



YOUR **NEW BABY**

 **Springfield**
clinic

A COMMUNITY OF CARING



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF YOUR BABY

Can I really take care of my baby properly?

For thousands of years people have been taking care of babies. But it's different now— much different. Childbirth is safer, babies are healthier and parenting is easier—that is, many of the mechanical things are easier. On the other hand, babies still cry, take time to feed and require changing. Sure, there's lots to know and lots to do, but with love, common sense and a few up-to-date guidelines, you are off to a great start.

How will I know if everything is alright?

Having a new baby is something like getting a new car. It's been a long wait. Now, everyone wants to look, listen, touch, lift, open, turn and look again to be sure that the parts are all there and working properly.

More than likely, everything is in order. This baby is really something! Did you know there are some 10,000,000,000 brain cells? And did you stop to think about the amazing heating, cooling, plumbing, pumping and even reproductive systems? It is estimated that there are 525 muscles and billions of specialized cells in a single baby. That is more than in a car or in just about anything you could buy.

The amazing thing is that everything works so well most of the time. But, look things over and ask about anything you happen to wonder about. That beats worrying about something that may mean nothing.

BABY'S PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

What is my new baby supposed to look like?

A newly born baby is a strange looking creature, often lobster-red, coated with a protective white-greasy "vernix." But good news—the looks quickly improve with age. Even a few minutes makes a difference, and soon the newborn really looks like the baby everyone has been waiting for.

Isn't my baby's head a funny shape?

Maybe. It often is. To begin with, a baby's head is large in proportion to the rest of the body and seems to sit on the shoulders without much of a neck. If a baby's head were solid, birth would be very difficult. So actually, the head is made up of several bones which can do some giving-and-taking during birth. They don't join together until later. Thus the head is shaped longer, rounder or flatter depending on the baby's position during birth.

At first, the forehead is often quite flat and sloped toward the back. Ridges and bumps can be felt where the bones overlap a little. Quite a bit of natural reshaping occurs in the first few days. Don't worry, your baby will look better in a day or so!

What are the soft spots?

There are two soft spots (fontanels) which are places on the head where the bones have not yet come together. The posterior one is quite small and disappears rather soon, but the diamond-shaped fontanel on top of the head takes one to one-and-a-half years to close. Go ahead, touch it, and don't be afraid to wash the area vigorously at bath time...you won't hurt anything.

BABY'S PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS continued...

Will the pink marks on the eyelids go away?

These light-pink blotches will eventually disappear, but it may take some time. There's no worry or hurry.

Why do my baby's breasts look large?

Breast enlargement in a baby girl or boy is caused by a hormone from the mother. There is no cause for concern even when a little milk-like discharge is produced. The swelling goes down soon enough.

Is mottled skin a worry?

No. A baby's skin may from time to time appear mottled. This pink-and-white pattern may come and go without worry.

BABY'S BEHAVIORS

Will I be getting up every night with my baby?

Probably for awhile. How long is hard to predict. Some babies skip night feedings sooner than others.

What about colic?

A daily fussy period is expected, often in the evening. First, be sure your baby isn't being overfed. Then, if getting rid of swallowed air and other simple comforting measures don't solve the problem, call the doctor's office. Don't forget that soothing music often helps to calm baby—and everyone else.

What's the deal with burping?

When your baby stops nursing for a few moments, it's time to burp-out a bubble of air from the stomach. Gentle patting with your baby over your shoulder or moving to- and-from a sitting position helps the air find its way out. Whenever air is swallowed (at feeding times or in-between) burping is comforting.

Is hiccupping a bad sign?

No, most healthy new babies have periodic episodes of hiccupping which cause no difficulty at all.

Do my baby's ears work yet?

Yes. You will notice that the baby responds to loud voices and noises. By the way, quiet music is soothing to a baby.

How much does a baby see?

Your baby can distinguish light from dark and can see gross objects, but it will be some time before much focusing and consistent eye alignment occurs.

Does it hurt a baby to cry?

