



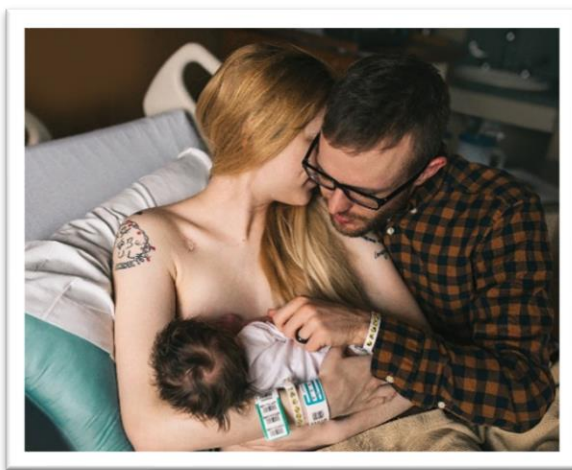
Your Guide to Postpartum



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The first 6 weeks after birth is known as the postpartum period. There will be changes for you and for your baby. As a parent you need to create a loving, safe, and healthy home for your baby.



1. Breastfeeding Your Baby

Breastfeeding is one of the best things you can do for your baby and yourself. Your baby needs only breast milk for the first 6 months. At 6 months, start solid foods and continue to breastfeed for up to 2 years and beyond.

Breastfeeding is healthy for your baby

It provides food that is always fresh and ready.

- Provides the best food that is always fresh and ready.
- Reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Helps prevent an upset tummy and constipation.
- Provides closeness and warm touch from the parent.
- Promotes good health and brain development.
- Protects against illnesses (e.g., coughs and colds, ear infection, type 1 diabetes, etc).
- Helps protect against allergies.
- Helps to promote proper jaw and tooth development.



To date, the COVID-19 virus has not caused infection in babies from breast milk but can be caused by close contact after birth and in a few cases during pregnancy. Your breast milk is safe and helps protect your baby from infections and illnesses.

Breastfeeding is healthy for you

- Helps your uterus return to its normal size more quickly.
- Lowers your risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and diabetes.
- Saves you time and money.
- Helps you bond with your baby and make you feel happier.

Start breastfeeding as soon as your baby is born

- Ask your health care provider to place your baby on your tummy as soon as they are born.
- The baby will be naked, their back will be wiped dry and your health care provider may put a diaper on your baby and a blanket over both of you to keep you warm.
- Your baby will slowly adjust to where they are and will start moving towards your breast. It may take time and you may need to help your baby a little bit to reach your breast and find your nipple. They will try to latch on.
- Many babies latch on and breastfeed well soon after birth. Keep your baby skin-to-skin until they have finished their first feed, or as long as you wish.

Holding your baby skin-to-skin will help them

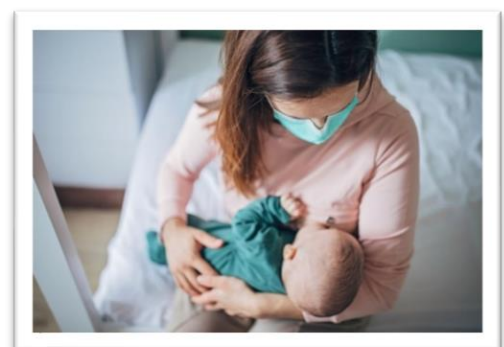
- Feel less stress from being born.
- Adjust to life outside your womb.
- Be calmer.
- Breathe better.
- Have normal blood sugar.
- Stay warmer.

Enjoy your first moments together. Continue to hold your baby skin-to-skin as often and as long as you can even after you leave the hospital and go home. Skin-to-skin is a great way to bond with your baby, encourage your baby to breastfeed, soothe your baby when they are upset, and lessens their pain during vaccination or other painful procedures.

If you are not well enough to hold your baby skin-to-skin right away, your baby can be placed skin-to-skin with your partner or support person if you wish.

If you have, or may have COVID-19, here are some tips to keep your baby as safe as possible when breastfeeding:

- Wash your hands before and after breastfeeding. Wear a face mask while breastfeeding.



- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it in the garbage right away. Then, wash your hands with soap and water. If you have sneezed or coughed over your exposed breast or chest before breastfeeding, gently wash the area with soap and warm water.
- When you are not feeding your baby, keep your baby at least two metres away from you. If possible, ask a healthy adult to care for your baby. That person should also wear a mask and wash their hands before they touch the baby.

If your baby is not well enough to be placed skin-to-skin the moment they are born, begin as soon as you can. Sometimes your baby has to go to the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) if they are not well. In many NICUs, you can **be with your baby if you are well and don't have COVID-19**. In some hospitals, you may be able to sleep in the same room with your baby. Often, only one parent at a time can be with the baby, so you have to decide which parent stays. This keeps a safe distance between all people in the NICU.

You CANNOT be with your baby in the NICU, to prevent infection to other babies, families, and health care providers if you have or may have COVID-19. If the other parent is well, they may be able to be with the baby. The other parent may also be able to hold the baby skin-to-skin. You can send your breast milk to your baby in the NICU. Follow the instructions by the NICU staff carefully about pumping, storing, and sending your breast milk. They can also show you how to sterilize the breast pumping equipment

Encourage a good latch

Some breastfeeding parents find that their nipples feel tender. The two most common reasons for sore nipples are poor positioning and/or poor latch. These problems can be solved. Find good breastfeeding support to help you.



There are many breastfeeding positions. Find the one that you and your baby prefer. Be sure that your baby is latched deeply onto your breast and not just taking your nipple into his mouth.

If you are feeling pain or if you feel your baby is not breastfeeding well, get some help right away. You can phone the Telehealth Ontario 24/7 Breastfeeding Support Hotline day or night at 1-866-797-0000.

Your baby will need to breastfeed often

Your newborn's stomach is very small. This is why you need to breastfeed often both day and night. Expect to breastfeed your newborn at least 8 times in 24 hours. As they grow, they will be able to drink more breast milk at a feeding.

Your baby will show that they are ready and eager to feed. They will show some signs called *feeding cues*:



"I'm hungry"

Early feeding cues:

- Stirring, moving arms.
- Mouth opening, yawning or licking.
- Hand to mouth movements.
- Turning head from side to side.
- Rooting, seeking to reach things with her mouth.



