

# The first 4 years (0-4)

Dear parent,

Congratulations on the birth of your baby! You have one of the volumes of The Growth Guide in your hands. The Growth Guide consists of seven practical booklets and a collection box.

This volume of the Growth Guide contains a lot of information on the development, health and safe upbringing of your child during the various phases of his life. You will also find practical advice for the difficult situations you will sometimes encounter when raising your child. The Growth Guide can also serve as a guidebook for the many major and minor doubts or concerns which all parents face every day. The conveniently arranged list of contents and index make it easy to find the subject you want to know more about.



It is essential to us that the information included in this Growth Guide is reliable. To achieve that goal, we have entered into an agreement with Opvoedinformatie Nederland. Our publications are reviewed and validated by the national knowledge institutes. For more information, see the Colophon (page 134).

In every Growth Guide volume, there is space at the back for your own notes and information, so that you will always have these close at hand.

**We wish you happy reading!**

Download the GroeiGids app or go to [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl) to make a lasting record of your child's development, with all his growth curves, vaccinations, milestones, photographs etcetera.



Child health care centre (consultatiebureau):

Telephone/regular visit/weight check:










Date from till

Our Child health care nurse:

Our Child health care doctor:

Our Child health care assistant:

### Appointments

date	time	notes
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____

If for any reason you are unable to come to your appointment, please let the Child health care centre know as soon as possible.



Our doctor/general practitioner (GP):

Parenting support centre (Opvoedsteunpunt):

Child day care centre (Kinderdagverblijf):

Nursery school/pre-school:

Group leader:

Heel prick date: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of screener: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of hearing test \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/ Result ri: \_\_\_\_le:\_\_\_\_

Name of screener: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

(Extra hearing test \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_/ Result ri: \_\_\_\_le:\_\_\_\_)

Name of screener: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

(Extra hearing test \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_/ Result ri: \_\_\_\_le:\_\_\_\_)

Name of screener: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

# Contents

Baby, toddler, infant, child	11
Your baby: first three months	14
Nutrition	21
Nutrition in the first year	28
Caring for your baby	36
Your baby is three months old. He has learnt so much!	46
Pages for your own baby	49
Your baby is developing fast: Between 4 and 12 months	50
He has learned a lot!	62
Pages for your own baby	63
Eating from the age of 1	66
A person in his own right: 1 to 2½ years	72
Pages for your own child	83
Discovering the world. Between 2½ and 4	87
What can your child do at the age of 4?	107

## Theme pages

Vaccinations	108
Your child is sick	112
Speech and language	118
Safety first	124
Travelling with your child (between the ages of 0 and 4)	132
Parenting Support	135
Websites	136
Colophon	138
Vaccination programme	140
Visits to the Youth Health Care Centre	141
Growth curves	155
Charting your child's growth	160
Index	162

### Your own notes

This booklet allows you to make notes, to store vaccination documents and messages as well as notes or reports from other institutions involved with your child. This will help you to keep a valuable record of your child's development, right from the start.

On [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl) (in Dutch) you can make your digital booklet, including your own photographs and videos. To make sure that the Growth Guide is easy to read we have decided to use 'he' when referring to your child. We will therefore consistently refer to a child as 'he' and 'him' whether it is a boy or a girl. Needless to say, we mean both boys and girls. And when we use terms like parent(s), mother and father, this applies equally to two fathers, two mothers, single parents, step and foster parents.

### Together with you

The Child Health Care Centre (Consultatiebureau) and the School Health Service make up the Youth Health Services (0-18 years). Here, staff from Youth Health Services monitors, together with you, your child's growth and development, from birth to the age of 19. You can always turn to the Youth Health Services for questions on growing up and parenting.

Data can be kept at the back of this booklet. Or you can use the app to record your child's development.

If your child is sick or running a fever, it is best to postpone the appointment. If your child has a contagious disease (like impetigo or chicken pox), please reschedule the appointment.





# Baby, infant, toddler, child

Your baby has arrived! You and your child have probably become used to each other. As the baby grows, you will get to know each other better and better. The little sounds he makes and the way he behaves will indicate his moods and his needs, although a baby cannot yet use words to express his feelings. Even if everything is going well, every parent worries sometimes. *Why is my child crying? Is he in pain? Is he growing enough? Is he developing normally?* In this section of the Growth Guide we will provide you with an answer to many questions and give you advice on how to look after your child.

