



Being a father.....	730
Being a mother.....	738
Being parents.....	744
Growing as a family.....	750

Being a father

Becoming a father.....	731
Importance of the father-child relationship	732
During the pregnancy.....	734
During delivery	734
After the birth.....	735
Feeding baby together	736
Working as a team with your partner.....	737



Anne Leclerc

Fathers are more and more involved in their children's lives. They want to play a full and active role. For many, fatherhood can be a source of accomplishment and pride.

Becoming a father

Becoming a father means learning a new role, one that begins during pregnancy and lasts a lifetime. It is a major change that brings great joys—and great challenges!

Your experience of becoming a father may vary depending on your situation (see [Emotional changes](#), page 50). Preparation for the baby's arrival can also vary from person to person, even within the couple. Talking to your partner about your respective expectations and concerns can help your couple adjust to these new realities.

After the delivery, your life as a parent truly begins. You will ease into your new role and learn to take care of your baby day by day as you spend more time with her.

At first, your daily routine may feel like it's been turned upside down. Schedules are all over the place, the house is a mess, you're trying to get your bearings as a couple, and nothing is the same as before. It's normal—most new parents go through this phase. The adjustment period may last a few months for some, or a few years for others.

Talking with other dads

If you have the chance, take time to chat with other dads. They've been there. Hearing about their experiences can do you good and help get you through the tougher moments. Talking to someone other than your partner can also help you better understand what you're going through.

Some fathers may experience a period of depression after the birth of a baby (see [Depression](#), page 262). If this happens to you, don't hesitate to seek help right away.

Importance of the father-child relationship

Fathers sometimes underestimate their role. Loving, actively involved fathers contribute to their children's well-being and development, strengthening their self-esteem. For example, this could be done by helping them discover the world through games and books.

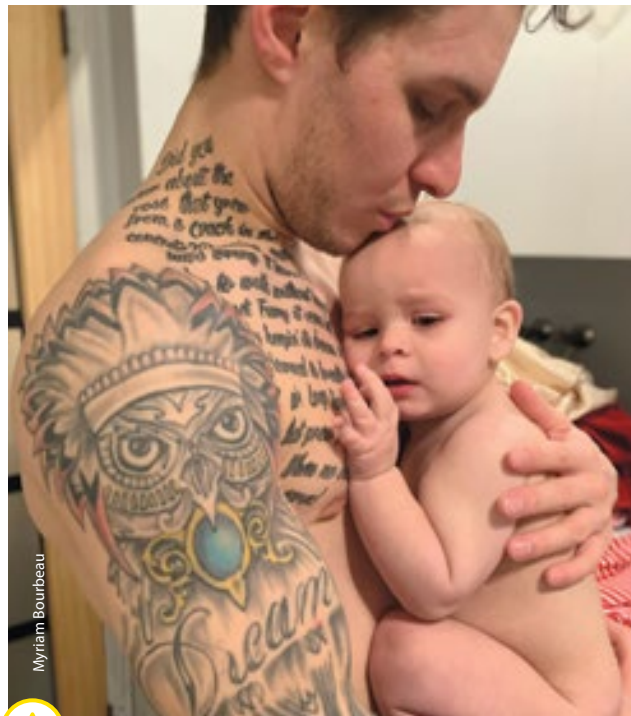
The presence of a caring father helps his child—boy or girl—to be more confident and to reach his or her full potential. By taking an active role from the moment your child is born, you help create a bond that lasts for the years to come.

Developing your relationship with your baby

Here are some things you can do to build your relationship with your baby:

- Take care for your baby, change her diapers, give her a bath, rock her, and put her to sleep
- Play and do activities with her
- Show her your affection
- Talk to other parents about your child, share baby photos with friends, and tell them how proud you are!

Playing an active role in organizing family life also strengthens your relationship with your child. You can do this by keeping track of your baby's health record, booking the babysitter, going to swimming lessons with your child, preparing meals, or contributing to the family income, for example.