"I'm really hungry"

Moderate feeding cues:

- Stretching.
- Moving more and more.
- Hand to mouth movements.
- Sucking, cooing or sighing sounds.



"Calm me, then feed me"

Late feeding cues:

- Crying.
- Agitated body movement.
- Colour turning red.

Crying is a very late sign that your baby is hungry. They may be too upset to latch well. You will have to calm them before breastfeeding them.

Most breastfeeding parents make more than enough milk for their babies

The amount of milk depends on how often and how well your baby latches on your breast. Your body will make more milk when your baby breastfeeds more often and has a good latch and suck. Start breastfeeding **as soon as your baby is born. Learn your baby's hunger** cues and breastfeed as often as needed.

Breastfeeding gives you a lot of freedom

You can breastfeed your baby anywhere, and anytime. You have the right to breastfeed anywhere in public. This can be at a restaurant, in the park, on the bus, at a shopping mall etc. You do not have to cover-up with a blanket if you do not want to.

Breastfeeding saves you time. You do not spend time washing and sterilizing feeding equipment. Your milk is also at the perfect temperature for your baby.

Breastfeeding parents can eat all foods

There is no special diet while breastfeeding. Enjoy a variety of foods and follow ***Canada's Food Guide***. Follow your thirst to know how much to drink. Water is the best choice.

It is best to limit herbal teas, energy drinks, and sources of caffeine. If you think your baby has an allergic reaction to something you have eaten, stop eating that food and make an appointment to see your health care provider to find out what to do.

Breastfeeding parents who smoke can breastfeed

Even if you smoke, breastfeeding is still the healthiest choice for your baby. If you can, try to cut down on smoking or quit. It is best to smoke after you breastfeed your baby. Smoke outdoors while the baby is left inside with family or friends. If you have smoked, wash your hands and change your outer clothing before holding your baby.

Father and partner can help with breastfeeding

They can:

- Change the diaper before feeding.
- Bring the baby to be breastfed.
- Burp the baby afterwards.
- Offer you a glass of water while you are breastfeeding. Also, keep you company when you breastfeed.
- Encourage you to keep breastfeeding.
- Find breastfeeding help if needed.



- Attend breastfeeding support groups or drop-ins with you.
- Encourage you to rest when you need it.
- Reduce the distractions such as answering the phone or doorbell, entertain visitors, take care of sibling, etc.
- Help care for your baby during COVID-19 if you are unwell by changing the diapers and **holding the baby. This may reduce your baby's exposure** to the COVID-19 virus.

For more information on breastfeeding, refer to *My Breastfeeding Guide* at <https://resources.beststart.org/product/b20e-my-breastfeeding-guide-booklet/>. It answers breastfeeding questions you may have as an expectant or new parent. The [Additional Resource section](#) contains information breastfeeding support and advice.

For information on pumping and hand expressing, refer to the fact sheet *Expressing and Storing Breast Milk* <https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/B35-E.pdf>.

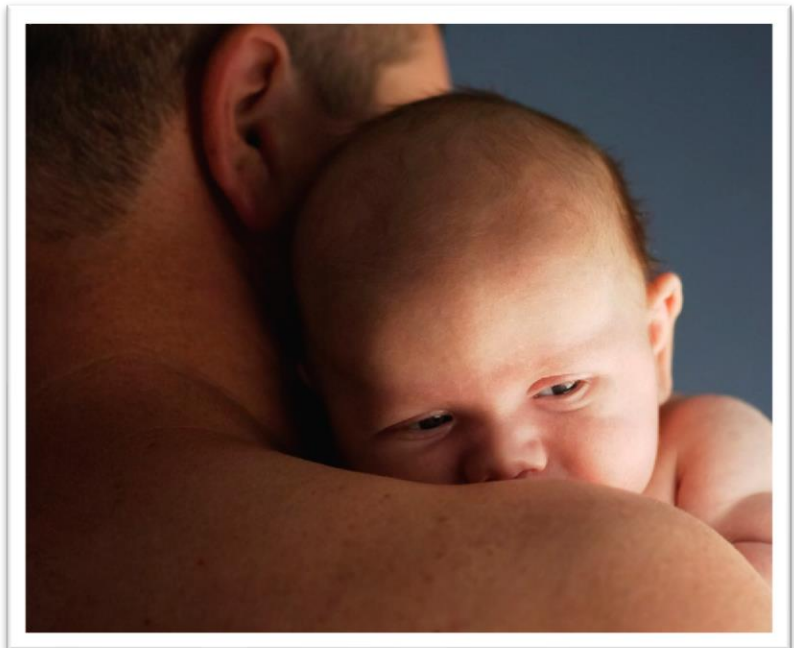
If you feed your baby formula, it is important to prepare it safely, refer to the tip sheets and video <https://resources.beststart.org/product/b42e-safely-preparing-infant-formula-for-your-baby-video-fact-sheets/>.

For information on how to prepare formula safely during COVID-19, refer to the tip sheet on *Feeding Formula During COVID-19* at <https://resources.beststart.org/product/v05e-making-formula-during-covid-19/>

2. Comforting Your Baby

In the first year of life, parenting is about comforting your baby and making sure they are safe. Your baby will feel loved and safe if you comfort them when they are startled, scared, or upset. You will not spoil your baby by holding them. Your baby wants to be close to you. Being close to your baby may be enough to calm them. If you have, or may have COVID-19, it is recommended that you keep your baby at least two metres away from you. If possible, ask a healthy adult to care for your baby. That person should also wear a mask and wash their hands before they touch the baby.

Your baby may be happy one minute and then start crying the next minute. Crying means they need something. They may be hungry, tired, wet, cold, hot or just want to be held. Try to respond before your baby is crying loudly. If your baby has been crying a lot they will be harder to comfort. Learn the early signs that your baby needs something. For example, when your baby is tired they may rub their eyes, whine more, lose interest and yawn. See [early feeding signs](#).



