers can hardly wait for their child to become more active, to be able to really “do something” with them.

Stacking building blocks, for example. Or looking at picture books. However, even very small babies are keen to play. Above all, they enjoy playing together with you. In addition, you will, thereby also boost your baby’s development.

Game ideas for everyday life with a baby

Sight

- Bend over your baby and look at it with wide eyes. Babies are very interested in and enjoy looking at faces.
- Slowly open your mouth and close it again, make faces.
- Have a look at yourselves in the mirror together and observe yourselves.

Attention: Cot mobiles or even a baby gym can quickly become overwhelming for your baby.

Speech and hearing:

- Imitate the sounds your baby makes or sing to them.
- Try reading to your baby from a book or magazine and keep changing your voice pitch.

Motor skills:

- Place a colourful cloth near your baby or move the cloth so that they can reach for it.
- Offer your baby an easy-grasp ball or wooden ring to grip.

This is what you can watch out for when playing:

- Make sure that your baby can move freely while playing.
- Choose a special place for your baby to explore. A place where you spend a lot of time. This can be a corner in the living room or, for example, a safe corner in the kitchen.
- Create an atmosphere in which your baby feels safe, sound, and secure. It should be a comfortable room temperature. Not too bright and not too dark either. You should avoid loud music or other “loud” media.
- Contact with the floor is important. It makes your baby feel safe. Lay a single-colour blanket or a non-slip mat on the floor.
- Place a vision barrier at the head end, e.g., a breastfeeding pillow or a rolled-up blanket. This also gives your baby a feeling of security.
- When choosing toys, make sure that your child is not overstimulated.

Important to know:

However, when it comes to stimulation and play, it is more about the quality and not the quantity of what is on offer. In fact, too many toys and appointments can actually overwhelm your child.

HERE’S WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOURSELF

The soul booster

Parenting takes a lot of energy. Unfortunately, in everyday life we sometimes forget – between the piles of laundry and the sleep deprivation – that being a mother or father brings a lot of joy and how wonderful it is most of the time. Here is a little „soul booster“ for those challenging times: At the end of each day, write down three positive baby or family experiences. In the course of time, your attention (perception) automatically focuses more on the beautiful things.



If you ruminate a lot ...

Some parents find it helpful to have a „rumination area“ and a „rumination time“: a designated area at home or outside where you can ruminate. But, if possible, only there and only for a certain time.

For example: „Now, for ten minutes, I think about what stresses, worries and annoys me, and then it’s over!“ Just try it out sometime!

Variety is the spice of life

Sometimes it feels good to just get out of the house, be in a new environment and talk to other parents about everyday baby life or about something completely different. Berlin has a wide range of activities for you to enjoy. Just try out the activities (e.g., parent-child groups) in your area and see what you and your baby enjoy (see activities on the last pages).

YOUR BABY'S SLEEP



A big milestone! Your baby is slowly establishing a day-night-rhythm.

From week 9 onwards, babies start to need more quiet time to sleep and have longer waking phases during the day. They slowly begin to distinguish between day and night.

Did you know

- ... that the total amount of sleep within 24 hours is about 13 hours?
- ... that your baby needs about 8-10 hours of sleep at night - with interruptions?
- ... that babies sleep around 4-5 hours a day?
- ... that 3-4 naps during the day are age-appropriate?
- ... that your baby can be awake for 45-120 minutes between naps and will extend the waking phases during the day? In the morning, the sleep pressure is usually even greater than in the evening.

What does this mean for your baby's sleep?

You may put your baby to bed at a fixed time in the evening so that they learn that night time is about to begin. Establish an evening ritual if you aren't already doing so in your daily life. This gives your child security and prepares them for sleep. Maybe in the first few weeks, sleep aids have become part of your daily routine. Consider whether you want to give up any sleep aids that have become a habit and are actually rather tiresome for you (e.g., exercise ball, pulling your hair). Sleep rituals can vary greatly. It is especially recommended for sleep guidance to have enough physical closeness before falling asleep. This causes the baby to release hormones that promote sleep. So, you can always try putting your baby in their cot and just holding their hand or singing, for example, rather than rocking them to sleep if you have been cuddling a lot before.

The following helps your child to relax and go to sleep:

- Introduce fixed bedtimes and a regular daily routine.
- Avoid light and noise exposure (darken the room from the 3rd month on).
- Introduce age-appropriate sleep rhythms with regular waking times.
- Needs such as hunger and closeness should be fulfilled before sleeping.
- It is much easier to sleep with a fresh nappy.
- Your baby knows that you are there when they need you.
- Create your baby's sleep home: This means a familiar sleep space where your baby feels safe and secure.

