



# BabyFAST

## How Baby FAST Works



For the Sake of  
the Baby

## **Baby FAST helps:**

### **Parents:**

- share problem solving with other caring parents
- learn important baby care habits and techniques
- establish roles and family management rules
- find help for your specific needs
- connect with parents, schools, churches, and community services

### **Baby:**

- learn trust and how to communicate nonverbally
- gain stimulation and stress reduction
- learn environmental cues for better development
- develop habits and routines
- grow safely and stay healthy

# Baby FAST

## FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS TOGETHER

THE PROCESS...

PRE FAST- *COORDINATOR*  
*TEAM SELECTION*  
*TRAINING*  
*RECRUITMENT*

DURING BABY FAST 8 week sessions-

**Welcome**

**Family Table Time**

Choices Activity

Baby FAST Hello

Singing

**Small Group Time**

Buddy Time

Scenario Discussions Group

**Concurrent Group Activities 1**

Grandparent's Group

Mothers Pamper/Craft Time

Dad's 1:1 time with child or team member

**Concurrent Group Activities 2**

Grandparent's Group cont

Baby Massage/Floor Play/Reading

Dad's Group

**Meal Time – Open Seating**

**Lucky Door Prize**

**Circle and Announcements**

**RAIN**

**Finish**

POST FAST- *BABY FASTWORKS*  
*TEAM REVIEW*

OTHER- *EVALUATION*

# What is Baby FAST?



Baby FAST is a research based, internationally recognized, family support, prevention program for infants (0-3) developed by Dr Lynn McDonald. It is a multi-family group process which builds relationships between young new parents, their

baby, a supportive adult (preferably the grandparents) and with community agency professionals.

Baby FAST promotes healthy parent-child relationships, builds informal social support networks for new mothers, and uses experiential learning to teach effective ways to maximize the brain development of the child.

## COORDINATOR

The coordinator is responsible for the all the organisation of Baby FAST in the community. The coordinator works with the team to make sure that BABY FAST happens in the appropriate way. The coordinator ensures that all paperwork and evaluation is completed. The trainer gives the coordinator support and assistance by a weekly visit or phone call.

## TEAM SELECTION



The local team is made up of:

- ☺ 2 Parent Partners – these are key people, they visit the families to invite them to Baby FAST. In most cases they have been past participants. They are paid to work on the team.
- ☺ 2 Grand Parent Partners – these are also key people, they visit the families to invite them to Baby FAST. In most cases they have been past participants. They are part of Grandparents Group. They are paid to work on the team.
- ☺ Community agency workers such as, health, sport and recreation, domestic violence or drug and alcohol prevention.
- ☺ A Child Health Nurse whose main role is to conduct Baby Massage.
- ☺ A Social Worker.

The team builds a strong support network around the BABY FAST families.

There are ways that other people can help in a volunteer capacity such as in the kitchen, transporting families and running children's activities.

## TEAM TRAINING

The 2 or 3 day training is for all team members. Team members practice all the Baby FAST activities, and understand the purpose, background and research of the activities. The training is done before families are recruited to come to Baby FAST. The team will plan the first week of Baby FAST, and will discuss the ways to invite families.

The team learns how to coach the parents to run all the family activities. They learn to do this in a respectful way.

## RECRUITMENT



The community or agency partner, and the Team will select some families who they feel would benefit from coming to Baby FAST. Many referrals come through the Child Health Nurse and local community organisations. Many families self refer after having heard from other participants about the benefits of attending Baby FAST. Some families choose to repeat the program especially if they were pregnant during the program. Young people can participate in baby FAST up to the age of 22 with the child being aged up to 3 years.

After the training, the parent partners with assistance from some other team members visit families and invite them to Baby FAST. They tell the parents what Baby FAST is all about and when and where it is happening.

During recruitment the team share the benefits of coming Baby FAST such as:

- There is no cost involved in coming.
- Transport is provided.
- New friendships
- Support from your community and other young parents.
- Lessons in Baby Massage
- Lots of fun
- Great food every week
- Weekly surprises

DURING BABY FAST

8 WEEKLY  
SESSIONS

For the Sake of the  
Baby

## FAMILY TABLE TIME

### Choices Activity



The Choices Activity allows the new mother to make little choices to help build confidence and to become aware of making choices with relation to the baby. Research shows that adults need to make choices, to consider choices and to reflect on choices as the road to happiness and maturity. Each week there is a different craft activity. Each activity is done “For the Sake of the Baby”.

### Baby FAST Hello and Singing

The *FAST Hello* welcomes and focuses on each family as ‘*special*’, and introduces families who may not know each other. The young mother or father introduces themselves as the parent of the baby, then the baby and finally any other family members. Music can quickly bond people and have everyone at the same level, so that other activities are more effective.



In addition, brain research supports the use of music both to calm the baby and to exercise the dendrites for mental development.

Music and singing is fun and brings all the families together in a shared activity.

## ***Group Time***

### ***Buddy Time***

Buddy time is an opportunity for participants to get to know other participants. They take their choices activity with them and buddy up (2 people) to share their activity. This is another opportunity to reinforce the choices they have made and share it with someone. Research shows that when an adult can have 'talk time' with another adult during the week it reduces the risk of child abuse.