When your baby is crying or fussy

- Try breastfeeding your baby.
- Always respond kindly and gently.
- Place a fussy infant skin-to-skin on your chest. The warmth and close contact will likely help to calm them. Always be sure that their nose is clear and that they can breathe easily.
- Check to see if your baby needs a clean diaper.
- Check to see if your baby is too hot or too cold.
- Try carrying or rocking the baby using very gentle movements.
- Take your baby to a quiet room and turn off the lights.

- **Play soft music, talk, sing or stroke your baby's forehead.** Avoid loud, sudden noises.
- Give your baby a warm bath or massage.
- Show your baby bright, colourful objects.
- Take your baby for a walk outside.

If you have, or may have COVID-19, ask a healthy adult to care for your baby and soothe them. That person should also wear a mask and wash their hands before they touch the baby.

If you are feeling upset because your baby is crying

Some babies cry more than others. All babies have times in their first few months when they cry more often. Sometimes nothing you do will calm your baby. If you are feeling upset:

- Put your baby in their crib, cradle or bassinet and leave the room.
- Ask someone you trust to hold the baby for you while you take a break.
- Talk to a friend, family member, or someone you trust about your feelings.

Never shake a baby or child. It can cause brain damage or death.

It is important to know that sometimes it may take a long time to soothe your baby. This is normal. See more at www.purplecrying.info/what-is-the-period-of-purple-crying.php. If you **are worried about your baby's crying** **talk** to your health care provider, call your local public health unit or visit a drop in. See [Additional Resources](#).

3. Caring for Your Baby

If you have, or may have COVID-19, here are some tips to keep your baby safe:

- Wash your hands and always wear a mask when feeding your baby.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it in the garbage right away. Then, wash your hands with soap and water.
- Place your baby two metres away from you or anyone else who is sick unless you are feeding or caring for your baby.
- If you are too sick to care for your baby, ask a healthy adult to help. They should wash their hands and wear a mask each time they are near the baby.
- If there is a person who is well living in your home, have that person care for the baby, change the diapers, hold, and feed the baby if you are sick.
This may reduce your baby's exposure to the COVID-19 virus.
- If you use a pillow to feed your baby, put a clean towel on the pillow each time you feed your baby.



Bathing

Once at home you can ask someone to show you and your partner how to give a bath to your baby.

Your baby does not need to be bathed every day. However, it is important that every day your baby stays clean and dry.

Bath time is another time to bond together. Your baby will enjoy your gentle touch, your voice and your closeness. Choose a time that you are both relaxed and when your baby is not hungry.

Set the temperature of your hot water heater at 49°C (120°F). Anything warmer, you may scald them.

Follow these tips to bath your baby:

- Get everything you need ready before you undress your baby: a mild unscented soap, wash cloths, diaper and



supplies, baby's clothing, and a soft towel opened up on a safe surface to lay them on after the bath.

- **Test your baby's bath water before** you put them in the bath. It should feel warm, not hot. Use the inside of your wrist or your elbow to test.
- Do not add oil or liquid soap in the bath to avoid a slippery baby.
- Use soap only for the dirtiest areas. You do not need to use soap every day.
- Use clear water and a soft washcloth for bathing your baby. Start by washing their eyes, face and then move down their body.
- Shampooing is only needed once or twice a week. Use mild shampoo, rinse well and rub dry.
- **Always be within arm's reach** when your baby is in the water. Never leave them alone, even for a brief moment.
- If using a bath seat always be **within arm's reach**. **Never rely** on the bath seat to keep your **baby safe**. **Health Canada doesn't recommend their use.**
- Take your baby with you if you have to leave the room. If you need to answer your phone during bath time, pick up your baby and take them with you.
- If your baby still has the stump of their umbilical cord, ensure it does not stay wet.
- To dry them, place her on a towel and pat dry. Pay special attention to drying skin folds.

For more information on bathing and skin care, refer to

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/your-babys-skin and [Additional Resources](#).

You may also consider bathing with your baby in a tub of warm water. You will both relax and enjoy the extra closeness. This bonding time can also soothe your crying baby.

Follow these extra steps to make your bath time safer:

- Place your baby in a bouncy seat beside the bath or on a comfortable towel on the floor before stepping in and out of the tub. It is safer not to hold your baby. If you have a partner, ask them to hold the baby when you step in and out of the tub.



- Always hold the baby with both hands.
- Rest them against your thighs. They will enjoy facing you.
- Keep them warm in the water. You can use a plastic cup or a face cloth to pour water over their body from time to time.

You or your partner can share the experience of bathing your baby for many months to come.

Immunize your baby

Starting at two months of age, your baby will need to start their immunization schedule. Breastfeeding provides protection for your baby and immunization adds to that protection. If you have or may have COVID-19, your breast milk is safe and helps protect your baby from infections and illnesses. Immunization will help your baby fight off vaccine-preventable diseases and stay healthy. During COVID-19, it is still important for your baby to be immunized to protect them from childhood preventable diseases. It is also important for your baby to receive these vaccines in order to enter child care and school.

When your baby is being immunized, breastfeeding and holding your baby skin-to-skin can help lessen the pain of the injection. Your health care provider will give you information about the vaccines and a booklet to keep track of the vaccinations your baby has had. Make sure you keep this booklet in a safe place.

For more information on immunization, refer to *A Parent's Guide to Immunization* at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/iyc-vve/pgi-gpv/assets/pdf/pgi-gpv-eng.pdf. To learn about Ontario's free immunization program visit, www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines.

Provide supervised tummy time

Tummy time helps to prevent flat spots on your baby's head (positional plagiocephaly). It is also important to develop healthy muscles.

Below are tummy time tips:

- Start tummy time right from birth.
- Place your baby on their tummy for short periods. You can try it after a diaper change.



- You can provide tummy time when they are tummy-down on your tummy.
- Gradually increase the time on their tummy, as they get older.
- Always stay close to them and play with them during tummy time.
- When your baby is awake, give them lots of cuddle time. You want to avoid long periods in sitting positions like in the car seat, a stroller, a bouncer, etc.

Consult your health care provider if your baby develops a flat spot on their head.

Diapering your baby

Most newborns need about 10 to 15 diaper changes per day. Your baby needs to be dry and clean to keep skin healthy and to help prevent diaper rash.

