

POSTPARTUM CARE FOR BABY

Temperature

Newborn babies do not know how to regulate their temperature very well, so we have to help them. It is important for babies to stay warm. Warmth is needed to help them grow and nurse well. A baby's temperature should be 98.0 to 98.9 when taken under her arm. Take your baby's temperature 2 to 3 times a day in the first few days after birth. If the temp is cool (96-97), warm your baby by putting a hat, socks, or a blanket on her. If your baby is too hot (99-100), take some clothing layers off to cool her down. Retake the temp in 15 minutes. If your baby's temperature remains over 99.5, call your midwife.

Respirations

The normal range of respirations in a newborn is 40 to 60 breaths per minute in the first few days after birth. Respirations will be irregular but should not appear labored. If respirations are over 70 per minute or breathing is labored with grunting, retractions of the ribs, nasal flaring, or change in the baby's color, call your midwife.

Elimination

Your baby should have a bowel movement and urinate at least once during the first 24 hours. More is OK. The first bowel movements are called meconium, which is black and tarlike. Applying olive oil at each diaper change makes it easier to wipe away. Usually babies poop and pee one time each for every day they are old until it levels out around one week of age; after the mom's milk comes in, babies usually wet 6-8 times a day and poop 2-5 times a day. If you notice a pink or orangish streak in the diaper, this is most likely concentrated urine (urate crystals) and is not a concern if the baby is still alert and peeing normally. Babies who are exclusively breastfed have yellow, soft or liquid stools that looks a little like mustard and cottage cheese mixed together. The occasional green stool is normal. By two months of age, a breastfed baby may only have one stool a day to one a week.

The genitals of babies of both sexes may be swollen. A newborn girl may have a vaginal discharge for three to five days, which may even be tinged with blood. This is due to effects of the mother's hormones transmitted through the placenta and is temporary.

Mucous

The best way for a baby to clear extra fluid and mucus from her airway is by nursing. If she continues to have enough mucus in her nose or mouth to make breathing noisy or difficult, you may suction gently with a bulb syringe. Be sure you have been shown how to do this and always suction mouth first and then the nose. Sneezing and coughing are normal ways that a baby clears her airway and she will do this frequently. Some babies may spit up a clear to yellow fluid that is most likely amniotic fluid. Sometimes this is stained a bit brown from swallowing blood during the birth. If your baby spits this kind of fluid up more than 4 times, call your midwife.

Umbilical Cord

The umbilical cord will dry up and fall off usually within a week. Do not apply anything to the cord, including alcohol. Studies show that putting alcohol or other agents on the cord actually inhibits the natural bacteria that help it dry and fall off. Keep the umbilical cord dry. It may have an odor around day 3 but the skin should not be red at the base or hot to the touch or have pus.

Skin

After the birth, your baby may have a white creamy substance on him, especially in folds and creases. This is called vernix and is very beneficial to the baby's skin. It does not need to be washed off and will absorb within the first few hours. Your baby's skin may become dry and peeling within the first two weeks after birth. This occurs as the skin is getting used to being in air and will resolve, however, you may put a natural lotion or oil on the baby. Olive oil works great and is very gentle for their skin. It is not uncommon for hands and feet to be blue or cool to the touch due to normal circulatory changes. A series of rashes is also normal unless accompanied by pus. Call your midwife if you find any worrisome spots. It is OK to bathe your baby with a warm wet cloth before the cord comes off and then by floating him in a warm water bath after the cord falls off. Be sure to bundle him up warmly or hold him skin to skin afterwards.

Jaundice

On about the 3rd day after birth, the baby's skin may turn yellowish due to excess bilirubin in the blood. This is very common and does not reach dangerous levels unless the baby is not nursing well or not having enough BM to help excrete the bilirubin. Exposure to direct sunlight for 5 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day can be helpful. If jaundice appears on the 1st or 2nd day, if the baby is excessively sleepy and hard to wake, or is not nursing well, please call your midwife.

Feeding

Your baby should be nursed frequently and on demand – 8 to 18 times a day. Some nipple soreness is common with the latch on however, if it continues to be very sore as the baby sucks, gently break the seal with your finger and help the baby to re-latch. Tickling the baby's upper lip and having him open VERY wide helps get the baby latched on well. If the baby is not latched on far enough, your nipples could get extremely sore. Remember that milk is produced in a supply and demand fashion; the more frequently the baby nurses, the more milk is produced. For a mom to sustain a great milk supply it is very important for her to get plenty of rest and lots of fluids. Sleep when the baby sleeps and drink a large glass of fluid every time the baby nurses.

Baby Behavior

The newborns behavior can be categorized into different states: quiet (deep sleep), active (light sleep), drowsy, quiet alert, active alert, and crying. Most newborns sleep an average of 20 hours a day in varying sleeps states but should be able to be easily roused or wake up on her own to nurse at least every two to three hours. Some babies tolerate stimuli more than others. Constant crying of

more than one hour is a sign of pain or maybe illness. Check the baby's temperature and look for a cause of external pain (such as a hair or thread wrapped around a toe). Colicky babies cry off and on and will draw their legs up to their belly. Gentle abdominal massage and leg movements sometimes help this. Be aware of the baby's sleeping. Do not allow a baby to sleep more than 3 to 4 hours during the daytime in the first few days after birth, as they need to nurse often.

Please call your midwife if:

* Underarm temperature is less than 96.0 or more than 100.4 after clothing and room temperature have been adjusted and baby's temperature continues to be out of the range of normal.

* Respirations are less than 30 or more than 70 breaths per minute while resting (not crying), or if baby has labored breathing, grunting, retractions of the ribs, nasal flaring, or the skin color has changed to whitish or dusky.

* Baby has not had a bowel movement and/or pee in a 24 hour period.

* Baby has any of these signs: excessive sleepiness, sleep periods lasting longer than 6 hours after the first day, hyperirritability or extreme reaction to ordinary stimulation like diaper changes or picking him up, jaundice in the first 24 hours after birth, poor nursing, not at all interested in nursing, or exhausted by nursing.