



2024 - 2025

PARENT HANDBOOK

INFANT PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO ARBORLAND MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S ACADEMY

You are your child's first educator and the primary influence in your child's life. We believe that you want to be their best mentor. We, at Arborland Montessori Children's Academy, will help you grow and learn alongside your child. Together, we can watch your child develop independence, self-discipline, and responsibility along with enthusiasm for learning, loving, and excelling academically.

Philosophy

The Montessori Method develops the whole personality of the child, nourishing their emotions, intellectual faculties and powers of deliberation. As the child grows, their initiative and ability to make independent choices will also prosper under the Montessori Method. The teacher guides the child to work at their own pace, building the child's concentration and self-discipline.

It is our belief that each child is a unique individual with their own special needs, background and experiences, and should be recognized as someone special. In order for the child to grow, they must first feel safe, accepted, and competent in an environment that is encouraging, nurturing, supporting, and challenging.

Arborland Montessori Children's Academy is directed towards the application of the highest standards and interpretation of the Montessori Method through the techniques and philosophy developed by Dr. Maria Montessori.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Born in 1870, Maria Montessori was the first woman to be granted a medical degree by an Italian university. At the age of 28, she was a medical professional assessing the physical needs of "defective" children. Influenced by the work of Sequin and Itard in France, Montessori designed materials and techniques that allowed the children to work in areas previously considered beyond their capacity. Montessori's great triumph came when these children took state examinations alongside normal children—and her "defective" children passed the exams. Montessori concluded that if children with disabilities could be brought to the same academic level as normal children, something must be drastically wrong with the education of normal children.

Her life's work began with a group of slum children in 1907 when she opened her famous "CASA DEI BAMBINI." Through her observations from working with the children, she discovered their remarkable, almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings. Children teach themselves. This simple profound truth inspired Montessori in her lifelong pursuit of educational reform, curriculum development, methodology, psychology,

teaching, and teacher training—all based on her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child.

Though Dr. Montessori passed away in 1952, her Montessori Method lives on. Today, after 100 years of international application, the Montessori Method thrives in the United States, with more than 5000 schools established since 1957. Montessori schools are not only found in the private sector, but are also increasingly implemented within the public school systems and federal day care programs. The Montessori philosophy focuses on the development of the individual child, the peaceful unfolding of self, and the prepared classroom environment. It reminds the educators to think unconventionally while assisting the children.

INFANT CURRICULUM

From birth, the infant's fundamental need is to be loved. Arborland Montessori Children's Academy loves and nurtures infants as they enter into the first sensitive period of development. Classroom work period and activities focus on four areas of development: movement, sensory perception, language, and order.

Movement

Even before birth, infants are testing out their limbs, reflexes and gross motor skills. This joyous exploration of the body's ability to move includes everything from kicking and stretching to using tiny fingers to pick up objects. The Montessori curriculum encourages the infant to explore his/her own body movements. Work time consists of ball play, rolling, block stacking, puppet play, and more. Tummy time, head-lifting, grasping, control of hands and feet, crawling, sitting, and hand-eye coordination are encouraged through a clean, soothing, and matted prepared environment and a loving teacher.

Sensory Perception

An infant's perception of sound, sight, touch, taste and smell is extremely acute. Therefore, the prepared environment is kept peaceful and teachers speak in gentle tones. Less is more at this stage of development, which helps the infant thoroughly explore without feeling overwhelmed. Classical music provides a soothing background to relax the infant. As infants begin to take interest in the world around them, the teacher's goal is to follow the infant's interests in new sensory experiences and to go at his/her own pace. Weather permitting, outdoor buggy rides allow infants to explore the outside world.

Language

From the womb, babies begin reacting to sounds they hear from the outside world. After birth, infants slowly begin to match where certain sounds come from and often are most interested in sounds coming from other humans. Though infants have not yet discovered spoken language, they intently watch the mouths of the teachers around them and begin moving their own lips in imitation. They soon realize that they have the ability to create their own sounds and will repeat syllables over and over as they learn to control their lips, tongue and throat. The curriculum at this stage includes plenty of talking time to the infant through stories and song. Circle time consists of recognizing who is present, puppet shows, felt board stories, counting, nature, and more.

Order

This last part of the infant curriculum is extremely important to helping the infant feel love and security. As infants experience the world around them, they feel a sense of chaos until they begin making sense of all the sights, sounds, smells, etc. At their own pace, they begin to realize that naps happen at specific locations on a specific texture. The location of furniture, the amount of light and a teacher's hair style all give the infant a sense of security once he/she realizes that everything has a rightful location. At this stage, the curriculum familiarizes the infant with the environment and teaches how the environment is ordered. This fosters security in the infant, which allows him/her to relax, feel love and be open to developmental exploration.

Most infant activities develop multiple areas at the same time. Stamping, pasting, exploring textures, decorating, using hand gestures, discovering new sounds, playing instruments and listening to different languages often will develop movement, sensory perception, language and order in the infants.

ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT

Admission

Children at least three months old may be considered for admission regardless of gender, race, color, religion, nationality, or political belief. The infant program is designed for children 3 to 18 months old. If a child is 18 months old, his/her growth and development can continue in our toddler program.

Enrollment Procedure

It is necessary to fill out the "Application for Admission" form and return it with the annual registration fee and tuition deposit per child to the school. (The tuition deposit is refundable only if your child is not accepted for enrollment.) Please call the school for current tuition and fees.

State law requires that every parent must complete and return the following forms to the school on or before your child's first day:

- 1) Identification and Emergency Information
- 2) Physician's Report for primary children or Health Examination Report for elementary children.
- 3) Child's Pre-Admission Health History (Parent's Report)
- 4) Emergency Medical Consent Form
- 5) Enrollment Agreement
- 6) Signed and dated "Notice Parent's Rights" Receipt
- 7) Signed and dated "Child Abuse Prevention Pamphlet" Receipt
- 8) Signed and dated "Personal Rights" Receipt

Parent/Teacher Orientation

Prior to the child's first day of attendance, the family/guardian(s) of the child will attend an orientation meeting with the classroom teacher. The purpose for the orientation is for the teacher to get to know the family and the child and also for the family to get to know the teacher and the classroom. This is a very important step in establishing a strong partnership for the care of the infant. During the orientation, parents will be asked to complete the Infant Needs & Services Plan and Infant Daily Schedule with the teacher. The orientation will be coordinated by the Administrator.

First Day of School

In order to help the parents and the infant transition to school and relieve any anxiety, we invite the primary caregiver to join the classroom for a short period on the first day of school. The purpose of this is for the child to experience the new classroom with the comfort of a family member who he/she already knows. The teacher will take over once the primary caregiver feels comfortable enough to release the infant to the teacher. Our intent is to have the transition to our center and their new classroom as smooth as possible.

Waiting List Registration

Since our capacity is limited, your child will be registered on the school's waiting list if classroom space is unavailable at the time of your application. The application form, registration fee and tuition deposit are required to be enrolled on the waiting list. The registration fee is refundable

anytime prior to the acceptance of the child for enrollment. When an opening occurs, priority is granted according to the waiting list.

