

# Baby Steps

## Getting Newborns Off to a Healthy Start



*The beautiful baby you always wanted has finally arrived! You're filled with joy! However, you're likely to have many questions and concerns about this wonderful little person who's counting on you for everything. But don't forget: you're important, too. With that in mind, this newsletter was written for both your little one and you. It's a handy companion to help answer your questions, advise, encourage, and "hold your hand" through the process of new motherhood and the beginning of a new life with your baby.*

## Caring for your baby and babying yourself

Don't worry if you don't know everything about proper baby care. You'll learn everything that's needed as your baby grows and changes. If you're not sure about a care-giving question, talk to your doctor. Meanwhile, here are some tips for caring for your baby:

- 1 • Handle your baby gently. Since a baby's neck is very weak, be sure to keep one of your hands under your baby's head to give it the support it needs.
- 2 • Be sure your baby is getting enough breast milk or formula. Wet diapers are a good way to determine if your baby is getting enough. Your baby should have 6 to 8 wet diapers and several bowel movements per day.
- 3 • Help your baby burp at the middle and end of each feeding. You can do this by holding your baby on your shoulder and gently patting or rubbing his or her back.
- 4 • You should change your baby's diapers frequently—at least before or after every feeding and whenever baby urinates or has a bowel movement. This will help to avoid irritation and help keep diaper rash from developing. It is a good idea to use a diaper rash ointment, such as A+D® Ointment, to help clear up diaper rash.
- 5 • Clean the remains of the umbilical cord each time you change your baby's diaper. A cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol is ideal for this purpose. Keep the umbilical cord dry, making sure that the baby's diapers do not cover it. The remains of the cord will eventually wither, separate, and fall off by itself, usually within 12 to 15 days after your baby's birth.
- 6 • If your baby has been circumcised and the area is bandaged, be sure to change the bandage during each diapering to reduce risk of infection. Petroleum jelly eases removal of bandages without adhesive "stickiness." Sometimes a plastic ring, rather than a bandage, is used. Positioned on the tip of the baby's penis, the plastic ring remains till it drops off—usually within 5 to 8 days. Healing time following circumcision is normally about 1 week to 10 days.
- 7 • Dress your baby appropriately by using layers of light clothing. Layers add warmth during cooler months and offer protection from indoor drafts when baby is out of bed. Keep baby's head covered with a hat when you are outside. A baby under 6 months of age should not be exposed directly to the sun.
- 8 • When putting your baby down to sleep, it is recommended to lay your baby on his or her back or side.
- 9 • When riding in the car (even on baby's trip home from the hospital), be sure to use an approved baby car seat, and follow the manufacturer's directions for proper use. It is a law that a baby must ride in a car seat. A baby car seat will undoubtedly be one of your wisest and most vital contributions to your baby's well-being. Consult your hospital or local civic groups, many of which can arrange rentals or loans of car seats for newborns.

# Babying yourself!



Don't forget to baby yourself, too. Following the birth of your baby, you will need a few days or weeks of rest. If possible, you may want to get someone to help you with the housework—maybe a willing family member or friend can lend a hand. Such assistance

will give you time to get to know your baby and rest when you can. Remember: Baby's nap time is a good time for **you** to nap, too. Take those precious moments to renew your energy.

In addition to an anticipated 4 to 6 weeks' recovery period following an uncomplicated vaginal birth, and 6 to 8 weeks following either a complicated vaginal delivery or cesarean, you'll also have a brownish to pinkish discharge from the vagina, which is called "lochia." If you are not breastfeeding your baby, you are likely to have an uncomfortable feeling of fullness in your breasts called "engorgement." This discomfort may be relieved by applying ice packs. After about 3 days of not breastfeeding, your breasts should stop producing milk.

Your moods may go through several changes during the first few weeks following birth. You may feel like crying frequently or have moments where you become angry more easily. Such mood changes are caused by hormonal changes. What is happening is normal at this time and should go away soon. If such mood changes are lasting a long time, or if they interfere with taking good care of your baby or make you think you might harm your baby, talk with your doctor about this situation right away.