Changing a diaper is another time for you and your baby to bond together. Make that time special by talking to them, laughing, singing, caressing and playing with them. When changing their diaper:

- Get everything ready before you change their diaper (e.g., diaper, wipes and towel).
- Wash your hands with soap and water before and after each change.
- Follow the manufacturer instructions for the change table and use the safety straps.
- Never leave them alone and never turn your head away even for a brief moment.
- Clean the area with an unscented baby wipe or a wet washcloth. To better reach all the dirty **areas, gently lift your baby's legs by the ankles.**





- For a baby girl, always wipe from front to back and gently clean the dirty areas.
- For a baby boy, clean the dirty area from front to back and do not pull the foreskin back. Place his penis in a downward position before fastening the diaper.
- Dry the area. You can pat dry or let it air dry. There is no need to use cream, powder or cornstarch.
- Slide the open diaper under the baby while gently lifting their legs and feet
- For a newborn, keep the diaper folded below the cord so it can dry better.
- The diaper should be snug but not tight.

For more information on steps to change a diaper visit [www.caringforkids.cps.ca/ uploads/wellbeings/diaper.pdf](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/uploads/wellbeings/diaper.pdf)

Caring for your **baby's** nails

Baby's fingernails grow fast. They are soft, pliable and sharp. You need to trim them to prevent your baby from scratching themselves. Follow these tips:

- Make sure you have enough light to see what you are doing. Cut their nails when they are sleeping.
- Use blunt scissors or clippers to cut their nails.
- Press their finger pad away from the nail to avoid nicking their skin.
- **Hold your baby's hand as you clip.**
- To avoid infections or hurting them, do not peel off their nails or nibble on their nails to trim them.



4. How to keep your baby safe

Safe sleep tips

For the first 6 months of life, place your baby's crib, cradle or bassinet next to your bed. Place your baby in an appropriate crib, cradle or bassinet that meets current Canadian safety regulations.

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep related causes of infant death also follow these important steps:

- Place them on their back to sleep, at naptime and nighttime.
- Provide a sleep surface that is firm and flat.
- Remove pillows, comforters, quilts, stuffed animals, bumper pads, positional devices or other loose or soft bedding materials that could suffocate or smother them.
- Dress them in comfortable fitted one-piece sleepwear.
- Ensure that the room temperature is comfortable for everyone.
- Use a baby seat, swing, car seat, bouncer, stroller, sling, and playpen only for what they are intended. None of them are a substitute for a crib, cradle or bassinet.
- Breastfeed your infant. Breastfeeding provides a protective effect against SIDS.
- Protect your baby from smoke and second-hand smoke. Smoke outside. Wash your hands after smoking. No smoking at all is best for your baby. Decreasing the number of cigarettes you smoke can also help to lower the risk of SIDS.
- Alcohol use and substance use pose a risk for SIDS and other unintended injuries in infants. It is safer to ask your partner or someone you trust to care for your infant until you are completely sober and not under the influence of substances.
- **At 2 months of age, start your baby's immunizations. Vaccines are important to protect your baby's health and safety.**



Baby Safety Tips

When your baby comes home, there are important safety tips you need to know.

The following tips are to keep your baby safe.

Remember:

- Injuries are preventable. The best way to keep your baby safe is to stay close to your baby.
- **You and all who care for your baby need to ensure that your baby's environment is safe at all times.**
- Prevention is the most important part of safety. As your baby becomes more active, they will explore and will develop new skills. Childproofing your house is necessary to keep them safe as they grow.

What you can do to make your environment safer for your baby

- **Always support your baby's head.** Their head is bigger and heavier than their body.
- **Keep one hand on your baby's body at all times** when they are on a high surface. For example, when changing your baby on a change table, a counter or a bed.
- Always hold your baby during feedings.
- Be sure that toys are sturdy and washable with no small parts.
- Keep small objects out **of your baby's** reach.
- Prevent burns. Your baby may reach out unexpectedly and burn herself. Avoid holding them when you smoke, cook or drink a hot drink. Avoid sitting too close to a fireplace.
- Check for strangulation or entanglement risks. Drawstrings on clothes, any object tied **to baby's clothing, necklaces, head bands, cords on toys,** strings, window blinds or curtain cords, etc. can pose a risk to your baby.



- Make sure you have working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and a fire extinguisher in the house. Always ensure any gas appliances are properly functioning.
- Avoid loud noises. For example, listening to loud music or high pitch noises. If you can talk over the sound, the level of the noise should be ok.
- Keep emergency phone numbers close. You can post them in an area where you can reach them quickly or enter them in your cell phone.



Is your baby equipment safe?

If you get second-hand items, check with the manufacturer and Health Canada to know if there are recalls on those items. Ideally check before buying or accepting them. See The Recalls and Safety Alerts Database at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/index-eng.php.

The following list is a guide to ensure the baby equipment you choose is safe for your baby.

Cribs, cradles and bassinets

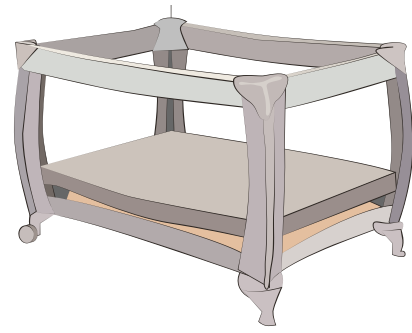
- Use a sturdy crib, cradle or bassinet that meets current Canadian safety regulations.
- Make sure it is built with screws and bolts, not hooks or clamps.
- It should have a firm flat mattress that fits snugly and a secure support system for the mattress. The mattress is too small if you can fit more than 2 fingers between the mattress and the side of the crib.
- Put it together carefully. Follow the instructions.
- Remove pillows, comforters, quilts, stuffed animals, bumper pads, positional devices or other loose or soft bedding materials that could suffocate or smother your baby.



Playpens

- Choose a playpen with a sturdy floor with a thin foam pad.
- Make sure it has secure hinges that cannot pinch your baby.

- It should have sides made of very fine mesh with no rips.
- Read the instructions that came with the playpen and follow any recommendations.
- Remove pillows, comforters, quilts, stuffed animals, positional devices or other loose or soft bedding materials that could suffocate or smother your baby.
- The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their crib, cradle or bassinet. Playpens are not safe substitutes for a crib.
- Supervise your baby at all times.