### ***Small Group Time***

Scenario Discussion Groups provide a safe opportunity for participants to share their thoughts about an issue without another family member present. Their voices are respected, and they learn that they already have wisdom. It also provides a good opportunity to make social networks. Each group consists of young parents, grandparents or support people and team members.



## ***Split Group Activities***

### ***Grandparent's and supporters Group***



This group provides an opportunity for grandparents to share their experiences of raising their child and sometimes their grandchild. Many grandparents report that they find it difficult not to want to parent their grandchild if their daughter/son is still young and growing themselves.

Grandparent group helps them to see that they are not on their own; there are many others in similar circumstances. It also helps them to come to terms with their new role as grandparent and to adjust to respecting the mother's role as the new mother.

### ***Mothers Pamper Time***



This is an opportunity for mums to chill out and recharge their batteries. It is important to promote self care for new mums so that they can feel better within themselves, which in turn will benefit the baby.

Some ideas are having a hand massage, head massage, painting nails or just having a chat for ten minutes. The idea is that they will have fulfilled some of 'their' needs before needing to fill the baby's needs during baby massage, floor play or reading.

## *Dad's 1:1 time with child*



This is an opportunity for the Dad's to have 1:1 time with their child while the mother is in pamper time. It is a wonderful time for the Dads to bond with their child, play and experience new things.

## *Dad's Group*

This group is facilitated by a male team member. This is an opportunity for dads to meet other dads. It enables them to form a network, and share ideas. In some programs dads have played pool, basketball, chess, or just had a chat.



## *Baby Massage 0 – 1 year olds*

Brain research supports the need for early intervention for children ages 0-3. Nature provides dendrites, lots of them; nurture is the interactions with others that shape which dendrites are used. The old saying “use it or lose it” is true. Infant massage has been demonstrated to have a massive impact on dendrite stimulation during the first year of life; this is an investment in the potential of that child.



The immediate benefits of baby massage are the baby sleeping better, eating better, being calmer, being more alert, and being happier. The mother's massaging of the baby also increases her bonding to the baby. For yet to be mum's we encourage “Tummy Massage” and give them opportunities to discuss preparations for the baby.

## *Floor Play & Reading 1 – 3 year olds*

These activities are done for the same reason as baby massage. Floor play also aids in hand eye co-ordination and fine and gross motor skills. The young mums are encouraged to play on the floor with the baby, sing and read stories.

## Meal



Each family has a turn cooking one meal for all the Baby FAST families. This builds a feeling of giving and receiving, and shared responsibility amongst families. It is a time for families to mix together and make social networks. Social Capital is linked with longevity, with feelings of well-being and other good outcomes. The family who won

the basket has been able to reciprocate by providing the meal for the families for this week.

## Door Prize

Each family will experience the fun of winning as a *family*, not as individuals. In return, the winning family provides the meal for the Baby FAST families next week. Families report feeling positive about the opportunity to give back to the Baby FAST community of families.

The door prize is another encouragement for families to come every week – it may be their turn to win.



## Announcements & Rain



Announcements are a time for sharing information, celebrating special events - this helps build community. RAIN is the closing activity and a weekly ritual. It creates a feeling of closeness within the whole group.

## SPECIAL SESSIONS – Graduation

The *Graduation* ceremony is a community celebration recognising each family's achievements. Guests are invited and the families are presented with *Graduation* certificates. This symbolises parent commitment and successful completion of the Baby FAST program.



# After FAST

## *FASTWORKS*

*FASTWORKS* ensures that families continue to feel supported by one another, and maintain the positive connections with the other Baby FAST families over the next two years. At least two meetings a term are organised by families with support from the team.



## *PROGRAM REVIEW*

After the 8 week program, the team meets for one day of training. The team and trainer talk about the strengths and challenges of program delivery. The team also receive their accreditation certificates.

Some parents also attend this meeting and share how Baby FAST has helped their family.

## *EVALUATION*



Parents and Grandparents complete retrospective (post program) evaluation forms. The evaluation report provides extensive information on the impact of Baby FAST for the families as well as program strengths and growth areas; which inform the delivery of future programs.

The trainer evaluates the team on week 1, 4 & 8 to support the team to run a strong program.

## What have Parents and Grandparents said about Baby FAST?

- ☺ What I loved about Baby FAST was meeting people around my age in a similar situation to me, being able to relax and meet new people and getting advice and information.
- ☺ I think the Baby FAST program is very beneficial for connecting our young people who need to make contact with other young people.
- ☺ I think it should be compulsory for every mother to do. It's great for self esteem as a mother and great for grandparents to communicate and understand their role as grandparents.
- ☺ I loved being able to get out of the house and meet such friendly people. I also really liked hearing other mums' opinions on different things and most of all I loved watching my son have a great time with the other kids, it was so cute.
- ☺ I loved the networking because I have made two great friends from Baby FAST and that means a lot to me.
- ☺ Baby FAST helped me to settle into being a young mother. At every step I was supported and encouraged. To a new mother realising that help is out there can make all the difference in your confidence in parenting.
- ☺ I loved that Baby FASTWORKS brings people together and gets different light on different situations.



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