Baby Care

BATHING YOUR BABY

1. Babies only need a bath 2 to 3 times a week. If you clean up spills and spit up and keep the diaper clean, your baby will not need a bath more often. **Do not** give your baby a tub bath until the umbilical cord is off and the belly button has normal looking skin. Use a sponge bath only.

2. Pick a time of the day when you can relax and enjoy this special time with your baby. Avoid bathing just before or after feedings.

3. Wash your hands with warm water and soap. Get all of the needed equipment ready for the baby.

Equipment includes:

- Basin of warm water – always check to be sure it is not too hot.
- Mild soap and baby shampoo.
- Soft wash cloth and towel (may use cloth diaper).
- Cotton balls.
- Clean clothes, diaper and blankets.
- Diapers.

NEVER LEAVE YOUR BABY ALONE ON AN HIGH SURFACE WHERE THE BABY CAN ROLL OFF!

4. Always keep one hand on your baby when giving them a bath. **NEVER LEAVE YOUR BABY ALONE IN A BATH.**

5. To keep your baby warm, cover your baby with a cloth except where you are sponge bathing.

6. Start the bath by cleansing each eye with a separate corner of the cloth or separate cotton balls. Stroke from inner corner of eye to outer using clear water only. **Do not** use soap on your baby's face. Then, wash the rest of your baby's face.

7. It is not necessary to clean the ears or nose with Q-tips. Just wash the outside folds of the ear and nose. If mucus collects in the nose that you can see, it may be removed by twisting a wet cotton ball and wiping the mucus away. Q-tips may injure the tender inside of the nose.

8. To wash the head, support the baby's neck and head with your hand. Wet the hair, then shampoo with a small amount of baby shampoo. Rinse thoroughly with warm water from a washcloth. If there is cradle cap, gently loosen the scales with a soft brush before rinsing.

9. Continue to wash the rest of the body. Gently clean in and around all the creases and folds. Remove the soap completely. This will help prevent dry skin.

10. FOR GIRLS: Clean between the folds of the labia using a cotton ball soaked with water. Stroke downward. Some babies have a bloody discharge from the vagina (*birth canal*). This is due to the sudden change of hormones following birth. There may be a white discharge also. Both are normal.
    FOR BOYS: See "Circumcision Care" below.

UMBILICAL CORD CARE

A few days after birth, the umbilical cord stump will become dry, firm, and dark brown in color. There may be a dark, reddish brown, drainage around the cord stump. Cleanse this area using gentle soap and water on a cotton swab 3-4 times a day or as directed by your baby's caregiver. The cord has no feeling so it does not hurt the baby when you clean it. Keep the cord dry by:

- Keeping the edge of the diaper folded below the cord.

- Changing diapers as soon as possible after soiling.
- In warm conditions, exposing the cord to the air.
- Sponge bathe until the cord is off, and the belly button skin looks normal.
- **Do not** use binders or place coins over the cord stump.

Call your baby's caregiver if there is a small red bump left in the belly button after the cord falls off. Notify your child's caregiver if the area is infected. Signs of infection include:

- Redness and swelling of the skin around the cord.
- Sudden crying if you touch the cord or skin near the cord.
- Bad odor.
- Fever.
- Yellow or green drainage.

CIRCUMCISION CARE

- If your baby boy was circumcised:
  - There may be a strip of Vaseline gauze wrapped around the penis. If so, remove this after 24 hours or sooner if soiled with stool.
  - Wash the penis gently with warm water and a soft cloth or cotton ball and dry it. You may apply Vaseline to his penis with each diaper change, until the area is well healed. Healing usually takes 2-3 days.
- If a Plastibell circumcision was done, gently wash and dry the penis. Apply Vaseline several times a day or as directed by your baby's caregiver until healed. The plastic ring at the end of the penis will loosen around the edges and drop off within 5-8 days after the circumcision was done. **Do not** pull the ring off.
- If the Plastibell has not dropped off after 8 days, or if the penis becomes very swollen and has drainage or bright red bleeding, call your physician.
- If your baby was **not** circumcised, do **not** pull back the foreskin. This will cause pain, as it is not ready to be pulled back. The inside of the foreskin does not need cleaning. Just clean the outer skin.