Summer School

If you would like to enroll your child in our summer school programs, please fill out the summer enrollment form in May and return it to the office to ensure your child's space.

PAYMENT POLICIES

Annual Registration Fee and Tuition Deposit

The annual registration fee is not refundable. Annual registration fee is the same for all children throughout the school year regardless of the child's actual starting date.

The tuition deposit will apply to your child's last month's attendance at school, if you provide the school with a 30-day advanced written withdrawal notice prior to March 1, 2025. If your child is enrolled during the 2024-2025 school year and their last day of attending Arborland Montessori Children's Academy is on May 28, 2025, you may deduct the tuition deposit from the April 25, 2025 payment. Any tuition deposit not applied to their child's last month's tuition may be picked up from the Arborland Montessori office after accounts are closed at the end of summer school.

Please note that our staff members make the commitment to educate your child for the whole school year. **There will be no refunds for children withdrawn from school, or an optional program, after March 1, 2025.** If no notice is given by March 1, 2025, parents are responsible for the tuition fees for the remainder of the academic school year, until May 28, 2025.

Tuition and Tuition Payments

Arborland is completely supported by tuition and fees to provide a high standard of education for your children. If the tuition is past due or uncollected, the increased expenses such as collection costs, extra bookkeeping, and loan interest will be charged and deducted from your tuition deposit.

Tuition is based on 180 school days (not calendar days) for the academic school year, which starts on August 12, 2024 and ends May 28, 2025. The tuition may be divided into 10 equal payments. Payment is due on the 25th of every month from July 25, 2024 to April 25, 2025. The monthly tuition payment has already excluded school holidays. A detailed breakdown of the tuition coverage for the 2024-2025 school year is listed as follows:

Payment	Due Date	School Days	School Days Covered
1	7/25/2024	18	08/12/2024 - 09/06/2024
2	8/25/2024	18	09/09/2024 - 10/01/2024
3	9/25/2024	18	10/03/2024 - 10/28/2024
4	10/25/2024	18	10/29/2024 - 11/21/2024
5	11/25/2024	18	11/22/2024 - 01/08/2025
6	12/25/2024	18	01/09/2025 - 02/04/2025
7	1/25/2025	18	02/05/2025 - 03/04/2025
8	2/25/2025	18	03/05/2025 - 04/04/2025
9	3/25/2025	18	04/07/2025 - 04/30/2025
10	4/25/2025	18	05/01/2025 - 05/28/2025

If you do not enroll your child for summer school, their last day for the 2024-2025 school year will be May 28, 2025. (Please refer to the current calendar and the tuition schedule.)

- A. **Payments are due on the 25th of the prior month.** The monthly payment coupon will be emailed to you on or before the 18th of each month, starting with July and ending in April. Please attach the proper monthly coupon with your child's tuition payment and drop it off in the administration mailbox in the office. A written notice of at least 30 days in advance must be given for withdrawal of a child from school or from an optional program.
- B. Payments made **after the first** of the month will be considered delinquent and subject to a **\$10.00 late fee**. A **\$20.00 late fee** will be charged for payments received after the **third** of the month. The late fee increases to **\$30.00** if payment is received after the **fifth** of the month. ****If the due date falls on a school holiday, please be sure that your payment is received before or by the due date to avoid any late fees.****
- C. If payment is not received by the **tenth** of the month, the child is no longer considered enrolled in the school and their enrollment will be terminated.
- D. You may apply for readmission for your child by paying a \$100.00 non-fundable re-registration fee and the full balance due.
- E. There will be a **\$30.00** surcharge for all unpaid checks and batch declined credit cards returned to the school. When a check is returned, you are expected to pay the current due amount by money order, cashier's check, or cash.

- F. After 2 returned checks or declined credit cards, only a cashier's check, money order, or cash will be accepted for the remaining tuition payments.
- G. If a child is enrolled after the school year starts, their tuition will be prorated by the number of school days that have passed.
- H. There will be no make-up days and no refunds for days missed.
- I. There is no fee deduction for holidays, illness, or vacations. An advance written notice of at least 30 days must be given for withdrawal of a child from the school for any reason. There will be no refunds for children withdrawn from school or an optional program, after March 1, 2025.
- J. A 10% annual percentage rate will be applied to the uncollected balance.
- K. Tuition on your account ledger can now be viewed at www.myprocare.com at your convenience. There is no need to call school for an updated balance. To register, go to www.myprocare.com and enter the email associated with your invoices and follow website instructions. If you have an account with both Arborland Montessori and Arborland Education center, you will need two different email addresses, one for each account. Please call the office to specify the emails for the accounts.
- L. For your convenience and ease of payment, Tuition Express is offered as an online payment system. Tuition Express is a payment processing system that allows secure, tuition and fee payments to be made directly from your BANK ACCOUNT or credit card. If you authorize Electronic Fund Transfer, Arborland will collect tuition from your bank account through automatic monthly ACH transactions or charge your credit card. The Tuition Express payment authorization form can be found at www.tuitionexpress.com by scrolling down to the For Parents and Family section of the website. Complete Section A for credit card or Section B for ACH and return the form to our office for processing. A voided check must be attached to confirm accurate routing and account numbers for ACH. Once confirmed, Arborland will provide you with a Tuition Express ID with which to register and manage your Tuition Express account online. Monthly tuition will be withdrawn **on the first day of the month**. Please check your account statement for accuracy.

Late Pick-Up

Your child should be picked up by the end of the contracted time, which for the infant program is by 5:30 p.m. **Any infant left after 5:30 p.m. will be charged \$10.00 per child per 10 minutes or fraction of 10 minutes.** The late pick-up charge is based on the record keeping of the Administrator and the childcare teachers. The late charge will be billed to the parent's account and included on the next month's tuition statement.

It is important for parents to pick up their child on time because the school arranges staff for the number of children who are enrolled at any particular time. Please understand that when children are not picked up at the contracted time, the school may not have a sufficient staff-student ratio to cover the unexpected number of children.

Absence & Vacation

There is no fee reduction for holidays, illnesses, or vacations. Staff members receive full salaries all school year.

Holiday Childcare

Childcare is provided during certain holidays, winter and spring break, at prorated infant tuition cost per day between the hours of 7:30 am - 5:30 pm. Prior sign up is required in order to bring your child to school for childcare. A minimum of 2 students signed up and paid for one week in advance will be required for the school to open for childcare on these days. You will be notified one week prior to the holiday if less than 2 students are signed up.

On holiday childcare days, the school **will not provide hot lunch**. Each child will need to bring their lunch to school on these days.

Refunds

Arborland is not able to refund tuition for absences of children from school due to illness, vacation or any other reason. There will be no refunds for children withdrawn from school or an optional program, after March 1, 2025. The annual registration fee is not refundable. The registration fee and tuition deposit is refundable only if your child is not accepted for enrollment.