From time to time, this booklet will mention the partner as a source of support, or as being involved in the organisation of daily tasks. However, many children are raised by single parents and these children have the same development possibilities as those who are being raised in traditional two-parent families. For a single parent, raising a child can be a lot heavier, as there is no partner to share the responsibilities. If that is the case, it can be important to have family or friends to fall back on for support.

If you encounter a problem (for instance, sleeping, crying, your child's health or development), do not hesitate to call the CJG for advice. If necessary, they will refer you for appropriate advice or help. It is often not even necessary to make an appointment for a visit or for a weighing. You can make a note of the opening hours and telephone numbers on the first pages of this Growth Guide.

## Not always perfect bliss

A new baby is not always a totally happy event. There may be medical problems, your child may be premature and/or too small. After a difficult delivery it may take you a while to recognise and feel the bliss, especially if your baby cries a lot. Having a baby is a major event with a heavy burden of responsibility. You do not have to be happy all the time. Feelings of sadness, the so-called baby blues, need to be allowed, just like those notorious moments of tearfulness. Do not carry on in silence, talk to your partner about your feelings, or to your gynecologist, maternity nurse or doctor. Especially if you are suffering from post-natal depression, you will certainly need help (and possibly medication).

Or go to [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl) and look for postpartum depression.



## Bringing up together

Bringing up children may be a lot easier if and when parents are able to support each other positively. Caring for a baby demands a great deal of time and effort. At times you will feel as if you no longer have any time for yourself or your partner, or to find comfort in those pleasant and comfortable feelings. For many parents, it is a challenge to share and organise child care and domestic activities in a way that keeps everybody happy and satisfied. Talk about it and look for solutions when there is a problem: this will make you feel like a team. You will have the best chance of coming up with a solution if you find a quiet moment and stay calm during these discussions. More information is to be found on [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl). Look for 'Ouderschap' (Parenthood).

## Make sure you get the support you need

Everybody needs support. Who are your primary supporters? It may be your partner, a grandmother, a neighbour or a good friend. Are you sure you have enough support with these people around you? If not, maybe you can think of other persons you would like to involve in your life. Or you could talk to someone from the Youth Health Service. They can provide you with information about the possibilities in your neighbourhood.

## Applying for a passport

In the Netherlands, a passport or an ID (Identity Card) is compulsory for persons aged 14 and over. Children younger than 14 travelling abroad and any person in need of medical care will also need a passport or ID.

If your child needs medical care in a hospital, he must be in the possession of a passport or an ID. Of course, your child will be treated and looked after before he has a passport. The law says, however, that he should be able to prove his identity within two weeks.



## Look after yourself

It is not just children who will need a compliment or a pat on the back from time to time. Adults have the same need. As a parent, you should sometimes stop and think about what you are doing right. "I managed to stay calm when my baby went on crying". It may be very pleasant to pay your partner a compliment, or to get a compliment in return.

Compliments make you feel good and build confidence, in yourself and your partner! Make sure to take some time for yourself, and for each other. For instance when your child is asleep. Stop and think about what is going well and about things you might want to do differently or which you find difficult. Talk to your partner about how the teamwork is going.

## Back to work or studies

After their parental leave period, many parents go back to work or studies. This could well be a major change. Often they will share the work involved in caring for the baby. It is important that both parents should have the opportunity to do so.

Day care for children is available for parents who work or study. It is vital to find a stable situation for the child, where he feels safe and secure. Make sure that you are in constant touch with the babysitter or the day care group leader. Keeping notes on sleeping, eating, and moods etcetera may be useful. More information is to be found on [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl). Look for 'Werk en kinderen' (Work and children).

You need to discuss the best way of combining work and family matters. There is a site '[zijnjullieraluit.nl](http://zijnjullieraluit.nl)' that can provide you with several very useful tools. To get more information about parental leave, go to '[verlofregelaar.nl](http://verlofregelaar.nl)'.

## How to combine working and breastfeeding?

Up to the age of 9 months, you have the right to use a quarter of your working hours to feed your child. If your child is at a day care centre near you, you could go there to feed him. Or you can use a breast-pump at work, in which case there has to be a space where you can pump without being disturbed. For more information about preparing for breastfeeding and about how to keep breast milk, read the Growth Guide booklet on Breast-feeding, go to [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl) or [voedingscentrum.nl/bv-werk](http://voedingscentrum.nl/bv-werk).