COLOR

- A small amount of bluishness of the hands and feet is normal for a newborn. **Bluish or grayish color of the baby's face or body is not normal. Call for medical help.**
- Newborns can have many normal birthmarks on their bodies. Ask your baby's nurse or physician about any you find.
- When crying, the newborn's skin color often becomes deep red. This is normal.
- Jaundice is a yellowish color of the skin and/or in the white part of the baby's eyes. If your baby is becoming jaundiced, call your baby's physician.

BOWEL MOVEMENTS

The baby's first bowel movements are sticky, greenish black stools called *meconium*. The first bowel movement normally occurs within the first 36 hours of life. The stool changes to a mustard-yellow loose stool if the baby is breast-fed or a thicker yellow-tan stool if the baby is fed formula. Your baby may make stool after each feeding or 4-5 times per day in the first weeks after birth. Each baby is different. After the first month, breastfed stools become less frequent, even skipping a day or more between stools. Formula-fed babies tend to have at least one stool per day.

Diarrhea is indicated by many watery, strong smelling stools in a day. If the baby has diarrhea you may see a water ring surrounding the stool on the diaper. *Constipation* is indicated by hard stools that seem to be painful for the baby to pass. However, most newborns grunt and strain when passing any stool. This is normal.

GENERAL CARE TIPS

- Babies should be placed to sleep on their backs unless your caregiver has suggested otherwise. This is the single most important thing you can do to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- **Do not** use a pillow when putting the baby to sleep.
- Fingers and toenails should be cut while baby is sleeping, if possible, and only after you can see a distinct separation between the nail and the skin under it.
- It is not necessary to take the baby's temperature daily. Take it only when you think the skin seems warmer than usual or if the baby seems sick. (Take it before calling the physician.) Lubricate the thermometer with petroleum jelly insert the bulb end approximately 1/2 inch into the rectum. Stay with the baby and hold the thermometer in place 2-3 minutes by squeezing the cheeks together.
- The disposable bulb syringe used on your baby will be sent home with you. Use it to remove mucus from the nose if he/she gets congested. Squeeze the bulb end together, insert tip very gently into one nostril, and let the bulb expand. It will suck mucus out of the nostril. Empty the bulb by squeezing out the mucus into a sink. Repeat on the second side. Wash the bulb syringe well with soap and water, and rinse thoroughly after each use.
- **Do not** over dress the baby. Dress him as you dress yourself - according to the weather. One extra layer over what you are wearing is a good guideline. If the skin feels warm and damp from perspiring, your baby is too warm and will be restless.
- It is not recommend that you take your infant out in crowded public areas (shopping mall, etc.) until the baby is several weeks old. In crowds of people, the baby will be exposed to colds, virus, diseases, etc. Avoid children and adults who are obviously sick. It is good to take the infant out into the fresh air.
- It is not recommend that you take your baby on long distance trips before 3 to 4 months old unless it is necessary.
- Microwaves should not be used for heating formula. The bottle remains cool, but the formula may become very hot. Reheating breast milk in a microwave reduces or eliminates natural immunity properties of the milk. Many infants will tolerate frozen breast milk that has been thawed to room temperature without additional warming. If necessary, it is more desirable to warm the thawed milk in a bottle placed in a pan of warm water. Be sure to check the temperature of the milk before feeding.
- Wash your hands with hot water and soap after changing the baby's diaper and using the restroom.
- Keep all your baby's doctors appointments and scheduled immunizations.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

The cord stump does not fall off by the time the baby is 6 weeks old.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- The baby seems to have little energy, is less active and alert when awake than usual.
- The baby is not eating.
- The baby is crying more than usual or the cry has a different tone or sound to it.
- The baby has vomited more than once (most babies will spit up with burping, which is normal).
- The baby appears to be ill.
- The baby has diaper rash that does not clear up in 3 days after treatment, has sores, pus or bleeding.
- There is active bleeding at the umbilical cord site. A small amount of spotting is normal.
- There has been no bowel movement in 4 days.
- There is persistent diarrhea or blood in the stool.
- The baby has bluish or gray looking skin.
- The baby's eyes or skin is yellow.

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