Strollers

- Choose a sturdy stroller with brakes that work.
- Follow the instructions that came with the stroller.
- Do not carry an extra baby or child in a single stroller.
- Use the lap belt.
- Remove pillows or blankets to avoid suffocation.
- Supervise your baby at all times.
- The safest place for your baby to sleep is in their crib, cradle or bassinet. Strollers are not safe substitutes for a crib.



Slings and carriers

- Use the right size for your **baby's age and size.**
- **Ensure you can see your baby's** face at all times.
- Check your baby often.
- Avoid overheating and suffocating.
- Never zip up your coat over your baby in the sling.
- Choose a sling or carrier with safety straps and always use them.
- Make sure your baby cannot slip through the leg openings.
- Slings and carriers are not safe substitutes for a crib. The safest place is in his crib, cradle or bassinet.

Highchairs

- Choose a high chair with a wide sturdy base and a safety belt.
- Make sure there are no sharp edges or parts on the tray that might pinch little fingers.
- Make sure there are no gaps between the tray and the back of the chair that might **trap your baby's arm or head**.
- Place the high chair far from the stove and kitchen counters.



Baby walkers

No walkers are safe. They are banned in Canada. Use a play centre without wheels.



Pacifiers

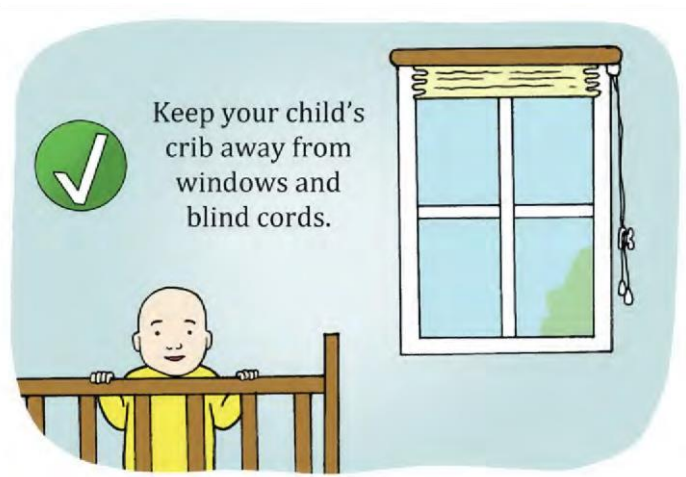
Many babies never use a pacifier. Pacifier use has risks. Talk to your health care provider so that you can make an informed decision.

If you decide to use a pacifier:

- Do not tie the pacifier ribbon or **cord to your baby's clothing**.
- Inspect the pacifier frequently and throw it away when it starts to wear out.
- Keep it clean to lessen your **baby's chances of getting sick** from germs on the pacifier. For more information, go to <https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-IPAC-Measures-in-the-home-Information-Brief-For-Parents-Home-and-Toys-Cleaning.pdf>.

Curtains and blinds

- Consider having cordless curtains.
- Keep furniture, or anything else children can climb, away from windows.
- Never leave a child alone.
- Keep window cords out of the reach of a child.
- Test your window safety devices regularly. Make sure they are working the way they should and that the release lock can be opened in case of an emergency.



Clothes

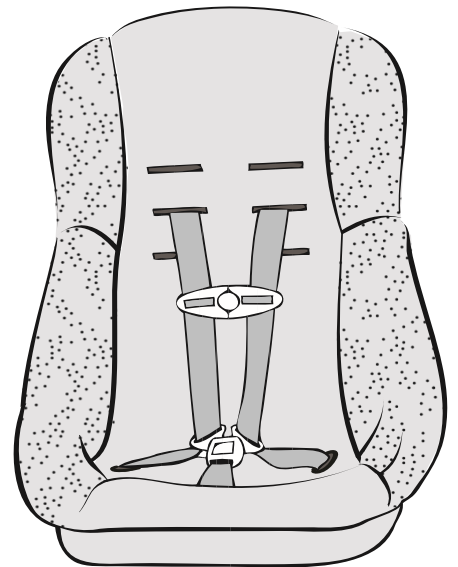
- Remove cords, drawstrings and ribbons.
- Do not use scarves or neck warmers.
- Check for loose buttons, loose threads or any other small part that can be a choking or strangulation hazard.
- Dress your infant in comfortable fitted one-piece sleepwear.

Car seats

A car seat used correctly can save your baby's life. Car crashes are the most common injury to children.

Follow these tips when choosing the right car seat for your baby:

- Check the car seat label for date of manufacture and expiry date. If expiry date is not on the seat, read the car seat manual to find the expiration date. Note that expiration dates change from seat to seat.
- Make sure the car seat has not been involved in a car crash or dropped from a height of one metre (3 feet) or more.
- You must have all its parts and the instructions on how to use it and install it.
- Make sure the car seat has not been recalled with a safety problem. To find out, call Transport Canada 1-800-333-0371 or visit <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/defects-recalls-vehicles-tires-child-car-seats/alerts-notices.html>.



- It must display a National Safety Mark.

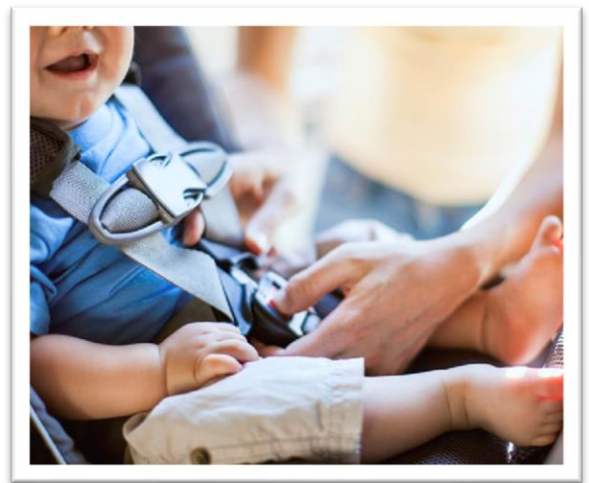


NSM sample – the unique number assigned to a company is to appear in the center of the NSM maple leaf shaped logo.

