

# What is Infant Mental Health? Why does it matter?



Infant mental health describes the social and emotional wellbeing and development of children in the earliest years of life.

Sensitive, responsive and trusted relationships are fundamental to infant mental health. Parents and caregivers help babies to learn how to experience, manage and express their emotions, and to feel safe to explore the world.



Although children's futures are not determined by the age of two, severe and persistent problems in early relationships and emotional development can have pervasive and lifelong impacts on a range of outcomes.

Because the first 1001 days are a period of rapid development, early experiences affect not only babies' emotional wellbeing now but also influences how their bodies and brains develop.



## Good infant mental health:



- enables young children to **feel safe and secure**, ready to play, explore and learn as they enter early education and school;



- increases the chances of babies **achieving their potential** in later life and **contributing to society and the economy** as adults;



- lays the groundwork for children's ongoing **social and emotional development**, including resilience and adaptability – key competencies that will help them to **thrive**;



- helps children to **develop behavioural and physiological regulation** which are linked to lifelong physical and mental health and wellbeing;



- gives babies the **skills to form trusting relationships** which are essential for living a healthy and fulfilling life.

It's very important to **promote emotional wellbeing and development** and to provide support to families if they experience difficulties in parent-infant relationships.

Good infant mental health promotes positive outcomes throughout a person's life and influences how they parent their own children. **Investing in infant mental health pays dividends for generations to come.**