To request a refund, fill out and turn a Withdrawal Form with the Office. Refunds require about 6-8 weeks for processing. If you request after April 25 of the school year or over the summer, please note that processing will occur at the end of summer once accounts are closed.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Infant Program Hours

The infant classroom is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

Office Hours

The Valencia Office is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. while the Hughes Office is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Our administrative staff is responsible for assisting existing and prospective parents. In addition, they also substitute in the classroom, assist children with special needs, and support teaching staff members. Therefore, if we are away from our desks, please call (714) 871-2311 for the Valencia Office and (714) 871-3111 for the Hughes Office. One of the administrative staff members will assist you as soon as possible. Please expect a wait during peak hours (drop-off and pick-up time). If it is not an urgent matter, you are welcome to leave us a note or email us: info@arborland.com. We will take care of your request after peak hours.

No School Holidays

Our school is officially closed on specific holidays throughout the year. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it may be observed on a Friday or Monday. School may be closed on additional pre-scheduled days to conduct full-day professional development training for our staff. See our School Calendar for Infants on our website (<http://www.arborland.com/parents-corner/>) for an entire view of the school year.

ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

During the school year, infants may be dropped off anytime Monday through Friday between 7:30 am - 5:30 pm. Childcare is included with tuition between these hours. Please pick up and drop off your child at the designated areas to reduce crowds during peak pick-up and drop-off times.

Classroom	Drop-Off Time	Drop-Off Location	Pick-Up Time	Pick-Up Location
Infant A2	8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Valencia Gate	3:00 - 3:15 p.m.	Valencia Gate
	All other times	Main Office Lobby	All other times	Main Office Lobby

Your child should be picked up by the end of the contracted time, which for the infant program is by 5:30 p.m. **Any infant left after 5:30 p.m. will be charged \$10.00 per child per 10 minutes or fraction of 10 minutes.**

Parking Lot

The parking lot is designed with a circulation area for the easy drop-off and pick-up of the children. Since there are many young children walking in the parking lot, please SLOW DOWN

and BE EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS when you drive in and out of our parking lot. The young children are hard to see through the rear mirror. Please be sure to HOLD YOUR CHILD'S HAND when you walk in the parking lot to protect your child's safety.

The parking lot is for immediate LOADING and UNLOADING only. If you need to speak with the office or teacher, please park on the street.

Valencia Gate Hours

In order to facilitate the drop-off and pick-up procedure, our Valencia gate will be open from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. and again from 3:00 to 3:15 p.m. every school day for the parents of infant and toddler students at the Valencia Campus. A staff member will be at the gate to assist you to sign in and out of your child.

Daily Sign-In & Sign-Out Sheet

California State Law requires a sign-in and sign-out procedure to transfer responsibility between the parent/guardian and the school for toddler and primary children every day. There is a \$10.00 charge per missing signature after your child's name has been highlighted three times. Please sign your name and the time you drop off or pick up your child everyday.

During drop off, you will be required to fill out the parent portion of the Daily Report to ensure that daily communication occurs between the parent/guardian and the teacher. This will include information on when your infant last ate and how he/she slept the previous night.

Check your child's cubby daily to pick up with the Daily Report left by your child's teacher. It will give you an overview of your child's day at school.

Daily Inspection for Illness

California State Law requires that Arborland is responsible for ensuring that children with obvious symptoms of illness, including but not limited to fever or vomiting, are not allowed to attend class to prevent germs from spreading to other children. With the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers will err on the side of an abundance of caution when inspecting your child for symptoms daily. If your child is ill, they will be sent home because the child needs to rest and may infect other children at school. If your child has a high temperature over 100.4°F, they should be normal for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Dismissal

Please anticipate busy traffic during class dismissal time and allow yourself enough time to park your car, walk to school, sign out your child, and take your child home. Your child will only be

released to a parent or a person whose name is on the Identification and Emergency Form unless specific written arrangements have been made with the office.

Absences

A phone call, email, or note in the office mailbox is very much appreciated if your child is to be absent. However, we are not able to refund tuition for absences of children from school due to illness, vacation or any other reason.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The daily schedule is a framework for planning and organizing a daily routine of activities for the infant to engage in. Each child's routine MAY VARY depending on age and personal needs. We follow each infant's own biological needs, allowing them to eat, change and nap AS NEEDED. The goal of the program is to provide each child with one-on-one, cuddling, interaction, stimulation, and sleeping time.

Typical 3 to 12 Month Infant Schedule

7:30 – 8:00 am	Arrival/Activity Time
8:00 – 8:20 am	Diaper Change/Tummy Time
8:30 – 9:00 am	Bottle or Breakfast Time
9:00 – 9:10 am	Clean Up
9:10 – 10:30 am	Nap Time/Quiet Time
10:30 – 11:00 am	Montessori Work Time
11:00 – 11:30 am	Outdoor Play Time
11:30 am – 12:00 noon	Circle Time, Diaper Change if Needed
12:00 noon – 12:30 pm	Lunch Time
12:30 – 2:30 pm	Nap Time/Quiet Time
2:30 – 3:15 pm	Bottle or Snack Time
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Circle Time, Diaper Change if Needed
3:45 – 4:30 pm	Activity Time/Tummy Time
4:30 – 5:00 pm	Nap Time/Quiet Time
5:00 – 5:30 pm	Bottle or Meal Time
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Story Time/Activity Time

Typical 12 to 18 Month Infant Schedule

Infants will be transitioned to the toddler schedule:

7:30 – 8:00 am	Arrival/Activity Time
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8:00 – 8:20 am	Diaper Change/Potty Time
8:30 – 9:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 – 9:30 am	Montessori Work Period
9:30 – 9:40 am	Clean Up/Potty Time
9:40 – 10:15 am	Outdoor Play
10:15 – 10:30 am	Wash Hands/Snack
10:30 – 11:10 am	Circle Time
11:10 – 11:30 am	Diaper Change/Potty Time; Wash Hands
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	Lunch
12:00 – 12:30 pm	Cleanup; Diaper Change/Potty Time
12:30 – 2:45 pm	Nap
2:45 – 3:00 pm	Diaper Change/Potty Time
3:00 – 3:15 pm	Wash Hands
3:15 – 3:45 pm	Circle Time
3:45 – 4:15 pm	Snack Time
4:15 – 4:45 pm	Activity Time
4:45 – 5:15 pm	Diaper Change/Potty Time
5:15 – 6:00 pm	Classroom Activities

CODE OF CONDUCT

As young as infants are, learning appropriate behavior begins as soon a child enters the classroom. Even when a child is not yet able to respond or demonstrate the ability to follow rules, the child can listen as the teacher narrates appropriate behavior. These rules were designed to provide a safe and creative learning environment for every child.

Classroom Rules

Appropriate behavior is very important in the classroom. Without proper behavior, the child is not able to apply their knowledge in the correct manner.

