

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Caring for Your Baby

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Caring for Your
Baby

an easy-to-follow guide

Naia Edwards

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Introduction

Caring for your new baby is perhaps the most important job you will ever do and certainly the one that requires the most dedication and responsibility. From the moment you become a parent, you take on a full-time job; you must be available for your baby whenever she needs you, day or night. This responsibility may seem overwhelming at first and you may worry about how you'll manage, especially if you haven't had much experience with babies before. But although being a parent may be hard work, it becomes easier as you become more practised. Your baby's needs are only basic human needs: to be fed and kept clean, warm and safe. And perhaps most importantly of all, your baby needs to be loved. While her requirements will change as she gets older, these basic needs will stay the same. Caring for your baby is the most rewarding job you will ever do. Enjoy it!

Please note that to avoid confusion the baby has always been referred to as 'she' but this could just as easily have been 'he'.

Chapter 1

HANDLING YOUR BABY How to hold, handle and carry your baby

Holding, handling and carrying your baby are practical necessities while she is unable to support herself, but just as importantly they are emotional necessities, too. Your touch and embrace will make her feel warm, secure and loved.

To begin with you may feel quite tentative about holding your baby but it won't be long before your confidence grows and it will seem like the easiest thing in the world. As your baby grows older and stronger the way you hold her will change, but the comfort it provides will always stay the same.



Holding your newborn baby

Moments after your baby is born, she will be put in your arms to hold. No one needs to tell you what to do; it will be instinctive to hold her close to you, touch her, stroke her and look at her in wonder and amazement! You may lie together in the delivery room, holding her for quite some time as you start to get to know each other; this skin-to-skin contact will be soothing and calming for both of you. Recent research indicates that having lengthy close physical contact with your baby in the first hour after birth strengthens the bonding process and improves your mothering skills, helping you become more confident and intuitive.

Handling your newborn baby: looking at your newborn baby and marvelling at how tiny and vulnerable she is may make you worry about holding her and hurting her. Don't be nervous. It will come naturally to you to be gentle with your baby and to avoid making sudden noises or movements that may startle her. Remember, newborn babies are much stronger than they look.

Supporting the head: until your baby is about four weeks old she will have very little control of her head. You may have noticed how big her head is in comparison with the rest of her body - it makes up 25 per cent of her total body weight. As her neck muscles are very weak you need to help support her head whenever you are holding, lifting or carrying her around. She will need her head supported for the first three months.



Picking up your baby: your newborn baby will spend most of her time lying flat on her back when you are not holding her. Tiny babies don't wriggle or move very much, so they're easier to pick up. When you pick your baby up from lying down, make sure that all your movements are gentle and smooth.

Back support method: this is probably the method you should try first and is the easiest way to pick up your baby when she is lying down. This is also the method that gives your baby the most support so it is particularly good for very young babies.

- 1.** Slide one hand underneath your baby's head with the base of your hand supporting her neck and your fingers cupping her head.

2. Slide your other hand underneath her bottom and lower back.
3. Gently, but confidently, lift her towards you to hold her in one of the different carrying methods ([see here](#)).

Under the arm method: this is particularly useful when picking up your baby from a car seat or other sitting position, although you can use it to pick up a baby who is lying down, too. It is the easiest way to pick up an older baby.

1. Put your hands underneath your baby's arms, with your thumbs on her chest and your fingers stretched up to support the back of her head.
2. Lift her up gently and bring her towards you to hold her in a carrying position.

Carrying your baby: there are many different ways to carry your baby and you will need to experiment to find the most comfortable position for you and the most enjoyable for your baby. Sometimes she will want to be comforted and held close to you; sometimes she will want to face out and look at the world around her; other times she will want to be rocked. Here are some different positions you can try:

Cradle carry position: this is a nice position for looking at your baby. Place her head in the crook of your arm, while your hand supports her under her bottom. Her spine will rest against your forearm. Use your other arm to give additional support across her body, cradling her head in your hand. As you become more confident at handling your baby, you will be able to hold her in this position with just one hand.