Your baby in the family bed?

For your parents or grandparents, this would probably not have been an option. Nowadays, more babies are sleeping with mum and dad again.

Think about it: For thousands of years, babies lived in much closer physical contact with their mother and father than they do today. With the onset of industrialisation, people's lifestyles and working patterns changed. Parents began to put their babies down for hours during the day and put them to sleep in a separate room at night. This custom is about 150 years old - a minimal period of time in terms of the length of human history.

So, what does this mean? Is it right to take a child to the family bed or not?

It is recommended for babies to sleep in a side bed during the first year of life or in their own crib in the parents' bedroom as they get older. Studies indicate that babies should not sleep in the family bed for safety reasons, as this can increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. If you do end up lying in the big bed with your baby, make sure your baby's head is higher than yours. In addition, babies should always lie in a protected nest.

Attention: Always protect your child from overheating and suffocation. Always make sure that toys, blankets, or pillows are not near your baby.

YOUR BABY'S DIET

Now that breastfeeding or bottle-feeding has really taken hold, the next topic is just around the corner: Baby food.

Often mothers and fathers are happy about this step. Your child is no longer exclusively breastfed or bottle-fed.

You may already be wondering when you can start complementary feeding, how and especially what you can cook for your baby.

Right up front: Baby food is about offering children different foods in addition to their breastfeeding or bottle feeding, such as classic porridges or solid food from the beginning (baby led weaning – BLW).

With baby led weaning, your baby controls what and how much they want to eat. They are allowed to try

things out and eat at the family table with their little hands. For the first few weeks, baby food is not a substitute for breastfeeding or bottle feeding.

At the earliest at the beginning of the 5th month and at the latest at the beginning of the 7th month, your baby can start to eat baby food. BLW starts later than pap foods, often after 6 months. Experience shows that most children are not ready for, or interested in, baby food until well after 5 months.

Vegetables such as carrot, parsnip and pumpkin are particularly suitable to start with.



THE ORAL PHASE

My baby puts everything in their mouth

The rubber ducky not only makes shrill sounds, it also has an intriguingly smooth surface. And look at this colour! You may have noticed that your baby is putting objects in their mouth more and more.

The baby sucks with the lips or tongue or chews on objects. Welcome to the so-called oral phase. It starts at 4 months and lasts until about 18 months of age.

Have you ever thought about why your baby does this? The explanation is simple: At this age, the sense of touch through the mouth is far better developed than the sense of sight. Thanks to many sensitive nerve endings in the mouth, your baby can explore the object with lips, tongue, and palate.

And: By bringing something to the mouth again and again, your baby is practising grasping and hand-eye coordination. So “putting something in one’s mouth” is also very important for motor development. The oral phase is also important for speech development. It trains the muscles in your baby’s mouth that are needed for speech. This is an important experience and a good preparation for future vocalisation and pronunciation.

During this phase, children often show a strong need for sucking that is independent of eating. This means that children suddenly want to suck more often at the breast or demand a soother more often even though they are not actually hungry. Sucking helps your baby to relax and calm down.

This is what you can do

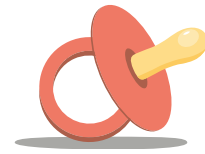
You can support your child during the oral phase by purposefully offering your baby different objects. The objects may be hard or soft, round or square. There are a lot of toys for children to grasp and chew that have just these kinds of different characteristics.

Tip: It is best not to buy cheap toys made of plastic, which may contain harmful plasticisers. Just a few high-quality, food safe products or untreated toys made of wood are better – especially for the oral phase. You can use safety labels such as the GS label as a guide.

Attention: This does not belong in children’s hands ...

- small parts that can be swallowed or could enter the windpipe (marbles, nuts, small toy figures, buttons, broken balloons, etc.).
- poisonous or other dangerous objects (lighters, cigarettes, nail polish, batteries, knives, scissors, etc.)

GIVING A SOOTHER - YES OR NO?



Good to know:
This will help you decide

Maybe you are unsure whether your child needs a soother or not. There is no right or wrong here.

