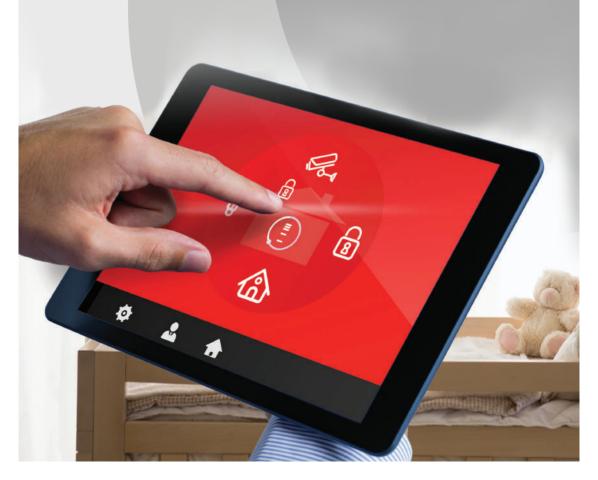






## Guide to Digital Parenting of Newborns



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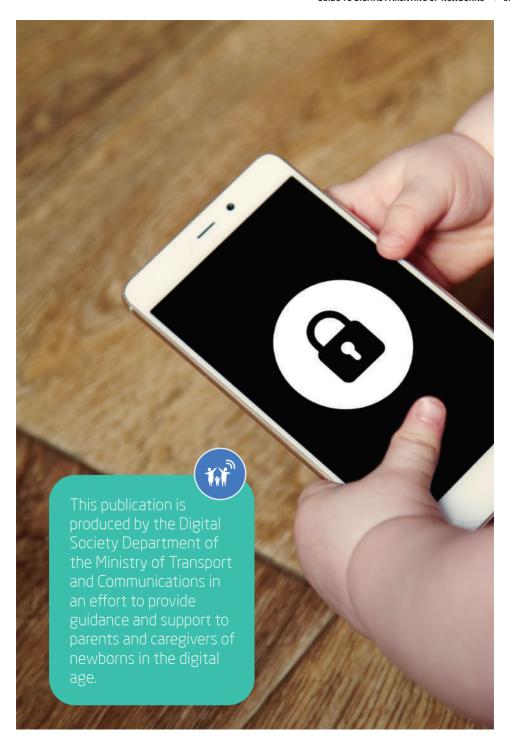
#### Introduction

The general consensus is that parenting a child in the digital age presents challenges. But what surprises many people is that those challenges may begin as soon as you receive the news that you are expecting a baby and you are left trying to figure out your next step. How will you announce the news of your pregnancy, of your child's birth, baby's first birthday and so forth?

Technology, internet and social media are now day-to-day considerations of parenting and new parents must navigate these waters not only for themselves, but for their children. As a result, digital guardianship of your child begins even before your child is born.

This Digital Parenting Guide for parents of newborns contains explanations on key issues such as posting ultrasound images, sharing on social media, paper photo albums vs online photo sharing, privacy settings, baby announcements, baby monitors, home assistants and more.





## Parenting a Newborn in the Digital Age Defined

It is evident that many children have an online footprint before their 1st birthday. From ultrasounds to social network profiles, children born today have more visibility and less privacy.



No matter the age of the child, or pregnancy status of the mother and father-to-be, parents need to understand the definition of parenting in the digital age.

Parenting in the digital age means raising babies, children and young people in an environment filled with internet, technology and social media.

Successful digital parenting of a newborn means:

- Active protection of your baby's digital reputation and digital identity.
- Protecting your baby from the dangers that Internet may pose.
- Bringing your offline parenting skills to the online world.

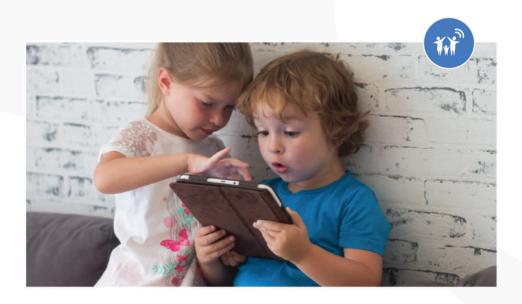


## Online vs Offline Digital Parenting

Bringing a child into the world is a thrilling time for parents-to-be and even when your child is in the womb, parents can begin to shape their views on how their family will use digital media.

