

Helpful tips when caring for your newborn



Taking care of a baby at home can be tough, especially as a first-time parent. These tips may help guide you through the first few months of parenthood to become confident about caring for your newborn.

You've survived nine months of pregnancy, now it's time to bring home your baby. Before you leave the hospital, be sure to take advantage of the resources they have available to new parents. Many hospitals have feeding specialists or lactation consultants, who can help you get started nursing or bottle-feeding. In addition, nurses are a great resource to show you how to hold, burp, diaper and care for your baby. So don't be afraid to ask questions and use the resources available.



GET EXPERT ADVICE

Parents can also get expert advice online from the American Academy of Pediatrics or [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org).



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EASE DISCOMFORT

Be sure to burp your baby by gently patting on your baby's back. Burping helps to get rid of the air they tend to swallow while feeding.

Try burping your baby every 2-3 ounces, or each time you switch breasts – or more frequently if your baby tends to be gassy or spit up a lot.

How often should I feed my baby?

Good question and one of the most important. It is generally recommended that babies are fed whenever they seem hungry, or demand feeding. Here are some of the signs to watch for:

- Opening their mouths
- Placing their hands to their mouths
- Puckering their lips as if to suck
- Crying is typically a late sign of hunger. The goal is to feed your baby before they get so hungry they get upset or difficult to calm down.

BREAST-FED BABIES: Newborns who are breast-fed typically nurse frequently and this will help stimulate milk production in the first month. A baby generally nurses for at least 10 minutes. But don't worry, as newborns get older, they will nurse less often and will begin to develop a schedule of feeding every 2-3 hours.

FORMULA-FED BABIES: Newborns who are formula-fed, feed every 3-4 hours. During these first few weeks, mix 2- to 3-ounce bottles for your baby. As their tummies get bigger at about two months, your baby may be taking 4-5 ounce bottles. As they grow, gradually increase this amount as you become familiar with your baby's eating patterns.

Is my baby getting enough to eat?

You can be assured your baby is getting enough to eat if he or she seems satisfied and does the following:

- Seems alert, content and active
- Is steadily gaining weight, growing and developing
- Is wetting and soiling diapers on a regular basis

Watch for signs that your baby is full (slow, uninterested sucking, turning away from breast/bottle) and stop feeding when you see these signs.



What should my newborn's diapers look like?

Newborns may have one poopy diaper a day at first. Poop is dark and tarry the first few days, and then becomes soft or loose and greenish-yellow by about three to four days. Newborns usually have several poopy diapers a day if breast-fed and fewer if formula fed.

Also clear or very pale urine is a good sign. If your baby is producing fewer than four wet diapers, or urine appears darker or pinkish, it may mean your baby's not getting enough to drink.



Is my baby getting enough sleep?

Newborns may sleep up to 16-17 hours a day, waking to feed every couple of hours. Your baby will not yet have a sense of day and night, but will begin to develop a sleep pattern over time, with regular sleep cycles by six months of age.

Never wake a sleeping baby? Within the first 3-4 weeks, you may want to wake your baby, day or night, every 3-4 hours until he or she shows good weight gain. After that, it's OK to let your baby sleep for longer periods of time.

WELL-CHILD CHECKUPS

Follow your doctor's suggested schedule for regular, well-child checks so that your little one can be weighed and measured to ensure they are on the right track.





How often and when do I bathe my baby?

Until your newborn's umbilical cord falls off and the navel heals completely, which is between one and four weeks, you will want to give your baby a sponge bath. When giving a sponge bath, use a soft, clean washcloth and mild baby soap. Gently expose only the parts you are washing. Pay close attention to creases under the arms, behind the ears, around the neck and in the genital area.

When your baby is ready for tub baths, the first baths should be gentle and brief. If he or she becomes upset, go back to sponge baths for a week or two, then try the bath again. When giving your baby a bath, remember these three important tips:

- 1 Watch your baby constantly.** While bathing your infant, never leave the baby alone.
- 2 Keep your baby's head well above water.** Throughout the bath, regularly pour water gently over your baby's body so he or she doesn't get cold.
- 3 Make sure the water isn't too hot.** To test the water temperature, feel the water with the inside of your elbow or wrist.

A bath two or three times a week for the first year is fine. More frequent bathing may be drying to the skin.



Need more information?

Text **BABY** to **511411** to receive health and safety tips delivered to your phone throughout your baby's first year. Visit text4baby.org to learn more.

Remember, it takes a village. Consider asking for help after giving birth, whether it be from a partner, family member or friend. The first couple days (and weeks) may be overwhelming, so don't be afraid to ask for support.

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Sources: Kid's Health.org, Baby's First Days: Bowel Movements and Urination (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Babys-First-Days-Bowel-Movements-and-Urination.aspx>), Sleep (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/default.aspx>), How often and how much should your baby eat? (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/How-Often-and-How-Much-Should-Your-Baby-Eat.aspx>). MayoClinic.com, Should I wake my newborn for feedings? (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/expert-answers/newborn/faq-20057752>) Baby Bath Basics: A Parent's Guide (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/in-depth/healthy-baby/art-20044438>). Kids Health, Baby Basics: Burping Your Baby (<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/burping.html>). March of Dimes, Your Baby's Checkups (<http://www.marchofdimes.org/baby/routine-medical-care-for-children-from-1-month-to-2-years-old.aspx>)



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