

GUIDE FOR LOOKING AFTER YOUR NEWBORN BABY

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HOSPITAL CLÍNICO UNIVERSITARIO
VIRGEN DE LA ARRIXACA



This information is intended to guide and help you to look after your newborn baby. If after reading this document you have any doubts or need any clarifications, do not hesitate to ask your baby's pediatrician or nurse.



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This and more information about childbirth at La Arrixaca is available on the website www.murciasalud.es/partonormal



Skin colour

A newborn's skin colour can vary from pink and white or yellowish to the typical red. Even from one moment to the next, colour may vary depending on the baby's activity. A newborn's hands and feet may be cold and bluish.

On the third day, it is common for newborns to «turn yellow», especially their eyes and skin. This yellowing is called jaundice. In normal circumstances, jaundice reaches its peak around the fourth day and subsequently disappears in a couple of weeks. If the baby is very yellow, this is due to a high level of bilirubin, and a treatment called phototherapy may have to be used.

Newborns' skin usually reacts to their new environment. Small red spots might appear on different parts of the body when the baby is approximately 1-2 days old (toxo allergic exanthema). This rash will go away on its own and requires no treatment.



Genitals

During the first few days of life a newborn's nipples may increase in size and even secrete a few drops of milky fluid. Do not squeeze them. If they turn red and hot or have secretion, see your paediatrician.

Newborn girls may experience a type of vaginal discharge (pseudo-menstruation) or white discharge, which will go away in a few days and requires no treatment.

During the first few days of life the newborn's urine may be a red-orange colour (known as urate crystals).



Bathing

You can bathe your baby from the very first day. There is no problem is wetting the cord stump as long as you always dry it very well afterwards.

It is advisable to bathe your infant at the same time every day. Some newborns prefer it in the morning, others in the evening. Bear in mind that babies usually feel relaxed after their bath, so it would be preferable to bathe them in the evening and before the last feed. The room must be warm and without any draughts: babies lose body heat quickly. Keep the water temperature warm, not hot. Before putting your baby into the bath, test the temperature with your elbow.

You can bathe your newborn daily or every 2 days. Genitals must be cleaned front to back especially in girls. It is very important to dry the umbilical cord stump very well after the bath.

Stools

Your newborn's first stools (meconium) will be blackish and sticky-looking. Then they will become normal and may range from watery-frothy and with whitish seedy-looking bits to compact. Variations in colour and texture are normal depending on whether the baby is being breastfed or formula fed. If your baby is adequately gaining weight, then the colour and frequency of stools should be no cause for concern, as the number of bowel movements per day is variable. Check with your baby's paediatrician if you notice any anomaly in this regard. It is advisable to change the wet or soiled nappies as soon as possible.

Umbilical Cord Stump

Your newborn's umbilical cord stump does not require any special care, except for being kept clean and dry. You may clean the stump with a gauze soaked in 70% alcohol, not leaving the gauze, about twice a day, although cleaning the area with soapy warm water and drying it well may be sufficient, since the use of antiseptics may slow down cord separation. Continue to clean the area 2 or 3 days more after it has fallen off. Keep the umbilical cord stump as dry as possible, since in this way it is less likely to get infected.

If it does not fall off within 12-15 days, if you notice skin redness or inflammation around the stump, secretion, pus or an unpleasant smell (it might be infected), you should see your baby's paediatrician.

Do not use umbilical cord girdles or similar items.



Diet and supplements

The best food for the newborn is his/her mother's milk.

Breastfed infants do not require any type of supplement. Water is usually not necessary if you breastfeed on demand, although in hotter seasons it may be necessary to avoid dehydration. Breastmilk contains everything the baby needs for growing. At sixth months other foods should also be offered.

About Vitamin D

Paediatricians recommend that all babies should receive a daily supplement of vitamin D, from 15 days old.

How to burp your baby

When babies feed, they may swallow air. Not all babies have to burp, so if your baby does not do so, it is probably because he/she does not need to. If your baby is formula fed, make him/her burp half-way through and at the end of the bottle. Make sure the teat is full of milk while feeding to reduce the amount of air swallowed. If your baby is breastfed, burp him/her when you change breast and after the second one. Breastfed babies swallow less air, so that the breastfed baby may not burp.

Hiccups

Most babies get hiccups during or after some feeds. Hiccups are not harmful to the baby, but annoying and can make him/her cry. Sometimes, a little drink of milk can make the hiccups disappear. Other times, you will just have to wait for the hiccups to stop on their own.

Regurgitation and vomiting

Infants often regurgitate after feeding, especially during the first few months. Regurgitation and vomiting are not the same thing. Regurgitation is like “spitting up” a little food and is usually not a cause for concern since it goes away as the baby grows and develops. Vomiting is the forceful expulsion of a large amount of milk . Some babies vomit once in a while. If vomiting persists, see your baby’s paediatrician.

Bedroom/Rest

The newborn’s room must be quiet, with natural light, well aired and with a pleasant temperature, around 20-22°C, avoiding overheating the baby, and no draughts. **DO NO SMOKE** in the baby’s presence.

Most newborns, though not all, sleep a lot. Some sleep up to 18 to 20 hours a day, while others only sleep 8 hours. Some babies are more active and alert, while others are calmer and quieter. In general, as babies grow, they need fewer hours of sleep. The mattress should be firm and no pillow should be used.