In a society where children are brought up to uphold Islamic and cultural values in their everyday lives, digital parenting can also be based on such values.

Parents-to-be can follow the same ethical principles online as they will follow offline.



Some guidance that you can follow to preserve Islamic and cultural values and online ethics with respect to your new baby and growing family:



New parents in Qatar, whether expatriate or native, are fortunate to live in a country where the fundamental beliefs in justice, freedom, benevolence, equality and high morals are so readily apparent. It is the responsibility of these parents to extend those beliefs to the online environment and to their future life with their newborn.

#### **Digital Guardians** of the Future

As you welcome your baby into your family, you need to remember that your role in this digital age has expanded to include digital guardianship. You are the digital guardian for your child's online life just as you are the guardian for their offline life. Protecting your child's digital identity and digital footprint today can impact their future digital reputation as they become digital citizens and learn to use internet, technology and social media.

When your baby grows up and

The best way to ensure that your child has a positive digital identity and footprint is to limit the amount of data. and information that you post about your child.



#### Your Baby's Digital Identity

Digital identity means the data that uniquely describes your baby.

Your baby's digital identity is the equivalent of their social identity used in cyberspace – this is how other internet users, artificial intelligence and online services will be able to identify them.

#### Your Baby's Digital Footprint

When parents blog, post photos or videos of their unborn baby or newborn baby online, they leave a digital footprint or trace of their activity.

These digital traces or footprints are created for children who are too young to understand or even provide their consent.

When parents post ultrasound scans, it is clear that the unborn child has not provided consent.



#### **Digital Opportunities** and Risks for Your Baby



Social Media, **Domain Names and Your Baby** 



You may want to purchase your baby's name as a domain name for intellectual property considerations. Your baby's domain name may be a valuable investment for their adult life and it also helps to create and preserve their online identity.

To register a Qatar-specific domain name, visit the QDR website at www.domains.qa or the Arabic domain ( نطاقات قطر ) to first check the availability of the specific domain name. If the domain name is available, you will be directed to a list of registrars you can choose from to purchase the domain name.



#### PITFALLS OF PURCHASING A DOMAIN NAME

Upon purchase of a domain name, many parents may be tempted to create a website, upload photos and videos of their precious child. But parents need to be aware that anytime they share information about their newborn online, that information is in cyberspace forever.

On occasion parents may post photos or videos that contain personally identifiable information in the background or even directly in the photo itself. Parents need to understand that anyone can access their baby's information once it is shared online and that sometimes, undesirable people do.



Similar to purchasing a domain name, creating a social media account in your baby's name preserves that account for your baby's future use.

Parents have created email accounts in their newborn's name for the same reasons; to preserve their online identity and ensure that when their child wants to use social media in their own name. that account name or email name is available.



#### PITFALLS OF CREATING A SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

According to many social media account terms of use, children under 13, which obviously includes babies, are dissuaded from having social media accounts.

Many companies and third-party app developers market to social media users and parents should be cautious of advertising targeting their children.

Another risk of creating a social media account for a baby is the risk of those photos being stolen and used for nefarious purposes such as identity theft, role-play games where people pretend that the baby is their own and more.

## Internet of Things / Toys and Your Baby

The Internet of Things (IoT) is used to describe the network of physical objects embedded with electronics, software, sensors and connectivity which allows them to collect and exchange data. Or in simple terms, devices can talk to each other, making it easier to control and automate tasks – and collect data. IoT ranges from health and fitness trackers to smart homes that can be convenient and attractive to young parents.

IoT has expanded to include toys where the same wireless connectivity will allow a toy to interact with other data-enabled devices or other toys. If parents purchase IoT or toys for their home, they should take precautions in the use of these incredibly convenient devices.