Myriam Bourbeau



Physical contact with dad is comforting and reassuring for your baby.

During the pregnancy

You can start establishing a relationship with your baby during pregnancy. To help make baby's upcoming arrival feel more real, you can

- Attend prenatal checkups and **ultrasound** appointments where you can see your baby
- Listen to your baby's heartbeat at prenatal checkups
- Touch the mother's belly to feel the baby moving
- Attend prenatal sessions, especially ones designed for dads (if available in your area)
- Work with your partner to get the baby's room ready—a good way to start visualizing daily life with your baby
- Talk with other dads about their experiences



Starting at 24 weeks, the baby can hear sounds from outside the womb, including your voice.

During delivery

Childbirth can be a rollercoaster ride of conflicting emotions for fathers—everything from stress, worry, fear, and helplessness to excitement and great joy. For many dads, the birth of a child is an unforgettable experience. Holding and talking to your baby for the first time makes fatherhood very real all of a sudden. This is also the moment when your couple becomes a family, or your family grows.

The father plays an important role during labour and delivery by accompanying and supporting his partner as she gives birth. There are different ways for him to provide support (see **Having someone with you during childbirth**, page 210). He can also act as the contact person, keeping family and friends informed.

The father needs to pay attention to his own needs and the emotions the birth can trigger.

After the birth

Spending time with your newborn allows you to quickly establish a relationship, one that can help you build the attachment bond that's necessary for your child's development. For this to happen, your baby needs to get to know you, and you need to get to know your baby.

Find time to be together just the two of you. You can enjoy skin-to-skin contact (see [Skin-to-skin contact](#), page 241), take her for a walk in the baby carrier or stroller, or give her her bath, for example. Moments like these allow you to develop your own special father-child relationship and gain confidence in your abilities.



Baby becomes attached to the people who are close to her and respond to her needs.

Feeding baby together

Feeding your newborn will be one of your main activities as parents in the weeks after the birth. You can get involved by teaming up with your partner in a variety of ways.

Breastfeeding requires a lot of time and energy from the mother. It can be very rewarding, but also very demanding. If your partner is nursing, you may sometimes feel left out and not very useful. However, there are a number of ways you can help share in the responsibilities around breastfeeding, for example:

- Bring baby to mom to breastfeed
- Burp her after she has fed
- Change her diaper
- Hold her after she has fed
- Rock her to calm her or help her to sleep
(see [Skin-to-skin contact](#), page 241)

See also [The role of the partner](#), page 180.

If your baby is bottle-fed, these are all equally useful ways of contributing to her care and feeding.

You can also get involved when it's time to introduce solid foods. Sharing in your baby's discovery of new foods can be another special moment you enjoy together.

Working as a team with your partner

One of the challenges of fatherhood is working together with another parent on a daily basis (see [Being parents](#), page 744). Exploring this new reality together, supporting each other through the difficult moments, and sharing in the joys and sorrows that come with the birth of a child isn't always easy.

Try to be open, present, and attentive to your partner. This can help you adapt to the changes in your relationship and work through this period of transition together.

It's also important to try to find time for intimacy. This is often easier said than done in the weeks and months after the arrival of a baby. Give yourselves time and you'll find ways to adjust your private life and your sexuality to your new reality (see [Sexuality after birth](#), page 264).



The support of family and friends can be extremely helpful while you're adapting to your new situation.

If people offer to help, accept. You can also ask them to give you a hand. If possible, delegate household chores and some of your meal preparation to family and friends.

However, if you feel like your space is being invaded, you can always say no to visitors to protect your privacy as a couple and family.

Being a mother

Becoming a mother	739
Taking care of yourself	740
Trusting yourself	741



Frédérique Gros-Louis

Becoming a mother

The birth of a child is an event like no other. Holding your baby in your arms for the first time can be a deeply moving experience.

Becoming a mother can bring great joy, but also new feelings. It's an experience that comes with many questions and new responsibilities. For some, all these changes can be unsettling. Every mother experiences maternity in her own way, depending on her situation.