- 1) Listen to your teacher.
- 2) Keep your hands to yourself.
- 3) Use soft voices.
- 4) Walk nicely.
- 5) Respect other people and their property.
- 6) Work nicely on the table and floor rug.
- 7) Keep the classroom neat and tidy.
- 8) Only one child is allowed in the bathroom at a time.
- 9) Do one activity at a time; no eating and working/walking at the same time.
- 10) Children who cannot follow the above classroom rules may not stay inside the classroom.

Playground Rules

The playground rules are developed to create a fun and safe environment for all children to play in.

- 1) Stay in your designated playground area under your teacher's supervision.
- 2) Keep your hands to yourself.
- 3) Respect pets, trees, plants and all school property.
- 4) Play safely and peacefully with your friends.
- 5) Use balls and other playground equipment for their designed purpose.
- 6) No screaming unless someone is in danger.
- 7) No pulling grass or digging in the dirt.
- 8) No climbing or standing on gates, walls, fences, trees or tables.
- 9) Put away the equipment properly after you use them.
- 10) No personal toys should be brought to school. Please talk to the classroom teacher if you would like to donate educational toys or balls to school.
- 11) No chasing games allowed.

Parental Support

While we are helping the students to learn proper manners and appropriate behaviors, your support and positive reinforcement is an invaluable necessity. The students look up to their surrounding adults, parents and teachers, and repeat our behavior or recite our language usage. It is crucial that all of us watch our manners and language patterns as we only want to have a positive impact on the children. Please do not expose children to any foul language.

Additionally, the children are not allowed in the classroom or on the playground without teacher supervision at any time. We want to ensure our students' safety at all times and need your help. In order to comply with our insurance policy and protect the well-being of all the students, we need you to pick up your child from the program teacher and escort your child at all times until you leave school grounds. Please do not allow your child to go back to the classroom unattended, or wander around the school premises without your close supervision. Due to our insurance policy regulations, Arborland is unable to assume any responsibility or liability after you pick up your child from your child's program teacher.

Freedom and Discipline

We claim that an individual is disciplined when he is a master of himself, can control himself, and follow the rules of his life. We teach the children to move about instead of remaining fixed in one spot. The children are taught to speak to their classmates with quiet voices inside the classroom, to use the materials nicely, to not harm others, and to not speak unkindly to another. We are not only preparing them to be disciplined in school, but also through life. Our goal is to help the children develop their internal discipline. The children learn to behave well, because that's the right thing to do and not because that's what they are told or how they are bribed.

Discipline has to be based upon love and consistency. At times we find some children do deviate from the normal path of development and are not acquiring the internal discipline we are looking for. The consequences are given as the children's own choice. All children need to feel safe and able to play nicely with their friends. If a child is not able to play nicely, he chooses not to play. When he chooses to play nicely, he is welcome to play. Time out is given for the child to cool down and think about proper behavior. If time out cannot calm the child down, the child will be sent to the office for a private talk and temporary isolation from other children. If the private talk cannot calm the child down, the parents will be called to pick up their child.

DISCONTINUING SERVICES

Withdrawal

A written notice of at least 30 days in advance must be given if you plan to withdraw your child from school or any optional program for any reason. The child's term of enrollment extends 30 days beyond the date of your written notice whether or not your child attends Arborland. Your child's tuition will be prorated by the number of school days. Any excess money paid to the School will be refunded except if the child is withdrawn after March 1, 2025. There is no withdrawal of services after March 1, 2025. The tuition must be paid for the rest of the school year.

Discharge of School Services

At Arborland, it is important that we provide quality service that meets the needs of your child. We reserve the right to discontinue services based on the following criteria:

- The services the child needs cannot be provided by Arborland.
- The child is absent for a length of time that exceeds our ability to maintain active status.
- The child's behavior support needs pose a significant danger to other children and/or staff and cannot be safely managed by staff.
- The family is no longer able or willing to partner with Arborland on their child's development.
- Failure to pay after reasonable and appropriate notice.
- Failure to meet Arborland policies and the Code of Conduct

We will provide a two week written notice of discharge, except for the case of an Emergency Discharge.

Emergency Discharge

Emergency discharge will be initiated to protect the health, safety or well-being of the child, other children or staff if immediate voluntary discharge is not possible or likely. In the event of an emergency discharge, a child may be discharged without any prior notice for his/her own safety and/or for the safety of the other children or staff.

MEAL TIMES

Schedule

Young infants will be fed according to their own schedules. Parents of infants are asked to bring milk/formula prepared in labeled bottles with sterile nipples and lids on a daily basis. Bottles need to be plastic, not glass, and will be warmed as requested. Staff will not mix bottles on site to ensure that each infant is fed the appropriate amounts.

Please ensure each bottle contains what you expect your child to eat per meal. Include one extra bottle in case your child is unusually hungry. (Ex: If you expect your child to eat 4 times in one day, bring 5 bottles filled with the appropriate amount of milk/formula each day.)

Container Cleaning and Sterilization

All bottles, dishes, and food containers brought from home must be labeled with the infant's name and current date. Contents remaining in any bottle will be discarded within two hours of the meal. Parents will bring home all bottles, dishes and food containers on a daily basis for cleaning and sterilization.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to stop by and breast feed as needed. Privacy can be provided in the school First Aid Room.

Changing Meal Needs

As infants grow and start eating solid foods, their eating needs will change. Infants will begin using their fingers for finger-foods and infant utensils to feed themselves. As infants gradually start to eat cereals, jarred foods, and table foods, parents will inform the teachers in the classroom as to what their child can eat. It is recommended that infants try new foods at home first, then parents can add the new food to the classroom list.

Allergies

If your infant has a food allergy or food intolerance, please notify your child's teacher and the office immediately. It is the parent's responsibility to provide appropriate food for the child.

School Lunch

Children who are 12 months or older will be given school lunch and snacks including whole milk. We will work together with parents to transition the children from bottle to regular food after their first birthday, if not earlier. Older infants will also begin sitting in small chairs and tables and using sippy cups as bottles are not a common practice in the classroom as the child gets older. It is our goal to partner with parents and families to ensure that each child has a routine that meets his/her needs.

For children who are ready for school lunch, the monthly school lunch menu will be reviewed with the parents. Parents must highlight and initial foods that the teacher may provide the child on a monthly basis. Parents should not highlight foods that a child has not yet tried at home due to unknown allergies.

NAP TIME/QUIET TIME

Schedule

Infants nap according to their own schedules. If an infant should fall asleep while being rocked, lightly bounced, or taken for a walk in a stroller, he/she will be put in the crib to continue to sleep. In accordance with the California Safe Sleep Policy, infants will always be put to sleep on their backs unless there is a medical reason the child should sleep in a different position.

Equipment

The School will provide mini-cribs with a firm mattress for infants to sleep on. Infants will be placed to sleep on the mattress with a sheet that fits snugly around the mattress to meet Consumer Product Safety Commission safety standards. Parents are responsible for bringing a clean crib sheet and sleep sack/blanket. No toys, stuffed animals, pillows, crib bumpers, positioning devices or extra will be in the crib.