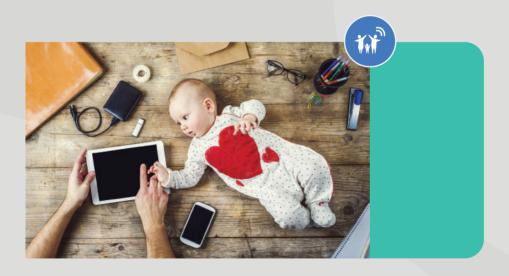


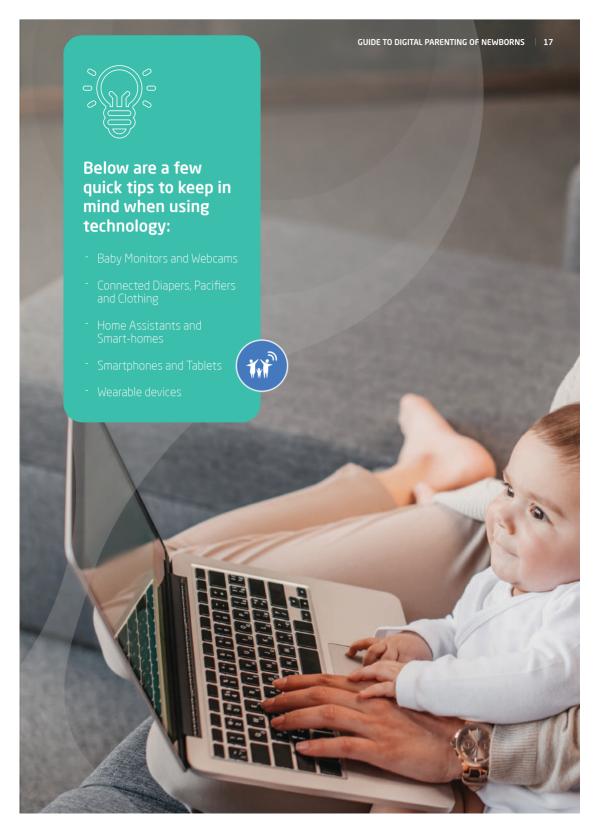
#### **Use Your Tech Responsibly** for Your Baby's Sake

If you enjoyed internet, technology and social media before having a baby, you may want to continue the adventure once your baby has arrived. The Internet of Things has revolutionized the devices and items marketed to new parents to help them understand and parent their baby in the digital age.

From connected diapers, to baby monitors, there are many devices on the market that provide benefits to parents in clever and innovative ways. However, issues of privacy and security are problematic for most devices and parents need to be aware of those issues.

This guide is not telling you NOT to use tech, but rather, it is advocating that you use your tech responsibly – for your sake and for the sake of your baby. For all devices and appliances, parents should review the permissions and privacy policies to ensure that they understand how and where their family data will be used.





#### **Baby Monitors and Webcams**

It is understandable that parents want to be able to monitor their newborn baby while sleeping or laying in a playpen. Baby monitors and webcams provide parents with reassurance that their baby is well, however use of monitors and webcams may cause privacy and health concerns.



- Place the monitor, webcam and any electronic cords well out of baby's reach.
- Password-protect your monitor or webcam with a strong password.
- Do not rely on the baby monitor or webcam to protect your baby from SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

#### Connected **Diapers Pacifiers** and Clothing

Wearable technology such as connected diapers and connected clothing for babies are often cited as having health benefits for babies. Parents and doctors are able to monitor a baby for hydration, temperature, sleeping position or other health concerns. Connected pacifiers also take baby's temperature and may sound an alarm when the pacifier is lost.



- Password-protect the device that will receive the information.
- Regularly, review the type of data that is being created about your baby and reflect upon any privacy issues for your baby or family.

#### **Home Assistants and Smart-homes**

Google Home and Amazon Echo are the leading devices which allow you to use simple voice commands to complete household tasks, play songs, get the weather and more. Smart-homes contain innovative, Wi-Fi connected devices and appliances that were created to simplify your home life. Smart refrigerators, thermostats, coffee-makers and more offer convenience to families. However, these inanimate devices and appliances "know" a lot of information about you and your family and parents need to protect from unauthorized access and security breaches.

