

## Birth to two months: serve-and-return activities

Even though babies are born with billions of brain cells, only some of them are connected at birth. Every time your baby hears your voice, smells your scent, sees your face, feels your touch and is cared for, brain cell connections are formed.

Brain cell connections become stronger when you and your baby engage in serve-and-return interactions. Here are some examples of how this might look with your baby.

### Activities

#### Getting to know each other

**Your baby serves when they:**

- Look at your face

**You return their serve when you:**

- Look at their face and smile while you're feeding and caring for them



Your baby is getting to know your face and is starting to recognize you. While your baby is awake, hold your baby close (20-30 cm) to you and make eye contact. Slowly move your face from one side to the other and watch what your baby does.

#### Speaking gently

**Your baby serves when they:**

- Pay attention to your voice
- Make contented noises like coos, gurgles, sighs, and squeals

**You return their serve when you:**

- Talk or sing gently
- Copy the sounds your baby is making



Caring touch and gentle speaking connects you to your baby. Gently grasp each of your baby's fingers one at a time on one hand and say or sing the following rhyme:

I love my baby. (*Grasp pinky*)

Yes, I do. (*Grasp ring finger*)

I love 'say your baby's name.' (*Grasp middle finger*)

'Say your baby's name.' (*Grasp pointer finger*)

I love you. (*Grasp and kiss thumb*)

#### Baby massage

**Your baby serves when they:**

- Seem comforted by your touch

**You return their serve when you:**

- Rub, pat, gently touch their tummy, back, arms and legs



Your baby gets comfort from physical contact with you. Massage your baby's hands, feet, legs, and arms. Use a soft tone to tell your baby what you're doing. Stop to see what they do. They'll let you know to stop or to do it again.