Teachers will ensure that the infant will be positioned at the foot of the crib with a sleep sack as a blanket, reaching only as far as the infant's chest. Teachers will also ensure that infants will be dressed appropriately for the room temperature before nap time.

When a child is ready, cot sleeping will be encouraged to help the infant transition to the Toddler Program.

Laundering

The bedding on the cribs and cots must be taken home to be washed each Friday. If illnesses are prevalent, laundering will need to happen more often. After every sheet change, the crib mattresses are disinfected.

We understand that practices may be different at home and that some children have unique situations. However, we must follow licensing guidelines and adhere to the above stated policies. We commit to work as a team with parents and children on any adjustments that a child may have to make.

DAIPERING

Parents will provide all diapers, wipes, and rash ointment for the children in the Infant classroom. Your child will be changed at regular intervals throughout the day and as needed. Soiled or wet clothing will be placed in a sealed bag and given to the parents at the end of the day. Cloth diapers are not allowed at the school due to sanitation purposes. Please note that a Medication form is required for teachers to apply rash ointment on the children.

HEALTH

Immunizations

To protect the health of all children, state law requires that upon admission to a school, each child must be immunized against the following diseases: Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Measles, Rubella, Mumps and Varicella. You are required to provide the school with a current record of your child's immunizations and TB test results. We maintain the right to deny attendance if immunizations are not current.

Hand Washing

Keeping hands clean is one of the simplest and most effective methods for preventing the transmission of infectious agents that cause common colds, diarrhea, influenza and food-borne illnesses. In order to control the spread of germs, we require hand washing before eating, after using the restroom, after playing outside, and at any other appropriate time. We also strive to help teach your child valuable personal hygiene skills.

Illness

We want every child to stay happy and healthy. It is the school's responsibility to protect other children from illness and it is also best for a child to rest at home if he is sick. Do not bring your child to school if they show any traces of illness. Please be sure that your child has completely recovered before sending them back to school. We assume that if a child is well enough to come to school, then they are well enough to fully participate in all activities.

As a rule of thumb, a child should stay home if he has:

- A fever higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (child should be fever free for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication before returning to school)
- Vomited (not caused by motion sickness or a gag reflex unassociated with illness)
- Diarrhea twice in a day
- An excessive cough
- Persistent pain (tooth, ear, stomach, etc)
- A new widespread rash

If your child has a contagious disease, such as COVID-19, please notify Arborland immediately so that we may take any precautionary measures. CDC guidelines will be consulted. In some instances, a physician's certificate of good health may be required before a child will be allowed to return.

If your child becomes ill at school, you will be contacted immediately. Arborland provides a first-aid room with a cot, sheet, and blanket for your child to rest separated from the other children. You must make arrangements for your child to be picked up within one hour of notification so the child can go home to rest.

Medication

All medication, with the exception of diaper rash ointment, must be administered by the parent. Once medication is administered by the parent, it should be taken home with the parent and not left in the classroom. Diaper rash ointment and sunblock must have a signed medication form for the teacher to apply during school hours.

Allergies

Please inform the office and your child's teacher if your child has an allergy. An emergency health care plan will be required prior to initial start day and updates as needed. If your child has food allergies or requires a special diet, we must be provided with written notification to work with you to accommodate your child's needs. Our school is a nut-free facility.

Emergency Care

If a child becomes ill or injured, a parent will be notified and instructions for the next course of action will be requested. If the parent cannot be reached, or if the nature of the illness or accident requires immediate action, then emergency care will be obtained from your child's doctor or at St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton.

CLOTHING

Dress Code

Clothing for school should be comfortable, allow freedom of movement, and independence of dress. Slacks with elastic waistbands usually fit more snugly for young children and it is easier for the younger ones to handle them. Belts with heavy buckles or slacks with heavy snaps are impossible, even for most of the oldest children. Long or fancy dresses and clothes with droopy straps frustrate children and can be in the way when they are climbing or doing outdoor activities. Also, words and illustrations on T-shirts need to be appropriate for the environment.

Once the children begin to climb, jump, and run during recess time, comfortable closed-toe walking shoes and tennis shoes protect the children's feet and are recommended. Crocs, sandals and loose fitting shoes can easily cause foot injury and should be kept at home. Jewelry and trinkets should be kept at home.

Change of Clothing

Each infant must bring 3 complete changes of clothing in a clearly labeled Ziploc bag. If the child uses the clothes, they will be sent home and must be replaced the following school day. It is the parent's responsibility to replace them as the child grows into a new size.

Marking of All Personal Belongings

Parents are advised to mark your child's name clearly on all their belongings including sweaters, jackets, extra clothing, bottles, cups, etc. Arborland cannot be responsible for any lost items.

“Shoe-Free” Environment

Infants spend much of their activity time exploring on the floor. With infants commonly on the floor, Arborland wants to provide a clean, safe and healthy environment in the Infant Room. We practice a “shoe-free” policy in the Infant Room and ask that any adults entering carpeted or padded areas slip a pair of shoe covers over their shoes. This will prevent outside contaminants from being brought into the room and spread onto the infant activity area. Keeping the area clean is a top priority.

Once infants begin walking, please bring a pair of indoor only shoes or non-slip socks so that infants can practice walking indoors without spreading contaminants. Infants will be changed to regular outdoor shoes for any outdoor play time.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is vital between parents and teachers. In order to educate your child and report to you outside of our instructional time, we have established many methods to keep us on the same page:

Parent-Teacher Conference

Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled in November and April. Please sign up for a 30-minute conference slot for an individual conference with your child's teacher. The sign-up sheets are available two weeks prior to the conference dates. Additionally, daily progress reports are sent home. We believe that the communication between you and our school is critical to your child's experience in Montessori education and we will make any reasonable effort to meet with you.

Missed Conference

Missed appointments can only be rescheduled for remaining open slots that have already been set aside for conferences. Please understand that missed conferences create a considerable hardship on the teachers because they must prepare for the conferences and while continuing to teach your child.

Making Appointments

Please be reminded that all the teachers are required to be with the children during class time. They are not allowed to have conferences with the parents when they are expected to teach your children. If you have a simple question to ask your child's teacher, please do so before school drop-off or after school dismissal time. If you need to discuss something that requires more time, please leave a note in their mailbox, email, or make an appointment to discuss it in person. Special meetings may be scheduled before or after school hours. A mutually convenient time for the parent and teacher may be scheduled upon your request. All of our parent-teacher discussions are confidential.

Bulletin Board

All updated policy and notices are posted on the Parents' Bulletin Board located in the lobby. Please take the time to read through these.

Transparent Classroom

Infant parents will be given access to Transparent Classroom at www.transparentclassroom.com. Transparent Classroom is an online tool used to inform parents what their child has been learning and doing in the classroom. Teachers will upload photos of your child and tag lessons and progress for your child. Infant parents will also receive Daily Reports through Transparent Classroom, detailing what the children ate, how they napped and how they did on their toileting routines.