You will gradually learn to be a mother as you gain experience with your baby. You too will grow and change as a parent. For some people, this process may reveal new facets of themselves. You will discover your strengths and find your own way of doing things.

With a baby, your days are very busy, and often tiring. Many new mothers are surprised by how much there is to do. Time seems to fly by for some, and go very slowly for others.



The cuddles, smiles, and special moments you share with your baby can help you through the tired times and tough days.

Some mothers may feel depressed for a while after their baby is born (see [Baby blues](#), page 260, and [Depression](#), page 262). It can happen to any mother and is not a reflection of your parenting skills. If this happens to you, don't hesitate to seek help right away.

Taking care of yourself

Meeting your baby's needs during the first months and years of his life is very demanding. But don't neglect your own needs: it's important to eat well, get enough rest, and have fun. You'll find it easier to care for your baby if your own needs are met.

New mothers sometimes feel overwhelmed. If that's the case for you, postpone tasks that can wait and don't be afraid to ask for help. Clearly state your needs and expectations to your loved ones.

It can take a few years to reconcile your new role as a mother with other areas of your life like work, friends, and personal pursuits.

For most mothers, it takes about two years to strike a balance. Give yourself time to grow into your new role.



If you are solo parenting, it's also very important to take care of yourself. Don't hesitate to ask your family and friends for help.

Trusting yourself

Many new mothers have doubts about their ability to care for their new baby. Are you afraid of being clumsy when giving baby his bath, or not understanding why he cries, or panicking when he comes down with his first fever? Don't worry. Most parents go through the same thing.



Don't set the bar too high and ask for advice if you need it.

Your confidence will grow with each passing week as it gets easier for you to understand your child's needs. It will also get easier to plan your baby's routine and organize your time.

As is the case during pregnancy and childbirth, you may need support. If you feel overwhelmed or unable to manage your everyday activities, ask for help from family and friends or a professional. You can also contact your local CLSC or perinatal resource centre.



Despite your doubts, you'll get to know your child better with each passing day. You'll also discover your own strengths and develop your own way of caring for your baby.



Being parents

Co-parenting.....	745
Caring for your relationship.....	747
You don't need to be perfect!.....	748



Cynthia Ladouceur

Co-parenting

The birth of a child can bring new meaning to a couple's life. In addition to your relationship as partners, you now have a new relationship as parents: this is what's known as co-parenting.

As parents, you share the responsibility for caring for your child and guiding her through the different stages of her growth and development. Together, you will also decide how you go about providing your child with a safe and caring environment.



Parents have complementary strengths and preferences. That's why it's good to work as a team!

Co-parenting isn't just about sharing the duties and chores. It's about recognizing your respective strengths and the contributions you each make to your child's life. Each of you can meet your child's needs and be involved in your own way. And each of you can provide the same care to your baby, but not necessarily in the same way.

As parents, each of you needs to step into your role and feel respected and valued in the way you care for and educate your child. This helps strengthen your commitment to your child and to your role as a parent.

Talk to your partner about the values and attitudes you consider important in your children's education. Look for common ground when you disagree. Listening to and respecting each other's opinions can help strengthen your relationship as parents, but also as a couple.



Children feel safe and secure when parents apply consistent rules.



Jamie G Photographie

Children need love and support, but they also need rules and boundaries. As parents, you provide love and affection, but you also act as educators who set rules. Together, you will learn how to balance these different roles.



Taking care of yourself and your relationship is also beneficial for your child.

Caring for your relationship

The arrival of a new baby, with all the attention a newborn needs, means there is less room for your activities as a couple. At times, you may feel like your childcare responsibilities leave no time or space for the two of you.

Don't hesitate to go out together or spend a day just the two of you from time to time. Keep on sharing activities and making plans. Have fun together!

Try to make room for couple time and intimacy, even if it's not always easy in the months after your baby arrives.

