



ElternMail Berlin

YOUR BABY AT 7-9 MONTHS

Dear Parents,

it is with great pleasure that we now present the latest online edition of ElternMail Berlin. In this issue you will find material on CHILD DAYCARE CENTRES ('Kitas'), CHILDCARE and ACCLIMATISATION.

The next online issue of ElternMail Berlin will cover the age range 10 to 14 months. Find out at the end of this online issue what topics are in store for you for this phase of your child's life.



The ElternMail Team



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Introduction

For most new parents, daily life moves between home and the first outings to the park or attending a new-baby course. But if your child attends a daycare centre or nursery, your circle widens. New processes await. Encounters with lots of new people - and not forgetting the as yet unfamiliar feeling of temporarily leaving your child on their own. An exciting time!

We are pleased to be able to support you and your family with this online issue of ElternMail. This phase of your baby's development will again throw up new questions that we are ready to answer in this ElternMail. You'll find important tips and helpful information around your child's 7th to 9th month.

CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

How can a 'Kita' benefit my child?

Even if you as the mother or father rely on sending your child to a daycare centre or nursery (known in German as 'Kindertagesstätte' or 'Kita'), you will probably still be wondering whether such a situation is actually right for your child.

We understand your concerns and seek here to point out the benefits available to your child if they receive care at a Kita or from a childminder.



1. Social development

In daily life at a Kita – or with a childminder – your child will have the opportunity to come into contact with many other children. This will enable them to experience and learn social skills such as sharing, playing together, communicating and dealing with conflicts. Children love to learn from other children and naturally seek social contact.

2. Emotional development

It is important that children are enabled to live out and experience all their feelings and to learn to understand them. They acquire the possibility of being open about their feelings and developing a healthy sense of self-worth.

3. Intellectual development

A variety of play ideas, materials and activities give your child the opportunity to live out their curiosity and creativity. Your child is given support commensurate with their level of development and their needs. They thus learn lots of new things and their capacity to think is fostered.

4. Linguistic development

Contact with adults and children will develop their vocabulary more rapidly. Your child will learn new words or gestures, while their ability to communicate is steadily built up.

5. Motor development

In a Kita environment, your child learns to develop their motor skills. Both the coarse motor skills (climbing, jumping etc.) and fine motor skills (drawing, cutting etc.) are developed.

6. Experience of diversity and culture

By participating with lots of other children in daily Kita life, your child automatically experiences other cultures. And since festivals, customs and holidays are celebrated all together, your child will get to know about a wide range of cultures. This nurtures tolerance and mutual understanding. Teachers employed in many Kitas speak different languages and share their own experiences from different cultural backgrounds.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

The right care for my child

For many parents, the question of a Kita is increasingly important – either because you, the mother or father, will soon have to go back to work, or wish to do so, and therefore you need care for your child, or because you sense that your child is ready or already wants to play with other children and to learn new things every day. Here we would like to summarise the different forms of care available and to give a few tips for searching for a suitable facility.

An important fact is that in Berlin, early-age education and childcare is free of charge for parents. Whether at a 'Kita' or with a childminder, the parents only have to finance the midday meal, for which they pay a monthly amount of €23.

Why early support at a Kita is important for your child:

- Stimuli are provided to match the level of development of your child, e.g. play ideas
- Linguistic support
- Motor skills support (development of movement)
- Mutual learning, e.g. interacting with older children
- Social skills (competences), e.g. empathy, conflict-handling skills, tolerance, teamwork
- Preparation for the demands placed on children at school

What different types of childcare are available?

Child daycare centre - 'Kita'

In all districts of Berlin you will find a diverse range of Kitas, plus facilities offered by childminders (Tagespflegestelle). All of these provide care for children from infancy to starting school. Children meet other children and discover a diversity of play opportunities. Even children with disabilities or a special need can attend a regular Kita daycare centre. Kitas operate on a variety of different concepts as regards content. The emphasis is often placed on specific aspects such as movement or music.

All Kitas operate on the basis of the 'Berliner Bildungsprogramm' education programme. Further information about this can be found in 'Important information about everyday Kita life' (see p. 7).