- Make sure the car seat is in good condition:
 - Free of cracks or chips in the molded plastic.
 - Free of warping, rust, or broken rivets in the frame.
 - Free of cuts, frayed edges, or broken stitches in the harness straps.
 - **Free of rips in the seat's padding.**
 - All the harness buckles work properly.

Using a car seat

- Place your baby in a rear-facing car seat.
- Read the instructions to find out how to properly install your car seat.
- The safest place is in the back seat but may not be the middle depending on the model of the vehicle. If the back-middle seat has access to the trunk or does have UAS clips, for example, it may be better to place the car seat behind the passenger or driver. Passenger side is recommended as it is curbside when car is parked along a street.
- **The car seat's harness straps and buckles** are supposed to be snug.
- Ensure that when secured, the harness strap cannot be pinched more than **one inch at the baby's collar bone.**
- The chest clip should be at your baby's **armpit level.**
- Read the car seat manual to find out how the carry handle should be positioned in the vehicle for proper installation.
- Change the car seat when your baby has reached the limits as outlined in the car seat manual.



Remember that your baby's car seat is not a safe substitute for a crib. The safest place for your baby to sleep is in his crib, cradle or bassinet.

5. When to Get Help for Your Baby

If you feel something is not right, and/or if you are very worried see a health care provider right away. Do not wait. Call immediately if your baby:

- Is still having black stools at 4 days old.
- Is very sleepy and always has to be woken up to eat.
- Is hard to wake or seems very weak.
- Has a fever.
- Is breathing very quickly or has trouble breathing.
- Has lips or ear lobes that are blue or grey in color.
- Appears jaundiced or yellow in color.
- Is losing weight or not gaining weight.
- Has sunken eyes or the soft spot on top of the head is sunken.
- Has a dry mouth, lips, tongue, or nose.
- Has pale, cold, and moist skin.
- Is having a seizure (the whole body, arms, and legs are shaking).
- Vomits large quantities or forceful (projectile) vomiting twice or more per day (spit-up or bringing up small quantities of milk is normal, even at every feed).
- Has a high-pitched crying over prolonged periods and your baby has other symptoms like diarrhea or a fever. Note that babies can be extra-fussy late afternoon and evening hours. See the period of purple crying at www.purplecrying.info

6. Changes to Your Body After Birth

There are many normal changes that will happen to your body after you have a baby.

Afterpains

After your baby is born you may feel painful contractions as your uterus goes back to its normal size. This is normal. Your health care provider will check to make sure that this is happening. You may feel these pains the most when you **breastfeed because your baby's sucking helps your uterus** return to its normal size. Afterpains usually go away after a week. Call your health care provider if the afterpains do not go away or if they are very painful.

Bleeding from your vagina

You will have bleeding from your vagina for 2 to 6 weeks. At first, the bleeding will be heavy and dark red. In a few days the bleeding will slow down. The colour will change to brown, pink, and then to white. It is important to keep this area clean and to change your pad often. Do not use a tampon during this time.

Call your health care provider if your flow is heavier than normal, is heavier than a period, smells bad, or has large clots.

Sore perineum

The area between your legs may be sore or swollen. If you had stitches you may feel more pain. Try freezing a damp maxi pad and putting it in your underwear. Try sitting in a warm bath. Also, keep the area very clean by pouring warm water on the area between your legs after you pass urine or have a bowel movement. You should also do the Kegel exercises you learned when you were pregnant. Call your health care provider if the stitches open or if you notice smelly fluid.

Constipation

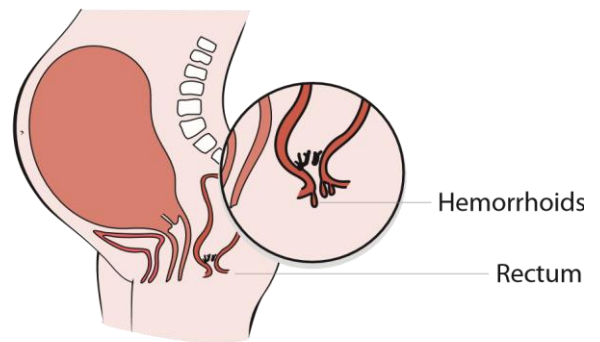
You may find it hard to have a bowel movement after your baby is born. Eat foods high in fibre and drink lots of fluids to make the bowel movement softer and easier to pass. Call your health care provider if you are constipated for more than 3 days.

Breasts

Your breasts will get firmer and bigger. Your breast milk will be yellow at first (colostrum). Colostrum provides everything your baby needs.

Hemorrhoids

You can get hemorrhoids during pregnancy and after you have a baby. Eat foods high in fibre and drink lots of fluids to keep the bowel movement soft and easy to pass. Ask your health care provider about medicines that may help.



Hard to pass urine

You may find it hard to pass urine for a couple of days after your baby is born. Drink lots of fluids and remind yourself to go to the toilet even if you do not feel like you have to go. If it burns or hurts when you pass urine or you really cannot pee, talk to your health care provider.



Getting your period

Many breastfeeding parents find that their period does not come back until they begin giving their baby solid foods at 6 months. Some find that their period does not return until after they stop breastfeeding. Parents who choose not to breastfeed usually find that their period starts within 2 months after giving birth.

Having sex

It is safe to have sex when you feel ready. This can be after the bleeding from your vagina has stopped and the area between your legs has healed (tears or stitches have healed). The best thing is to talk to your partner about how you are feeling and what you would like. Choose activities that please both of you.

You need to see your health care provider 6 weeks after your baby is born for your check-up. Ask about birth control methods. If you are breastfeeding be sure to let your health care provider know because some birth control methods can affect breastfeeding.



Postnatal physical activity

Taking care of yourself helps you to take care of your baby. Being active after your baby is born will improve your blood flow and make you stronger. Ask your health care provider or public health nurse about activities to do after having your baby.

If you had a Caesarean birth

If you had a caesarean birth, you will need to take extra care and will need extra rest. Ask for help. Talk to your health care provider.