Until the age of 8 years, both parents have the right to take a period of parental leave. For more information visit the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment on [rijksoverheid.nl](http://rijksoverheid.nl)

## Getting used to the nursery or the babysitter

Well before you (both) return to work, you should start the process of helping the baby get accustomed to the leader of the day care centre or the babysitter. Child day care centres usually have a protocol, based on a gradual approach. It is advisable to start before you return to work, so that you will be available if needed. If you are considering other possibilities, such as placing your child with a host family or an in-house baby-sitter, the gradual approach is also the most suitable. If you are breastfeeding, make sure to make an early start with the process of accustoming your child to drinking expressed breast milk from a bottle.

In touch with your baby

# Your baby: the first three months

## Your baby's development in the first three months

Young children discover themselves and the people around them. They get to know the outside world, they learn to communicate and they begin to understand how things work. Every child has his own way of learning, as well as his own order of learning. It may be interesting to watch and record how your child starts this process. On one of the next pages in this booklet, you can fill out a list of your child's development in the first three months.

## Your baby's feelings

What is going on inside that little head? For a start, a child will learn to recognise his parents very quickly. Inside the womb, he has got used to your voices. At birth, your child's brain is not yet fully developed.

The first years are important, because your child will acquire a great deal of experience and his brain is developing quickly. That is when you develop your own emotional ties with your child. It is essential that you take enough time for that: it is good for you too.

Look at your child, talk to him, touch him and hold him. This will give your baby a feeling of warmth and safety. Watch your child and listen to him carefully, to get ever closer to him. In the first few weeks of his life, the baby will not be able to concentrate on that contact for very long. He may look away.

Babies love repetition, it makes their world predictable. Small variations help to make life more interesting for your child.

## The bond between you and your child

Every parent feels occasional fear of not being a good parent, of not being up to the responsibility. Do not worry, this is quite normal. If you have a strong bond with your child, there is nothing to worry about. You can work on the bond by talking to your child, by staying calm when he is unsettled and by taking the time to find out what is wrong. In other words: care for your baby with love and attention and your bond will grow ever stronger.

Some questions:

- How is your baby communicating with you? Babbling? Staring at you intensely?
- How does he show that he recognises you? Does he laugh, wave his arms, stamp excitedly, or blink his eyes contentedly?
- How do you notice that he is relaxed? In what position is he lying then? How do his hands look? How does he feel?
- How can you tell that he is curious? Does he lift his head, or start making noises?



## Crying

Crying is normal for babies and children and it is a form of communication. In the second week, babies will cry for an average of one hour a day. The amount of crying increases until approximately six weeks when the average crying time is three hours a day. From then on, the crying will often start to decrease, even if you do nothing special. But remember, the amount of crying and crying times differ a lot from baby to baby. Researchers have not yet been able to determine why babies cry more in the first weeks, but it is the same all over the world. Current scientific opinion is that it has to do with the development of the central nervous system. The most common times for crying are late afternoon or early evening and it is thought that babies use crying to discharge the tension they have built up during the day. The number of daily crying sessions cannot always be reduced by good care, but it may be possible to reduce the crying time by reacting adequately. Hold and comfort your baby when he is inconsolable.

If you are not sure that there is no other reason for the baby crying, make sure to consult the Child Health Care nurse or doctor. They will check your child to see if there is any medical reason for crying and they will offer you support at this difficult time.

## Consoling and soothing your baby

It is perfectly all right for you to pick up a baby when he is crying inconsolably and to hold him safely against you. Talk to him softly, sing a lullaby, or cradle him gently. He will hear your voice and heartbeat, he will feel your movement, which will make it easier for him to calm down. A sling is ideal in these situations. When selecting a sling, go for one with a wide seat, as it gives better hip support. A well-tied sling gives the best 'seat'. The baby feels comfortable, with his head well supported. In a way, it resembles the cover provided by the warm and familiar womb. Your body heat will provide extra warmth, so make sure the baby is not wearing too many layers of clothing or he may overheat. Holding a crying baby to your chest and soothing him is a good thing, but think of

yourself. Make sure you get enough rest. The Youth Health Service will be able to advise you on this.

## Spoiling?

Crying and consolation are part of a baby's life. Contrary to what was thought in the past, it is impossible to spoil a baby in his first weeks. Babies have to absorb a great number of new impressions and their parents' support is indispensable.

## Sometimes, it's just too much

There may be moments when a baby demands more from you than you can give. For instance, if your child cries a lot. It is not easy to see and hear that he is unhappy. As a result, you may feel very frustrated and possibly even angry. Perhaps relatives or friends will be able to lend a hand, so that you can get some rest. Consult your health care centre or your pediatrician if you do not know what the cause is.