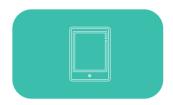


- Understand that the device is always "listening" and this may be a privacy risk.
- If possible, change the device "wake" word that wakens your home assistant and activates listening mode.
- Password-protect all devices that will contain your family data.
- Use a secure internet connection such as a Virtual Private Network, (VPN).
- Review and delete your interactions with your devices.



#### **Smartphones and Tablets**

Your smartphone or tablet may contain a lot of vital data, such as contacts, photos or even health data of your baby. Parenting apps that note baby milestones are also storing data and information about your baby and your family. Consider what information you want to share and how do you want to save the information (paper format, external hard drive, online files, etc.)



- Keep your smartphone and tablet updated to improve performance and security.
- Password-protect your smartphone and tablet with a strong screen lock and SIM card lock
- Avoid using public Wi-Fi and public charging stations. Neither are secure and hackers can
  easily intercept your data.
- Turn off Bluetooth when not in use and choose the setting 'non-discoverable' so that
  people cannot see your device if it is in range. Bluetooth is not very secure and also uses
  up your battery.



#### Wearable devices

Wearable Wi-Fi connected devices such as Fitbit and Apple watches are useful for keeping track of your health, but they can also provide information about your location.

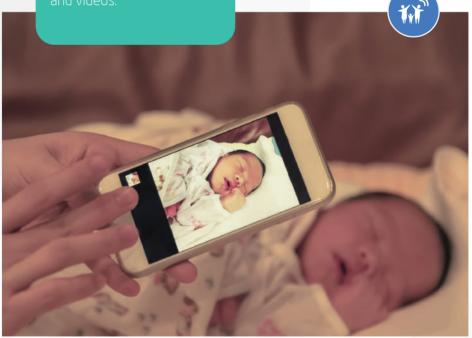
- Wearables exist for children that allow parents to track and call their young children via the device.
- Parents are advised to consider any privacy concerns and geo-localisation issues that might arise from the use of wearables.





#### **Tips for Sharing Baby with Family and Friends**

with family and friends, be





#### **Birth Announcements**

If you are going to send birth announcements, discuss with your spouse how do you plan to inform the world of the new arrival.

Electronic announcements, unlike paper announcements can exist forever.

Choose photos and language accordingly and provide your child with privacy even at this young age.



#### **Sharing Ultrasounds**

Your baby's ultrasound is a souvenir for your family, but consider carefully sharing the ultrasound with the world.

If you decide to share, make sure to remove your name and hospital information from the ultrasound image to maintain some degree of privacy.

Be careful about sharing too much information in the caption. A pregnancy announcement is one thing, a step-by-step guide to the first few weeks of your unborn child's life may fall into the category of oversharing.

Think about timing for posting an ultrasound. Sometimes later is better than earlier.



#### **Sharing Images on Social Media**

Social media is a time-efficient manner to inform family members and friends of your family activities.

Once you post an image of your baby, please remember that the image is archived and that the image can be shared with others today, as well as in the future.

Do not share photos that show any negativity and can expose your child to ridicule.

Consider what impact, if any, photo sharing will have on your own parent-child relationship.



#### Paper photo albums vs online photo sharing

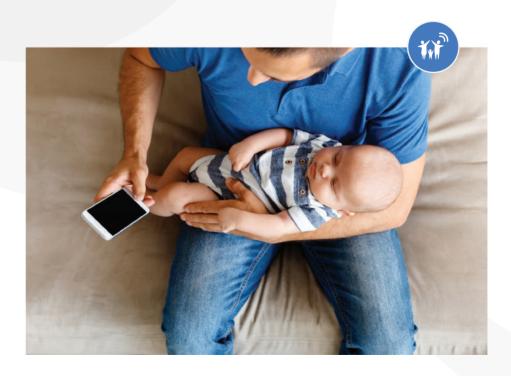
For maximum security, paper photo albums will win the battle over online photo sharing – every time.