7. Your Changing Feelings

The first few days and weeks after your baby is born are both exciting and tiring. You may have many new feelings. It is normal to feel stress, anxiety and worry after having a baby, and especially during COVID-19. Take time for yourself, try to eat healthy, connect with others through FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, etc., and get as much rest as possible. If you feel lonely, depressed, or anxious, talk to your health care provider about it without delay. Contact your local public health unit to see what supports are available in your areas.

To find your local public health unit, go to www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx.

Baby Blues

Many new parents feel sad or cry easily for a week or two after the baby is born. This should be better after 2 weeks. If not, talk to your health care provider. This is called having the baby blues. These feelings are normal and happen for many reasons, such as:

- Changing hormones.
- Lack of sleep.
- Not feeling sure how to care for the baby.
- Worrying about being a parent.
- Trying to do everything at once.
- Your changing relationship with your partner.



Tips to help you cope during the first few weeks

- Learn how to care for your baby.
- Try to get as much rest as you can when you get home. Sleep when your baby sleeps.
- Limit the number of visitors and keep the visits short.
- Arrange for family and friends to help with cooking and cleaning.

- Give yourself time to adjust to your new life.
- Ask for help.
- Take time for yourself.

Postpartum depression

When the feelings of “baby blues” continue for a longer time and feel stronger or get worse, you may have postpartum depression.

You may be feeling:

Sad, alone, worried, or nervous. You may also feel overwhelmed, ashamed, guilty, angry, upset, or irritable. You may not enjoy being with other people (including your baby) or you may get angry very easily.

You may also:

- Be tired all the time.
- Want to sleep all the time.
- Have trouble sleeping or relaxing.
- Cry easily and for no reason.
- Have no appetite or want to eat all the time.
- Feel like your heart is beating too fast.
- Feel sweaty, numb, or tingling.
- Have a lump in your throat.
- Worry a lot about your baby.
- Feel rejected by your baby.

If these feelings last more than 2 weeks, get help right away. Talk with your health care provider or public health nurse. They will know how to help.

Some women think about hurting themselves or their baby. If you feel this way, get help right away. Go to the hospital or call your health care provider.

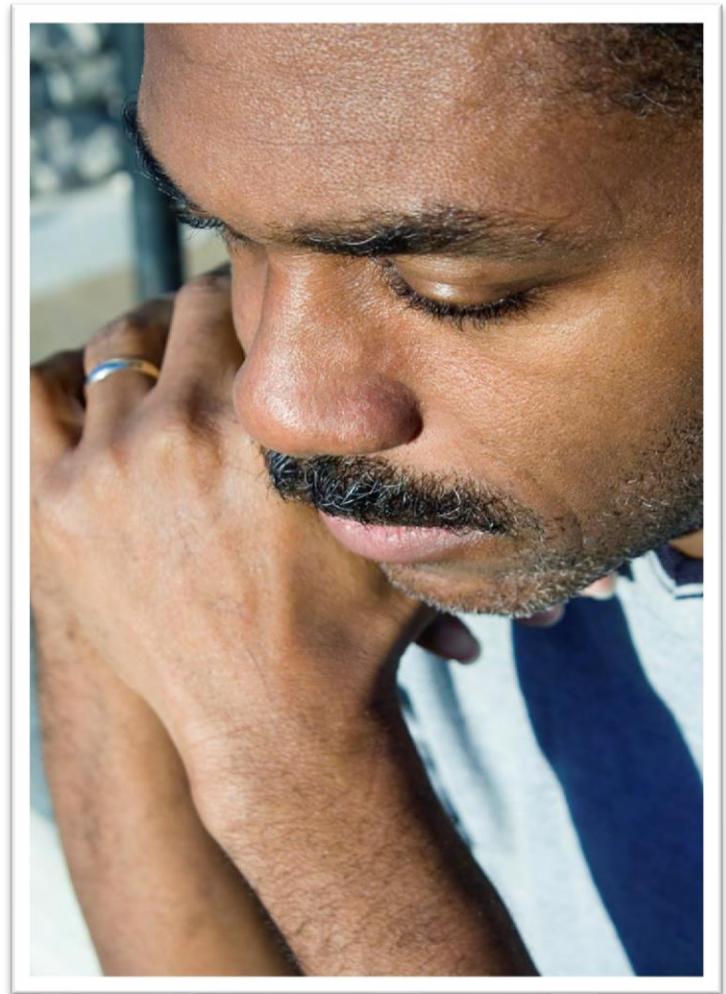
To find mental health supports in your area, go to www.ontario.ca/page/find-mental-health-support. For more information refer to the section *Mental Health* at http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/do-you-have-baby-0-12-months and the [Additional Resources](#) section.

8. Having Support

You can help a new parent get the care and support they need. If you notice signs of postpartum depression, help them contact their health care provider right away.

To support the parent dealing with postpartum symptoms of depression you can:

- Know the signs and symptoms of postpartum depression.
- Tell them they are a good parent and the baby is doing great.
- Help with the care of the baby and household chores.
- Take the baby out to give them a break.
- Suggest they get outside for a walk. Go with them or have a friend join them.
- Listen without judging or trying to fix their situation.
- Limit the number of visitors.
- Arrange for other people to make meals and to help in practical ways.
- Go with them to medical appointments and psychological follow-ups.
- Help a parent who has or may have COVID-19 care for their baby by wearing a mask and washing your hands before touching the baby.



What you can do for yourself

Life with a new baby is stressful for partners and other family members as well, especially if the parent becomes depressed.