There are babies who like their soothers and children who don't accept a soother. In stressful situations, a soother can help your child to satisfy the need to suck and thus calm down (self-regulation). Of course, sucking at the breast also helps, but not all mothers breastfeed their baby or want to use the breast permanently for their baby's sucking needs and soothing. In addition, there are so-called high-need babies who cry a lot and can regulate themselves more easily by sucking on the soother, or premature babies who need a soother earlier. If you are unsure, ask your midwife or at your U-examination.

Here is what you can keep in mind when using a soother:

- Make sure that your child doesn't use a soother all day, but only to calm down and sleep.
- Please avoid hanging heavy soother chains or stuffed animals onto the soother. This can deform the jaw.
- Comfort your child without a soother at first, e.g., by cuddling, singing, or carrying them.
- Even when the clothes get bigger and bigger, the soother can stay small. A soother should always be the smallest size so that the jaw does not become deformed.



Don't miss out!

Register for the Elternmail starting at month 7 months of age (see backside)
(Deutsch / українська / Türkçe / العربية)



WHY BABYWEARING YOUR BABY IS BENEFICIAL

Benefits of babywearing

Your child feels the warmth of your body. They can feel your heartbeat, smell your body odour, they can feel and hear your voice with their head on your chest. All of these sensations make the child feel safe and protected. Studies in indigenous cultures as well as in Western cultures have shown that carrying a baby - including in a sling or baby carrier - calms the babies. Children who are carried cry less and are happier. But no need to worry, carrying your baby is just one of many ways to soothe them and fulfil their need for closeness.

Can babywearing harm the baby's posture?

Children who are carried are no more likely to have postural problems than children who are not carried, even if they were carried - as soon as in the first weeks of life - sitting upright in a squatted position (important!) not in walking direction.

Is the pram the worse option?

Mothers and fathers who don't want to or cannot practise babywearing - for whatever reason - need not fear that they are doing something „wrong“. You can certainly provide your baby with physical contact and closeness on other occasions.

Is it okay if I lay my baby down for a while?

It is important to start babywearing early. Usually, the person carrying the baby then gets used to the increasing weight of the baby without any problems, as the muscles are strengthened by the gradual training. For many parents, carrying their baby on their back in a baby carrier or sling is a good way of babywearing.

Babywearing is especially valuable in the first months of life to meet many needs. At the same time, you and your child also need to rest and get some space every now and then. Especially if your baby is happy at the moment, you can lay them down any time you like. This will provide your child with the opportunity to engage with their own body and gain their own experiences. As babies get older, they need more and more time to explore their surroundings on their own. Sometimes children may not want to be carried because they are not used to being wrapped up so tightly. The weight of the child can put too much strain on parents' own muscles, ligaments, and spine, especially if there is already a pre-existing health condition. If you are unsure, a babywearing consultation could certainly be helpful for you.

YOUR BABY'S HEALTH

Breastfeeding your baby

You may find that breastfeeding suddenly changes, and your baby wants to latch onto the breast much more often than a few weeks ago. The growth spurt can mean that the milk is no longer sufficient. At this stage, try latching your baby more often and make sure you two get some extra rest so that your milk production is adjusted. Lactation teas, for example, can be of help. In case you are worried, feel free to ask your midwife or a breastfeeding counsellor for advice.

The development of the intestine

Mothers and fathers are often concerned when their baby suffers from tummy aches and flatulence. There are children who are not affected at all and others who are in pain and show it by whining and crying. It is often the case that children are more likely to complain immediately after meals or in the early evening. The reason is that your baby's digestive system is still not fully developed. You may notice that your child has a very hard tummy or keeps tightening and stretching their legs.

After the 3rd and 4th month, parents may notice that the tummy aches and flatulence slowly disappear. However, if there is no improvement, see your paediatrician.

Tips for tummy aches:

- A burp after meals can help.
- Carry your baby with their stomach side on your forearm (the so-called colic hold). This helps to get the air out of your baby's tummy.
- Little tummy massages brings calmness. Ask your midwife to show you some of the techniques.
- Leg exercises: Put your baby on their back, hold each foot of your baby with your hand and „cycle“ with their legs.
- Pay attention to your diet and to calm surroundings when breastfeeding.

U4 - Preventive examinations Month 3 to 4

Your paediatrician will examine your baby at the U4. They check whether your baby's physical and mental development is age appropriate. That is why it is important to make regular use of the U-examinations. These sessions also provide an opportunity for you to voice concerns and questions about baby care. The yellow children's examination booklet contains information about the contents of the respective U-examination.

