



Building Safe, Strong, and Nurturing Families

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month—a time to support families in creating safe, nurturing homes where children can thrive. Parenting is rewarding but can be overwhelming; young children rely on adults for everything, and their crying or behavior is a way of communicating needs, not misbehaving.

Here are a few helpful reminders:

- ✿ Babies cry to tell you they need something (food, comfort, rest)
- ✿ Staying calm helps your child feel safe and secure
- ✿ Toddlers are still learning how to express feelings

Taking a Break Is Okay

It's normal to feel frustrated sometimes, especially with little sleep or constant demands. If you feel overwhelmed. Taking a short break helps you respond calmly and safely.

- ✿ Place your baby in a safe space (like a crib) and step away for a few minutes
- ✿ Take deep breaths or get a drink of water
- ✿ Call someone you trust or your Family Support Specialist

Positive Ways to Guide Behavior

Children learn best through patience and consistency:

- ✿ Use simple, clear words like “gentle hands”
- ✿ Redirect to a safe activity
- ✿ Praise what your child is doing well

Build Connection Every Day

Strong relationships help children feel safe and secure:

- ✿ Spend a few minutes each day giving your child your full attention
- ✿ Cuddle, talk, sing, and play together
- ✿ Keep routines for meals, naps, and bedtime

Build Your Support System

Parenting is not meant to be done alone. When you need help, reach out to:

- ✿ Your Healthy Families Family Support Specialist
- ✿ Family and friends
- ✿ Local community resources



Preventing child abuse starts with supporting parents. When you take care of yourself and reach out for help, you are building a safe and nurturing environment for your child.

Healthy Habits: Simple Nutrition Tips for Families

Healthy eating helps children grow strong, stay energized, and build lifelong habits. The good news? It doesn't have to be complicated or expensive.

Start with Small Changes

Try adding one healthy habit at a time:

- Offer fruits or vegetables with meals and snacks
- Choose water or milk instead of sugary drinks
- Keep a regular meal and snack schedule

Make It a Family Activity

Children are more likely to try new foods when they're involved.

- Let your child help wash fruits or stir ingredients
- Offer simple choices: "Do you want apples or bananas?"
- Eat together when possible; kids learn by watching you

Tips for Babies & Toddlers

- Introduce a variety of soft foods as your child grows
- Be patient—new foods may take several tries
- Avoid added sugar and too much salt

Eating Healthy on a Budget

- Buy frozen or canned fruits and vegetables (look for low-sodium options)
- Plan meals ahead to reduce waste
- Use community resources like WIC or local food pantries if needed

Healthy habits don't have to be perfect. Small steps over time help your child develop a positive relationship with food.

Protecting Your Child from Serious Illness

National Infant Immunization Week is April 20-27

National Infant Immunization Week focuses on keeping babies safe early in life, when they're most vulnerable to serious illnesses like measles, whooping cough, and polio. Vaccines are one of the safest and most effective ways to protect your child's health.

Common Questions from Parents

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines are carefully tested and monitored to make sure they are safe for children.

Do vaccines cause illness?

Vaccines do not cause the diseases they protect against. Some children may have mild side effects like a sore arm or low fever.

What if I'm nervous or have questions?

Talk with your child's doctor or your Family Support Specialist.

By keeping your child up to date on vaccines, you are protecting their health, protecting other children in your community, and helping prevent the spread of serious diseases.

Pinwheels in April: a Symbol of Hope for Children

You may notice pinwheels displayed around the community in April. Pinwheels are a symbol of Child Abuse Prevention Month and represent the happy, healthy childhood every child deserves. They remind us that childhood should be filled with:

- Safe, nurturing relationships
- Joy, play, and laughter
- Healthy growth and development

Pinwheels also represent hope that families have the support they need and that communities come together to keep children safe. So, when you see a pinwheel, it's a reminder that we all play a role in helping children grow up safe, loved, and supported.





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!

StartSmart: Learning Through the Senses

From the very beginning, babies learn by using their senses—touch, sight, sound, taste, and smell. Every time your baby looks at your face, listens to your voice, or grabs a toy, their brain is making important connections. You don't need special toys to support this learning. Simple, everyday experiences help your baby grow and develop.

See, Hear, Explore

Your baby is learning from everything around them:

- Looking at faces and bright colors
- Listening to voices, music, and everyday sounds
- Watching movement, like a fan or your hands

Try this: Talk to your baby about what they see and hear: “Do you hear the dog barking?” or “Look at the bright light!”



Touch and Feel

Touch is one of the most important ways babies learn.

- Let your baby explore safe objects with different textures (soft, bumpy, smooth)
- Give plenty of cuddles and gentle touch
- Offer supervised tummy time to explore movement and surfaces

Everyday Moments Matter

You can build your baby's brain during daily routines:

- Bath time: splashing and feeling water
- Feeding time: holding, looking, and talking
- Diaper changes: naming body parts and making eye contact



Watch for Overstimulation

Sometimes babies can get overwhelmed by too much noise or activity. Signs to watch for:

- Turning their head away
- Fussing or crying
- Arching their back

If this happens, move to a calm, quiet space and comfort your baby.

Your baby learns best through simple, loving interactions with you. By talking, touching, and exploring together, you are helping your child build a strong foundation for learning.



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Important dates this month:

April 1	Passover Begins
April 5	Easter
April 15	Tax Day
April 22	Earth Day