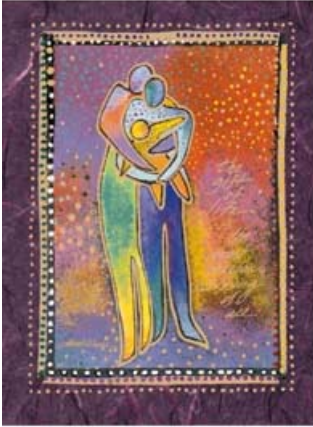


# Frequently Asked Questions

## *Beginnings Parents Guide*



*Sue Birch*

*Beginnings Parents Guide is a superb publication and will certainly be a boon to new parents. It is easy to read and at the same time it is packed full of useful information.*

Dr. Marilyn Segal, Developmental Psychologist  
Author of *Your Child at Play*

### **What is the content of the *Beginnings Parents Guide*?**

The *Beginnings Parents Guide* presents current evidence-based, medically reliable, easy-to-read information and advice for parents of children aged 2 weeks to 3 years. It is a companion series to *Beginnings Pregnancy Guide*. It begins where the *Pregnancy Guide* ends, after mothers' recovery and the baby's first weeks at home.

*Beginnings Parents Guide* focuses on the child as a learner and parents' role as their baby's teachers. Information and advice reflect the conversations an articulate, caring, fully-informed healthcare professional or home visitor would have with each parent at each well-child visit, if time permitted. The *Beginnings Parents Guide* addresses the health and medical aspects of infant and toddler care and the non-medical challenges of becoming a family. The *Guide*, along with training, teaching strategies and learning aids intend to promote life skills that every mother needs to nurture a healthy learning child and to benefit by healthcare and social services.

### **What is the format of the *Beginnings Parents Guide*?**

The *Parents Guide* is a series of 8 easy-to-read booklets, which total 196 pages. The series follows the usual course of well-baby visits and the immunization schedule. It is referenced by child age. This staged teaching and

learning approach means that parents are not overwhelmed by too much information at one time and not intimidated by the prospect of wading through a book. Information is presented when parents are most likely to need it. Photographs reinforce key messages and aid teaching. Design and layout employ the most current research on adult learning, health literacy, type and graphics to produce highly readable and actionable information that earns 'extremely satisfied' ratings from both college educated and under-educated parents.

The *Beginnings Parents Guide* booklets measure 5.5 x 8.5 inches. By a margin of two to one, both college educated parents and those with 6 to 8 years education preferred this size booklet to the same information in 8.5x 11 inch format with more white space and larger type. They said the smaller size is less intimidating and easier to carry, store, and find.

### **How is the *Beginnings Parents Guide* distributed?**

#### **In home visits**

The *Parents Guide* facilitates both teaching and learning during home visits. The home visitor reviews with the parent topics of particular importance. She may increase comprehension by asking parents to read aloud selected sections or by reading it to them. The visitor explains how information applies specifically to the family and answers questions. Parents keep the *Guide*, which reinforces and complements teaching and serves as a handy reference. This staged learning model and brief counseling increases recall of key messages and supports healthy behaviors.

#### **By mail**

Health plans and hospitals mail *Beginnings Parents Guide* to parents at home. This enables parents to articulate appropriate questions and get the most out of well-baby visits. Mailing also enables insurers and community programs to complement and reinforce healthcare professionals' counseling and advice while maintaining a presence with key constituents.

#### **In WIC offices and medical offices during well-child visits**

The materials guide counseling and learning during well-child visits. Optimally, the primary care provider hands the parent the booklet appropriate to the child's age, reinforces key messages, and encourages parents to call with questions. Then a nurse or health educator reviews with the parent topics of particular importance, asking parents read aloud selected paragraphs, or reading and highlighting for them. The nurse explains how information applies specifically to the family and answers questions. The parent takes the

### **Is the *Beginnings Parents Guide* suitable for a Medicaid population?**

Yes. The *Beginnings Parents Guide* is easy-to-read. In interviews conducted by New Mexico Department of Health care coordinators, Medicaid eligible parents with 6 to 14 years education found the *Parents Guide* easy to read and comprehend independently. Some parents may require brief counseling to fully understand and act on the information. If counseling time is limited, prioritize parents with less than 8th grade education.

### **Is the *Beginnings Parents Guide* suitable for a commercially insured population?**

Yes. Easy-to-read does not mean over simplified or "talking down". It's just easy. Studies consistently show that college-educated readers prefer and learn more, faster from simply written information. Using one set of materials for all your constituents ensures equitable information and eases program administration.

### **How was the *Beginnings Parents Guide* field-tested?**

New Mexico Department of Health conducted Reader Verification Interviews on *Beginnings Parents Guide*. Maternal-child health care coordinators conducted structured face-to-face interviews according to a protocol at several clinic locations. Participants (n=36) were invited to read sections of the test booklet before the interview and to refer to it during the interview. Participants were a convenience sample of women of childbearing age who were residents of New Mexico and visited a DOH clinic during the study period. In recognition of her contribution, each participant was offered a copy of the finished materials and a gift valued at approximately \$5. The testing revealed an easy, effective way to focus counseling. Ask each mother which of the key messages is most difficult for her to follow.

### **What is the reading level of the *Beginnings Parents Guide*?**

Readability refers to the relative difficulty of decoding the words. It is expressed as a school grade level or, more accurately for adults, on a scale from very easy to very complex and difficult. A reading level was calculated for each booklet and for the series. Here we show average ratings for the series using two different formulas:

Flesch Reading Ease score = 89 Easy (this test is designed for adult materials)

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level = 3.3 (this test is for student materials)

### **What do mothers say about the *Beginnings Parents Guide*?**

Here are some comments mothers made during field-testing. They are responding to this question:

*"This is one booklet in a series of 8. Would you want to receive the rest of the booklets? Why or why not?"*

"All sections are short and direct, relevant. I like the lists."

"I think they are real informative. If you have any questions, it would be something to try before calling the doctor."

"The short blocks are good instead of long explanations."

"It would help one to see what I should be looking for - what I should be teaching my kids."

"... because they are interesting and give you a wide view of what happens to the baby, what to look for, and just the education it gives you."

"... Succinctly lists things you should know, especially 1st time moms."

"Cause I think they are helpful and they can teach you a lot."

### **What do experts say about the *Beginnings Parents Guide Guide*?**

"... appropriate for several different cultures within the US."

"Excellent job of graduated, sequential learning that is manageable."

"Laurel Burch's images are cross-cultural, hip, inviting and warm. The colors are engaging."

"There are things to check, questions to answer, places to respond... Lots of specific examples."

