



## **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**

*Supporting Families, Protecting Children*

**Every child deserves a safe, loving environment to grow and thrive. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time to raise awareness and provide families with the support they need to keep children safe. Parenting, especially in the early years, can be overwhelming—but no one has to do it alone.**

### **Did You Know?**

Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment. Babies and toddlers rely on caregivers for food, supervision, and emotional security. Meeting their basic needs helps them feel safe and nurtured.

Children under age 3 are at the highest risk of abuse. Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable, making early support for parents essential in preventing stress-related harm.

Most abuse happens within the family. Abuse is often committed by a parent or caregiver, usually due to overwhelming stress, lack of support, or unrealistic expectations of a child's behavior.

Parental stress is a major risk factor—but help is available. Sleep deprivation, financial strain, and feelings of isolation can increase frustration. Seeking support from friends, family, or parenting programs can make a big difference.

A strong support system can prevent abuse. Parents who have access to emotional support, parenting resources, and self-care strategies are better equipped to manage challenges in a healthy way.



### **What You Can Do:**

- Reach out for help when you need it—parenting is tough, and support is available.
- Learn about positive discipline strategies that work for babies and toddlers.
- Build a support network—friends, family, and parenting groups can offer guidance and encouragement.
- Take breaks when needed—stepping away for a moment when feeling overwhelmed is okay.

By supporting families and reducing stress, we can create safer, healthier environments for our children. This month, let's work together to build a community where every child can grow up safe and loved.



**StartSmart** is designed to share practical tips and advice each month to help you nurture your baby's growth and development. From encouraging milestones to promoting healthy habits, **StartSmart** is here to support you every step of the way on your parenting journey!

## Building a Strong Bond with Your Baby

Becoming a parent is a life-changing experience filled with joy, challenges, and plenty of learning moments. One of the most important things you can do in your baby's early months is build a strong bond, also known as secure attachment. This connection not only makes your baby feel safe and loved but also lays the foundation for emotional and brain development.



### The Power of Early Attachment

**Respond to Your Baby's Cues:** When your baby cries, coos, or smiles, they are communicating with you. Responding with gentle words, cuddles, or feeding helps them feel secure.

**Practice Skin-to-Skin Contact:** Holding your baby close, especially in the early weeks, helps regulate their body temperature, heart rate, and stress levels while strengthening your connection.



**Make Eye Contact and Talk to Your Baby:** Your baby loves hearing your voice! Talking, singing, and making eye contact help build language skills and emotional trust.

**Establish Routines:** Babies feel safe when they know what to expect. Simple routines like feeding, bath time, and bedtime help create a sense of security.

**Take Care of Yourself, Too:** Through play, children learn to share, take turns, and build relationships. Offer opportunities for safe social interactions with family, caregivers, or other children.

### You're Doing Great!

Bonding doesn't have to be perfect—it's about being present, responsive, and loving. Every cuddle, soothing word, and gentle touch strengthens the connection between you and your baby. Keep going—you're building the foundation for a lifetime of love and trust!



### Important dates this month:

April 1	April Fool's Day
April 2	International Children's Book Day
April 13	Passover Begins
April 18	Good Friday
April 20	Easter