



SESSION

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Babies Matter: Changes for me and us

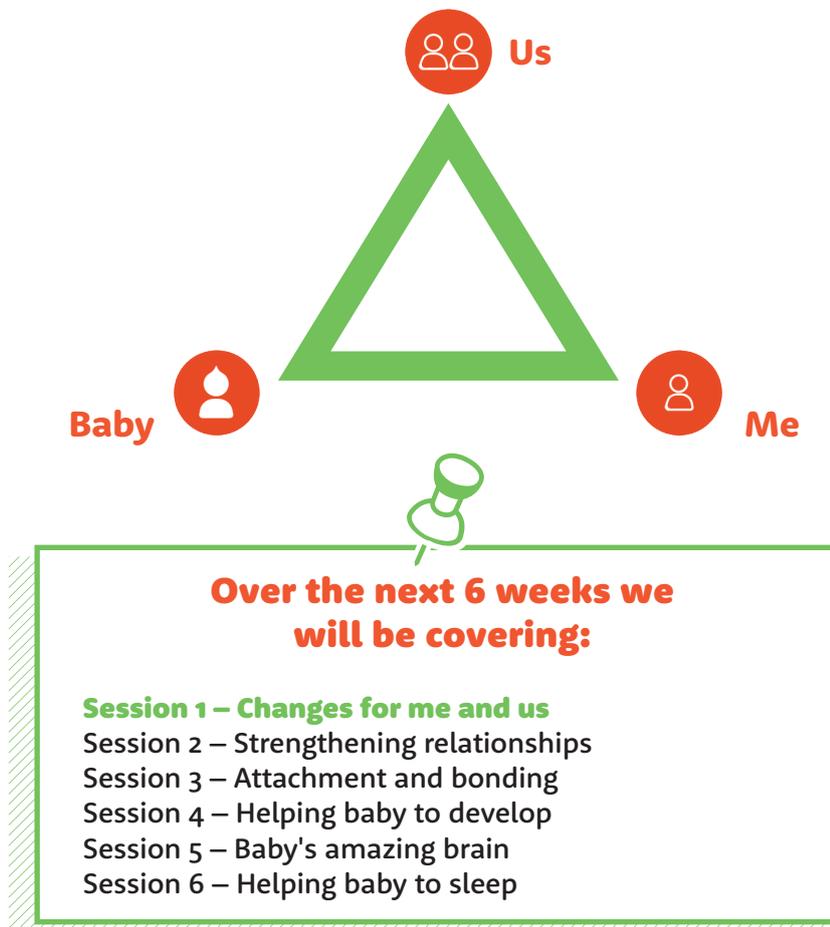
NAME:

Welcome

Welcome to Babies Matter and congratulations on becoming parents / parents to be! We hope that over our next few weeks together we will have an opportunity to think about, and prepare for, the many changes that happen when a new life is born – changes in our relationships, the demands on our time, our emotions and our physical needs. This is a safe space to share our experiences, joys and challenges – there is never any pressure to share, but please be assured that ‘what is said in the room, stays in the room’.

The group facilitator will respect the confidentiality of the group and will not share anything that is discussed here with anyone outside the group, unless there is a concern for the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child.

Our family is a bit like a triangle, with ‘baby’, ‘me’ and ‘us’ as the three points – all are interconnected and rely on each other, and so for the sake of our babies, we want ‘me’ (individual parents/caregivers) and ‘us’ (the parenting team) to be strong. In each session we will look at each topic from the perspective of these three triangle points.



Today we are going to explore the many changes that we are going through, and also reflect on how our own experiences of being parented have an impact on our expectations of our own roles as parents or carers.

We are going to talk about  baby,  me, and  us each week.

Baby

Whilst it can be an exciting time becoming a parent, it can feel quite overwhelming bringing a new person into the world, and trying to imagine how we're going to bring them up. Sometimes it can feel hard to know where to even start as new parents.

Baby's needs include:

- Basic care - food, water, shelter, healthy home, sleep, warmth, washed and clothed
- To feel safe and secure emotionally and physically
- To feel loved and to belong
- Opportunities to learn, grow and develop
- Play
- Physical activity - learn to crawl and walk
- To learn language and communication
- Friendship and community
- Education

Changes for Me and Us

Changes in my life may include:

- Different routines
- Learning new skills (e.g. feeding, nappies, winding, settling baby)
- Shifts in family relationships
- Lack of sleep
- New/intense emotions
- Physical health and changes to my body
- Financial challenges
- Different priorities and demands on my time



My Parenting Team

As we adjust to our new roles as parents, it can really help to have other people around us to support us. This could be immediate family, wider family, close friends, neighbours or supportive professionals. We call this our Parenting Team.



My new family

The ways in which our own parents looked after us can have a big influence on what we expect to be doing as a parent. Sometimes we want to be just the same – sometimes we want to do things completely differently! Talking to our partner about this is important as it helps us to understand what each other's hopes and needs are, and what help and support we are expecting from each other too:

We are building a new family and have the chance to do this in a way that we feel happy with, regardless of our past experiences and circumstances.



Parenting roles and responsibilities

Let's think about what practical tasks are involved in caring for my baby and the family. What will or do I need to do?

Here are some ideas of the tasks involved in caring for your baby:

- Feed baby
- Change nappy
- Bath baby
- Play with baby
- Housework
- Laundry
- Food shopping and cooking

These are the responsibilities that come with having a baby - finding a balance of how we share these tasks can help us support each other.

What are the responsibilities that we can share between us as parents?

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Understanding our expectations of ourselves and our partners can help us to realise why certain things are making us upset or resentful – if we have not communicated it with each other, we don't know where we are letting each other down, or expecting too much of each other. Taking time to talk to each other and come to an agreement about how we can support each other well is good for us, our relationship, and our baby.



Looking after ourselves

Looking after our own wellbeing might feel like a luxury we don't have time for at the moment, but the 'me' in the triangle is just as important as the 'baby' and the 'us'. There is no perfect way to do this, but being aware of the importance of our own wellbeing is something to hold onto throughout the coming weeks and months.

Each week we are going to be thinking about our wellbeing because prioritising our mental health and physical health will help us to be the best parent we can to our new baby.

Physical health and changes

Looking after ourselves physically during pregnancy and after having a baby is important for both parents. Recovering from birth takes time and can impact how mum feels about her own body; the physical side of her relationship with her partner will also take time to adapt. Partners can help by being patient and understanding. Mums will have a postnatal check 6-8 weeks after baby is born to make sure they are recovering and feeling well.

Encouraging each other to take time to be active, and trying to eat healthily, will help us to feel better about ourselves, and that will help us to look after our baby well.



What is one thing I could try this week to look after my physical health?



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Summing up....

As we have seen today, having a baby is a time for celebration and joy, and is also a time of huge change, practically, physically and emotionally, for both parents. Being aware of these changes, and talking with each other about how to face them together, gives both parents a strong place to start from. If we are parenting alone then finding our 'supportive other' to be in our parenting team will help us to cope with the challenges, and also help us to share and enjoy the good times.



What can I practise/try/do differently this week?



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Notes

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