Vaccinations for your baby

At the U-examinations, you will be informed about vaccination recommendations and vaccination obligations for your baby. If you have any uncertainties or questions about vaccination, please contact your paediatrician.



POSTNATAL RECOVERY

Postnatal recovery is both meaningful and important

Pregnancy and childbirth weaken and stretch the mother's muscles. In the postnatal class you strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor, your back, and your abdomen. This way you can prevent back problems, incontinence or a uterine or vaginal prolapse



Good to know

... regarding postnatal classes:

- A postnatal class strengthens your pelvic floor as well as your abdominal and back muscles.
- Start your course 6-8 weeks after a vaginal birth.
- Postpartum exercises are also necessary after a c-section - but wait until 10-12 weeks after the birth.
- Your health insurance will cover the costs of your course if it is attended in the first 9 months after the birth.
- There are courses in the morning with baby and in the evening for you alone - see what suits you best!
- Give your body time and training until everything feels the same as before pregnancy.
- Pregnancy lasts 9 months - and the postnatal recovery of all physical changes due to pregnancy takes about the same time.

DAY CARE FOR YOUR CHILD

Getting back to work

If you are already thinking about going back to work, you may be feeling a bit torn at the moment. You may be looking forward to the return of a piece of your old life; or you may be struggling with the thought of being separated from your child for the first time. Perhaps you might even be feeling both sentiments at once. Either way: This is a sensitive time in your life and your gut instinct is your best guide. Talk to your partner, good friends or get support from local counselling services.

Are you worried about who will look after your baby when you go back to work? Some parents can choose the time of day care individually, while others depend on childcare early on. It is important to have a good feeling and to be comfortable with the decision for day care - no matter when and where your child is cared for. In addition, it is important for your baby to have enough time to bond with a caregiver so that they can feel safe and comfortable. You can find out more about settling in gently in the next ElternMail.

Forms of childcare:

- Day care centre or childminder
- Family-oriented support
- Additional childminder



You can find detailed information about these services using this link:

← www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/kindertagesbetreuung/kindertagespflege



Good to know:

Day care is free of charge for everybody in Berlin.

Parents only pay a share for the hot lunch meal.

Tips for finding childcare:

Finding a suitable form of childcare and a guaranteed spot in a day care establishment takes time.

- Register your childcare requirements as early as possible. You can apply for a day care voucher (Kita-Gutschein) at the Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt). You should apply for the day care voucher as soon as possible, at the earliest nine and at the latest two months before you wish to start day care.
- Use the day care centre navigator to find day care centres in your area and find available spots.

← <https://kita-navigator.berlin.de>

- Contact your employer. There are companies that have their own company day care centre or purchased spots in nearby day care centres.
- Sometimes self-governing childcare entities (Kinderläden) or childminders have notices with vacant spots hanging in their windows.

An overview of the topic, including further links to specialised resources, can be found at

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/kinderbetreuung-ergaenzend-und-flexibel-143

and

← www.berlin.de/familie/suche?tx_kesearch_pi1%5Bfilter_11_77%5D=KinderbetreuungundKita

Everything you need to know about the day care voucher, including the online application, can be found here:

← <https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/324873>



You can look for babysitters at online platforms such as **nebenan.de** or **betreut.de**



Single parent or separated parents

If you are a single or separated parent, the issue of day care may be even more pressing. Important: Look for a day care spot as early as possible! A good summary of how to do this and what you need can be found on the website of the single parent networks.

← <https://alleinerziehend-berlin.de/informationen/kinderbetreuung>

If the opening hours of the day care centre do not fit in with your working hours, you can also apply for complementary day care. Information on this can also be found on this page.

Who takes care of my child if I am absent?

If the person who mainly takes care of a child falls ill and is absent, it is possible to apply for family care (household help), up until the age of 12 of this child. This requires a prescription from a doctor and an application at the family's health insurance fund. If necessary, the Youth Welfare Office can also take over the financing. Family care services can be found, for example, through the child care network.



← <https://kinderversorgungsnetz-berlin.de/familienpflege-0>

HELP WITH FINANCIAL WORRIES

Along with the joy of having a new family member, this change often comes with major financial challenges. Financial support such as maternity benefit, parental allowance and child benefit can already be applied for before as well as after the birth.

In the lives of many families, there are unforeseeable events that can lead to financial bottlenecks or money shortages. Events like the sudden separation of parents, the loss of a job, a serious illness or other strokes of fate can pose a great challenge to the life of a family.



