



FIRMAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH - WORTH

Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies

Newsletter

The Importance of Mothers by Rexanne Mancini

Moms, did you ever question your value as a role model, caretaker, administer of hugs and Band-Aids? I think we all have in today's climate of "do more, get more, have more." Many of us work to bring home a paycheck and others work for our sanity. Have you ever wondered if your children were better off with the baby sitter than you? Scientific studies are beginning to point to the overwhelming value of a mother's love, hugs and support. Nannies, baby-sitters and relatives are terrific. They just aren't as terrific as Mom.

I have had the best of both worlds, I suspect. I worked a high-powered executive job until my older daughter was 2 and a half. At a crossroads in my career, I opted to "get pregnant and stay home for a year." HA! Little did I realize I was about to take a ten-year hiatus from my much-loved life! I didn't get pregnant right away, but, after having spent a year basking in the glow of being Mom, I couldn't bear giving up the care and nurturing of my daughter to another nanny, no matter how wonderful. I think it was the best career move of my life.

Well, ten years later, I am back in the work force and thriving. Yes, I felt bored much of the time. Yes, our family sacrificed the bigger house, fancier cars and vacations some of our peers were enjoying. But it was a conscious decision to sacrifice for the benefit of our children. We wanted *our* morals, *our* ethics and *our* life lessons to influence our children.

I think moms can work at home, be homemakers or work outside of the home and still be great moms. The most important part of mothering, I feel, is being there for our children. Maybe your sacrifice is going to work but spending your precious little free time reading your child a bedtime story every night, taking him to the park on Saturdays or chaperoning your daughter's school dance. What matters is our input, the confidence in our roles as mothers and knowing we are the best person for the role ... to understand how valuable we are to society.

Pat yourselves on the backs ... you've accomplished a miracle! There is no greater sacrifice on earth, in my opinion, than making the decision to be a parent. Know how important you are. Know that your children need you to be as solid an individual as you can be. Therein lies your strength as a mother, whether you spend all day at home or in an office. We are all exceptional women in our motherhood.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters, Justice and Liberty. She is a novelist, freelance writer and maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site, Rexanne.com – <http://www.rexanne.com> -Visit her site for good advice, award-winning Internet holiday pages and some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly

Fathers as Caregivers

Today, with more mothers working, more fathers are becoming involved in the care of their babies. In some one-parent families, the father is the main caregiver for his child.

There's no question that fathers can form close relationships with their babies. Fathers can love, guide, teach, and nurture their babies. So how much should you, the father, be a part of your baby's life? As much as you can!

Feeding Your Baby

After four to six months, your baby will be ready to eat solid foods in addition to breast milk or iron-fortified formula.



When to Feed

Increasing numbers of doctors recommend that babies not be given solid food until they are at least 4 months of age, and they prefer that parents wait until 5 or 6 months to begin feeding cereals and other solid foods. The reason: before 4 months, babies do not have full mouth and tongue control and usually push solids out with their tongues. Therefore, semi-liquid, mushy foods should not be given to your baby before she can sit up with support or has some head and neck control. Also, feeding solids too early in life may lead to overeating, obesity, and increased risk for food allergies. Check with your healthcare provider before beginning solid foods.



What to Feed

After 4 to 6 months, your baby will be ready for other foods in addition to breast milk or iron-fortified formula. Usually an iron-fortified infant cereal is first. Choose a single-ingredient infant cereal such as rice, oatmeal, or barley.

How to Feed

Put a teaspoon of infant cereal in a dish (not in the bottle) and mix it with iron-fortified formula or breast milk. Don't add sugar, salt, butter, or any seasonings.

For the first few weeks, offer the cereal once or twice a day after breast or bottle feeding. Use a baby-size spoon to feed your baby. Give her just a small taste at first. If she seems interested, give her a few more tastes with the spoon. If she doesn't like it or pushes the spoon away, wait a few days and then try again. Don't force your baby to eat. She will accept solids when she is ready.

