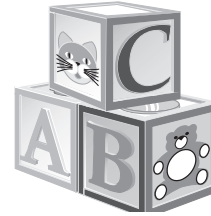


You and Your Baby

Month 1



Baby's Safety & Health

In the first month of your baby's life, you will need to make an appointment with the doctor for a first checkup and for vaccinations/shots to prevent serious diseases.

The vaccinations/shots won't help after your baby is exposed to the diseases. Many parents don't pay enough attention to vaccinations/shots or may even avoid them because they don't know anyone who has had the diseases. These preventable diseases are still around and can kill, unless parents, doctors, and nurses work to have all children fully immunized on a schedule.

In the past, doctors suggested that babies be placed on the stomach to sleep. Stomach sleeping, however, may be part of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Put your baby down to sleep on his back or side.

A crying, fussing infant is probably not what you had hoped for. Babies have different personalities and needs, just like older people do—some are fussier than others. Babies can only communicate fear, pain, hunger, cold, or tiredness by fussing or crying. You will need more help from the doctor and from supportive family or friends if your baby is fussy. Call or visit your doctor for any signs of illness, such as fever, pulling at ears, or continuous crying. Your baby may be sick.

One problem that occurs often in newborns is gas. A baby who has trouble with digestion, allergies to formula, or who develops gas will cry, tense his muscles, and perhaps draw up his legs. Try several things to reduce these episodes:

- For bottle-fed babies, check the size of the nipple holes; if baby is sucking hard through small nipple holes or gulping too much through large nipple holes, he can swallow air. Stop often during feeding, hold baby upright, and pat gently on his back to burp (allow air to escape his stomach).
- Breast-fed babies may react to food eaten by the mother. Avoid spicy foods, chocolate, seafood, caffeine, and cow's milk for a few days to see if baby is more comfortable. Then add desired foods back one at a time to see if it causes problems. Add only one food back each week, starting with cow's milk, or you won't know which food caused the negative reaction.

No matter what is causing the problem, your baby needs comforting. Try placing the baby stomach down across your knees and rub his back, or walk with her, letting her suck a clean finger or pacifier. Try soft music or singing. Even if your baby continues to cry or fuss, she will know you are with her. Time spent comforting a baby is good for her emotional development.

Your doctor or pharmacist can suggest medicine for gas pain if you or your baby can't get relief from frequent episodes. Your doctor may also suggest trying a different formula if your baby is bottle-fed.

Family Focus

Your new baby is important and takes a great deal of your time and energy. However, whether this is your first child or fourth child, the focus should be on the strength of the whole family, not just on one member. Caring, concerned parents will help all family members adjust to the new baby.

As a new mom, you will need to take time for yourself. Try to get enough sleep and eat a nourishing diet. You may need to ask for help from other adults to get the rest you need; but remember, you and your baby will benefit.

Every child needs warm and loving care from the entire family. Dads can help by getting involved from the very beginning with everyday routines such as bathing, diapering, cuddling, and feeding. A great book for dads to read is *Working Fathers* by James A. Levine and Todd L. Pittinsky. The book contains practical strategies for enhancing the quality of both work and family life.

The family as a whole needs to be involved in the nurturing and supportive care of the newborn infant. When an infant is in a positive nurturing environment, his brain can develop in a healthy way. Older siblings can be especially helpful, as well as senior family members. The new mother needs a supportive relationship from all members of the family.



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Baby's Development

Physical

In the first month, your baby will probably have wrinkled skin and tightly curled hands. He may even have an elongated or bumpy head from pressures in the birth canal during delivery. Expect your baby to—

- sleep 18–22 hours each day.
- wet 10 or more diapers a day.
- cry as much as 2 hours each day.
- breathe noisily.
- have runny, irregular bowel movements several times each day.

Also remember that each baby is an individual and will grow, develop, and react differently from any other baby.

You probably have noticed the soft spot on top of your baby's head. This is normal. It appears where skull bones have not yet joined and hardened. Baby's skull is soft to allow the head to pass through the birth canal. In the first year, the flexible skull gives your baby's brain room to grow. **Do not shake your baby; it can cause permanent brain damage or death.**

Although the soft spot is covered by a tough membrane, you need to avoid bumping or hitting baby's head. Washing and rubbing will not harm the baby's head. Cleaning the scalp is important to keep baby's head clean. "Cradle cap" is a scaly buildup that often occurs.

The soft spot may look flat or slightly depressed when your baby sits. When baby lies down, it may become slightly rounded. This is normal, but a severe depression or bulge may signal dehydration or swelling. Your pediatrician will check the soft spot in your regular visits. You can expect the skull bones to close between 12 and 18 months.

Baby's hearing is well developed at this point, but her sight is not. She can distinguish light from dark, and she may be able to focus on an object about 7 inches away. Your baby can use only one eye at a time, so don't be surprised if her eyes cross; there is no cause for alarm.



*This information sheet is one in a series called **You and Your Baby**. Contact your county Extension office or visit www.childcaremississippi.org for more information on you and your baby. The American Academy of Pediatrics also provides educational reading materials at www.healthychildren.org.*

Emotional

Your baby's sense of touch is developing, and he needs you to hold him, pat him, and cuddle him. This will help him to feel more secure and learn to trust. Use a soft tone of voice.

One of the first negative emotions a baby feels is fear. If he dislikes a bath, it may be because he is afraid of falling. He will overcome this as he learns to trust you. So touch him lovingly and often, sing softly, and use soothing tones of voice. Ease the baby into new experiences and reassure him along the way.

Infants can't use words to tell you what they need. But they can send many signals. Some of these clues are the sounds they make, the way they make eye contact, and the way they move. Children become securely attached when parents and others who care for them try to read these signals and respond with sensitivity. They begin to trust that when they are hungry, someone will feed them; when they are upset, someone will comfort them.

You cannot spoil a newborn baby by responding to her needs. Hugging, rocking, and gentle touches help her grow and learn to trust.

Social

Babies like to be played with. They need stimulation to help them grow and develop. It helps them learn to explore the world. You need to get to know your baby. Each baby is an individual. Some are active, some are quiet, and some are in between. These differences make each baby special.

Look directly at your baby when you are diapering, bathing, rocking, or feeding, and sing, talk, coo, babble, and smile. This is the beginning of your first conversations with your baby.

Mental

Children are born learning! They learn through touching, seeing, hearing, and tasting. Read picture books and tell stories to infants. When babies hear you singing, talking, and reading, it helps their brains grow and develop.



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