Newborn Discharge Instructions

NORMAL NEWBORN BEHAVIOR AND CARE:

- The baby should move both arms and legs equally and need support for the head.
- The newborn baby will sleep most of the time, waking to feed or for diaper changes.
- The baby can indicate needs by crying.
- The newborn baby startles to loud noises or sudden movement.
- Newborn babies frequently sneeze and hiccup. Sneezing does not mean the baby has a cold.
- Many babies develop jaundice, a yellow color to the skin, in the first week of life. As long as this condition is mild, it does not require any treatment, but it should be checked by your health care provider.
- The skin may appear dry, flaky, or peeling. Small red blotches on the face and chest are common.
- The baby's cord should be dry and fall off by about 10-14 days. Keep the belly button clean and dry.
- A white or blood tinged discharge from the female baby's vagina is common. If the newborn boy is not circumcised, do not try to pull the foreskin back. If the baby boy has been circumcised, keep the foreskin pulled back, and clean the tip of the penis. Apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) to the tip of the penis until bleeding and oozing has stopped. A yellow crusting of the circumcised penis is normal in the first week.
- To prevent diaper rash, change diapers frequently when they become wet or soiled. Over the counter diaper creams and ointments may be used if the diaper area becomes mildly irritated. Avoid diaper wipes that contain alcohol or irritating substances.
- Babies should get a brief sponge bath until the cord falls off. When the cord comes off and the skin has sealed over the navel, the baby can be placed in a bath tub. Be careful, babies are very slippery when wet! Babies do not need a bath every day, but if they seem to enjoy bathing, this is fine. You can apply a mild lubricating lotion or cream after bathing.
- Clean the outer ear with a wash cloth or cotton swab, but never insert cotton swabs into the baby's ear canal. Ear wax will loosen and drain from the ear over time. If cotton swabs are inserted into the ear canal, the wax can become packed in, dry out, and be hard to remove.
- Clean the baby's scalp with shampoo every 1-2 days. Gently scrub the scalp all over, using a wash cloth or a soft bristled brush. A new soft bristled toothbrush can be used. This gentle scrubbing can prevent the development of cradle cap, which is thick, dry, scaly skin on the scalp.
- Clean the baby's gums gently with a soft cloth or piece of gauze once or twice a day.

IMMUNIZATIONS:

The newborn should have received the birth dose of Hepatitis B vaccine prior to discharge from the hospital.

If the baby's mother has Hepatitis B, the baby should have been given an injection of Hepatitis B immune globulin in addition to the first dose of Hepatitis B vaccine. In this situation, the baby will need another dose of Hepatitis B vaccine at 1 month of age, and a third dose by 6 months of age. Remind the baby's health care provider about this important situation.

TESTING:

- The baby should have a hearing screen performed in the hospital. If the baby did not pass the hearing screen, a follow-up appointment should be provided for another hearing test.
- All babies should have blood drawn for the newborn metabolic screening, sometimes referred to as the state infant screen or the “PKU” test, before leaving the hospital. This test is required by state law and checks for many serious inherited or metabolic conditions. Depending upon the baby's age at the time of discharge from the hospital or birthing center and the state in which you live, a second metabolic screen may be required. Check with the baby's health care provider about whether your baby needs another screen. This testing is very important to detect medical problems or conditions as early as possible and may save the baby's life.

BREASTFEEDING:

- Breastfeeding is the preferred method of feeding for virtually all babies and promotes the best growth, development, and prevention of illness. Health care providers recommend exclusive breastfeeding (no formula, water, or solids) for about 6 months of life.
- Breastfeeding is cheap, provides the best nutrition, and breast milk is always available, at the proper temperature, and ready-to-feed.
- Babies should breastfeed about every 2-3 hours around the clock. Notify your baby's health care provider if you are having any trouble breastfeeding, or if you have sore nipples or pain with breastfeeding. Babies do not require formula after breastfeeding when they are breastfeeding well. Infant formula may interfere with the baby learning to breastfeed well and may decrease the mother's milk supply.
- Babies who get only breast milk or drink less than 16 ounces of formula per day require vitamin D supplements.

