



Celebrating Your Love and Strength

This Mother's Day, we celebrate you—the moms who give so much every day to nurture, comfort, and protect your little ones. Your love, patience, and presence are the building blocks of your child's healthy future.

Even when life brings challenges—like stress, past trauma, or tough times—what matters most to your baby is you. Your hugs, your voice, your care in the small, everyday moments help protect your child from the effects of early adversity, also known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). (See this month's StartSmart on page 2 for more info on ACEs.)

The good news? A safe, stable, and loving home can buffer the impact of stress and help your child grow strong and resilient.

This Mother's Day, remember:

- ♥ You are your child's safe place.
- ♥ Taking care of yourself helps you take care of your family.
- ♥ Your presence and love matter more than perfection.
- ♥ You are never alone—Healthy Families is here for you.

Wishing you a joyful Mother's Day full of love, laughter, and a little time to rest—you deserve it!



Taking Time for You

National Women's Health Week is May 12-18, a time when we celebrate the strength, resilience, and care that women bring to their families and communities every day. As a mom, you're often focused on everyone else's needs—but your health and well-being matter, too.

Self-care isn't selfish – it's essential.

When you take time to care for yourself, you're not only supporting your own health, but also creating a stronger, more nurturing environment for your little ones. Babies and toddlers thrive when their caregivers are feeling balanced, supported, and well. Here are a few ways to prioritize your well-being:

- Schedule your check-ups. Whether it's a wellness visit, dental appointment, or mental health check-in, keeping up with your own health is a powerful way to lead by example.
- Move your body in joyful ways. A short walk with the stroller, dancing in the kitchen, or stretching before bed can help boost your energy and mood.
- Ask for help when you need it. Whether it's leaning on a friend, partner, or program like Healthy Families, you don't have to do it all alone.

This Women's Health Week, let's honor the powerful work of nurturing others by taking good care of ourselves. Remember: your health and well-being matter, too!





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!

Understanding ACEs and Building a Strong Start

As parents, we all want to give our babies the best start in life. One way to do that is by understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs: stressful or traumatic events that happen early in life—like family separation, abuse, or exposure to violence. These experiences can affect how young children grow, learn, and connect with others. But with love, support, and safe environments, children can grow up healthy and strong, even if challenges come their way.



Why It Matters in the Early Years

Infants and toddlers are especially sensitive to their surroundings. Their brains are growing rapidly, and strong, positive relationships with caregivers are key to healthy development. Even when life is stressful, small acts of care can help protect babies from the effects of early adversity.

What Parents Can Do

- Be present and nurturing. Hugs, eye contact, and talking gently during diaper changes and feedings help build trust and emotional security.
- Create calm, predictable routines. Babies and toddlers feel safer when they know what to expect—whether it's a bedtime song or a daily walk outside.
- Take care of yourself, too. Parenting is hard work. Finding ways to manage your own stress—like talking to a friend or taking a few deep breaths—helps you stay calm and connected.
- Reach out for support. Programs like Healthy Families are here to walk alongside you. You don't have to do it alone.



By showing up with love and consistency, you're helping your little one build the strong foundation they need to thrive—for life.



Important dates this month:

May 11 Mother's Day
May 26 Memorial Day



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