

Toolkit in support of:

IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: WHO Guideline



About the Guideline



The rationale

New scientific evidence of the **importance of early childhood development (ECD) for future health and human capital** necessitated the development of this guideline

The gap

Existing WHO guidelines related to maternal, newborn, child health and nutrition **refer to the importance** of respective interventions for ECD. However, they do not address **ECD-specific interventions** such as those related to responsive caregiving and early learning opportunities.

WHO will release the Guideline: Improving Early Childhood Development on 6 March 2020



Resources:

- Improving early childhood development: WHO Guideline
- Summary of the Guideline
- Evidence reviews
- Frequently asked questions
- Social media tiles
- Lancet commentary



Materials will be available at:
<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/improving-early-childhood-development-who-guideline>

The recommendations

Addressing the needs of both caregivers and young children

1 RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

All infants and children should receive responsive care during the first 3 years of life; parents and other caregivers should be supported to provide responsive care.

Strength of recommendation: Strong

Quality of evidence: Moderate (for responsive care)



2 PROMOTE EARLY LEARNING

All infants and children should have early learning activities with their parents and other caregivers during the first 3 years of life; parents and other caregivers should be supported to engage in early learning with their infants and children.

Strength of recommendation: Strong

Quality of evidence: Moderate (for early learning)



3 INTEGRATE CAREGIVING AND NUTRITION INTERVENTIONS

Support for responsive care and early learning should be included as part of interventions for optimal nutrition of infants and young children.

Strength of recommendation: Strong

Quality of evidence: Moderate



4 SUPPORT MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH

Psychosocial interventions to support maternal mental health should be integrated into early childhood health and development services.

Strength of recommendation: Strong

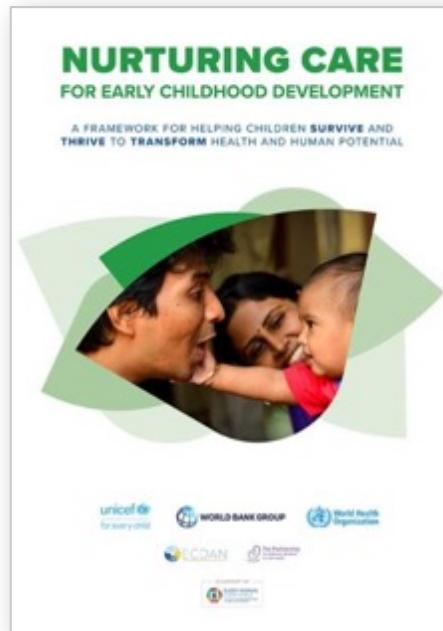
Quality of evidence: Moderate



The guideline supports and enriches previous evidence



2016



2018



2020

Promoting nurturing care



- Responsive care and early learning are among the five essential components of nurturing care for early childhood development.
- They are essential for children to be healthy, happy and thrive.
- Every child has the right to responsive care and opportunities for early learning, starting from the first days of life.

Some definitions

Responsive caregiving refers to the ability of the caregiver to notice, understand, and respond to the child's signals in a timely and appropriate manner.

- *A responsive caregiver will know when the child is well or sick; full or hungry; happy or sad; interested or uninterested in an activity and, in turn, know what to do and how to do it in each situation.*

Early learning happens when children use their five senses, move their bodies, hear and use language, experience different places, interact with people, and explore different objects.

- *Opportunities for early learning present themselves in daily life in every interaction that children have with a person, place or object in their home, day care, place of worship, health facility, market or other settings.*

Play and communication are two activities that strengthen caregiver-child interactions and promote responsive caregiving and opportunities for early learning.



Key information

- 250 million children (43%) younger than 5 years in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of not achieving their developmental potential, due to risk factors of extreme poverty and stunting alone.
- Maternal depression is an additional risk factor that affects 1 in 6 women during the perinatal period and can be addressed with interventions at the primary care level.
- Nurturing care is especially important for children in the early years, from pregnancy to age 3. This period of rapid physical and psychological development is when the foundations for later health and well-being are laid.
- Nutrition interventions do not have an impact on early childhood development when implemented alone, but are associated with improved childhood development when combined with support for responsive caregiving and opportunities for early learning.

Key information

- This guideline is relevant for all infants and young children, including those with a disability or medical condition.
- It is also very relevant for caregivers and children living in humanitarian settings.
- Interventions that support responsive feeding and early learning are particularly important for vulnerable children, such as those who are malnourished, affected by HIV, or exposed to violence.
- No single sector or stakeholder can provide all that is needed for every caregiver and every child. Everyone has an important role to play, including in developing social policies that support families and young children.
- The *Nurturing Care Framework*, launched in 2018, provides a multi-sectoral, multi-level roadmap for action, recommending a whole-of government and whole-of society approach.