Communicating to understand each other better

Communication is a good way to take care of your relationship. Pregnancy and the period that follows bring major changes in a couple's life, and both parents need to adapt. It's important to talk about your emotions, concerns, and joys during this period in order to maintain a close bond with your partner.

If you face an obstacle or conflict, don't wait to talk about it. Take time to explain your different perspectives and find solutions together. Good communication habits can help you develop a new approach, one where both parents feel valued and respected.

You don't need to be perfect!

Your role as parents will change over the course of the passing days and the different stages of your child's life. Being a parent is all about learning, making mistakes, and trying again. Don't get discouraged. It's normal to have doubts and to feel awkward and insecure at times. What's more, being a good model for your child also means acknowledging your missteps and mistakes.

"Am I too strict?" "Am I stimulating my child enough?" Parents are always asking themselves questions like these, but there's no "right" answer that fits every situation and every child.

Many parents feel pressure from family and friends, or the things they see in the media. Even total strangers will sometimes offer parenting advice.

Talking with other parents

If you have the opportunity, take time to chat with other parents about their experiences. Hearing their stories can do you good and help get you through those tougher moments.

Sharing your experiences with someone—without comparing yourself to them—can also help you deal with built-up stress and better understand what you're going through. Most parents like talking about their kids. Feel free to do the same!



Every parent, like every child, is different. There's no magic recipe for raising a child. Trust yourself!



Growing as a family

Reaction of older children	752
Grandparents	753
Twins	755
Being a parent of a baby who is different	757
Taking baby for a walk	762
Family activities	767
Childcare and babysitting	768
Budgeting for baby	770
Being environmentally aware	771
Choosing clothes	774
Asking for help	776



Maxim Rousseau

In Canada, families with children, whether biological and adopted, come in many shapes and forms, including families with heterosexual, gay, transgender, or non-binary parents, single-parent families, and blended families. And there are many others! There are as many family models as there are families.

The same family can also change over time, depending on events. The arrival of a child is one such life-changing event. Change requires adaptation.

If you need support, contact your CLSC or community resources in your area.



There are as many family models as there are families. Every family is unique.



Make sure that friends and relatives show as much interest in the older child as the new baby. A little special attention will make her feel better.

Reaction of older children

A child of any age can be worried about and jealous of the arrival of a new baby in the family. This is a normal reaction. You can help older children get ready for their new role and reassure them that they'll always have a big place in your heart.

You can talk to them about the baby several months in advance. Reading them stories on the subject or looking at photos of them when they were born are good ways to familiarize them with the new family reality.

You can also explain that little babies sleep a lot and cry from time to time, and that they won't be able to play with the baby right away. Also, let them know you'll be away during the birth, and who will be looking after them during that time.

Even so, your child may behave differently around the time of the baby's arrival. They may fall back into phases of behaviour they had previously grown out of (e.g., bedwetting, thumb-sucking, asking to be breastfed). These are normal reactions. Don't scold them, and continue to show your affection.

Your child may need time to bond with the baby. It's important not to rush them, and to listen to their feelings. If they want, you can give them little chores that make them feel good about helping you. You can tell them that what you're doing for the baby is the same as what you did for them when they were little. If they want, sing to them and rock them. Tell them you love them as much as ever.

Grandparents

Becoming a grandparent is a unique new opportunity to relive a child's first moments. It's also an occasion to witness firsthand the birth of a family. The role played by Grandma and Grandpa in this new family will depend on a host of factors: distance, work, the relationship with the new parents, and the grandparents' desire to be involved.

Pregnancy is a good time to talk about the grandparents' new role. Do you want them to be present during the baby's first days? How will they be involved in his education? How can they best help the new parents?



Grandparents may do things differently, and practices have changed a lot since their day. This guidebook *From Tiny Tot to Toddler* can be a very handy tool for sharing the latest recommendations with your child's grandparents.

The first few weeks will be easier for the new parents if someone else is helping them look after household chores. Home-cooked meals, for example, are a wonderful, heartfelt gift new parents are sure to appreciate.