Single mothers and fathers can, for example, receive “additional benefits for single parents” (Mehrbedarf für Alleinerziehende) and apply for an advance on alimony (Unterhaltsvorschuss) if one parent fails to pay alimony for their child.

Further information:

← www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/finanzielle-leistungen/unterhaltsvorschuss

Financial support

There is a great number of public services managed by different institutions, for example

- Parental allowance from the Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt)
- Basic income (Bürgergeld, previously called Hartz IV or unemployment pay 2 (ALG 2)) from the Jobcenter
- Unemployment pay 1 (Arbeitslosengeld 1) from the Employment Office (Agentur für Arbeit)
- Child benefit at the Family Benefits Office Berlin-Brandenburg (Familienkasse)



Housing allowance at the Berlin Housing Departments (Wohnungsämter)

Parents can check their entitlement to family benefits at <https://infotool-familie.de/zum-tool>



An overview of possible state benefits is provided by
← www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/finanzielle-leistungen



And at the Berlin Family Portal:
← www.berlin.de/familie/ratgeber/rund-ums-geld



Pregnant women and families in financial need can also turn to the Help for Families Foundation (**Stiftung Hilfe für Familien**):
← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/stiftung-hilfe-fuer-die-familie-stiftung-des-landes-berlin-168

SUPPORT SERVICES IN BERLIN

Make use of your legal right to assistance:

In addition to financial benefits, there are many other support services for parents. The Youth Welfare Offices are responsible for helping children and young people. Child and youth welfare supports children and young people in their development and assists in difficult situations.

Remember: You are entitled to help and you are not alone. Find more information at
← www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/kinder-und-jugend/kinder-und-jugendschutz/fragen-und-antworten-kinder-und-jugendhilfe/fragen-und-antworten-kinder-und-jugendhilfe-86352

Everything about family life

Another helpful contact point for questions about your family life is one of Berlin's family service offices. They are offered by the Youth Welfare Offices in cooperation with independent organisations and are available in all districts of Berlin – or even as mobile family service offices with vehicles on the road in your neighbourhood. Especially if you are stressed and at a loss with various applications, the staff there will support you. You can get the forms for various applications there, such as for parental allowance or a day care or after-school care voucher (“Antrag auf Ergänzende Förderung” and “Betreuung EFöB”), and even help with filling them out. You can also get advice on topics such as financial aid, custody declarations or paternity acknowledgements, or information on leisure activities for families in your area. In challenging family situations, such as separation or debt, the family service offices can also refer you to the appropriate specialised counselling centres.

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/familienservicebueros-350

Berlin Family Portal:

On the Berlin Family Portal, you will find a wealth of valuable service information on the topic of family, a calendar of events for children, young people, and the entire family, as well as guides on a wide range of topics (e.g., leisure, finances, single parenthood, day care centres, etc.).

← www.berlin.de/familie



An overview of the wide range of tasks performed by the Youth Welfare Office can also be found at:
← www.unterstuetzung-die-ankommt.de/de/das-sind-wir/unsere-aufgaben



Services of Early Help (Frühe Hilfen) are aimed specifically at parents from pregnancy onwards and families with children up to the age of three. They are particularly geared towards families in stressful life situations. Information on this can be found at the following websites:

← www.elternsein.info

SUPPORT SERVICES IN BERLIN



Fathers on parental leave

Berlin has a wide range of service opportunities for fathers on parental leave. The Berlin Fathers' Centre, which covers the whole of Berlin, and the services in the districts offer counselling as well as seminars, group activities and joint leisure and holiday activities.

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/beratung-von-vaetern listet die einzelnen Websites und Angebote auf.



You can find information on the topic of parental allowance (**Elterngeld**) and parental leave (**Elternzeit**) at

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/elterzeit-212

Networks for single parents

If you are a single parent to your child or children, the following institutions can offer you support:



- The **Association of Single Mothers and Fathers** (VAMV, "Verband Alleinerziehender Mütter und Väter") sees itself as an interest group for single-parent families. Besides a lot of lobbying for the interests of single parents, the VAMV offers counselling, discussion groups, recreational activities, exciting workshops, informative publications and much more.

← www.vamv-berlin.de



- The **Single Parents' Self-Help Initiative** e.V. (SHIA, "Selbsthilfeinitiative Alleinerziehende") also supports single-parent families. Counselling, information events, workshops, meetings, excursions, etc. are available here:

← <https://shia-berlin.de>



- The Berlin State Programme to Improve the Infrastructure for Single Parents ("Berliner Landesprogramm zur Verbesserung der Infrastruktur für Alleinerziehende") also aims to improve the infrastructure for single parents in Berlin. To this end, coordinators in all districts ensure that the special situation of single parents is taken into account. In addition, there are counsellors in each district who will deal with your questions and challenges.