Kinderladen - a Kita guided by parents

A 'Kinderladen' is an association run by parents and often also by teachers. Parents and educational specialists manage this type of Kita themselves and take organisational and educational decisions about the childcare concepts they adopt. The statutory regulations apply here as they do in all other Kitas in Berlin. What is special about Kinderladens is that they are often significantly smaller than other structures. Mothers and fathers are integrated more closely and in some cases play a role in the centre on a daily basis. Kinderladen centres are mostly small, where everybody knows each other well and work together to organise the childcare service provided.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Family-orientated child support by childminders

All childminders are qualified to perform their function of caring for children and are checked for suitability by the state youth welfare office (Jugendamt).

With a childminder, your child is cared for in a straightforward, family-like environment. This type of childcare normally takes place in the childminder's home or in rented premises. In both cases the location must be suitable for children and equipped safely.

The advantage of this family-like support for your child is often that you, as the parents, have a high level of interaction with the childminder and a close bond is formed.

A childminder can normally care for up to 5 children on their own. This is normally the case until the child reaches the age of three. For children under three, this has the benefit of providing support in a small group and in a family-like environment.

Two childminders working together are permitted a maximum of 10 children up to the age for starting school; this situation is referred to as large-scale care (Großtagespflege). The state youth welfare office (Jugendamt) is involved and works together with the minders. There also, you will obtain a list of approved daycare centres and can apply for a half-day or all-day care package.

Like Berlin's Kitas, these centres also operate on the basis of the 'Berliner Bildungsprogramm' education programme. This means that your child will receive support appropriate to their individual development.

Extended child daycare

You can also apply for extended daycare in addition to an ordinary place at a Kita. This provides additional hours of care if you as the parents are required to work extended work schedules, for example. It is also possible, if necessary, for your child to be given care in the evenings or at night, at weekends or on public holidays, in your own home. You can apply for extended daycare at the Jugendamt responsible for your area.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Good to know: inclusion and care places for children with special support needs

Berlin's Kitas actively ensure that children with special support needs are integrated into their work. If the child has a disability, a chronic illness or a special support need, they have a statutory right to a place at a Kita. Children with disabilities or special needs are normally cared for together with other children in a Kita facility. Special services and programmes are offered to cater for children on a needs-orientated basis.

If your child requires special care, a special care and development plan is designed that is matched to the child's needs. Additional sessions with trained specialists are also available for your child. Additional educationalists are made available for this purpose. At the wish of the parents, or if there are multiple disabilities, care may be provided in small curative education groups or special groups that cater for children with disabilities only. These groups have fewer numbers of children than do regular Kita groups.



Tips

when searching for childcare:

- Register your need for childcare as early as possible. The Jugendamt or the family service offices (Familienservicebüros) of your district are good starting points for obtaining additional information, e.g. on the topics of childcare and support.
- Registration takes place using the 'Kita voucher' (Kita-Gutschein) that you can apply for from your competent Jugendamt. You should apply for the voucher not later than 2 months and not earlier than 9 months before you wish the care to start.
- The Kita Navigator helps you find Kitas and free places in and around your area. Kitas with an emphasis on integration for children with disabilities can be found under the topic of 'Integration of children with disabilities'.
- Make contact with your employer. A few companies have their own company Kitas. Some Kitas have cooperation agreements with companies, or may be located near to your place of work.
- Sometimes, Kinderladens and other childcare facilities display a notice in their window indicating available places.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Checklist when searching for a Kita

Check the following points:

- What are the working hours/ closing times?
- Distance from your home or place of work
- Is there a special care concept, e.g. a religious denomination, Waldorf, Montessori, forest kindergarten (Waldkindergarten)?
- How many children in each group?
- What qualifications do the carers or teachers have?
- How is the acclimatisation period handled?
- What is the physical layout of the facility? (e.g. movement spaces, sleeping area, outdoor spaces)
- Are specific activities offered? (e.g. linguistic or motor development, outings)
- What options are provided for meals? (e.g. organic, vegetarian, halal, kosher, allergies)
- Are services offered for children with special support needs? (e.g. language support, motor skills support, promotion of creative processes, talent advancement)
- What languages are spoken in the centre by the teachers?
- Are there extra costs in addition to the charges for lunch?