Try only one new food at a time. For example, if you start with a couple of teaspoons of infant rice cereal, continue for a week before introducing infant oatmeal or infant barley.

The first feedings probably will be messy. Your baby has been only sucking up to now, but she soon will learn how to swallow solids. With a little patience, you can help your baby learn to eat and like different foods. Try to make mealtime pleasant for both of you.

Sometimes a new food can cause diarrhea, a skin rash, or even a runny nose. If you think your baby has an allergy problem, check with your healthcare provider.

Games Babies Play

I Can Move to Keep Things in Sight: Eyes and Body Game

Purpose

This game teaches your baby to use his body and to lift his head and part of his upper body when watching a moving object.

How to Play

- ◆ Put your baby on his stomach and sit facing him.
- ◆ Use a ring of keys or a box or can filled with buttons and rocks.
- ◆ Dangle the noise-making object in front of your baby's face and say, "Look at the keys."
- ◆ Raise the object slowly in the air to encourage him to lift his head and push up with his hands.
- ◆ Say something like "Follow the keys" or "Keep your eyes on the keys."
- ◆ Watch your baby and see if he can lift his chest off the floor.

Another Eyes and Body Game

- ◆ Move objects slowly behind your baby's head. See if he will move around to find the object.

Coping with Daily Stress

Does your stomach feel tense? Do you often get headaches? Do your muscles ache? Do you sometimes feel like hitting someone or crying for no reason? These are some of the signs of stress—and you can do something about it.

Everyone goes through stress or strain at one time or another. Stress builds up from daily worries, crises, or life changes such as becoming a new parent or getting divorced or changing jobs. For some people, it can build up to the point at which they can no longer control their emotions or they strike out at the world around them.

It's easy to ignore the first signs of stress. But if you listen to your body and your feelings, you can learn to read the warning signals and take action to reduce tension. Here are some stress-reducing suggestions and exercises.

Suggestions

- ◆ Put your baby down for a nap and forget what you "should" be doing. Take some time to relax. Do whatever makes you feel fresh again.
- ◆ Don't keep worry and anger bottled up. Talk about these feelings with someone close to you.
- ◆ Set reasonable goals for yourself. Then decide what first steps you want to take toward those goals.
- ◆ Pick out the most important things and don't worry about the others. Trying to do everything plus taking care of your baby will wear you out.
- ◆ Get regular exercise. Try walking 30 minutes a day with your baby in a front pack, sling, or stroller. Exercise helps to relieve stress, and your baby will enjoy being outdoors.

Exercises

- ◆ Raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold while counting to four, then drop your shoulders back to their normal position. Rotate your shoulders back, down, and around—first one way, then the other. Repeat several times.
- ◆ Lie on the floor with your feet up on a chair. Place a cool washcloth on your face and think of the most peaceful scene you can imagine. Stay there for at least five minutes.



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Vanilla Ice Cream VII

Ingredients:

- 1 quart heavy cream
- 1 1/4 cups milk
- Q vanilla bean, split and scraped
- 1 1/4 cups white sugar, divided
- 10 egg yolks
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract



Directions:

1. In a heavy saucepan over medium heat, combine cream and milk, Place vanilla bean and scrapings in pot, and sprinkle with half the white sugar. Allow to just come to a boil.
2. Meanwhile, whisk the egg yolks together with the remaining sugar and the vanilla extract in a bowl. When the cream is ready, pour a third of it into the egg mixture, and whisk. Pour egg mixture into remaining hot cream and return to the heat until mixture coats the back of a metal spoon. Do not boil.
3. Strain custard and chill until cold. Then pour into the canister of an ice cream maker and freeze according to manufacturer's instructions.

Quote of the Month

"Being a full-time mother is one of the highest salaried jobs in my field, since the payment is pure love." -Mildred B. Vermont