It takes time to build a relationship with a grandchild. Your close and loving attachment, sense of pride, and protective instinct are the foundation for a lifelong bond.

Twins

If you give birth to twins, your life during the first few months will revolve around feedings, diapers, baths, and naps. You'll have the same routine as all new parents—times two! You'll also be doubly amazed at how your babies develop from day to day.

Even identical twins will probably have different schedules. To make things easier, keep a notebook of each baby's schedule. This will also be helpful to those who come to give you a hand.

If friends are looking for gift ideas, why not ask for diapers, home-cooked meals... or a few hours off!

You'll very likely need a hand looking after the babies and doing household chores. Seek help from your family, friends, or CLSC.



Your twins may look alike, but they are two very distinct people. As parents you can encourage each child's own unique character. With time, you'll discover what sets them apart.



Even if you're the very busy parents of twins or triplets, make sure to set aside time for yourself and your significant other. Remember, you're more than just parents! If the weather is good, get out of the house with your babies. This will break the routine and give you the chance to chat with other people. Plus, people are sure to express their admiration at the sight of your twins, making you feel proud and rewarded.

To find out more, you can consult resources for future and new parents of twins and triplets, such as Mamans pieuvres.

Mamans pieuvres

mamanspieuvres.com (in French only)

Being a parent of a baby who is different

Some parents learn during pregnancy that they will have a baby who is different, while others only find out at birth or in the hours, days, weeks, or months that follow. In some situations, it's the parents who notice their baby is different.

Regardless of when you learn of a chronic illness, disability, or other persistent problem in your child's life, it can be deeply upsetting. After all, don't all parents-to-be wish first and foremost for a healthy baby?

The need to know

Sometimes it's hard to make a definite diagnosis. It can feel like these difficult times of worrying and waiting will never end. Receiving a diagnosis often makes it easier to know the best way to act, but this is not always the case. Your intuition and knowledge of your baby are valuable assets.

There are also many advantages to developing a good relationship with all the health professionals dedicated to your baby's well-being.

Medicine has come a long way in recent years. It is now sometimes possible to identify the cause of a baby's health problem or deformity. It may be a genetic or metabolic illness, a **birth defect**, a neurological disorder, or a syndrome. Regardless of whether medicine can help identify the cause of your child's health problem, avoid falling into the trap of needing to blame someone or something.



Available help

A baby with health or developmental problems often requires more care and has greater needs. It will take courage and a lot of love on your part. But don't forget that parents also have needs as they learn to adapt.

There are support groups to help you come to grips with the situation and your baby's health. Some services may also help you care for your baby. Remember that you just gave birth and still need to rest, despite the emotional strain, errands, appointments, medical investigation, and hospitalizations.

Obtaining a clear diagnosis for your baby is an important step. As soon as you receive a diagnosis, you can put your child on the waiting lists at rehabilitation centres that can help her. Unfortunately, these waiting lists are sometimes long. Various associations provide information and, in some cases, support for families faced with specific health problems. Don't hesitate to ask questions to the health professionals and parents you meet.

Services differ from one region to the next. You'll find the resources that suit you best by exploring what's available. The website laccompagnateur.org (in French only) provides a wealth of practical information that can guide you in your search for information about your "different" child.

Financial support is available. For information on the *Child disability benefit*, visit canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/child-disability-benefit.html.

Free time with your child

When you bring a "different," ill, or disabled child into the world, life becomes very action-oriented. You need to take care of him, stimulate him, give him medication, feed him, and so on.

All these tasks mean you lack the time and energy to simply be with your baby. "Being" with your baby who is different can simply mean spending time massaging him, stroking him, watching him sleep, just looking at him without worrying about his physical care or medication, sharing your sorrow with him, and expressing your love.

Forming a bond with your baby is as important for you as parents as it is for him. This contact without any obligation to "perform an action" will help you come to grips with and adapt to the situation.

Taking baby for a walk

Babies need fresh air and light. Going for a walk outdoors is also stimulating and fun for your child. A healthy baby can go outside every day in any season, as long as the temperature isn't too hot or cold.

