



APRIL 2008



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

Building Strong Families

Reading Times Are Special Times

GET THE READING HABIT EARLY. Your child will benefit from hearing you read to her from the time she is born. Reading times are one-on-one times with your child. It only takes a few minutes to read a book to your child, but the special bond you build lasts a lifetime.



There are lots of picture books for young children. Infants and toddlers tend to put things in their mouths, so board books, cloth books, and vinyl books are best because they are sturdy and can be washed. Infants and toddlers may not listen to a whole story and that's ok. The important thing is to introduce them to books. Point to the pictures and tell what they are. Eventually, your young child will become interested in what's happening in a story and want to listen to the whole thing. Young children often want a favorite book read over and over again. That's how they learn. They learn language from listening to you talk with them and read to them.

Take your child to your public library and choose some books together. Look for books on things your child wants to learn about. Curious children tend to be eager to learn.

Once your child learns how to read, continue to read stories together. You can take turns reading. These special family times are priceless.

One Child, One Book for Everyone!

PENNSYLVANIA HAS SPONSORED A STATEWIDE ONE BOOK, Every Young Child effort for the last three years. It is one of three states in the United States to take part in this promotion of literacy to help prepare preschool children for school. The goal of the program is to give books to as many preschoolers as possible, hoping to reach the approximately 560,000 preschoolers in Pennsylvania.



This year's book is *Up, Down, and Around*, by Pittsburgh children's author Katherine Ayres and illustrated by Nadine Bernard Westcott. The story and illustrations show children exactly what happens as things grow in a garden. For example, "Corn grows up, potatoes grow down, and pumpkins vine around and around." Garden insects, birds, and small animals are also shown as part of the garden world. What a way for young children to learn about science and nature while reading this story!

The program was developed by librarians and museum educators from across the state to promote the value and benefits of reading early and often to preschoolers and doing related activities with them. In April there are author visits and activity sessions in communities around the state. Check with librarians at your local public library for what is happening in your area. Child care centers, schools, and other agencies may have activities scheduled as part of this program and will be distributing the books. Make sure your child receives a copy of this delightful children's book.

Babies Sleeping Safely

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS have discovered ways to keep babies safe when they sleep to prevent SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. SIDS is also known as crib death, the sudden, unexplained death of a child under one year of age. Cribs do not cause SIDS, but it often happens when a baby is in a crib. The Back to Sleep campaign began in 1994 to help prevent SIDS in the United States.



Top 10 ways a parent can reduce a baby's risk of SIDS

1. Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep at night and for naps.
2. Place your baby on a firm sleep surface in a crib, on a safety-approved crib mattress covered by a fitted sheet or in a play pen with no soft bedding.
3. Do not use pillows, crib bumpers, blankets, or other loose bedding where your baby sleeps. Keep all items away from your baby's face.
4. Do not allow smoking around your baby.
5. Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep. It may be tempting to leave your baby in bed with you after a feeding, but a sleeping adult can roll over on an infant.
6. After your child is one month old, offer a clean, dry pacifier when placing your baby in his crib to sleep, but do not force him to take it.
7. Don't let your baby be too hot while sleeping. Dress her in light sleep clothing and keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for you.
8. Avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS. Most have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.
9. Don't count on home monitors to reduce the risk of SIDS. Talk with your health care provider about the need to use a monitor.
10. Some parents worry that putting a baby to sleep on his back will cause flat spots to develop on his head. Reduce this possibility by providing "tummy time" when your baby is awake with someone close by to supervise. Change the direction your baby lies in the crib once a week. Avoid having your baby spend too much time in car seats, carriers, and bouncers.

Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows about the Safe Sleep Top 10! You can find more information on reducing the risk of SIDS by contacting the Back to Sleep campaign at 800-505-2742 and on their Web site at www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS.

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