Checklist when searching for a childminder

Check the following points:

- Are there extra costs in addition to the charges for lunch?
- Distance from your home or place of work?
- Qualifications, experience, suitability test?
- What times are agreed for dropping off and collecting your child?
- Who is appointed as the child's representative, e.g. in cases of illness or while on holiday?
- How many children in each group?
- What is the daily programme?
- Does the childminder have their own outdoor space or are there play areas/ parks nearby?

Questions to ask the care facility - prepare yourself in advance

Have you got the opportunity to find out more about a childcare facility? Then you are advised to prepare the main questions ready to ask. What do you, as the mother or father, wish to know about the facility?

Example questions:

- How does the acclimatisation process take place?
- Can my child always go and sleep if they get tired?
- How and when are nappies changed?
- What food is provided and where does it come from?
- Are there fixed drop-off and collection times?
- How many education professionals are there? When are they there?
- How is bilingualism handled?
- How is the specific support need of my child catered for?
- What qualification does the teacher responsible for integration have?
- What does a typical daily or weekly programme look like? Do the children go outside each day?
- How can parents get involved in daily activities at the Kita? Is this desired? Are there shared celebrations or other events in which parents can provide support? What does the Kita expect from parents?

CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Important information about everyday Kita life

When looking for a suitable Kita, it is usually helpful to ask other parents who already have a child at a care centre. Just by glancing at the home pages of the facilities' websites, you will notice factors such as: The care offered is hugely colourful and diverse. Many facilities display their guidelines and concepts.

It's worth a look inside: Is the overall environment suitable for our family's needs? Would our child receive the care and support they needed if they have, say, a disability or chronic illness? Do the focal points of the education appeal to us? A clear gut feeling of YES is an important factor for ensuring a good start for your child at a Kita.



Opening hours and scope of care

Berlin's Kitas enable parents to combine family and work life. For this reason, the ordinary 'Kita voucher' proposes a daily (Monday-Friday) care package of 7-9 hours per day, and the care centres offer opening hours to suit.

Educational concept: the Berliner Bildungsprogramm

This, the 'Berlin education programme', is a framework pedagogical concept that has been developed for early childhood education and upbringing in Berlin. It forms the basis for the work of educational specialists in Berlin's Kitas.

The programme focuses in particular on:

- Individual support for each child
- Holistic development - that is, your child learns about their body and about expressing their feelings through play and movement
- Involvement of the children - they get to participate in deciding and shaping aspects of daily life



Lunch and mealtimes

The focus in Berlin Kitas is on promoting healthy nutrition and eating habits. Lunch is frequently provided by an external catering service or prepared in the facility's own kitchen. Parents pay a contribution towards the hot meal at lunchtime. You should clarify with the Kita what additional charges you may have to pay, e.g. for breakfast or for snacks. Also check about any special need your child may have, e.g. allergies, food intolerances etc.



Fun and play during the daycare programme

Generally, a Kita will have a regular daily programme. Almost all Berlin facilities start the day with the Morning Circle (Morgenkreis), a ritual for starting the day together. In this, the children and teachers sit together in a circle and talk about the day ahead, sing songs or play a game. Throughout the day, the focus is placed on free play. This gives children with or without disabilities the opportunity to play independently and to explore.

There are however also regularly held activities led by the teachers and with specific educational objectives. An example of this might be working with a variety of paints and materials, leading to a creative activity. Through this process, the children become familiar with the colours and materials.



Outdoor play times

Most Kitas in Berlin have their own outdoor spaces with gardens or play equipment, so always allowing the children the opportunity of being outside in the fresh air. In addition, outings are organised from time to time to nearby parks, museums, children's theatres or other local places of interest.



Contact between parents and teaching staff

To ensure that not only the children but also the parents are comfortable in the everyday life of the Kita and can see their child's development, it is desirable that parents' evenings and development discussions are held regularly. Open communication between the parents and the teachers is very important.

CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Acclimatisation: separation from the parents for the first time

Welcome to the Kita! Your child's relationship – and yours – with the Kita starts with a period of acclimatisation. Normally, for this phase a particular member of staff will be on hand to provide plenty of time for you and your child. Your presence will help your child to feel comfortable and safe in the new environment. For the first few days, you, the mother or father, will be present to provide a safe haven for them. Various different approaches exist towards acclimatisation. You are encouraged to ask the Kita or the childminder how they manage the acclimatisation phase.

Acclimatisation...