Babies poorly tolerate hot summer weather and must be kept out of the sun (see [Protecting your baby from the sun](#), page 705). If it's very hot (above 25 °C), short, light clothing and a diaper are sufficient.

When it is very cold, don't stay outside too long as your baby runs the risk of frostbite, especially if she isn't moving around. It's hard for a baby to tell you she's cold. That's why it's important to dress your baby warmly and ensure her head, hands, and feet are well covered. Wind can also make your baby uncomfortable, so make sure she's protected (e.g., by raising the stroller hood).

Your baby's first outing should be short—about 20 to 30 minutes. Then you can start going out for longer periods, provided you and your baby are comfortable.

Baby carriers

Babies like to be snuggled up next to their mother or father when taking a walk or at home. Baby carriers are convenient for doing everyday tasks and taking your baby on outings. The body heat and movement often put babies right to sleep.

Certain precautions must be taken to carry your baby safely. Get a baby carrier that fits you and is appropriate for your baby's age and weight, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure it's in good condition and meets current safety standards.



Pquan Nguyen



Baby carriers are fun for children and practical for parents.

Always make sure that your child is properly positioned in the baby carrier, according to the manufacturer's instructions. In order for your baby to breathe properly, her face shouldn't be squished against you, your clothes, or the baby carrier itself. Also make sure her chin is not resting against her chest. You should be able to see her face at all times.

When you have your baby in a carrier:

- Hold your baby when you bend over.
- Take extra care going up and down stairs.
- Make sure your baby's clothing is not so tight it cuts off blood circulation.
- Don't fasten your coat around the baby.
- Don't lie down or nap while your baby is in the carrier.

Baby carriers shouldn't be used during activities where there's an increased risk of falls (e.g., biking or walking on icy sidewalks). Avoid using them while cooking due to the risk of burns.

For more information, consult:

Institut national du portage des enfants (INPE)

inpe.ca/en/index/

On your bicycle

Your baby is ready to ride in a bike seat or trailer once she is

- At least one year old
- Able to sit up on her own while wearing a bike helmet

By this age her neck muscles are strong enough to support her head and the bike helmet in the event of an accident, and her head is big enough so that the helmet will fit her properly.

Make sure your child is seated properly in the bike seat or trailer with the straps adjusted correctly. She should be sitting upright, with her shoulders and head well supported. The bike seat should be equipped with a headrest and leg protectors for maximum safety.



Your child should always wear a helmet, whether she is riding in a bike seat or a trailer.

Check the seat's maximum weight capacity and make sure it is compatible with your bike. If you use a bike trailer, install the safety flag on the back to make it more visible. Be sure to read the recommended safety precautions in the user guide that comes with the bike seat or trailer.

Never leave your child in the seat when you're not on the bicycle as it could tip over and injure her.

With the extra weight behind you, it takes longer for the bike to stop when you brake, so take it easy the first few times out until you get used to the feeling.

In the stroller or carriage

There are many styles of strollers and baby carriages to choose from. Models that convert from carriage to bed to stroller are practical year-round. Those with reclinable seats are an excellent way to get around. Umbrella strollers are handy but light, and can tip over.

Always buckle up the safety harness and keep a close eye on your baby. While it's convenient to hang a few shopping bags from the stroller or carriage handles, be careful not to overload it, which can cause it to tip over.

Strollers and carriages retain the heat. When it's very hot, make sure your child stays comfortable. You can install a stroller umbrella or a small fan.



When it's very hot, do not put a blanket over the stroller even if it's to shield your baby from the sun. The temperature inside the stroller increases rapidly.

Family activities

Your energy will return once you've adapted to life with your new baby. Many parents then get the urge to get out and do things as a family. This is a good idea! Depending on your energy level, there's no reason you can't continue your usual family activities with the baby. Even very brief outings are beneficial for the whole family. They are a good way to break the sense of isolation you may feel. Try a few short outings as soon as you feel up to it.

