

SELF-CARE (SLEEPING, BATHING, TOOTHBRUSHING)

Self care refers to all the things we do to keep our bodies safe and healthy. For an infant, it is the parent who is doing the care, and the baby is just taking part. The main areas of self-care for an infant are sleeping, eating/drinking, tooth brushing, dressing, and bathing/grooming.

INFANT DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Sleeping

Babies sleep a lot! When they are first born, babies spend the majority of their time sleeping - between 16 and 20 hours per day. By the time your baby is a year old, he will likely be sleeping about 14 hours per day, including 2 naps. However, all babies are different, and some will sleep more than others.

Because of the dangers of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), the BC Government has published some guidelines for safe sleeping practices for infants. To read these guidelines, please click the link below:

<http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-your-baby/baby-care/sleeping.html>

Getting your baby to sleep is often one of the most difficult tasks for a parent, and there are many different opinions about the best ways to do this. We do not support one method over another, but recommend that parents find the method that they feel most comfortable with and that fits their child and family.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with trying to help your baby sleep, you can talk with your doctor, a public health nurse, an [occupational therapist](#), or another health professional in the community.

Toothbrushing

A baby's teeth usually start to appear anywhere from 4 months to 1 year of age. It is very important to clean your baby's teeth as soon as they appear, and the best way to develop that routine is to start cleaning her mouth right from birth. You can start with a small soft washcloth or toothbrush with a bit of water on it, and just gently rub your baby's gums twice per day. Once her first tooth erupts, use a small toothbrush with a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste to clean her teeth, again twice per day.

Try to make toothbrushing time a relaxing time for your baby. Put him in a comfortable place, either laying down or sitting in a supportive chair. Sing a fun song while you brush! Try to do the toothbrushing routine at a time when your baby is well rested and full.

If you are frustrated because your baby will not let you brush his teeth, talk to your dentist or doctor, a public health nurse, an [occupational therapist](#), or another health professional in the community.

Dressing

Dressing your baby can be quite a challenge. When she is first born, it is difficult to hold her AND get her limbs into her clothes. Once she starts moving around, then it is hard to get her to stop long enough to get her clothes on! The good news is that your baby should be able to help you a bit when she is close to a year old by holding her arm or leg out when you are putting on her clothes.

If you are having difficulty dressing your baby for any of the following reasons, you may want to talk to an [occupational therapist](#):

- Your baby seems extremely stiff or extremely floppy, beyond what is expected for his age
- Your baby has physical challenges that make it difficult to dress him
- Your baby becomes extremely upset when you try to dress her, beyond what is expected for her age

Bathing and Grooming

Babies are not usually able to help with any bathing or grooming tasks, but they often protest when you try to do them! For some tips on washing and grooming your baby, check out the BC Government's Best Chance Website by clicking the link below:
<http://www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca/you-and-your-baby-0-6/caring-for-your-baby/baby-care/bathing-and-skin-care.html>

If you are having difficulty washing or grooming your baby for any of the following reasons, you may want to talk to an [occupational therapist](#):

- Your baby seems extremely stiff or extremely floppy, beyond what is expected for his age
- Your baby has physical challenges that make it difficult to bathe/groom him
- Your baby becomes extremely upset when you try to bathe/groom her, beyond what is expected for her age

TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Sleeping

Research shows that getting enough sleep is extremely important for your child's development and brain function. Getting your child to go to sleep and stay asleep is often one of the most difficult tasks for a parent, and there are many different opinions about the best ways to do this. We do not support one method over another, but recommend that parents find the method that they feel most comfortable with, and that fits their child and family.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with trying to get your child to sleep, you can talk with your doctor, a public health nurse, an [occupational therapist](#), or another health professional in the community.

Toothbrushing

It is extremely important for children to have their teeth brushed twice per day, using a small dab of fluoride toothpaste. If your child wants to brush his own teeth, he should be encouraged to try. However, children under 6 years of age should have an adult finish the job to make sure his teeth are cleaned well. If you have specific questions about how to brush your child's teeth, please talk to your dentist or another dental health professional.

Many children find it uncomfortable to have their teeth brushed. Try some of the following strategies to make toothbrushing time more relaxing:

- Do it at a consistent time of day so your child knows what to expect
- Try singing a fun song or making up a rhyme for toothbrushing time
- Encourage your child to try brushing her own teeth when she is ready (as long as you finish the job for her)

If you are overwhelmed trying to get your child to brush her teeth, you may want to talk to a dental health professional, to a public health nurse, or to an [occupational therapist](#).

PRESCHOOL AGED DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Sleeping

Research shows that getting enough sleep is extremely important for your child's development and brain function. Getting your child to go to sleep and stay asleep is often one of the most difficult tasks for a parent, and there are many different opinions about the best ways to do this. We do not support one method over another, but recommend that parents find the method that they feel most comfortable with, and that fits their child and family.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with trying to get your child to sleep, you can talk with your doctor, a public health nurse, an [occupational therapist](#), or another health professional in the community.

Toothbrushing

It is extremely important for children to have their teeth brushed twice per day, using a small dab of fluoride toothpaste. If your child wants to brush his own teeth, he should be encouraged to try. However, children under 6 years of age should have an adult finish the job to make sure his teeth are cleaned well. If you have specific questions about how to brush your child's teeth, please talk to your dentist or another dental health professional.

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If you are overwhelmed trying to get your child to brush her teeth, you may want to talk to a dental health professional, to a public health nurse, or to an [occupational therapist](#).

From Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre in Kamloops, BC

- See more at: <http://www.kamloopschildrenstherapy.org/self-care-preschool-milestones#sthash.qTerGxom.dpuf>