FORMULA FEEDING:

- If the baby is not being breastfed, iron-fortified infant formula may be provided.
- Powdered formula is the cheapest way to buy formula and is mixed by adding one scoop of powder to every 2 ounces of water. Formula also can be purchased as a liquid concentrate, mixing equal amounts of concentrate and water. Ready-to-feed formula is available, but it is very expensive.
- Formula should be kept refrigerated after mixing. Once the baby drinks from the bottle and finishes the feeding, throw away any remaining formula.
- Warming of refrigerated formula may be accomplished by placing the bottle in a container of warm water. Never heat the baby's bottle in the microwave, because this can cause burn the baby's mouth.
- Clean tap water may be used for formula preparation. Always run cold water from the tap to use for baby's formula. This reduces the amount of lead which could leach from the water pipes if hot water were used.
- For families who prefer to use bottled water, nursery water (baby water with fluoride) may be found in the baby formula and food aisle of the local grocery store.
- Well water should be boiled and cooled first if it must be used for formula preparation.
- Bottles and nipples should be washed in hot, soapy water, or may be cleaned in the dishwasher.
- Formula and bottles do not need sterilization if the water supply is safe.
- The newborn baby should not get any water, juice, or solid foods.

ELIMINATION

- Breastfed babies have a soft, yellow stool after most feedings, beginning about the time that the mother's milk supply increases. Formula fed babies typically have one or two stools a day during the early weeks of life. Both breastfed and formula fed babies may develop less frequent stools after the first 2-3 weeks of life. It is normal for babies to appear to grunt or strain or develop a red face as they pass their bowel movements, or “poop.”
- Babies have at least 1-2 wet diapers per day in the first few days of life. By day 5, most babies wet about 6-8 times per day, with clear or pale, yellow urine.

SLEEP

- Always place babies to sleep on the back. “Back to Sleep” reduces the chance of SIDS, or crib death.
- Do not place the baby in a bed with pillows, loose comforters or blankets, or stuffed toys.
- Babies are safest when sleeping in their own sleep space. A bassinet or crib placed beside the parent bed allows easy access to the baby at night.
- **Never** allow the baby to share a bed with adults or older children.
- **Never** place babies to sleep on water beds, couches, or bean bags, which can conform to the baby's face.

PARENTING TIPS.

- Newborn babies can not be spoiled. They need frequent holding, cuddling, and interaction to develop social skills and emotional attachment to their parents and caregivers. Talk and sign to your baby regularly.

Newborn babies enjoy gentle rocking movement to soothe them.

- Use mild skin care products on your baby. Avoid products with smells or color, because they may irritate baby's sensitive skin. Use a mild baby detergent on the baby's clothes and avoid fabric softener.
- Always call your health care provider if your child shows any signs of illness or has a fever (temperature higher than 100.4° F (38° C) taken rectally). It is not necessary to take the temperature unless the baby is acting ill. Rectal thermometers are most reliable for newborns. Ear thermometers do not give accurate readings until the baby is about 6 months old. Do not treat with over the counter medications without calling your health care provider. If the baby stops breathing, turns blue, or is unresponsive, call 911. If your baby becomes very yellow, or jaundiced, call your baby's health care provider immediately.

SAFETY

- Make sure that your home is a safe environment for your child. Set your home water heater at 120° F (49° C).
- Provide a tobacco-free and drug-free environment for your child.
- Do not leave the baby unattended on any high surfaces.
- Do not use a hand-me-down or antique crib. The crib should meet safety standards and should have slats no more than 2 and 3/8 inches apart.
- The child should always be placed in an appropriate infant or child safety seat in the middle of the back seat of the vehicle, facing backward until the child is at least one year old and weighs over 20 pounds.
- **Equip your home with smoke detectors and change batteries regularly!**
- Be careful when handling liquids and sharp objects around young babies.
- Always provide direct supervision of your baby at all times, including bath time. Do not expect older children to supervise the baby.
- Newborn babies should not be left in the sunlight and should be protected from brief sun exposure by covering them with clothing, hats, and other blankets or umbrellas.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your next visit should be at 3-5 days of age. Your health care provider may recommend an earlier visit if your baby has jaundice, a yellow color to the skin, or is having any feeding problems.

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