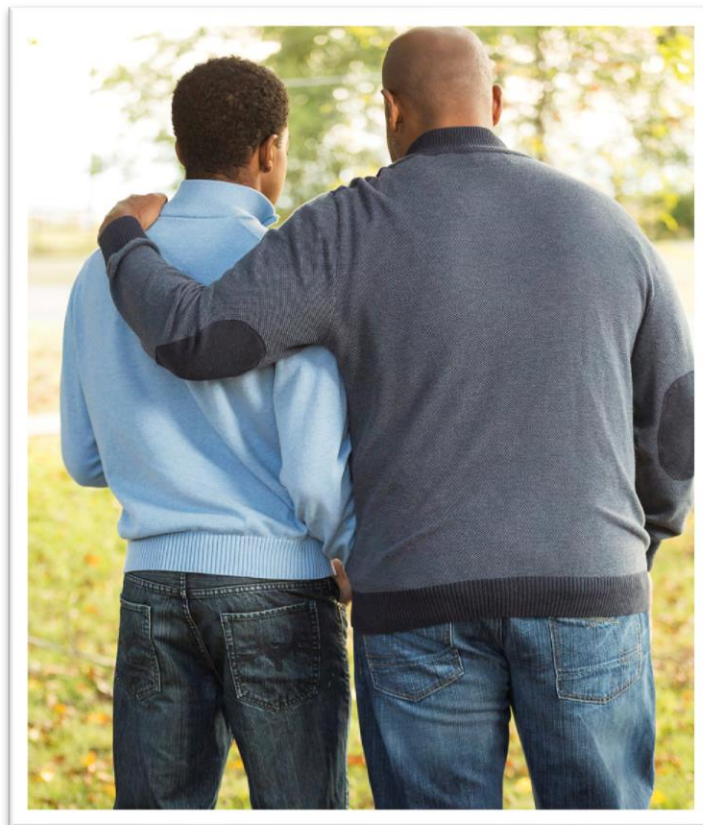
It is important to take some time for yourself to do what you enjoy doing. You need a break too. Find someone to talk with virtually, over the phone or in person.

Here are some suggestions:

- Family, friends, other partners.
- Your health care provider.
- 24-hour crisis line.
- Your local public health unit.
- Community services in your area.
- Parenting groups in your area.
- There may be parenting groups through Facebook or other virtual platforms such as Skype or Zoom.

Remember that:

- Having symptoms of depression is not a weakness of character.
- It is a treatable mental condition that does not go away by itself.
- Getting help is the best thing you can do.
- You need to look after yourself.



9. When to Get Help

See a health care provider right away if:

- There is a bad smell coming from your vagina.
- Large blood clots come from your vagina.
- The amount of blood coming from your vagina is heavier than normal.
- Blood is still coming from your vagina after 6 weeks.
- Your stitches open.
- You have a fever.
- You have signs of postpartum depression.

You think something is not right.



10. Additional Resources

Breastfeeding

Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services

Search for breastfeeding services near you.

www.ontariobreastfeeds.ca

Breastfeeding for the Health and Future of Our Nation

Indigenous women will find information about the art of breastfeeding.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b05a-breastfeeding-for-health-future-nation-book/>

Breastfeeding Hotline

Telehealth Ontario offers 24/7 breastfeeding advice and support service.

1-866-797-0000

Breastfeeding Matters: An Important Guide for Families

This booklet will help women and their families explore breastfeeding from prenatal decisions, learning breastfeeding basics to gaining confidence.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b04e-breastfeeding-matters-book/>

Mixing Alcohol and Breastfeeding

To new parents make an informed choice when it comes to drinking alcohol while breastfeeding.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/a21e-mixing-alcohol-and-breastfeeding-brochure/>

My Breastfeeding Guide

This booklet helps new and future parents learn about breastfeeding, and where to get help.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b20e-my-breastfeeding-guide-booklet/>

Fathers and Partners

Dad Central Ontario Information for dads.

www.dadcentral.ca/dads

Daddy and Me on the Move

Find activities that fathers can do with their children.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/k57e-daddy-and-me-on-the-move-booklet/>

General

211 Ontario

Find programs and services in your area. In over 100 languages.

www.211ontario.ca

EarlyON Child and Family Centre

Find free drop-in programs for children from birth to 6 years old. You can learn and play with your child, meet people or get advice.

www.ontario.ca/page/find-earlyon-child-and-family-centre

Giving Birth in a New Land – A guide for women new to Canada and their families

Find information for newcomer women who are pregnant and expect to deliver their baby in Ontario.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/e30e-giving-birth-in-new-land-book/>

Local Public Health Unit

Find the nearest health unit. Ask about postnatal programs and services near you.

1-800-267-8097 or

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Telehealth Ontario

A free Ontario Government phone service to get health advice from a nurse.
1-866-797-0000

Risks of Cannabis on Fertility, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Parenting

Offers current information about the effects of cannabis.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/a30e-risks-of-cannabis-booklet/>

Sleep Well, Sleep Safe

Information on healthy sleep tips for infants and for parents. It provides information on how to reduce the risks of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep related causes of infant death.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/k49e-sleep-well-sleep-safe-booklet/>

The Period of Purple Crying (National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome)
Find information on preventing shaken baby syndrome and how to calm an infant.

www.purplecrying.info/#sthash.DPDZ1Gpo.dpuf

What to Expect in the First Three Months

A list of websites and resources to guide new parents in their first three months as parents.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/k82e-what-to-expect-in-the-first-three-months-booklet/>

Growth and development

Is My Child Growing Well?

Information on child's growth.

<https://www.dietitians.ca/growthcharts>

Looksee Checklist by NDDS

Find information on child's development and suggested activities from birth to age 6.

www.ndds.ca/ontario

Tips for Parents – Brain Development

View a series of 15 lists of tips for parents on topics associated with brain development.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/k46e-tips-for-parents-brain-development-for-providers/>

Infancy (Birth – two years of age)

Find information to help your child with the best possible start in life.

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/stages-etapes/childhood-enfance_0-2/index-eng.php

Infant feeding

Safely Preparing Infant Formula for Your Baby

This video and tip sheets provide information on how to safely prepare formula.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b42e-safely-preparing-infant-formula-for-your-baby-video-fact-sheets/>

Infant Formula: What You Need to Know

This booklet helps families make informed decisions about infant feeding and how to handle formula safely.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/b19e-infant-formula-booklet/>

Infant safety

Install a child car seat

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation web site provides information on how to correctly install a child car seat, booster seats and seatbelts to help protect children from serious injury.

www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/install-child-car-seat.shtml

Is Your Child Safe? Series

Health Canada information on keeping young children safe from health and safety hazards.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/index-eng.php

Mental Health

Life with a New Baby is Not Always What You Expect

A booklet for new parents with information about perinatal mood disorders, self care and where to get help.

<https://resources.beststart.org/product/m03e-life-with-a-new-baby-brochure/>

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best start
meilleur départ

by/par health **nexus** santé