The Spanish Group for Sudden Infant Death Prevention of the Spanish Paediatrics Association recommends placing an infant to sleep lying on his/her back, avoiding the “face down” position while sleeping, pillows and cushions. As for the noise level, your baby should get used to everyday household noise from the beginning.

Clothing

Clothing should be loose-fitting to allow your baby move with ease, natural fabrics (cotton or linen), and suitable for every season of the year (warm in winter and cool in summer). Do not overdress him/her, as a baby does not need any more clothing than an adult (overdressing your baby is as harmful as underdressing him/her). Avoid garments with loose fibres, the use of safety pins, ties, or ribbons. Also avoid the use of garments with very small buttons or that are on the front because there may be a risk of choking

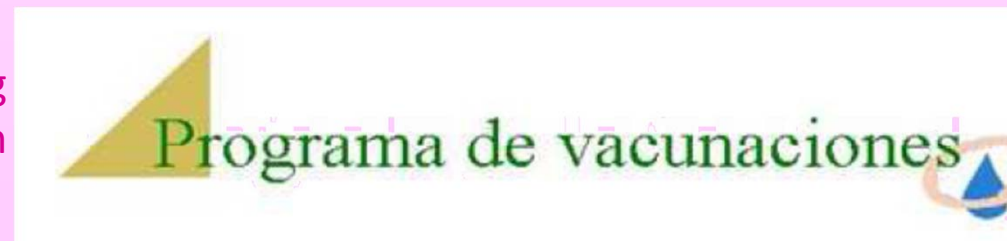
Dummy

It is preferable not to use a dummy, and if it is used, then only at night to sleep. According to the AEPED, using a dummy to sleep acts as a protective factor against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. It is advisable for the dummy to be a one-piece model and it should be washed frequently. Do not hang it around the baby's neck with a string or chain; there are security clips to secure it to your baby's clothing. Never put it into somebody else's mouth to clean it or put sugar, honey or any other substances on it. Your baby should give it up from the age of about one year when he/she starts chewing; if this use is prolonged it may lead to bite defects, deformation of the palate and alteration in teeth alignment.

Vaccines

They shall be administered at the newborn's corresponding Health Centre. It is essential to follow the official immunization schedule.

More information at: www.murciasalud.es/vacunaciones



Walks

Taking your baby for walks is very important for his/her health. You must take him/her out for a walk every day following your discharge from hospital, unless there is a problem preventing it. It is relaxing for your baby. Avoid times of intense heat or cold and direct exposure to the sun.

If you use a pushchair, take extra care when going up or down slopes/kerbs, securing him/her with the pushchair safety harnesses.

If you take him/her with you in the car, on every occasion, ALWAYS use an approved infant safety car carrier or seat and place it rearward-facing, harnessing it with the safety belt. If the car has airbags in the front seat, either disable it or place your baby in the back of the car. Most modern cars have specific safety anchoring systems for child seats (ISOFIX or similar), which reduce up to 22% of serious injuries in small children in traffic accidents.

Your older child and your baby

Often, older siblings suffer when there is a new baby at home:

- Please note that there will always be some degree of jealousy and rivalry. Anticipate this; prepare your child for the arrival of his/her little brother/sister, explaining about the new member of the family using terms appropriate to his/her age: tell them they are just as important for you as the baby, even though you are going to have to spend a lot of time and pay a great deal of attention to the new arrival.
- Let your child be a true helper making simple errands such as going to get a nappy or a towel for his/her little brother's/sister's bath.
- Take advantage of any opportunity to have moments alone with your child and show him/her your feelings towards him/her. Accept that you cannot be in two places or do two things at the same time.
- Do not punish your child for minor acts of jealousy. Give praise when he/she behaves well and cooperates, saying so frequently.

Visits

Take advantage of the time your child is awake to «show» your baby. No one likes being disturbed when they are sleeping.

Avoid exposing your baby to people who have a cold or any other infectious disease, especially young children (under 6 years of age).

Always ensure visitors wash their hands before touching your baby.

DO NOT SMOKE in the baby's presence.

Accident Prevention

- DO NOT LEAVE THE BABY ALONE, especially when you are bathing him/her, in the car or in the kitchen.
- Do not leave him/her on elevated surfaces.
- Do not tie any ribbons, chains, etc...
- Do not give the baby any toys that can be split up into multiple parts.
- Do not leave plastic bags or ropes near him/her.

Signs of alarm

- High body temperature.
- Stools: no bowel movement may indicate insufficient food.
- Urine: the same as above, it may indicate lack of food or hydration.
- Weight: the lack of significant weight gain should make us see the paediatrician.
- His/her skin or lips is/are dark or blue.
- He/she has difficulty breathing or his/her chest caves in when breathing.
- Extreme drowsiness or limpness , or excessive Irritability.

Being a father/mother is one of the most difficult tasks in life and also one of the most important (not to say the most important of all).



Unfortunately, it is one of the least respected and also "worst paid", but there is nothing comparable to the satisfaction of seeing your baby grow and being able to help him/her to do so. Feelings toward newborns are contradictory: on the one hand there is a feeling of tenderness toward them, experiencing pleasure and satisfaction as your baby grows and develops, and on the other hand, the feeling of fear having to cope with the responsibility of protecting, teaching and guiding your newborn toward his/her new life. We hope this advice will help you to have a good start in the most important task parents will ever have: looking after their newborn baby.