

Here to help

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OUR EXPERTS ARE HERE  TO SHARE THEIR ADVICE



## THE BIG QUESTION

**SARAH OCKWELL-SMITH**

is author of *The Gentle Potty Training Book: The Calmer, Easier Approach to Toilet Training*



## PREGNANCY

**ANYA HAYES**

is author of *Pregnancy the Naked Truth*, a no-holds barred guide to pregnancy



## BEHAVIOUR

**ANNA TAYLOR**

is a child development expert at [fundamentallychildren.com](http://fundamentallychildren.com)



## SLEEP

**LISA CLEGG**

is the author of *The Blissful Baby Expert* and *The Blissful Toddler Expert*



## EATING

**POLLYANNA HALE**

is an award-winning personal trainer and nutritionist at [thefitnumformula.com](http://thefitnumformula.com)



**Q** My three-year-old has been running around in the garden naked this summer – is now a good time to potty train?

**AMBER BUTCHER, HERTFORDSHIRE**

Summer is a great time to potty train for several reasons. Firstly, you can contain most of the potty training to your garden, which greatly reduces the need for cleaning up accidents indoors, as well as the need to cover up carpets, rugs and sofas. Another important benefit is that the warmer weather allows your child to be completely naked without getting cold.

My recommendation for potty training, whatever the time of year, is that children should be 'bare bottomed' for the first two to three days of potty training. The chances are, your daughter won't give you much notice when she needs to go to the toilet, and the time needed to remove clothing can often result in accidents, which can dent her confidence. Introduce easy-to-remove underwear by day three or four, then add other items of clothing as the week of potty training goes on.

Another thing to consider in summer is dehydration, which can impact not only how often she needs to wee, but is also a

contributory factor in constipation, so do ensure that your child drinks enough. Homemade ice lollies are helpful for reluctant drinkers.

It would be ideal if you could devote five days to staying at home in the garden, to get off to the best start. This means that your child should be fairly dry by the time you venture out and about, and significantly reduces the chances of getting caught short in public. And it's much easier to stay home for five days in the summer without boredom striking than it is in the winter!

Despite all of this, however, there is only one time when any parent should potty train – the right time for their child. Most children potty train between two and three years of age. Other signs that signal readiness include your child being able to tell you that she needs to go to the toilet before she goes (not during, or after), asking you to change her nappy, and hiding to go to the toilet, particularly for a poo. If these coincide with summer, you're ready to go. If not, stay patient for just a little longer. **SO** ➔➔

PREGNANCY

**Q** My belly button has just popped out – will I ever go back to having an innie?

**KATE PHILLIPS, RUTLAND**

Your belly button pops out in pregnancy because your tummy has to expand hugely to accommodate your baby, and the skin has to stretch the most right about where your naval is. Combine that with pressure from your expanding uterus, and out pops your belly button to say hello! For most of us, the tummy button gradually softens back in once baby has been born and your uterus is no longer putting pressure on your skin. But, as with everything to do with pregnancy, there's no hard and fast guarantee, and so for some people, the belly button never quite goes back to what it was. If your belly button prefers to stay out, massaging with nourishing oils will do wonders for enhancing the skin tone of the entire area. **AH**



**Q** I am finding it hard to write my birth plan. Where do I start?

**SARA WATSON, SUFFOLK**



Firstly, understand that your birth plan is a guideline rather than a fixed decree. The word 'plan' suggests you can predict what will happen, so it can come as a shock if things veer off course. The last thing you want to do is feel like things 'didn't go right'. I prefer to think of this task as assessing your options. It is a good idea to research all avenues. Writing things down will organise in your mind what scenarios you're drawn to: where would you like to have your baby? Who would you like present? What type of pain relief would suit? Remember you're allowed to change your mind. Being open to all birth routes will equip you for feeling like you haven't lost control if your birth story unfolds in a narrative you hadn't predicted. **AH**