It all depends on what's going on. Some mothers won't let their babies cry for a single minute. They drop everything and run at the first whimper, which doesn't make sense. On the other hand, crying may mean "Hey, mom—I'm wet." or "How about changing this messy diaper." or "I've been swallowing some air and have a tummy-ache. Sit me up in your arms and burp me!" An overly filled, or empty stomach, may also cause crying, or maybe your baby's just tired and needs to cry itself to sleep. All babies are going to do some crying.





FEEDING YOUR BABY

The decision to breastfeed or formula-feed your baby is entirely up to you. While there are many proven health and cost-saving benefits to breastfeeding, advancements in formula have led to a healthy alternative for parents who are unable or choose not to breastfeed.

For women committed to but struggling to breastfeed, seek a lactation consultant. Support, encouragement and expertise can do wonders for a mother and baby struggling to nurse.

Feeding your baby, whether by breast or by bottle, is an excellent way to bond and connect with your child. Breastfeeding mom's can consider pumping and filling a bottle with breastmilk for Baby. This takes some of the pressure off of the mother to be the sole feeder of the baby and allows Dad to participate in this bonding experience.

Why didn't my baby want to eat last night at feeding time?

If you were awakened at 3 a.m. would you be excited about eating a hamburger with onions? Of course not. This would be foolishness. Likewise, it is seldom necessary to get a baby up to eat. If a baby wakes up hungry, that's a different question!

How do I know when my baby is hungry?

If it's been awhile since the last feeding and your baby starts yelling, it's a pretty good assumption that your baby wants to eat. In other words, a demand schedule makes more sense than feeding a baby on a strict clock schedule.

Can a baby really get too much milk?

The mark of success at one time was to see how big and fat baby could be. It isn't. It's easy to mistake hunger for fussiness or crying from a tummy too full of milk or swallowed air. Yes, a baby really can get too much milk, and that can result in irritability, vomiting, diarrhea and, eventually, an overweight baby. Be sure swallowed air is burped-up during, after and in-between feedings.

BREASTFEEDING

What's the best way to get my baby nursing at the breast?

Be comfortable and relaxed. Hold your baby close so the mouth touches the nipple. Usually the mouth flies open and after a little exploring the nipple is found, and the rest is automatic. Let the baby get as much of the breast in his mouth as possible. This is more comfortable for mother, and makes a better suction seal for baby so less air is swallowed.

How long should a breast-fed baby nurse, and how often?

At first, about three minutes on each breast for the first few feedings, then five or six minutes (per breast) at a feeding should be plenty for the next few days. Your baby gets protein-rich colostrum prior to the pure thin-bluish milk coming in.

For the first few days, the baby will want to nurse frequently and doesn't get much at a single feeding. This is fine. Frequent nursing stimulates milk production. As time goes on, the baby may sleep for quite awhile between feedings. Letting the baby set his own feeding schedule usually works out best.

When milk comes in, the baby can nurse longer, often falling asleep nursing. When the milk is flowing freely, a baby can nurse from both breasts or alternating breasts, emptying at least one breast per feeding. A complete breast-feeding may take as few as five minutes or up to twenty-five minutes.

BREASTFEEDING continued...

Can I “lose my milk?”

Many mothers think their milk is “lost,” not realizing that tense, firm breasts usually become soft in a few days. Variations in the feeling of fullness as a balance of milk is reached may be deceptive. Lots of milk can come from small breasts that don’t seem full at all.

What about breast and nipple care?

Wear comfortable nursing bras. Change nursing pads often and use a nipple-softening cream after nursing or if nipples become dry or irritated. Gently wash and dry nipples before and after each feeding.

What kind of diet is best while nursing?

A normal, well-balanced diet with lots of liquids is best. Thirst guides most nursing mothers to want to drink about three quarts of fluid each day, one quart of which usually being any kind of milk. If a mother is allergic to milk or doesn’t like it, she can still successfully produce plenty of milk without drinking milk at all.

Most anything can be eaten in moderation by a nursing mother, noting that sometimes different foods may cause baby to have a tummy-ache or loose stools. These foods don’t have to be eliminated completely unless a problem comes up. Check before taking medicines, as many can affect a nursing baby.

FORMULA FEEDING

How do you hold the bottle?

