



NURTURING CARE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The five components of nurturing care¹

1. Good health

For good health, young children need caregivers to:

- monitor how they are, physically and emotionally
- respond affectionately and well to their daily needs
- protect them from danger at home and outside
- be hygienic and minimize infections
- use health services, both promotive and preventive
- get the right treatment when they are ill.

*Nurturing care
is what the
brain expects
and depends
on for healthy
development.*

2. Adequate nutrition

Pregnant women's nutrition affects their babies' development, as well as their own well-being. From birth to six months old, babies flourish on exclusive breastfeeding. After that, they need complementary foods, diverse and often, containing the micronutrients to support their rapidly growing bodies and brains.

3. Security and safety

The biggest risks to children are extreme poverty, low income, air pollution, chemicals, unsafe play environments, harsh punishment and violence. Social and child protection services are critical, securing financial and other support for the most vulnerable households. Other services and community networks also help to prevent and detect maltreatment, and create safe communities.

4. Opportunities for early learning

Learning begins at conception, and as soon as babies are born they begin to acquire skills socially, from other people – through smiling and eye contact, talking and singing, modelling and imitation, and simple games like “wave bye-bye”. Playing with everyday things like cups and pots helps children learn about objects and what to do with them. And reading books allows children to name things, as well as building curiosity, imagination and knowledge.

5. Responsive caregiving

Responsive caregiving means observing and responding to children's movements, gestures, sounds and verbal requests. This protects children against injury and adversity, enables caregivers to recognize and respond to their needs, enriches learning, and builds trust and social relationships. It also includes responsive feeding, which is especially important for infants who are low-weight or ill.

For more information and examples see:

[Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development](#) (pp. 12-19)
[What is nurturing care](#) at www.nurturing-care.org

¹ Extract from the Nurturing Care Framework Handbook (in preparation).