**Q** What can I do to minimise stretchmarks?

**FRANCINE BAKER, LONDON**

The honest answer here is that whether or not you get the tiger stripes of pregnancy as your belly swells is largely down to your genes and lady luck. But there is a lot you can do to keep your skin moisturised, supple and healthy. There is evidence to suggest that regular massage with a moisturising oil goes some way to prevent stretchmarks being too severe. It's also a lovely way of connecting with your bump. There are plenty of pregnancy-friendly massage oils and balms on the market, for varying price ranges. I loved the Mama Mio range, and used The Tummy Rub Oil in the postnatal months to massage my deflating belly. Bio-Oil is also good. But the most important thing is to reframe your view of stretchmarks, as they are a marker of having brought your baby into the world. Midwives in Mexico refer to them as 'love lines'. Now, isn't that a better way of seeing them? **AH**



MOTHER&BABY PROMOTION  
**PREGNACARE LIQUID**

Pregncare Liquid is ideal for women who prefer not to swallow tablets and has been carefully developed to help safeguard daily dietary requirements from the start of trying to conceive and during all

of pregnancy. The formulation includes 18 important vitamins and minerals, including 10mcg vitamin D, the daily level recommended by the UK Department of Health. There is also 400mcg folic acid, which contributes to maternal tissue growth during pregnancy, and zinc to support normal reproductive health.



BEHAVIOUR



**Q** My toddler eats everything and anything. How can I teach him not to put things into his mouth when he's playing in the garden?

**KIM HOGG, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

Most children go through this stage; they're very curious at this age and, now they're up and moving, can't wait to use all of their senses to explore their environment. Gently explain to him that he shouldn't eat rocks, grass or mud, and perhaps give him an

alternative he can munch on, such as a snack or his comfort blanket. It's important that you keep the garden clear of anything dangerous, such as cat poo, and always keep a watchful eye on him. He'll soon learn that snails don't taste very nice! **AT**

**Q** My six-month-old son hasn't learnt to roll over yet. What can I do to help him?

**MEG BELMORE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Before your son can start to roll himself over, his neck and arm muscles need to be strong enough. Tummy time – putting him on his front while he's awake, on a blanket on the floor, or on your chest, lap or arms – is a great way to develop these muscles, and you're likely to see him doing mini push-ups before he begins to roll. Another way to strengthen those arm and neck muscles is to give your son interesting toys to look at and reach for during tummy time. High-contrast patterns will catch his attention, and he'll love batting at toys to cause a reaction, such as a noisy toy or a mirror reflecting light. **AT**



**Q** My 18-month-old is very shy and hides behind my leg all the time – how can I help him feel more confident?

**MELANIE WILLISHER, DORSET**

It's very typical for toddlers to be cautious in new situations or around unfamiliar people. It could be your son's temperament, or he could be going through a stage of separation anxiety, which comes and goes over the first three years and tends to peak at around 10 to 18 months. Group activities such as birthday parties or playdates are a good way for him to become more comfortable with social situations. Stay with him while he warms up to the environment. Avoid calling him 'shy' or being critical of his shyness, and offer understanding along with encouragement, for example, saying: 'There are lots of people here, it is quite noisy.' **AT**



MOTHER&BABY PROMOTION  
**SPLASH ABOUT'S NEW HAPPY NAPPY**

Splash About's new Happy Nappy offers the best protection ever against leaks in the pool. Its new ergonomic shape with fitted gusset and

specialist-pressured fabric at the waist and legs is flexible but holds any waste inside. This swim nappy won't gape and leak, regardless of how hard your baby kicks in water, which is why it's recommended by UK swim-schools and British Standards guidelines for baby swimming, [splashabout.com](http://splashabout.com)



## SLEEP

**Q** *My two-year-old has started to have vivid nightmares. What can I do to prevent them?*

**KIRSTY PATTERSON, WARWICKSHIRE**

A toddler's imagination can run wild as he goes through a leap in his language, social and emotional development. Keep his bedtime routine very calm and consistent. A good wind-down could include a nice bath followed by some calm play, perhaps doing a puzzle as well as reading a bedtime story. And make sure that story doesn't involve monsters, dinosaurs or anything else that could potentially cause him to wake up scared. Overtiredness can also cause unsettled sleep and increase the chance of a nightmare occurring, so ensure he gets a daytime nap if he still needs one, and that he goes to bed at a reasonable time. **LC**