You can join in the dissemination of the guideline and facilitate its uptake in national policy and practice:

- Share the **Guideline**, its **Summary**, and **Frequently Asked Questions** widely within your network.
- Use the guideline in dialogue with policymakers and programme managers to solicit uptake of the recommendations in national programming.
- Work with civil society and local champions to create awareness about the right of every child to receive nurturing care.
- Support families and other caregivers with information and practical tips on nurturing care and pay attention to the needs of the caregiver.
- Share messages and tiles on social media and translate them in other languages.



Social media messages

@ caregivers

- Your loving care as a parent is what a child needs to be healthy, well-nourished and safe.
- Communicate early and often, starting even before your baby is born. It will help you build a warm and loving relationship.
- Make time to play with your child and engage them in your daily chores. You will help your child to learn, be happy and thrive.
- Remember that feeding times are periods of learning and love – talk to your child while feeding and make eye to eye contact.
- If you feel sad and unable to respond joyfully to your child, seek help from your health care provider.



Every child should have responsive care from the very beginning of life
#HealthForAll

Social media message

@ caregivers



1 week to 6 months:

Talk to your child and get a conversation going with sounds or gestures (copy your child)



9 months to 12 months:

Hide a child's favourite toy under a cloth or box.
See if the child can find it.
Play peek-a-boo.



12 months to 2 years:

Give your child things to stack up and to put into containers, and take out.



Source: WHO/UNICEF Care for Child Development: Improving the care of young children. WHO: Geneva 2012

Social media messages

@ health workers

- Help parents provide responsive care from birth, by supporting them to
 - ✓ *Play and talk with their child*
 - ✓ *Recognize and respond to their interests and needs*
 - ✓ *Encourage early learning*
 - ✓ *Provide a safe place for the child to explore.*
- Skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth helps the parent and the child build a warm and loving relationship.
- Every contact with health services is an opportunity to promote and support early childhood development through: good health, adequate nutrition, responsive care, security and safety, opportunities for early learning.

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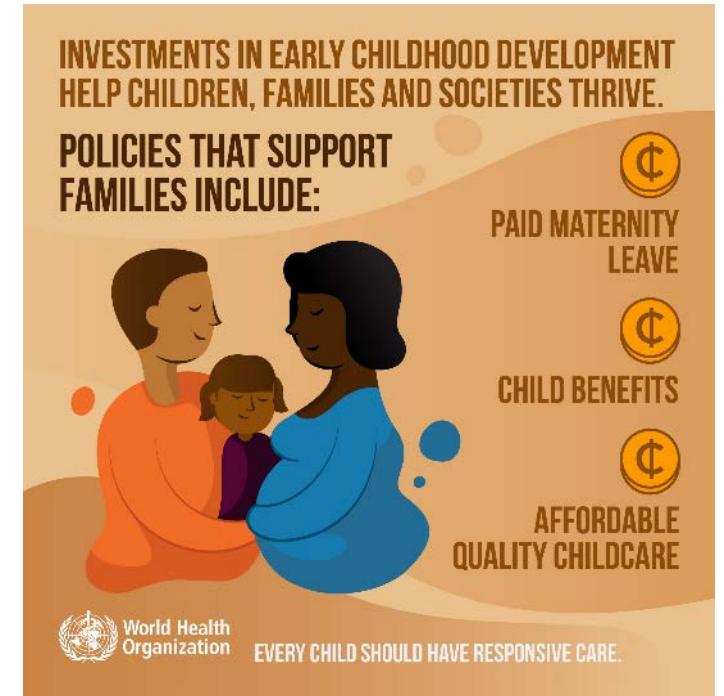
#HealthForAll



Social media messages

@ policy makers

- Invest in services that support early childhood development and in child-friendly policies, help children and societies thrive.
- Adopt policies that support families and help build sustainable societies:
 - ✓ Paid maternity leave
 - ✓ Child benefits
 - ✓ Affordable quality childcare
- Integrate the recommendations of this guideline into job-aids and counselling materials.
- Strengthen health worker capacities so that every contact they have with caregivers and young children is used to support nurturing care.



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Supportive materials and links



- Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential

https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/child/nurturing-care-framework/en/

- Care for child development: improving the care for young children

https://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/documents/care_child_development/en/

- mhGAP intervention guide for mental, neurological, and substance disorders in non-specialist settings

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/mhgap-intervention-guide---version-2.0>

Many more resources are listed in Annex 1 of the Guideline



Communications:

Laura Keenan
keenanl@who.int



NURTURING CARE

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



Thank you