- ... is a major developmental task for your child.
- ... will have individual requirements depending on your child's temperament and other factors.
- ... is more straightforward when the parents are able to build trust in the Kita and its staff.
- ... is easier when there are no problems in the three-way relationship between child, parents and staff.



1. Preliminary visit and familiarisation

It is advisable to visit the Kita before the acclimatisation period starts, so that your child can start to build a sense of trust. Many Kitas offer initial sessions that you as the mother or father and your child can attend to see the facility together.

2. Slow acclimatisation

The different models regard the acclimatisation of children as a process that takes place in slow stages. The main feature of the first few days is that your child is at the facility together with their primary attachment figure (parents), which enables them to create an initial sense of trust and safety. As time passes, however, the parents should gradually withdraw.

The staff member allocated to your child will gradually increase their level of contact with your child, in order to establish a bond. Only after a minimum of 3 days is it possible to consider introducing a first separation. Many factors are involved in this decision.

Examples include:

- Is your child slowly reducing their bond with their primary attachment figure?
- Do they accept the teacher who looks after them?
- Is the primary attachment figure (mother/father) ready for the separation and does it feel right?

Conditions for separation – from the child's perspective

- 'The environment, the spaces and the programme are familiar to me.'
- 'I know that my parents trust the other person.'
- 'I know that my parents are safe when they are not with me!'
- 'I know that the new adult is there to help me and knows what I need.'

CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

What you can do as the parents during the acclimatisation phase

Prepare for childcare

It's good to talk about the Kita with your child. Show them relevant picture books, or maybe go for walks that pass by the facility so that you can look at it from outside.

You as the safe haven

During the acclimatisation phase it is important for the child to feel safe and secure. Show your child a lot of loving support during this time and let them see that you trust the member of staff taking care of them.

Your child senses that you feel right

Make sure that you have a positive feeling towards the teachers and carers and the facility. It is also important for you to remain in reach during the first separation attempts and ask to talk to staff if you have a sense that something doesn't feel right yet.

Of course it is not easy to have to leave your child, and so it is very helpful if you have a good relationship with the staff member in charge of the child.

Despite the heartbreak, try to let your child see that they will enjoy themselves, and show them, say, when you come to collect them, that you're glad, even if the child cries. Here again, convey positive feelings.

Your inner attitude during acclimatisation

'There's no rush!'

→ Acclimatisation is easier if you don't put time pressure and high expectations on yourself or your child.

'I'm confident in my child's abilities.'

→ Your child can tell whether you trust them to take this step.

'I trust the competence of the teachers and carers.'

→ Your child will see how you interact with the staff and whether you are confident in them.

'We'll do it!'

→ A confident outlook gives you and your child security and trust.

'My child and I are good just as we are.'

→ Allow yourself and your child to go your own way.

This is likely to be a time of considerable adjustment for you too, and you are sure to have mixed feelings about it. Talk with your partner openly and with the staff about your thoughts and feelings. Be confident that the staff understand this and that they will support you too during this time.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

How your child experiences acclimatisation

Some children who are used to being separated from their parents and already know that Mum or Dad will come back. For them, the acclimatisation is often easier. They form a bond quickly with the care facility staff and can already handle a few hours at the Kita by themselves. There are, however, children for whom the acclimatisation is their first experience of separation from their parents. For them it is completely unfamiliar for Mum or Dad to go away. And so they don't know that their parents will come back. For this reason there are often tears during the acclimatisation period. Another factor for acclimatisation is the child's age; a child who is currently in the alienation phase will require a lot of patience and loving support. Gradually, however, your child will acclimatise to the new situation.

Why crying is important and must be allowed

- Crying can help the child to cope with the situation of separation.
- Crying is a form of stress-reduction for children.
- Crying shows the intensity of the child's bond with their parents.

What does your child need in this situation?

- Crying calls for loving support from the new attachment figure (co-regulation)
- What is necessary for loving support is that your child already has a trusting relationship with the attachment figure.
- At the moment that the child feels the pain of separation, it is vital that you show empathy. In other words, really go into what your child is feeling with them. So when your child cries because you are leaving, take them in your arms again and tell them: 'I know you're unhappy and you'd rather stay with me. But I'll come and collect you very soon. And meanwhile you can play with all these new toys and games.' Then leave the child with the staff member, and demonstrate that you trust them.

