

Healthy Kids

Newborn Care

It's worth remembering that there are many different ways of doing things that are necessary for the care of an infant. Our philosophy is not to require each newborn to conform to a set pattern of eating, sleeping, etc. We wish to encourage you as a parent to use your own good judgment and common sense as much as possible. We do not feel that any set of rules should be followed rigidly. A relaxed attitude toward the care of your baby is very helpful.

THE BABY'S FIRST WEEK

Among the things which may disturb you are the natural phenomena of sneezing, yawning, burping, hiccupping and crying. Sneezing is the baby's only way of removing mucus from his nostrils. Hiccups are merely spasms of the diaphragm muscle, and require no treatment. Most babies do a little vomiting of watery mucus during the first week of life. Try to remember that perfectly normal, healthy babies often cry up to two hours or more a day without obvious cause. When your baby cries, she may be thirsty or hungry, her diaper may be wet, she may be too warm or too cold, or she may be in an uncomfortable position. After checking these things, put her down and let her cry herself to sleep. Many babies cry 5 to 10 minutes after feeding before dropping off to sleep. Babies won't injure themselves just by crying. Just because your baby grunts, turn red in the face, groans or fusses when he passes a bowel movement, she is not necessarily constipated. Infants do not have good control over the muscles of rectum and abdomen, and therefore cannot push out a bowel movement as efficiently as an older child.

BABY AT HOME

Clothing

The natural tendency is to keep the baby too warm. Adjust his clothing on the basis of how the room feels to you. If you are comfortable when lightly dressed then he will be too.

Sleeping

There is no definite number of hours a baby should sleep every day. Some babies average 18 hours of sleep a day, while others remain awake for long periods of time. It is advisable to change the baby's sleeping position from day to day so that she is not always in the same position. Because of the possible relationship between sleeping position and SIDS (Sudden Infant

Death Syndrome), we strongly recommend placement on the back and alternate head position side to side prevent flattening of the head.

SKIN CARE

Sponge bathing is indicated until the belly button stump falls off. When baths are started, the frequency depends on the time of year and exposure to dirt. A bath every other day is usually sufficient in winter months. Use tap water without soap, or a non-drying soap such as "Dove". The scalp may not require washing more than once or twice a week. Use a "no tears" baby shampoo. Do not be concerned about hurting the anterior fontanelle (soft spot). It is well protected. Do not use oil on the baby's skin. If his skin has a tendency to be dry and crack at the wrists, knees and ankles, use Vaseline.

NAVEL

Keep the navel clean and dry. Apply rubbing alcohol on a Q-tip to the base of the cord (where it attached to the skin) a few times a day until it falls off. Air exposure helps with drying and separation. Keep the diaper folded down below the cord area.

Boys/Circumcision

Follow instructions given to you in the hospital regarding circumcision site. If the tip of the penis appears to be adhering to the diaper, you may apply a small amount of petroleum jelly to that area. If you son has not been circumcised, do not attempt to retract the foreskin.

Girls

Many infant girls have a thick mucus discharge, occasionally with a little blood, from the vagina for the first few weeks of life. This is normal and will gradually disappear.

Going Outdoors

You may take your baby out whenever the weather is pleasant. Crowds should be avoided during your baby's first two months of life. Try to avoid close contact with people with infections or illness during his first year of life.

Prevention or Reduction of Infectious Disease

Hand washing helps to prevent or minimize the spread of infections and illness more than all other approaches combined. Hand washing is important after using the toilet, changing diapers, coming in from the outdoors, etc. Please don't smoke around your baby! Passive smoke increases the frequency and severity of colds, coughs, croup, ear infections and asthma.

FEEDING

Most babies will want to eat about every 3 to 4 hours during the first week of life. At night wake your baby for a night feeding after 4 hours. If your baby's weight gain has been satisfactory at the 2 week visit, your doctor may advise you not to wake your baby for a night feeding unless it is to your advantage. For example, if the baby's next feeding is due at midnight and you wish to go to bed at 11, awaken your baby to feed him. Hopefully you can both then settle down for a long sleep.

Nursing

During the first days the breast contains a small amount of thin fluid called "colostrum". Your milk will not "come in" in large amounts until the 3rd to 5th day after delivery. Don't worry about how much your baby is getting these first few days. It usually takes several days before nursing is well established. During this time, expect to have occasional "bad days". Don't attempt a rigid schedule. Feeding may be necessary every 1 ½ to 3 hours during the first two weeks. A breast feeding mother often wonders if her baby is getting enough calories since she can't see how many ounces the baby takes. If your baby nurses on demand every 1 ½ to 3 hours and appears satisfied after feeding, and if she wets 4 to 5 diapers a day and has at least 3 to 4 seedy yellow stools, you are doing fine. Call the office if your baby is not making wet diapers or having bowel movements, not eating 6 to 8 times a day, or if she seems lethargic. These may be signs of dehydration which is a potentially serious problem for newborns.

Formula Feeding

Formula preparation and feeding instructions will be given to you at the time of discharge.

WELL BABY VISITS

Your baby's first office visit will be around 3-5 days of life for a newborn check. Her first well child check will be at age 2 weeks. Call for an appointment when you return home. Someone from our office may contact you at home shortly after your discharge. If you have not heard from our office within five days after your discharge, please call our office. Your baby should have regular examinations, even when he appears well, since these are important safeguards to his growth and development. At these visits he will receive his recommended immunizations.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

During the first two months of life you should call the doctor if he/she appears irritable, has a temperature greater than 100.4 F (or 38C), if he/she is not feeding well, or if he/she appears sick, jaundiced or lethargic.

We encourage you to visit our website at:
www.westside-pediatrics.com

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