

Guidance For The Parents Of The Newborn

Feeding

In most cases breast milk provides ideal nutrition for your baby. Breast milk is easy to digest, contains appropriate nutrients, and can help prevent some infections. Breast fed babies typically feed every 2-3 hours for 10-20 minutes on each breast. Since most breast-fed babies initially lose weight, expect to feed your baby on demand (more frequently than every 2-3 hours) during the first two or three weeks of life. If you choose to feed your baby formula, use an iron-fortified formula. If your baby seems to have difficulty with a formula, discuss this with your pediatrician prior to switching brands/types of formula. Most infants will feed 2-3 ounces every 3-4 hours. Make sure you feed your baby in a semi-upright position. All babies need to be burped frequently; swallowed air, which is not burped up, may become painful gas as it passes through your baby's digestive tract. Never warm bottles of breast milk or formula in a microwave oven. This practice can create hot pockets of fluid in the bottle, which will burn your baby. Most new mothers worry whether their baby is feeding enough. Take cues from your baby – when she is full she will turn her head away or stop sucking. A well-fed baby should have 6-8 wet diapers per day. Giving additional water is not necessary and may be dangerous. On extremely hot days, 1 - 2 ounces of water may be given once or twice a day or increase breast-feeding.

Bowel Movements

Infants can be very irregular in the frequency of bowel movements. Some babies will have a bowel movement with every feed while others stool only once every 5-6 days. Both situations are normal. Infants commonly turn red and grunt when they have a bowel movement. This does not mean they are constipated. If your baby's stools are harder than firm clay or there is blood on the surface of the stool, call the office.

Sleep

Place your baby on his back to sleep to reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). It is important that your baby have some time on his belly when he is awake to allow him to gain upper body strength and prevent his head from flattening in the back. To be safe, the slats on your crib should be less than or equal to 2 7/8 inches apart. Do not use soft bedding such as quilts, pillows, and blankets, and do not place stuffed toys in the crib as they may increase the risk of suffocation. Babies should share a bedroom with parents, but not the same sleeping surface, preferably until the baby turns 1 but at least for the first 6 months.

Infant Care

Your baby's **umbilical cord** will fall off some time during the first four weeks of life. In the meantime, you should clean the cord with alcohol one time per day. Until the cord has fallen off, your baby should be sponge bathed. Soaps and lotions that contain perfumes and dyes should be avoided as they may irritate the baby's skin. Most babies have **dry skin** with peeling of the hands and feet, this is normal and requires no special care. Be sure to carefully trim your baby's **fingernails** as needed to prevent him from scratching himself.

Infant Care (cont'd)

If your son was **circumcised**, place a gauze pad with Bacitracin® ointment on the head of the penis with each diaper change until the penis looks pink. Do not be surprised if your female infant has a **whitish vaginal discharge or blood tinged vaginal discharge** in her diaper – this is normal and will resolve by itself.

Infant Habits

There are certain common habits that most infants have which are perfectly normal including sneezing, hiccoughing, and spitting-up, passing gas and crying. Babies **sneeze** to keep their noses clear. Sneezing does not mean your baby has a cold. Similarly infants tend to make loud snorting noises at times while breathing. This is also normal. **Hiccoughs** are probably from air swallowing, and do not tend to bother infants at all. Many babies **spit-up** part of their feedings. This is due to an immaturity of a muscle that is between the esophagus and the stomach and is not usually caused by a formula intolerance or improper handling of the infant. Holding your infant upright after feeding as well as careful burping may decrease spitting, however over time, spitting will eventually stop on its own. If you think your baby is spitting excessively or vomiting, then we should see the baby in the office.

Prevention of Illness and Fever

Because infants have immature immune systems they are more susceptible to serious infections than older children and adults. To reduce exposure to germs, do not bring your baby to crowded places (i.e., church, malls, and supermarkets). Signs of illness to watch for include, failure to eat, vomiting, unusual irritability, lethargy, jaundice (yellow skin) and fever. You should have a digital thermometer (the tympanic, or ear, thermometers do not work with infants). If your baby shows any of the above symptoms take a rectal temperature. A temperature of 100.4 degrees in an infant is a **fever**. If your baby has a fever and is under 2 months of age, call the office immediately.

Safety

There are several measures you should take to prevent injury to your baby. Always use an infant **car seat** rear facing and in the back seat when taking your baby in a car. Never place an infant in a front seat with a passenger airbag. To prevent burns turn the thermostat on your **water heater down to 120 degrees** Fahrenheit. Keep hot liquids (coffee, soup) away from your baby. Install in your home and check on a regular basis both **smoke and carbon monoxide detectors**. For your baby's sake, keep your home and car free of tobacco smoke. **Never shake your baby** – this can cause permanent neurological damage. Never leave your baby alone in a tub or high places. When on the changing table, always keep a hand on your baby as she may startle and flip or slip off the table. Baby **walkers** are dangerous. Babies sustain broken bones and severe brain injuries by falling down steps or flipping over door jams. If you have purchased or were given a baby walker as a gift exchange it for a stationary walker which has no wheels (such as an Exersaucer®). Stationary walkers are safe for babies beginning at 4-5 months or age. For more information about child health, safety and parenting visit the American Academy of Pediatrics' web site @ WWW.AAP.ORG