

Insert from the Baby Friendly Initiative: Infant feeding and Relationships

Helping your baby grow and develop

- New babies have a strong need to be close to their parents, as this helps them to feel secure and loved.
- Babies don't become spoilt or demanding if they are given too much attention.
- When babies' needs for love and comfort are met, they will be calmer and grow up to become happy, healthy, secure children and adults.
- When babies feel secure they release a hormone called oxytocin, which helps them to be happy babies, and also helps their brains to grow and develop.
- Holding, smiling and talking to your baby also releases oxytocin in you, which helps you to feel calm and happy.
- Breastfeeding provides everything your baby needs in terms of nutrition, protection and comfort. The hormones that make your milk are also the hormones that help you form a loving bond with your baby.
- Oxytocin levels are high during breastfeeding, helping your baby's brain to grow.
- If you are bottle feeding you can help raise oxytocin levels by doing things such as holding baby close, looking into his eyes, talking to him and spending time in skin-to-skin contact.
- Babies love looking into their parents' eyes: when we look at babies in a loving way our pupils (the dark circle in the centre of our eyes) become bigger. Babies pick up on this and know that they are loved. This makes them feel happy and secure.