**Q** *What should I dress my six-week-old in for sleep when the weather is really hot on holiday?*

**CLARE JONES, SWANSEA**

Babies can sleep in just a vest if you are on holiday in a hot country, or even if it becomes hot at home in the UK. Remember that the overnight temperature does drop though, so you'll need to add an extra layer before you go to bed to prevent her waking up and being cold during the night. **LC**



*Any tips for helping my eight-month-old sleep well when she is teething?*

**ISABEL RUNCORN, LANCASHIRE**

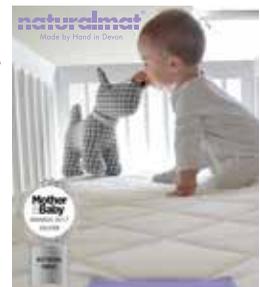


Teething is tough for everyone, and it takes time to figure out what are the best forms of relief for your baby so she can settle and sleep well. There are lots of products available, but it does vary as to which ones are more effective for each child. Try using teething toys and rings that can be put in the fridge to soothe her gums when she wakes. She'll need lots of reassurance and cuddles, too. When a tooth may just be ready to pop through and is too painful for her to sleep, give her an infant ibuprofen-based medicine, which works better for teething than paracetamol-based medication. **LC** ➔

**MOTHER&BABY**  
**PROMOTION**  
**A NATURAL**  
**NIGHT'S SLEEP**

The Coco Mat baby mattress is handmade in Devon using organic materials, which are naturally breathable and self-ventilating. This helps

your baby regulate his body temperature. Ideal for babies who suffer from allergies and asthma, the mattress is anti-dust mite, chemical free and naturally fire retardant, and comes with a machine-washable pure cotton cover. Available in all baby bed sizes, from [naturalmat.co.uk](http://naturalmat.co.uk)



## EATING

**Q** My two-year-old normally eats what we do – is it OK for his diet to completely change when we go abroad on holiday this summer?



**CHRISTINE OSBOURNE, SHROPSHIRE**

One of the great benefits of holidaying abroad is being able to expose toddlers to new foods. Your break away is an ideal time to get your little one experimenting. The best way to do this is to eat new foods yourself – if he sees something he likes the look of on your plate, he might try it. Let him pick something off your plate that looks interesting to him – the fact that you're eating it gives him the go ahead that it's safe to eat.

Of course, you do need to be careful about hygiene so, depending on where you're travelling to, follow the recommended advice of choosing bottled water over tap, fruits that need peeling, and be wary of salads that may have been washed in local water, as well as meat and fish that could have been sitting around in the heat.

Toddlers can be fussy but won't let themselves go hungry, so if he's refusing to join in and eats bread and butter for most of the holiday, don't worry: he won't be the first child to do so! As long as he eats well at home, it won't hurt him. **PH**

**Q** My baby was born six weeks early. Do I need to approach weaning any differently?

**JOANNE WITHERS,  
TYNE AND WEAR**

It's recommended that weaning starts at around six months. However, each baby's development speed is different, so take her personal needs into consideration. Questions to ask are: 'Can my baby sit up and hold her head unaided?', 'Is she showing an interest in my food?', 'Does she put toys in her mouth and attempt to chew on them?'. Of course, if there were any health complications as a result of being born early, seek advice from your health visitor as to what's best for your baby. **PH**

**Q** I'm 20 weeks pregnant and have been told my vitamin B12 levels are quite low. What should I eat?

**NICOLA BICKER, KENT**



Vitamin B12 benefits your mood, energy levels, memory, heart, skin, hair, digestion and more. Like folic acid, it's also needed to prevent neural tube and other neurological defects in unborn babies. Low energy is the most common symptom of deficiency. Red meat, especially beef, is the best source during pregnancy. Organic grass-fed dairy products, free-range eggs, wild-caught fish and organic poultry are valuable sources, too. **PH**

MOTHER&BABY  
**PROMOTION**  
**GROSWADDLE**

**Q** My baby likes to be swaddled, but I've heard it can be bad for hip development – what do I do?

**A** It's important for a baby to move and rest his legs in the

natural 'frog leg' position. Swaddling too tightly around the hips and legs can restrict this. A product such as the Hip-healthy Groswwaddle has been designed to allow you to swaddle your baby's body and arms, but ensure healthy leg positioning. [gro.co.uk](http://gro.co.uk)