Most children love being outdoors. Take your child outside in a baby carrier or in a stroller in summer or a sled in winter. In summertime, picnics in the park can be a lot of fun. If the weather's bad, seek out indoor activities where you can meet other people.

Municipalities often offer enjoyable free or low cost activities, such as family swim time at the pool, storytelling at the library, children's shows... Contact your municipal recreation department to find out what's available in your area.



Ask your friends who have young children about their favourite family activities. Get out and have fun!

Childcare and babysitting

Finding childcare is a key concern for parents wishing to return to work after taking parental leave. See the “Pregnancy and Parenthood” section at quebec.ca/parent for more information on childcare.

If you want to go out alone with your partner, you’ll need to entrust your baby to someone else. Choose someone you know or who has been recommended by other parents.

If you opt for a teenager, pick one who has experience and has taken a babysitting course. Have the babysitter come for a visit before you leave him or her alone with your child.

Watch how your baby reacts to the sitter. Before going out, make sure you leave a phone number where you can be reached and the approximate time you’ll be home.

Information to give the babysitter:

- Baby’s name and age
- Bedtime and feeding schedule
- Phone number where you can be reached and emergency phone numbers



Budgeting for baby

With the arrival of your baby, new expenses combined with a drop in income can be an added source of stress, so try to keep life simple. There are different types of financial aid that may be available to you (see [Government programs and services](#), page 781).

Take advantage of your pregnancy to make your needs known to people around you. You can also explore the treasures to be found in thrift shops, garage sales, second-hand clothing stores, used furniture stores, and bazaars held by church and community groups.

If your family is having trouble adjusting financially to your baby's arrival (debt, difficulty paying regular bills, etc.), there are about 30 consumer associations in Québec that offer free budget consultation services.

For the name of the association nearest you, contact Union des consommateurs du Québec at [514-521-6820](tel:514-521-6820) or [1-888-521-6820](tel:1-888-521-6820) (in French only), or Coalition des associations de consommateurs du Québec at [514-362-8623](tel:514-362-8623) or [1-877-962-2227](tel:1-877-962-2227) (in French only). You can also visit defensedesconsommateurs.org (in French only), which provides a list of these associations.

Being environmentally aware

Having a child and making green choices can seem complicated. Yet, through small, everyday actions, parents can help protect the environment.



If the environment is important to you, parenthood can be a time to reaffirm your values. However, you don't have to put pressure on yourself. Do what you can and what's important to you.



Through small, everyday actions, parents can help protect the environment.

Active and public transport

If possible, you can get around using active transport like walking or cycling (see [Taking baby for a walk](#), page 762). In addition to being environmentally friendly, this type of transportation can increase your physical and mental well-being.

You can also use public transport (e.g., bus, train, subway) or carpool. For more information, see [Travelling safely](#) on page 673.

Nutrition

At the table, you can focus on seasonal and local foods as well as plant-based proteins such as legumes and tofu (see [Protein foods](#), page 85 and [Legumes and tofu](#), page 552). These choices help limit pollutants related to producing and transporting meat.

The overpackaging of individual portions can also be avoided by buying regular sizes. The contents can then be put in reusable pouches or small containers (e.g., yogurt, purée).

Baby products

It's possible to get a variety of items while being environmentally aware.

Buy truly useful items – While there are an impressive number of baby products on the market, very few are truly essential.

Opt for used items – Because babies grow rapidly, most of the items intended for them will only be suitable for a short period of time.

You can use second-hand baby items (e.g., stroller, crib, high chair). However, it's important to make sure that they're in good condition and meet current safety standards (see [Babyproofing](#), page 683). If you're thinking about buying a used car seat, see [Used car seats](#), page 681.

Also, when you no longer need your baby items, you can give them to other parents or to organizations, if the items are in good condition.

Borrow toys and books and use them in rotation –

Instead of always buying new toys or books, you can go to a toy or book library if there's one nearby. You can also exchange books and toys with other families.