Mailbox and Phone Calls

For communication purposes, every Arborland staff member has a mailbox in the office. Your comments, suggestions, and opinions are important to us and we want to communicate with you. Please feel free to drop a note in any one of our mailboxes. If you need to talk to your child's teacher for urgent matters, please call Valencia Campus at (714) 871-2311 for immediate response.

Website and Email

We post announcements, pictures, and pertinent information on our website www.arborland.com to keep you informed. Please check our website on a regular basis. Each teacher has a mailbox in the office and an email address with their name @arborland.com. We encourage you to use regular school mailboxes or email to communicate with your child's teacher. We also request that you send an email to your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year to confirm both parents' email addresses. Providing us with your current email addresses gives us the opportunity to email notices and reminders directly to both parents. Please understand that even though we have easy Internet access, we work with your children during school hours and will not be able to check our emails until after hours. If something is urgent, please call us.

MISCELLANEOUS

Toys, Candy, Gum, and Soda

The school will provide plenty of educational equipment for the children. Your child may bring special items and books on Sharing Day, as specified by the teacher. **Toys, candy, gum, and soda are not allowed at school. The teachers are requested to throw them away or to donate them to charity.** The school will not be responsible for lost or broken toys. **No guns, knives or other destructive toys are allowed at school.**

Birthday Parties and Programs

Your child's birthday is a very special day to you, your child, and us. Although we do our best to keep track of the birthdays that occur during the school year, we would also appreciate you reminding the teacher in advance so that none are overlooked. The teacher will take a special time during the day to recognize your child.

To make the day as special as possible, it would be nice if your child brings a plant, educational music, or a book to share with their class. Another special remembrance that is welcomed is a birthday book to be donated to the class library in your child's name. No treats or desserts allowed as infants may only eat food provided by the parents or the school. **We respectfully request that you also save birthday parties, balloons, goody bags, party hats, or other party favors for home celebration.** Please communicate with your child's teacher in advance.

Pets

Personal pets are not allowed in the infant room due to the age of the children and possible unknown allergic reactions. Please understand that your child's welfare is our primary concern.

Lost Materials

From time to time, the children become much attached to small pieces of Montessori materials and take them home. We would appreciate that you check your child's pockets and the washing machine and send them back to the school.

Child Care Expense Tax Credit

If you paid someone to care for a child under age 13 so you could work or look for work, you may be able to reduce your tax by claiming the Child and Dependent Care Credit on your federal income tax return. For more information on the Child and Dependent Care Credit, please see Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses. You may download these free publications from IRS.gov or order them by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

Earthquake Preparedness Kit

In order to be totally prepared in the event of an earthquake, each child must have an emergency kit stored at the School. The emergency kit should contain the following items:

- Water
- Formula
- Small receiving blanket
- Family photo with an out of state relative's name, relationship, and phone number on the back of the photo

All items should be clearly labeled and placed in gallon size Ziploc bags. The child's name should also be clearly written on the bag.

Valuables

Please leave all valuables at home. If students bring any personal belongings to school, they are responsible for their own personal belongings at all times. Arborland will not be responsible for any lost items.

Lost & Found

A Lost & Found is located in the office at each campus. Please check for lost articles periodically. **Items remaining for more than a month will be donated to charity. Food and optional program bags will be discarded daily for sanitary purposes.**

Advertising

Photographs of school activities will be used for commercial purposes including website posting. If you object to your child being photographed for such purposes, you must submit a written notification to the office during the first two weeks of your child's admission.

WEEKLY CHECKLIST

Numbers in parentheses are for estimation purposes only. Please bring enough for your child according to his/her needs. All items must be labeled with the child's name.

- Diapers (36)
- Box of Wipes (1)
- Diaper Rash Ointment
- Changes of clothes (3) and pairs of socks (2)
- Sweater, jacket or hooded sweatshirt
- 2 Crib sheets (mini 24" x 38" for younger than 12 months; regular 28" x 52" for 12 months and older)
- Sleep sack (younger than 12 months)
- Light blanket (12 months and older or when sleeping on cot instead of crib)
- Burp cloths (6)
- Hat
- Sunblock
- Non-Slip Socks or In-Door Shoes (for walking children)
- Sippy cup (for children eating solids)

DAILY CHECKLIST

Numbers in parentheses are for estimation purposes only. Please bring enough for your child according to his/her needs. All items must be labeled with the child's name.

- Bottles prepared with Formula/milk, nipples, lids and liners (4)
- Bib
- Snacks (instead of bottle when ready)
- Meals (must be ready to be served as needed)
- Bowl, spoon, and/or fork (for 6 months and older or when eating solids)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Separation Anxiety

How to Ease Your Child's Separation Anxiety

Source: *HealthyChildren.Org*

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Soothing-Your-Childs-Separation-Anxiety.aspx>

Separation anxiety varies WIDELY between children. Some babies become hysterical when mom is out of sight for a very short time, while other children seem to demonstrate ongoing anxiety at separations during infancy, toddlerhood, and preschool.

To All You Working Moms & Dads

The trick for surviving separation anxiety demands preparation, brisk transitions, and the evolution of time. I would suggest we parents suffer as much as our children do when we leave. Even though we are often reminded that our children stop crying within minutes of our leave-taking, how many of you have felt like you're "doing it all wrong" when your child clings to your legs, sobs for you to stay, and mourns the parting?

As a working mom, separation anxiety creates questions for me. Although it is an entirely normal behavior and a beautiful sign of a meaningful attachment, separation anxiety can be exquisitely unsettling for us all.

Here are facts about separation anxiety and tips to improve the transitions:

Facts about Separation Anxiety

- Infants: Separation anxiety develops after a child gains an understanding of object permanence. Once your infant realizes you're really gone (when you are), it may leave him unsettled. Although some babies display object permanence and separation anxiety as early as 4 to 5 months of age, most develop more robust separation anxiety at around 9 months. The leave-taking can be worse if your infant is hungry, tired, or not feeling well. Keep transitions short and routine if it's a tough day.
- Toddlers: Many toddlers skip separation anxiety in infancy and start demonstrating challenges at 15 or 18 months of age. Separations are more difficult when children are hungry, tired, or sick—which is most of toddlerhood! As children develop independence during toddlerhood, they may become even more aware of separations. Their behaviors at separations will be loud, tearful, and difficult to stop.

How to Survive Separation Anxiety

- Create quick good-bye rituals. Even if you have to do major-league- baseball-style hand movements, give triple kisses at the cubby, or provide a special blanket or toy as you

leave, keep the good-bye short and sweet. If you linger, the transition time does too. So will the anxiety.