## Recovery after a C-section

If your baby was delivered by cesarean section, or C-section, you probably stayed in the hospital a few days longer than those mothers who had vaginal births. Because of the procedure, you are more likely to tire easily following the birth of your baby. You'll want to resume your normal activities slowly. However, movement is important for recovery. Enlist the help of your partner, relatives, or friends for baby care, housework, and meal preparation. Don't be timid to ask for the help you need and deserve; let others treat **you** a little royally for a while! Follow your

doctor's instructions for recovery. Before you know it, you'll be up and about.

## Getting back into shape—diet and exercise

You'll lose some weight after your baby is born, but you may have to make an extra effort to regain the figure you had and weight you were before pregnancy. If you are breastfeeding your baby, talk with your doctor before you begin a program for weight loss. Your doctor may suggest that you postpone intentionally losing weight until you are no longer breastfeeding.



If you have chosen to bottle feed your baby, a nutritional, well-balanced diet is our suggested method for your weight-loss regimen. Consult your doctor or nutritionist for healthy ways to lose those postpartum pounds.

## What about exercising?

A woman's weight gain during pregnancy is part of the baby's growth process within her. However, even after baby has arrived, most women are wheeled from the delivery room appearing about the same weight as when they went in. Baby's here, but weight gain still lingers—as do the maternity clothes a new mother hoped to put away!

Sound familiar? Don't despair. With active exercise, you can get back that prepregnancy figure (or perhaps an even slimmer one) in just a couple months. Even though life has likely been very busy since returning home from the hospital, the hectic activity that comes with a new baby's arrival doesn't tighten up the muscles left sagging after pregnancy. Exercise does.

Assuming you had an uncomplicated vaginal delivery, you may be able to start a postpartum exercise program as soon as 24 hours after delivery. However, you must start your exercise schedule slowly and carefully—don't overdo it! Moderation is the key. Allow about 6 weeks before starting abdominal exercises, such as sit-ups, or before doing aerobics. Swimming should be postponed for at least 3 weeks because bacteria from the water may enter healing vaginal tissue. If you had a surgical delivery or a difficult labor, you should talk to your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

# Feeding your baby—breast or bottle?

While many doctors prefer that mothers breastfeed, some new mothers can't. If you are having trouble deciding **which** feeding method is better for you, discuss this matter with your doctor.

Whether you breastfeed or bottle feed your baby, the moments you spend feeding your little one are precious opportunities to bond with her or him. Touching, observing, singing to, playing and making eye contact with your baby can be a wonderful part of your daily feeding routine.

## Facts favoring breastfeeding

Babies grow well with the nourishment offered from either breast or bottle feeding. However, breast milk provides special nutrition and protection from allergies and infections that formula does not.



## Breastfeeding your baby:

- Provides a special blend of nutrients, hormones, and proteins essential to an infant's digestion, brain development, and growth
- Provides antibodies that fight off or reduce the risk of infections involving the middle ear, digestive system, and respiratory tract
- Decreases the risk of food allergies
- Creates fewer digestive problems for your baby (eg, constipation or diarrhea)
- Lowers risk of certain chronic illnesses later in your child's life

## When you breastfeed:

- There's no preparation needed as with bottle feeding since breast milk is sterile, always available, and dispenses at the ideal temperature—whenever baby's hungry
- Your uterus returns to its normal size more quickly
- Weight loss is faster
- Your risk of breast cancer is reduced each time you nurse for a period of at least 3 months
- It's a chance for you to relax
- You're avoiding the money and time expenditure of formula preparation



## Facts favoring bottle feeding:

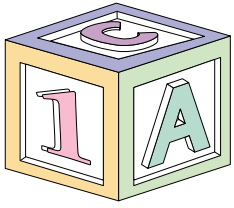
Breastfeeding is not the method of choice for **all** women. If you are unable to breastfeed or choose not to, bottle feeding can be quite satisfactory. There are many infant formulas designed to closely simulate the

nutritional content of breast milk. Ask your doctor to recommend a formula that's right for your baby.