### What can you do if it is too much?

- Put your baby in a safe place, like his bed or the pen.
- Leave the room.
- Do not go back to your baby until you have calmed down.
- Talk to family, friends, the Child Health Care Centre, your doctor or the gynaecologist.



## Why is it dangerous to shake a baby?

A baby's head is large and heavy in comparison to the rest of his body. If the head is not supported, it will shake to and fro, because the neck muscles are not strong enough to keep it in position. Shaking the baby exerts serious pressure on the head and may cause tiny blood vessels in the head to burst, possibly leading to blindness, deafness, epilepsy, learning difficulties, brain damage or even death. This is called 'shaken baby syndrome'.

If your baby cries a lot, it may be hard for you. There are many ways to get help. Talk to your GP or to the Child Health Care Centre. They can check your baby for possible medical causes for crying or be of assistance to you in these tough times.

## Seven ways to prevent prolonged crying and make your baby sleep better

If your baby cries a lot or is very upset, you will probably have found a way yourself to calm him down. If you need more advice, the following seven methods are quite practical. They will introduce an element of restful routine into his life, which will be especially useful for easily stimulated babies. If this does not work sufficiently against prolonged crying, ask the Child Health Care Centre about other methods.

### 1. Steady daily routine

Babies love routines. A baby will cry less if he knows, more or less, what is going to happen. The same daily sequence of activities will make him feel at ease: sleeping, waking up, feeding, hugging or 'talking'. A baby may appear sleepy after being fed, but sometimes he just needs to recover. He does not have to be put to bed then.

### 2. Sleepy?

A baby will usually make it very clear when he is tired. Some telltale signs: reduced activity, looking away, no eye contact, whining, yawning, staring, clenched fists.

### 3. Put the baby to bed when he is tired, but still awake

If a child is used to falling asleep by himself, he will sleep as much as necessary and will awake refreshed. A child needing help to get to sleep, may wake up at every unexpected sound, or if he makes an involuntary movement. It may take a baby 5 to 20 minutes, during which time he may cry or whine, before he suddenly drops off to sleep.



#### 4. Predictable activities

A steady ritual may help a baby to fall asleep more easily. For instance: changing the nappy, singing a song, cuddling and putting the baby to bed, tired but contented. It is good for your baby to learn to sleep in his own bed (see page 38: Sleeping well).

#### 5. Avoid too much outside distraction

You can do this by making sure the radio and TV are not switched on all day, by not putting a baby aged less than 3 months under the baby gym all the time and by not putting him in front of the TV. Try to limit visits during his sleeping hours.

#### 6. Rest

Give him a healthy mix of sleeping and being awake, quiet surroundings and not more than one outdoor activity per day.

#### 7. A tightly made up bed

A baby often sleeps better when his arms and legs cannot move in all directions. You can make up the bed so that the blanket reaches up to the baby's shoulders while his feet touch the bottom end of the bed. Tuck the blanket in snugly and your child will be comfortable. If there are no medical objections, you may wrap your baby in a special swaddle. Ask the Youth Health Care Centre for advice.

## Nutrition in the early months

### Breastfeeding as required

Breastfeeding is unique: it always has the right composition. It always has the right temperature. The quantity is automatically adapted to the age of the child. For instance, milk for a two-week-old child is different from the milk for a newborn baby. For maximum benefit, breastfeeding is recommended up and to the age of at least 6 months. Remember: every week of breastfeeding counts. From the age of 4 to 6 months, breastfeeding can be supplemented with small portions of extra food. The Growth Guide on 'Breastfeeding' contains detailed information. Or go to [groeigids.nl](http://groeigids.nl).

### Formula food

Maybe you are unable or unwilling to breastfeed. In that case there are many different kinds of prepared formula milk for bottle-feeding. The maternity assistant ('kraamverzorgster') or the Youth Health Service will help you select the most appropriate food for your baby. It is wise to take advice on this, because frequent changes can unsettle a child. When preparing formula, make sure you use the right quantities of

In some older houses or apartments, lead piping is still used. Find out whether this is the case, as you should avoid using tap water for bottle-feeding as it can cause lead poisoning. Instead, use water from non-lead piping or bottles (the label will indicate whether the water is suitable for babies).

Drinking water in newly built or renovated houses may also contain too much lead. Pipes and taps should therefore be flushed for two minutes every morning for the first three months before using the water. If it is only a new tap (and not new pipes) 10 seconds will be enough.