- **Be consistent.** Try to do the same drop-off with the same ritual at the same time each day you separate to avoid unexpected factors whenever you can. A routine can diminish the heartache and will allow your child to simultaneously build trust in her independence and in you.
- **Attention:** When separating, give your child full attention, be loving, and provide affection. Then say good-bye quickly despite her antics or cries for you to stay.
- **Keep your promise.** You'll build trust and independence as your child becomes confident in her ability to be without you when you stick to your promise of return. The biggest mistake I ever made in this regard was returning to class to "visit" my son about an hour after a terrible transition. I was missing him, and although the return was well intended, I not only extended the separation anxiety, we started all over again in the process. When I left the second time (and subsequent days) it was near nuclear.
- **Be specific, child style.** When you discuss your return, provide specifics that your child understands. If you know you'll be back by 3:00 pm, tell it to your child on his terms; for example, say, "I'll be back after nap time and before afternoon snack." Define time he can understand. Talk about your return from a business trip in terms of "sleeps." Instead of saying, "I'll be home in 3 days," say, "I'll be home after 3 sleeps."
- **Practice being apart.** Ship the children off to grandma's home, schedule playdates, allow friends and family to provide child care for you (even for an hour) on the weekend. Before starting child care or preschool, practice going to school and your good-bye ritual before you even have to part ways. Give your child a chance to prepare, experience, and thrive in your absence!

It's rare that separation anxiety persists on a daily basis after the preschool years. If you're concerned that your child isn't adapting to being without you, chat with the pediatrician. Your pediatrician has certainly helped support families in the same situation and can help calm your unease and determine a plan to support both of you!

Latching from Bottle to Breast

What is Nipple Confusion and How to Resolve It

Source: *Medela.com*

<https://www.medelabreastfeedingus.com/article/223/what-is-nipple-confusion-and-how-to-resolve-it>

When you're a breastfeeding mom, necessity may dictate that baby gets your breast milk in a bottle, but sometimes difficulties such as nipple confusion can occur if a baby is both breast and bottle-feeding. Understanding why nipple confusion happens and using strategies to ease the transition between breast and bottle can help lessen or avoid this for your little one.

What is "nipple confusion?"

Nipple confusion is when a breastfeeding baby is having trouble latching and breastfeeding effectively after being fed with a bottle.

Why does nipple confusion happen?

Babies need to use different techniques when nursing versus feeding from a bottle. When breastfeeding, they control the flow of milk from mom by creating suction, using their pauses to swallow and breathe. When using an average baby bottle, babies don't have to work as hard because gravity and the nipple cause the milk flow to be more continuous for baby. Nipple confusion occurs when baby switches back to breast, and doesn't understand why the milk flows differently than it did with the bottle.

Strategies to Help With Nipple Confusion

- Since there's no way to predict if your little one will struggle with nipple confusion, it's recommended to delay giving a bottle or pacifier until breastfeeding is well established – usually when your baby is about 4 weeks old.
- If your baby is getting more bottles once you return to work or school and your milk supply might be lower, he may prefer the quick flow of the bottles. You can work on reversing this by trying to increase your milk supply and focusing on more breastfeeding time.
- Another type of nipple confusion occurs when baby refuses bottles and only wants to breastfeed. Practice offering bottles in a relaxed, low-key way and stop if your baby becomes fussy or stressed. Or, try switching it up and having someone else give the bottle. Some babies will not accept a bottle from mom, but will accept a bottle from a family member or caregiver.
- Look into using a bottle system that mimics babies' natural breastfeeding motions and behavior to make the transition from bottle to breast easier.

If you find that you and your baby are continuing to struggle over nipple confusion, reach out to a Lactation Consultant who can work with you and guide you through this challenge. It will take some effort to make the transition from bottle to breast easier for your little one, but it's worth it to help get your breastfeeding journey back on track and going strong!

Guilt of Going Back to Work

Managing guilt of returning to work after having a baby

Source: *Bounty.com*

<http://www.bounty.com/family/work/back-to-work/managing-guilt-of-returning-to-work-after-having-a-baby>

Going back to work after maternity leave can be tough. Leaving your baby with a childminder or even a family member can be heart-wrenching - especially if you've had several months off and have spent most of that time in each other's company. Your baby may not be used to other carers and there's nothing worse than floods of tears as you head off on the train to the office (theirs or yours!)

As well as the exhaustion, organisation and costs of going back to work - and the logistics of childcare - the guilt factor feel like the toughest. Sometimes you feel like you've not spent enough time with them and you go to bed thinking - could I have done more?

Working parents often complain that the evenings are spent cooking, cleaning, getting organised for the next day and trying to get everyone to bed. It can be overwhelming. You need to learn to manage your time carefully so that neither you nor baby feels neglected in the midst of the new routine.

And when the guilt strikes - and it will - bear in mind that it's quality of time that matters more than quantity. Work doesn't mean your baby has to miss out - as long as they feel loved, there's no need to be consumed in guilt.

Here are some tips for a guilt-lowering return to the workplace.

1. Preparation is key: Do a trial run before you go back and try out the creche or childminder. See how baby gets on and if there are glitches you can work on them for the next time. Work out how long the journey takes in rush hour and ensure you have a back-up minder available just in case of illness.
2. Make life easier: Don't stress about housework when you get in from work. Try and have dinner sorted (slow cooker, or batch-cook in advance and freeze). Sit down with your little one - they'll be too young for you to ask how their day went but you can get into the routine of having a cuddle together after a long day and as they get older you can chat about the daily happenings.
3. Don't beat yourself up: If you have to work to pay the bills and mortgage, then that's the way it is. Your baby won't resent you or hate you for it, as long as they feel loved and appreciated, they will develop and thrive.
4. Organise fun stuff for the weekend: A walk in the park, a trip somewhere. It doesn't have to be expensive. A picnic or feeding the ducks gets you out and about for quality time.
5. Ask for help: If a friend/mother/mother-in-law/partner offers to do something to help – e.g mow the lawn, make a meal, give you a night out, accept, accept, accept. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. It's easy to want to control everything but recognise your limitations - and see the guilt factor fall as you delegate tasks and accept favours.
6. Put down your phone/iPad/gadgets when you get in in the evening: Don't check work emails or chat to friends on social media the minute you get in. Spend one-to-one time with your little one - they may be testy and tired but a cuddle will do wonders. After all, who doesn't need one of those?
7. Rest when you can: It goes without saying but we all need our sleep. With a good night's rest, we can't tackle the following day with greater ease. Babies can be night owls and that doesn't mix well with returning to work. Exhaustion can make the guilt factor worse, so try and get some early nights. The old adage of rest when the baby sleeps has some merit. Nobody will blame you for heading upstairs after the soaps!
8. Talk to other parents: Friends who are also working parents are invaluable when you're experiencing guilt - because they will understand exactly how you feel. Having a cuppa

and a moan about your boss could be just what the doctor ordered - a problem shared and all that.