If you are the least bit concerned about your digital guardianship, know that paper photo albums provide the ultimate protection against hackers.

#### **Digital Parenting Skills That You** Can Use Today for Your Baby

#### **Awareness**

- Stay updated on trends and issues by consulting the safespace.ga website on a regular basis.
- Speak with parents in your extended family and community about online safety topics and challenges.
- Share lessons and tips that work with your family.
- Have discussions with your baby's caregiver regarding the use of internet, technology and social media.



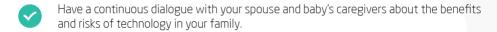
#### **Critical Thinking**



For every device, or platform, think critically before using the WWWW method:

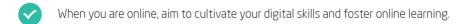
- Who will benefit or be harmed? Will this harm my baby in the future?
- What are the strengths and weakness? Is there an alternative?
- Where can I get more information about the safety of this device?
- Why is this necessary for my family?

#### **Engagement**





Enrol your children in workshops so they can explore technology and internet further.



#### Parental Concerns **Q&A**

As my baby grows, can we use screen time to make calls to family members?



Most pediatricians recommend that babies have the least amount of time in front of a screen. Previous recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatricians said absolutely no screen for children 0-2, but that restriction was recently adjusted because doctors realized that parents were using screens to communicate with family members.

As a new mother, I feel anxious thinking about the digital age. What can I do to increase my confidence?



Reading this guide is the first step in creating early awareness. The more that you search out and learn regarding digital parenting, the more that you will be able to teach your child on the dos and don'ts from an early age. This in turn will benefit them as they grow older and become teenagers.

Can my baby learn by watching videos?



Your baby learns best from face-to-face interaction. Your baby watches your facial expressions, judges emotions and starts to become a social creature – when you are in front of your baby smiling, talking and making faces. A tablet, smartphone or computer does not have the same effect.

I want to share photos of my baby and now I feel worried.



The intention of this guide is not to increase your worry, but rather to create awareness. You need to know that internet, technology and social media have incredible benefits, along with risks. Now that you know that there may be risks, you can better manage those risks. You can check your privacy settings, you can share photos that do not always show your child's face, you can limit other identifying personal information about your family and your child.

I have heard that it may be harmful to my baby if I'm on my smartphone. Is that misinformation or reality?



There has not been enough research to state conclusively, but observations have been made that parents are becoming increasingly absorbed in their own devices. Common sense would indicate that parents need to look at their devices less and look at their children more. Parental attention and face-to-face interaction. is essential for your child's development.

#### Conclusion

Becoming a parent is one of life's rewards and technology can add to those rewards. Technology can offer easy efficient ways to share your family's life with others, whether you choose to share the minimum or almost everything. Before sharing, answer this question: "When my baby is older, will they be happy about the information that I have shared online?"

For all uses of technology (baby monitors, webcams, etc.) and internet, including your social media accounts, you should know how to optimize your privacy settings, to turn off geo-localisation and to update the device/account regularly. Explore private social networks so that if you do share online, you have a more secure way to share photos and videos of your precious child.

No matter how much or how little you decide to share online, remember that as a parent of a newborn, you have a responsibility in the management of your family online footprint, identity and reputation.

### Further Reading/Resources for Parents

#### Safespace:

#### http://safespace.qa

Qatar's Centre for cyber safety information. Resources and information for teachers, parents and students.

A Guide to Ethical Responsibility in a Digital World

#### https://bit.ly/2pK6mGY

A guide reflecting online behavior from an ethics and values perspective prepared by Ministry of Transport and Communications, Qatar.

#### **Digital Natives**

#### https://bit.ly/2pMM8fX

Primary research studying the online behavior of young people in Qatar, conducted by Ministry of Transport and Communications, Qatar.

#### Vodafone AmanTech

#### https://www.vodafone.ga/en/better-world/aman-tech

Resources for parents and caregivers with age-appropriate checklists, tips and guides.

Please consult www.safespace.qa to access a listing of other resources for parents in Qatar, Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Europe.