What can I do as the mother or father to help out?

There are all kinds of ways you can get involved at a childcare facility as parents. Here are some possibilities:

- Help out at planned celebrations or events, e.g. with preparing and clearing up, baking cakes, buying in drinks, decorating etc.
- Assisting on outings, if you can integrate them into your schedule.
- Giving support to projects within the Kita.
- Some facilities require help maintaining their gardens. You could even bring your child along and plant and water flowers together, etc.
- Take part in parent events or take on a formal role such as parents' representative.
- Parents and teachers can both get involved in the support association. They then bring people involved with the Kita together. Support associations (Fördervereine) support the facility and various projects.



CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Our tip for you if you have little time

Offer to buy something - maybe something decorative. The staff will be sure to be delighted! Or maybe you could bring craft materials from home, such as empty shoe boxes, cardboard rolls or yoghurt pots. If you come to the event on your own but are then collected by your partner at the end, you could help the Kita team with clearing up. If you are unable to help in these ways, perhaps because you are busy with work or personally, it is fine for you to make other suggestions that are practicable for you. Talk to the staff member responsible and tell them what you can offer and what you can't. This will make it clear that you are still interested in playing an active role.

Conflicts between facility staff and parents

Maybe you have already experienced it - perhaps you forgot to bring waterproofs for an outing, or the teacher didn't remember to bring cream for sore bottoms. Things of this kind can easily occur in a busy day. Then the mother and father quickly feel misunderstood and perhaps also offended. They do not feel as much appreciated as they would like. The same can happen with the educators and carers.

Take time to think about what causes you trouble and why. Once you have clarified this for yourself, ask to speak to someone - ideally, of course, the person directly involved in the situation in question. If you are irritated by small details, you should raise these straight away in an informal manner - and not later than on the following day when bringing or collecting your child.



Here are two examples of 'small details' and how you can deal with them.

Your child isn't wearing their woolly hat while outside in the garden.

You think: 'Oh no. Not cold ears yet again! Why did I bother giving them a hat in the first place?'

When I collect my child, they have a very full nappy.

You think: 'Why don't they change my child's nappy? My child's sure to get a sore bottom from this.'

Of course, as a parent, you have a right to be angry about this. Ultimately what is at stake is the wellbeing and health of your child. Say what you wish to say - in a friendly but firm manner.

Tip:

- Maybe there is something positive you can say at the beginning, such as 'I get the impression that my child loves coming to the Kita.' Or: 'Your Christmas decorations are really lovely.'
- A constructive exchange is easier to achieve if the point you wish to raise refers to a specific concern rather than being a general comment. The person you are talking to hears that you are basically happy with the work they are doing, but just this one thing is not right at the moment.
- And there may be a simple reason why the nappy wasn't changed on this occasion.

Important: If incidents of this kind recur and there is no sign of an improvement, a discussion should be arranged with the staff involved to clarify the situation.

Another possibility is a meeting with the group or team leader or the facility management.

To give you protection and support it can be helpful if both parents come to the meeting together. And if you have to come alone or are a single parent, you might ask a close friend or one of your own parents whether they have the time to come along and support you. Make use, meanwhile, of the regular parent meetings that all Kitas offer. These give you the opportunity to discuss your child's development and everyday matters about the Kita with the facility's staff.

CARE FOR MY CHILD: KITA & CO.

Examples of other conflict situations

Example 1: Arrangements and times

If the Kita gives only very short notice of dates on which it will be closed or on which you must collect your child at an earlier time, leaving you with difficulties caring for your child, you should ask the parents' representative to speak to the management. You can be certain that you won't be the only person affected.

Example 2: Problems with an individual staff member

You gradually sense that one of the teachers or carers is making you uneasy through their behaviour. You notice that other families are also having difficulties communicating with this person - the problem is not yours alone. This is an important reason for obtaining the advice of the facility management.

Example 3: Criticism of the pedagogical concept or the daily programme

You and other parents are of the view that the staff are not taking the children out into the fresh air often enough. In this situation you can ask the parents' representative to address this situation with the facility management.