Hold your baby snugly so baby experiences a warm and happy feeling. Touching the nipple to the lips of a hungry baby is usually enough to get the mouth open. Slip the nipple all the way in. Then hold the bottle so the nipple stays filled with milk. For many reasons, never leave a baby with a bottle propped in his/her mouth.



CARING FOR YOUR BABY

When does the cord come off?

The umbilical cord, no longer being necessary, begins drying up right after being cut at birth. The remaining part will drop off in a week or two.

How do you care for the cord and navel?

Clean around the cord a couple of times a day with warm water. When the cord comes off, use a cotton swab dipped in alcohol to clean periodically for the next 24 hours. A little moist secretion and a few drops of blood may be present. However, more drainage (especially with a bad smell) or redness around the cord base is cause for concern.

What about care after circumcision?

Keep the area clean. A little petroleum jelly may be desirable to reduce irritation for the first two or three days. That's about it. After the first week, the foreskin should be pushed back toward the body and washed every day to avoid adhesions.

What about bathing?

Sponge bathing is best at first. Then when the cord comes off, real baths are fun. Use a mild soap, noting that almost any soap might cause a rash. If it seems that one soap is a problem, switch.

Should matted (crusty or gooey) eyes be washed?

Yes, with plain water.

How do you clean a little girl's private parts?

It is important to separate the labial folds when washing a baby girl. Otherwise, the two sides may stick together forming "adhesions" that will have to be separated. (These adhesions have nothing to do with the hymen.) Incidentally, a little vaginal secretion and even bleeding sometimes occurs at a week or so which is no cause for concern. This is another quickly passing effect of mother's hormones.

Should my baby's fingernails be clipped?

If the fingernails are long or the baby scratching itself (or you), yes. You may also file down with a nail file.

Will my baby really lose weight the first few days?

Yes, but the birth weight almost always is regained within the first couple of weeks.

Must my baby have a bowel movement every day?

No. Quite normally, a baby may have several stools each day and then suddenly go two, three or even four days without a bowel movement. More worry is wasted about bowel movements than any other part of baby care. Don't. It's expected for a baby to push, strain, draw his legs up, cry and get red when he has a bowel movement. Avoid laxatives. Unless the stools are rock-hard, your baby is not constipated.

What color are "normal" stools?

A newborn's first few stools look like sticky greenish-black tar. Then the stools become greenish-yellow with a seedy consistency. Gradually the more typical yellow color is reached, with quite a bit of variation depending on what the baby is fed. For example, a baby fed only breast milk usually produces watery-soft golden-yellow stools with very little odor. The stools of babies on different prepared formulas have their individual characteristics and are usually not as strong-smelling as the yellow-brown stools of a baby on canned or fresh cow's milk.



How much clothing does my baby need to wear?

How much clothing do you need to be comfortable today? That's enough. Don't make your baby hot and miserable by putting on too many layers of clothing and covers.

Does my baby's name make much difference?

Maybe not now. But it might make a lot of difference later. A little time choosing a name might avoid some teasing about a particular combination of initials or names. Is a name a "plus" or a "minus?" Will it be strange and difficult for future playmates to say? Think about nicknames. What about the spelling? Is there something about a name that may cause a youngster (or grown-up) embarrassment or difficulty and confusion? A name lasts a long time. It's worth thinking about.

Is sibling jealousy of a new baby inevitable?

If you had been in the center-stage spotlight and were suddenly displaced, would you like it? Neither does a three-year-old, or a child of any age, who suddenly feels unimportant. Sometimes, even a father feels a little jealous about all the attention baby is getting—perhaps rightly so. All family members need to continue getting attention, affection and love after baby comes. Make siblings feel important and part of the new event:

- Help them anticipate the arrival of the new baby
- Promote their role in the family to "big" brother or sister
- Establish new privileges based on their new role
- Remind visitors to greet siblings before the new baby
- Facilitate special one-on-one time for the siblings with mom and dad

That's it for the first forty questions, but you can be sure as the years go by, there will be forty thousand more. When questions arise, don't hesitate to reach out to your pediatrician or call Springfield Clinic TeleNurse at 217.528.7541.

Notes



A COMMUNITY OF CARING

217.528.7541

www.SpringfieldClinic.com/Pediatrics