## When you bottle feed:

- Other people can help with the feeding schedule, allowing you to work, or get much-needed rest during nighttime feedings
- Bottle-fed infants are not affected by what you eat or the medications you take
- Parents can easily monitor how much food the baby ingests
- For some mothers, bottle feeding in public places is less inconvenient or embarrassing than breastfeeding in public
- The frequency of bottle feedings is often more spread out
- No special clothing or bras are needed as in breastfeeding
- There's no leakage as with breast milk; no need for breast pumps

These facts should help make your decision a little easier. The facts are important, but be sure to consider your own feelings during the decision process. You'll want to feel comfortable with the method you choose so you'll be relaxed when feeding your baby.



# Milestones in Your Baby's Development

In the next 12 months, your baby will be developing and growing at a rapid rate. The chart below will explain what you can anticipate month by month over the first year of your baby's life.

## MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Remember, each child develops differently. This chart reflects general time frames when certain developments may occur, and not all babies will be able to do each identified milestone in the month indicated. If you have concerns about the developmental growth of your baby, speak with your physician.

### Month 1 Many babies can:

- Grasp an object, such as a rattle, but let go quickly
- Stare at an object without trying to reach for it

### Month 2 Many babies can:

- Move arms and legs smoothly
- Hold head up at a 45-degree angle for a few minutes
- Grasp an object for a short time

### Month 3 Many babies can:

- Sit supported with only minimum head bobbing
- Attempt to swipe at objects, often missing
- Be physically steadier, less "floppy"

### Month 4 Many babies can:

- Sit up with assistance and maintain good control of the head
- Roll or rock from side to side while lying on stomach
- Transfer an object from one hand to the other

### Month 5 Many babies can:

- Place feet up to the mouth and suck on the toes

- When on stomach, push with the hands and bring up knees

- When pulled up to standing position, move the body up and down and push down on one foot and then the other, as though walking

### Month 6 Many babies can:

- Roll over from position of lying on back to lying on stomach
- Get up on hands and knees and creep along floor
- Sit in a chair
- Bounce in a sitting position
- Play with own hands by placing them together

### Month 7 Many babies can:

- Sit more strongly, perhaps even unsupported
- Use thumb and finger to grasp a small toy like a block
- Bang together two objects

### Month 8 Many babies can:

- Crawl
- Some babies may be able to stand when leaning against something for support

- Hold a rattle for several minutes

- Attempt to pick up small objects

### Month 9 Many babies can:

- Crawl while holding a toy in one fist
- Stand alone for short periods of time
- Grasp small objects with thumb and forefinger

### Month 10 Many babies can:

- Hold on to furniture while walking around room
- Walk while holding someone's two hands
- Climb up on chairs, then climb down
- Carry two small objects in one fist

### Month 11 Many babies can:

- Stand alone
- Wave
- Climb stairs
- Squat, stoop
- Hold a spoon and direct it to the mouth
- Scribble with crayon
- Pull off own shoes

### Month 12 Many babies can:

- Walk, although crawling may still be baby's preference
- Go up and down stairs
- Climb out of crib
- Point with index finger
- Remove covers from containers

## VERBAL DEVELOPMENT

### Month 1 Many babies can:

- Make little throaty sounds, other than crying

### Month 2 Many babies can:

- Make cooing sounds

### Month 3 Many babies can:

- Squeal, chuckle, whimper, make vowel-type sounds like ah, ooh
- Coo, gurgle
- Respond to familiar voices, react to loud noises

### Month 4-6 Many babies can:

- Babble, including sighing, grunting, gurgling, laughing
- Make a different crying sound for pain or hunger
- Vocalize for pleasure or displeasure

### Month 7-9 Many babies can:

- Repeat syllables
- Babble in singsong fashion
- Produce about a dozen different sounds, especially sounds with p, b, and m
- Use sounds as a type of play
- Say "mama" repetitively
- Begin to mimic the vocal intonations of others
- Listen intently to sounds, both spoken and nonspoken, recognizing "dada," "mama," and "bye-bye"
- Recognize his or her name
- Distinguish between friendly and unfriendly vocal tones

### Months 10-12 Many babies can:

- Babble in a melodious tone that resembles actual speech
- Repeat sounds made by others
- Vocalize during playtime, utilizing most of the vowel and consonant sounds
- Some babies may begin vocalizing first words
- Comprehend and respond to simple request
- Respond to names
- Recognize the names of common objects and family members