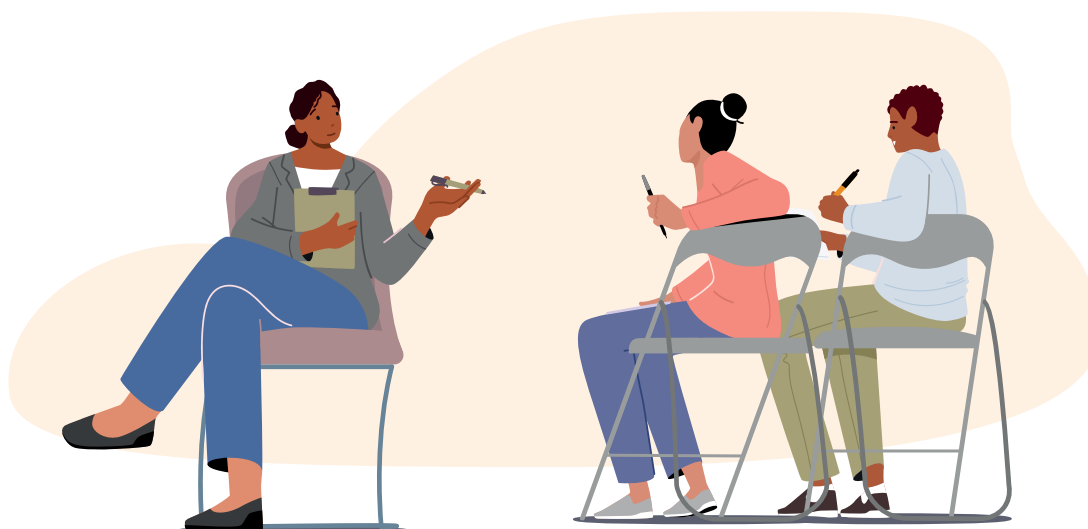
The following applies for all such meetings: Be clear about what is bothering you and what you would like to achieve.

When discussions take place for clarification and without attribution of blame, a shared solution can often be found and put into place very quickly. By demonstrating that you are prepared to talk with them, you are supporting the cooperation necessary for a good educational partnership.

What rights do parents have in the Kita?

The law of the Berlin region on child daycare provision (Kindertagesförderungsgesetz) states that parents have particular rights in respect of the Kita or childminding centre. We have listed these rights here:

1. Regular meetings should be held in which parents can be informed about their child's development.
2. Parents are entitled to accompany their child during the acclimatisation period. Parents may also take part in the daily activities of the facility. It is necessary that this be notified in advance.
3. The childcare facility should promote shared activities such as celebrations and outings.
4. It is important that parents be included in decision-making by the Kita, particularly where the outcome may involve higher costs for the parents, say, for a special lunch meal. Parents should also be included in questions regarding the educational and child-rearing work of the centre.



SUPPORT AVAILABLE IN BERLIN



Berliner Familienportal

The Berliner Familienportal (family portal) offers a wide range of useful service information on the subject of the family, an events calendar for children, young people and the whole family, and advice on a range of topics such as leisure, finance, single parenting, childcare offerings and so on.

← www.berlin.de/familie



Care for your child

An overview on the topic of childcare, including links to specialised services, at

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



Information on parent-run centres (Kinderladens) is offered by the Dachverband der Kinder- und Schülerläden (Daks)

← www.daks-berlin.de



Kita voucher

Comprehensive information about the 'Kita-Gutschein' (voucher), including the online application, is available here:

← www.service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/324873



Additional care

Additional care for parents with unusual working hours is available from mobile childcare service Mokis (Mobiler Kinderbetreuungsservice)

← www.mokis.berlin



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



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



Getting involved in the Kita

Further information on the opportunities for active involvement by parents in Kitas can be found on the website of the Berlin regional parents' committee for Kitas (Landeselternausschuss Kita Berlin):

← www.leak-berlin.de



WELL SUPPORTED, RIGHT FROM THE START

With the **ElternMail Berlin** the **Senate Department for Education, Youth and Family** aims to support and strengthen all parents at the start of their family life and along their journey. The service, which is free of charge for families, is designed to provide mums and dads with helpful information about their child's development and practical tips and advice on local support services.

Preview of the next online issue of ElternMail Berlin for the age range 10 to 14 months Baby's age in months

1. Your baby's development - learning to walk, to crawl, to talk
2. How your baby sleeps - from the cot to a child's bed
3. Conflicts with parents-in-law or grandparents
4. My child is sick: fever, coughs, colds



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