

Understanding Your Baby

Newborn

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CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW BABY!

PREVENTING FATIGUE & EXHAUSTION

For most new parents the first weeks at home with a new baby are often the hardest in their lives. You will probably feel overworked, even overwhelmed. Inadequate sleep will leave you fatigued. You may wonder if you will ever catch up on your rest or work. The solution is asking for help. Ideally, you were able to make arrangements for help before your baby was born. Clarify that your role is looking after your baby. Your helper's role is to shop, cook, houseclean and wash cloths and dishes. If your newborn has a medical problem that requires special care, your doctor may arrange for home visits by a health professional.

The way to avoid sleep deprivation is to get your sleep in bits and pieces. Go to bed earlier in the evening. When baby naps you should also nap. *If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of your baby.*

POSTPARTUM BLUES

Postpartum blues may occur in the days following delivery. The symptoms include tearfulness, tiredness, sadness and difficulty in thinking clearly. The main cause of this temporary reaction is due to hormonal changes. Many mothers feel let down and guilty about these symptoms because they have been let to believe they should be overjoyed about caring for their newborn. In any event, these symptoms usually clear in 1 to 3 weeks as the hormone levels return to normal and the mother develops routines and a sense of control over her life. There are several ways to copy with the postpartum blues:

- Acknowledge your feelings. Discuss them with your partner or someone close to you.
- Get adequate rest.

- Get help with your work.
- Interact with other people and other parents; don't become isolated. Get out of the house at least once a week.
- By the third week, setting aside an evening a week for a "date" with your partner is also helpful.

If you have severe symptoms such as thoughts of harming yourself or your baby or don't feel better by the time your baby is 1 month old, talk to your doctor.

VISITORS

Only close friends and relatives should visit you during your first month at home. They should not visit if they are sick. During visits the visitor should pay special attention to older siblings.

NEWBORN DEVELOPMENT & NORMAL ACTIVITY

Each child is unique. While certain behaviors and physical milestones tend to occur at certain ages, a wide spectrum of growth and behavior for each age is normal.

Babies do many things like cry, grasp, yawn, suck, swallow, blink, cough, gag, sneeze, hiccup, burp and pass gas. Some actions are reflexes like:

- Grasps whatever is placed in hand
- Sucks whatever is placed in mouth
- Is startled by sudden noises and movements

Your baby's movements will be mostly jerky, uncontrolled motions like waving arms, kicking legs, with lots of wiggles and squirms. Newborns may turn their head from side to side while lying on their tummy. Newborns cannot turn their body or support their head without assistance, and cannot sit without support. Your baby can see but cannot focus clearly. A newborn sees best at 8 to 10 inches.

Your baby will smile spontaneously, discriminate between some smells, will begin to turn in direction of sounds, and begin to distinguish the human voice from other sounds. Your baby may be more sensitive to high-pitched voices, especially the mother's voice. It is normal for your baby to cry a lot. Your baby is best calmed by a soft, rhythmic voice, and may tiny gurgling sounds when content.

CRYING

Crying is the only way your baby has to talk to you. Crying babies need to be held. They need someone with a soothing voice and a soothing touch. You can't spoil your baby during the early

months of life. You will soon learn to distinguish your baby's cry, and know what your baby needs. Trust your instincts.

FEEDING

All babies lose some weight during the first few days after birth. Most bottle-fed babies are back to birth weight by 10 days of age, and breast-fed babies by 14 days of age. Then infants gain approximately an ounce per day during the early months. The normal newborn's hunger drive ensures appropriate weight gain. Know your baby's feeding cues such as:

- Turning his head toward whatever is close, mouth open, searching for a nipple
- Sucks his fingers or fists
- Fussing or cries

Breast milk is the *best* nutrition for your baby. A breast fed baby should eat every 2 to 3 hours, while a bottle fed baby should eat 2 to 3 ounces of formula fortified with iron every 3 to 4 hours. In the newborn period you should not let your baby go more than four hours without food. You may need to wake your baby during the night for these feedings. You can tell if your baby is getting enough to eat if there are at least 6 wet diapers each day and 3 or more soft stools per day. Contact your doctor if you are concerned about your baby's eating patterns.

SLEEP

It is important to make sure your baby has a safe place to sleep.

Crib Safety:

- Space between the crib bars should be less than 2 3/8 inches (about 4 adult fingers, or less than the width of a soda can).
- Mattress should fit tight so the baby cannot be trapped between the mattress and the sides of the crib (no wider than 2 adult fingers).
- Keep plastic bags, cords and drapery away from your baby's crib. Keep blankets, pillows, stuffed animals and toys away from your baby's head.

Family Bed:

You might choose to have your newborn sleep with you in your bed. It is especially convenient during the newborn period because babies wake up less often when they sleep with their mothers and it is easier to keep a close watch on the baby. If you are breastfeeding, you will not have to get up to feed the baby. It is not safe to have the baby sleep with you if:

- you have a waterbed

- you drink alcohol or use any other drugs including tobacco
- you are taking any medications which may make you drowsy (like pain medicines, etc.)

Remember to place your baby on his back to sleep.

Newborns sleep a lot, about 16 hours per day on average. Don't be surprised if your baby has days and nights reversed during the first few weeks. Soon your baby will adjust to a regular sleep schedule. Getting enough rest is important for you and your baby.

SAFETY TIPS

- Always use a car seat. At this age your baby should be in the back seat, facing the rear. Never place your baby in the front seat of a car, especially if it has a passenger side air bag.
- The safest place for your baby is in your arms. When she cannot be in your arms, make sure she is away from danger of falling, pets, young children, and other hazards.
- Maintain a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, ask your doctor about ways to help you quit. Even if you smoke outside, your baby is exposed to smoke from residue left on your clothes, skin and hair.
- Know the signs of possible illness in a newborn:
 - Fever – a rectal temperature greater than 100.4° F is considered an emergency at this age. Call your doctor immediately.
 - Difficulty with breathing: wheezing, grunting, nostrils flare, skin or lips look blue or gray, outlines of the ribs visible if your baby is working hard to breathe.
 - Sleeping more than normal, or acting lethargic
 - Difficulty feeding
 - Severe or worsening jaundice

WELL CHILD VISITS

It is important for your doctor to see your baby regularly to make sure you and your baby are doing well. Try to develop a habit of jotting down questions about your child's health or behavior at home and bring this list with you to office visits to discuss with the physician. If at all possible, both the mother and father should go to these visits. Most physicians prefer to get to know both parents during a checkup rather than during the crisis of an acute illness.

CALL YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR IF:

- your baby shows any signs of illness
- your baby is not eating well

You can reach a doctor 24 hours a day by calling: 406-862-2515

IMMUNIZATIONS & NEXT DOCTOR VISIT

At this point there are no immunizations which need to be given. Your baby should have received her first Hepatitis B immunization in the hospital. Your baby may have blood drawn to test for genetic and metabolic abnormalities at today's visit (the 2nd in a two part test) if you were released from the hospital before your baby was 48 hours old.

Your baby's next appointment will usually be at the age of 2 weeks, unless your doctor advises differently.