Give your child just a few toys and books at a time, and put the others away. That way, they'll seem new to him when you pull them out of their hiding place!

Choose items that will grow with your child – Some children's items can be adaptable, meeting your child's needs as he grows. That's the case for some car seats, high chairs, and clothing, for example. Sometimes those items are a bit more expensive, but because they don't need to be replaced often, they end up being more cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

Prioritize washable and reusable items – You can also opt for washable and reusable items (e.g., nursing pads, diapers, washcloths) rather than single-use items that must be thrown out. Several municipalities offer subsidies for purchasing washable items.



Jessica Gallant



It is possible to borrow games and toys in most libraries.

Choosing clothes

As diapers will be part of your baby's wardrobe for about two and a half years, you'll find more about them in the section **Choosing diapers**, page 610. When it comes to clothing, there's no need to buy lots of clothes of the same size because your baby will grow quickly. The size indicated on the tag can be deceiving: even if your baby is only 1 month old, a size 3-month garment may already be too tight.

The choice of clothing is often based on the weather. In summer, a diaper and a light garment or undershirt are fine. Dress your baby more warmly if you have air conditioning. In winter, your baby will be very comfortable in pyjamas with feet. Your baby's toes shouldn't be curled up in pyjamas that are too short. Check whether your baby is too hot by touching the back of his neck: it shouldn't be damp.



Preparing for the arrival of your baby requires a few necessities. But there's no need to spend a fortune!

Caring for clothes

If your baby has sensitive skin, wash her clothing separately with mild, unscented soap. Rinse the clothes twice to get rid of any trace of soap. Poorly rinsed clothes are often the cause of skin irritations.

It's best to wash new clothes before your baby wears them. Watch out for fabric softeners: they can irritate the skin of some newborns.

First shoes

Babies normally have flat feet until the age of about three. The arch takes shape as the muscles develop. Letting your baby go barefoot in the house and outside in the summer about half the time is excellent for his feet. There's no need for shoes before your baby takes his first steps.

It's best to take your baby to the store with you when buying him shoes. The shoes should fit properly at the heel and be about 1.25 cm (½ inch) longer than your baby's feet. Have your baby stand up so that you can measure the space between his longest toe and the tip of the shoe. You can also measure the inside of the shoe with a measuring tape and compare this measurement with the length of your baby's foot when he's standing.

Your baby's first shoes should have a semi-rigid sole. You should be able to bend the front of the sole with slight pressure. Shoes protect the feet and keep them warm. Ankle-high boots offer unnecessary support and are harder to take off. Socks should not squish the toes together.

When your child is between the ages of 12 and 36 months, check his shoes regularly to make sure they still fit properly.

Asking for help

In your neighbourhood, there are many community organizations, volunteer groups, and social economy enterprises providing services for families and support for parents in their new role. Are you familiar with them?

At every stage of life, getting involved in community life can be enriching for you and for other parents. In your community, you'll find information, help, respite, solutions, friends, a babysitter... or maybe even the desire to become a volunteer!

Find out about the organizations in your neighbourhood by contacting your CLSC. You'll also find contact information for a number of associations, agencies, and support groups on page 784.

Guide Info-Famille

If you're looking for written material, try the *Guide Info-Famille*, published by Éditions du CHU Sainte-Justine (in French only) or visit editions-chu-sainte-justine.org. The guide and website provide a list of books, associations, and websites that can answer parents' specific questions.

Adaptation problems

Does your child have sleep or behavioural problems? Does she seem overly nervous or sad? Talk to a doctor or a trusted health professional. Don't feel guilty—you wouldn't hesitate to consult a health professional for an earache, and you shouldn't for other health problems either.

You can also get help by contacting your CLSC or Info-Social (dial [8-1-1](#) and choose option 2). They can provide you with psychosocial services or refer you to other resources in your region that can assist you.

Ordre des psychologues du Québec can also refer you to psychologists in your region who work with children. If you are on a tight budget, some insurance policies and most employee assistance programs will reimburse part of these expenses.