Baby Blues

The Baby Blues Survival Guide

Source: *The Bump*

<https://www.thebump.com/a/baby-blues-or-depression>

CRYING OVER SPILT MILK (LITERALLY)? FEELING ANXIOUS FOR NO GOOD REASON? YOU MIGHT HAVE THE BABY BLUES—AND WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

You excitedly count down the weeks until you meet baby, expecting to feel euphoric once that moment arrives. But by the time you come home from the hospital, you feel...“eh.” What gives? Say hello to the baby blues. Before you give yourself the “worst mom ever award” for feeling down after giving birth, know that this is completely normal. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, as many as eight out of 10 moms will get the baby blues. Considering that you just spent 40 weeks growing a human in your belly and probably even sweated through a multi-hour labor, only to embark on a sleepless marathon of feedings and diaper changes, it makes sense that you're not exactly radiant. Even the cutest baby can't always compensate for this level of physical and mental exhaustion. Still, there are plenty of things you can do to brighten up. Read on!

WHAT ARE BABY BLUES?

Baby blues are irregular mood changes that can start shortly before or anytime after childbirth, but usually set in between a week and a month after delivery and generally last for less than two weeks. The reality of attending to a new baby that monopolizes all your time and energy can leave you feeling irrationally upset and frustrated. However, unlike full-blown postpartum depression, the negative feelings you get with the baby blues aren't continuous, and you should still experience moments of joy.

WHAT CAUSES THE BABY BLUES?

Besides the obvious baby blues causes—mental and physical exhaustion—there are physiological triggers as well. These include:

- Hormonal shifts and chemical imbalances. During and after pregnancy, hormonal changes naturally make you more vulnerable to mood shifts. Remember feeling super-emotional during the first trimester (thank you, progesterone)? Cortisol, the stress hormone, gradually rises during pregnancy, peaks at delivery and drops to baseline level within the first three days postpartum, according to a BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth article. Hormones aren't the only things to blame when it comes to the baby blues, however; research shows that an increase of monoamine oxidase (MAO-A), an enzyme that helps break down “feel-good” chemicals like serotonin and dopamine in the brain, may work as a catalyst in that uneasy feeling. Immediately after delivery, the new

mother's estrogen production plummets to pre-pregnancy levels, says Michael Silverman, PhD, assistant professor of psychiatry at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City. Simultaneously, MAO-A increases and essentially destroys those feel-good chemicals in the brain.

- **Inflammation.** Your body undergoes tremendous change and repair during pregnancy—you just grew and birthed a baby, after all. As a result, “there is a profound immunologic response,” Silverman says. “And we know there’s a strong relationship between inflammation and depression.” As with an extreme case of the flu, wear and tear on your body can have an effect on your brain, leaving you crabby and in cognitive disarray—what we call the baby blues.

BABY BLUES SYMPTOMS

Most women are just trying to survive after being catapulted into motherhood full force. Not surprisingly, the feelings of worry and fatigue that arise are natural. They also underlie the most common baby blues symptoms. These include:

- mood swings
- crying spells
- anxiety
- difficulty sleeping
- loneliness
- brain fog

BABY BLUES VS POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

One way you can tell whether you have the baby blues or postpartum depression is that with the baby blues, you should see an improvement in mood in about two weeks. Without this relief, or with a worsening of symptoms, it's possible you might have postpartum depression.

Up to 15 percent of women experience postpartum depression within the first six months—though, “it often occurs in the first three months postpartum and may have started during pregnancy,” says Tiffany Moore Simas, MD, associate professor of ob-gyn, pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts. You can be prone to minor and major depressive episodes for the first year post-childbirth. In addition, if you have a history of depression, you're more than 20 times more likely to suffer from postpartum depression compared to women without such a history, according to a recent Depression and Anxiety study. If you also had pregestational diabetes, an inflammatory disease, there's an additional 1.5-fold increased risk for postpartum depression.

Finally, while baby blues symptoms are mild, that's just not the case with the symptoms for postpartum depression. “The baby blues are temporary and manageable,” says Sherry A. Ross, MD, author of *She-ology: The Definitive Guide to Women's Intimate Health. Period.* and a Santa Monica, California-based ob-gyn. “Postpartum depression makes all the desperate feelings more intense and debilitating to a point where you're unable to perform your daily routine, including caring for your baby.” The symptoms for postpartum depression include:

- profound sadness
- loss of interest in things you enjoyed before the baby
- unrelenting guilt
- extreme anxiety
- helplessness
- worthlessness
- change in energy and concentration
- poor appetite and sleeping habits

By definition, in order to be considered depressed, the symptoms need to last at least two weeks, but if you notice these behaviors and you feel concerned, talk to your doctor right away—especially if you have a history of depression. “The consequences to the mother and the child are not worth 'waiting and seeing' whether the baby blues go away on their own,” Silverman says. “Once real depression hits, the mother is not in a position to get help on her own.”

HOW TO DEAL WITH BABY BLUES

The delicate period post-childbirth may seem permanent, but you'll eventually find your rhythm. Chances are, your mom did that, and so did her mom and so on. Realizing this will help you through it.

Those who are naturally more anxious because of a genetic predisposition or history of mental illness may not be able to cope with the baby blues without the help of a medical professional, psychotherapy or medication. “I would encourage any woman not to ask but tell her ob-gyn that she's worried about her emotional state,” Moore Simas recommends.

Doctors will typically wait after the two-week mark to start prescribing breastfeeding-safe antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications to help moms manage their baby blues. “Keeping your postpartum routine and bonding rituals with your baby is vital in the treatment process,” Ross says.

Unless you're dealing with unbearable and disruptive baby blues symptoms, you may be able to alleviate the baby blues with a few helpful coping techniques:

- Seek support. Without a strong social network of family and friends, it's easy to feel helpless and alone. When you feel like everything is on you, even a minor annoyance, like yet another poopy diaper, can quickly lead to a full-blown breakdown. Seek out someone who can say, “I get it.” That should be your partner, but it can also include a best friend or another family member. When you have the baby blues, these people “let you be as emotional as you want,” Silverman says. And they help “facilitate the adjustment much quicker.”
- Build a mommy network. Reach out to friends or moms from your prenatal classes. Chances are they're going through something similar or, better yet, have already overcome the challenges of the baby blues and can offer solid advice. Pursue empathetic friends, since they're most helpful during stressful times. Online communities

like The Bump Message Board and Postpartum Progress are also great resources for connecting with moms who may also be grappling with the baby blues.

- Engage in skin-to-skin contact. The Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing found that moms who engaged in six hours of skin-to-skin contact with baby in the first week reported fewer depression behaviors. What's more, those who did skin-to-skin contact for even three hours a day reduced infant crying by 43 percent.
- Practice mindfulness. Staying in tune with yourself through mindfulness (awareness during a particular moment) is said to reduce the likelihood of postpartum depression, according to new research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of California, San Francisco. Engage in meditation or yoga, even if it's just for a few minutes a day.
- Sleep. Deprive any healthy person of sleep, and you'll notice moodiness. Deprive a new mom juggling everything, and you have potential chaos. To help lessen the baby blues effects, try to sleep when baby sleeps—the dishes and laundry can wait.
- Set realistic expectations. Motherhood is often not how you dreamed it to be while pregnant. Once you're home from the hospital you'll likely feel scattered, so instead of trying to do things "just so," focus on getting into a rhythm—even if that rhythm involves walking around like a zombie.