← <https://alleinerziehend-berlin.de>

When you have many worries and fears



- If you are feeling very emotionally distressed, get help! You can find a self-test as well as a list of counsellors and self-help groups at Schatten und Licht e.V.

← <https://schatten-und-licht.de>



- There is also "emotional first aid":

← www.emotionelle-erste-hilfe.org

When your baby cries a lot



When babies cry a lot and sleep badly or are very restless, parents often feel helpless and desperate. You can find help, support, and numerous tips for your everyday life with your baby in the so-called crying baby clinics (Schreiambulanz).

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/hilfe-fuer-eltern-von-schreibabys-264

In addition, many family centres and counselling centres also have services on the topic of crying and regulation disorders.

If you have a baby with an impairment or observe delayed development



- The association Parents advise parents of children with and without disabilities (“Eltern beraten Eltern von Kindern mit und ohne Behinderung”) e.V. is one of the organisations that can help you with questions, fears, and doubts.

← www.eltern-beraten-eltern.de



- You can find a compilation of all counselling and support services here:

← www.berlin.de/familie/informationen/kinder-mit-behinderung-beratung-und-hilfe-fuer-eltern-146

When you need relief



- Practical support and relief in everyday life are offered, for example, by volunteer services such as “wellcome – practical help after birth” (wellcome – Praktische Hilfe nach der Geburt) or “Kangaroo helps and guides” (Känguru hilft und begleitet), which exist throughout Berlin. In addition, there are other similar **offers** in almost all districts:

← www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/familie-und-kinder/familienfoerderung/netzwerk-fruehe-hilfen



- A special offer is “**AMSOC Mentorships**” (Patenschaften). In this project, volunteers are involved as godparents specifically for children of mentally ill parents.

← www.amsoc-patenschaften.de



“**Forget Me Not** – Child Mentorships” (Vergiss mich nicht – Kinderpatenschaften) have set themselves the task of giving children from families with addiction problems support, stability, and affection. People who find themselves in crisis or distress sometimes need help quickly. Qualified, professional counselling and support – free of charge and anonymously if you want – is offered by several non-profit and municipal organisations:

← www.berliner-notruf.de

Support and services for LGBTIQ* families:



- **The Lesbian and Gay Association Berlin-Brandenburg (“Lesben- und Schwulenverband”) e.V.** is active as a lobbying association nationwide in socio-political matters and offers a wide range of counselling services.

← <https://berlin.lsvd.de/der-lsvd>



- The queer **Rainbow Family Centre Berlin East (Regenbogenfamilienzentrum)** in Friedrichshain offers services on topics such as discrimination, family planning, play groups as well as counselling on legal issues, transition processes or separation.

← www.trialog-berlin.de/queeres-regenbogenfamilienzentrum-berlin-ost.html



- **The Rainbow Family Centre in Schöneberg** of the Lesbian and Gay Association Berlin-Brandenburg offers counselling on wanting to have children and family issues, a discussion group for rainbow parents, a group for people wanting to have children, a pregnancy preparation course, a baby meeting, legal advice, and various open groups.

← <https://berlin.lsvd.de/projekte/regenbogenfamilien-berlin>



- The **Rainbow Family Centre Lichtenberg** of the association Lesbians Life Family (LesLeFam e.V., Lesben Leben Familie) provides support through individual counselling, a telephone hotline (030 586 821 31 or 0177 638 3327), group meetings on wanting to have children and starting a family, for pregnant women and parents-to-be, for single or non-birth parents, as well as open groups.

← <https://regenbogenfamilienzentrum-lichtenberg.de>



WELL-SUPPORTED FROM THE BEGINNING

With **ElternMail Berlin**, the **Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family Affairs (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Familie)** aims to support and strengthen all parents at the beginning of their family life and along the way. The service, which is free of charge for families, is designed to help mothers and fathers find useful information on all aspects of their child's development, as well as practical tips and information on local support services

Preview of the next ElternMail - 5th and 6th month of your baby's life

1. Couple Relationship - Space - Sexuality
2. Getting back to work
3. Trips, visits, and holidays with baby
4. Your baby's diet - baby food and BLW
5. When your baby gets sick



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