

## Meeting Your Newborn<sup>1</sup>

The process of birth is hard on both the baby and the mother, but meeting your newborn for the first time is a precious moment. It's completely normal for the baby to look a bit misshapen (their head and looks will change a lot in the first few days and weeks of their life). It's often a good sign if your baby is crying loudly. In the first hours after birth it is important to cuddle your baby skin-to-skin. Talk to them. Let them hear your voice. Gaze into their eyes and let them focus on your face.

Newborns often have a fine hair called lanugo all over their body at the time of birth. This thin and short hair falls off in a few weeks. Some newborns may begin to have peeling shortly after birth. Rashes, blotches and tiny white spots often on the nose are typical for newborns. Most of these will disappear without any intervention, but your doctor will examine your child closely to make sure there are no issues. This is all normal. A healthcare team member will clamp your baby's umbilical cord after they are born. It will dry up and the clamp will be removed before you go home. Their umbilical cord that will dry up and fall off after 10 to 21 days.

## Leaving the Hospital<sup>2,3</sup>

You must have an infant rear facing car seat properly installed before leaving the hospital. **Always install car seats according to the manufacturer's instructions. Ensure that each seat at every age is correct for your child's weight, size and age.**

The nurses will dress and bathe your newborn during your stay at the hospital. They use simple onesies or a shirt and a little hat to help your baby regulate body temperature. You may choose an outfit for your trip home, but it's wise to keep it simple. It is a great idea to bring baby mittens with you for your baby. Many babies are born with sharp nails that easily scratch their faces.

## Newborn Sleep<sup>4</sup>

Newborns sleep 16 to 17 hours a day. **While babies sleep much of a 24-hour period, they may only sleep one or two hours at a time.** They don't have a regular sleep cycle until they are around six months old. The safest place for a newborn to sleep is in a crib or bassinet in the room with the baby's parents or caregivers. No loose clothing, blankets or pillows should be in the area where the baby is resting.

## Crying & Colic<sup>5</sup>

The main method of communication an infant has is to cry. The only way a baby can call for help is by crying. When a child under the age of six months cries for more than a few moments, you will need to respond.

They use crying to communicate that they're hungry, wet, uncomfortable or sick. Infants also communicate hunger with their gestures/behaviors – i.e., rooting to find their mothers breast to feed. You cannot spoil a child at this young age. You're only helping take care of something they cannot take care of themselves.

You may have a time when your precious little one will cry, and nothing you do will comfort him. When the crying lasts for longer than three hours a day, and there are no known health problems, it is called colic.

## Colic:

- usually occurs at the end of the day and when you have had the least sleep
- usually occurs at about the same time each day and stops after your baby is exhausted
- it's a good idea to see your pediatrician to rule out any health problems
- usually starts when babies are about two weeks old and peaks at about six weeks
- usually improves within three to four months, but can last up to six months

Make sure during this time that you get lots of rest when you can. Sleep while their baby sleeps when possible.

## What's the Scoop on Poop?<sup>6</sup>

The color of your baby's stools can sometimes cause concern to a new parent. The color of the stool often depends on what he eats.

The first stool passed by a newborn is a greenish-black and is sticky. It is called meconium. Breastfed babies have stool that is like Dijon mustard with little white bits. Formula's stool is more yellow or tan and pasty in texture. Green to the normal colors that are common. If a baby's stool appears green, this is often a normal poop color, but it could also be related to the formula the baby is drinking or to the way the mom is breastfeeding. Mention it to your pediatrician if concerned. If your newborn stool is white, light gray or red, take them to see the pediatrician immediately.

Babies may stool with each feeding or every two to three days. If your baby goes four days without pooping, contact your pediatrician. They could have constipation.

## Newborn Hunger<sup>7,8</sup>

The one thing you can count on is that your baby will let you know when he is hungry. During the first few weeks of life, he will need to be fed during both the day and night. Babies who are breastfed require more frequent feedings than babies who are fed by bottle.

You might be confused at first about how often you should feed your baby and how much. You may receive advice from well-intended family and friends about feeding and sleeping schedules. The best rule of thumb, though, is to let your baby tell you when he is hungry and then feed him. This is called "demand feeding." He will give you cues that he is ready to eat by turning his head toward you, sucking on his fingers or making sucking noises. If you are breastfeeding, he may "root" for your breast. Ultimately, he will cry if you miss his early cues.

Generally, newborns may want to be fed around every two hours. If you are breastfeeding, your baby may take about 15 minutes at each breast. He will let you know when he is done. Breastfed babies rarely overeat. If you are feeding by bottle, he may take about 2 to 3 ounces of formula at each feeding. After the first few days of life, a newborn should be wetting six to eight diapers a day and soiling about two to five diapers.

## Watch Out for Infections

Infections are another common complication for newborns. An infant normally contracts an infection during birth or through close proximity with sick visitors. It is important to watch for infections around the belly button, eyes and the circumcised foreskin. Signs of infection include a lack of appetite, poor weight gain, weak crying, fever or increased irritability. A fever of 100.4 (measured by rectal thermometer) is an emergency in the first month of life. Go to your nearest emergency room to have your baby evaluated and cared for.

### Taking Time With Your Baby

The quiet time you spend with your baby helps him to feel loved and protected. At this early age, touching, holding and talking to him is very important for both of you. Consider singing and playing with your baby. You will learn to understand his needs, and he will learn to understand his environment through you. You can never spoil him by holding him too much or by spending too much time with him. Remember, he needs you. Soon, you will wonder what you ever did before he came along!

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