

Caring for your baby: First 3 to 5 days

Congratulations on your new arrival! The first few days with your newborn baby can be joyous, and possibly a little overwhelming and unnerving. But don't worry. Caring for your infant will get easier, day by day, and these tips will help you keep your baby safe and healthy.

Feeding your baby

- Breast milk is the healthiest food for your baby, and is all the nutrition your baby needs for the first 6 months of life.
- If breastfeeding your baby, feed every 1 to 3 hours, 8 to 12 times every 24 hours.
- Do not use pacifiers until breastfeeding is going well.
Note: See p. 2 for more breastfeeding tips.
- If using formula, choose iron-fortified formula and feed about 2 to 3 ounces every 3 to 4 hours.
- Make sure your baby is getting 400 IU of vitamin D every day.
- Wake your baby for feeding if it has been more than 3 hours since the end of the last feeding.
- Do not give your baby honey in the first year of life.

Practicing healthy habits

- Wash your hands before holding your baby.
- Don't let anyone smoke in your home or car. Smoking around your baby increases the risk for SIDS (crib death), ear infections, asthma, and pneumonia.
- Keep your baby away from crowds and sick people (especially toddlers). Avoid air travel for the first month of life.
- Protect your newborn from whooping cough (pertussis). Make sure everyone who comes into contact with your infant is up to date with the Tdap vaccine.
- Keep umbilical cord area clean and dry.
- Your newborn should not sleep in the same bed as you. Instead, place your baby to sleep on their backs on a firm mattress in their own crib or bassinet, with no blankets, sheets, pillows, stuffed animals, crib bumpers, or other items.

- If your baby happens to sleep with you, put them down to sleep on their back, face up and uncovered. There should not be space between the bed and wall or headboard where your baby could slip down. Don't smoke, drink alcohol, or take other drugs. These activities put your baby at higher risk when sleeping with you.
- Dress your baby in the same amount of clothes as you are wearing. While cold air and wind do not cause ear infections or pneumonia you should add a hat during the winter when going outside.
- Protect your baby from sun exposure (no more than 10 minutes at a time).

Keeping your baby safe

- Avoid SIDS (crib death). Put your baby down to sleep on their back (not side or stomach), on a firm, flat mattress with their face uncovered. If your baby falls asleep in your arms or a sling, make sure their face is uncovered.
- Use a car seat for every car ride. Place in back seat, facing backward. Rear-facing car seats cannot be used with passenger side air bags. For questions about car seats, call toll-free **1-800-282-5587** or visit **www.800BUCKLUP.org**.
- Prevent burns. Lower water heater temperature to warm or low (below 120°F). Do NOT warm bottles in microwave. Always check temperature of formula with a few drops on your wrist before feeding.
- Never shake your baby. Shaking or spanking a baby can cause serious injury and death.

Knowing when your baby is sick

Infants can get infections easily. Call your baby's doctor right away if your newborn has any of these symptoms:

- A rectal temperature (in your baby's anus) over 100.4°F or below 97.5°F. (Take your baby's temperature if they feel hot or you think they may be sick.)

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- Very sleepy or not eating well (does not wake up to eat).
- Breathing fast (more than 60 breaths a minute) for a prolonged length of time.
- Frequent coughing or forceful vomiting.
- Redness and swelling around the umbilical cord or circumcision.

Don't worry about your baby's hiccups, sneezes, congestion, and crossed eyes. They are normal in newborns.

Taking your baby's temperature

- Rectal temperatures are the most accurate and are recommended for the first 2 months of life. Ear temperatures are not reliable at this age.
- Lay your baby stomach down on your lap.
- Put some petroleum jelly on the end of the thermometer, gently put the thermometer no more than 1 inch into the rectum (anus), and hold for 2 to 3 minutes.
- A rectal temperature over 100.4°F is a fever.

Breastfeeding tips

Good news! Most breastfeeding problems can be prevented.

How to tell if your baby is getting enough to eat

- Listen for swallowing during feeding.
- Let your baby nurse as long as they are hungry.
- Count wet diapers. Your baby should have 1 wet diaper for each day of life, up to 6–8 wet diapers at 6 days.

Remember that the more you nurse, the more milk your body will make.

How to position and latch correctly

- Using one hand, hold your baby close, facing you.
- Use your other hand to hold your breast with your fingers under your breast and your thumb at the top edge of the areola (dark skin around nipple).
- Touch your baby's mouth with your nipple.

- Wait until your baby's mouth opens like a wide yawn, then bring your baby onto your breast.
- Your baby's mouth should cover as much of the areola as possible.
- If you feel pain after the first few minutes, break the suction, take the baby off the breast, and start again.

What to do if your nipples are sore

- Soreness is normal when a baby first latches.
- Use different positions when breastfeeding.
- Express some breast milk. Rub it on the sore area and let air dry for 5 minutes.
- Call your baby's doctor if you have very sore nipples or breast pain, if you think your baby is not getting enough to eat, or if your baby has deep yellow or orange colored skin (jaundice).

How to prevent engorgement

Breastfeed frequently. Let your baby nurse as long as they are hungry.

What to do if your breasts become engorged

- Fullness or swelling in your breasts usually lasts 24 to 48 hours.
- Put warm, moist cloths on your breast before feeding.
- Express milk to soften breasts to help your baby get a good latch.
- Continue to breastfeed at least 8–12 times in 24 hours.

Next well-child visit at 1–2 weeks old

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