

Daily Routine

Bowel Movements

Your baby's stools will probably change in color, softness, and frequency from time to time. Also different babies have different bowel habits. Some have a stool with every feeding (6 to 9 stools/day); others may have one stool every 36-72 hours. The consistency and color varies from day to day. Usually breast-fed babies have yellow or mustard-colored liquid stools. If you are breastfeeding, do not take runny stools as a sign of diarrhea. The stools of formula-fed babies are yellowish-tan. All babies sometimes have green, brown, or gray-colored stools. However, if the stool is green, runny and frequent, it is usually a sign of diarrhea.

As long as your baby seems happy and content, eats normally, and has no signs of illness, do not worry about minor changes in the stools. It is normal for a baby to strain, grunt or turn red-faced during a bowel movement.

Constipation has nothing to do with frequency of stools. Small and pebble-like stools generally indicate constipation. Do not give him/her an enema, suppository or laxative until you have talked to us.

Female babies should always be cleaned from front to back during diaper change. Also clean them between the vagina by gently wiping the area with wash cloth. It will not hurt.

Breathing, Hiccups & Sneeze

Dry sneezes and rattley snorting noises do not mean a cold. If you hear it, but you don't see it and if it doesn't bother the baby when he/she is sleeping or eating, you can safely ignore it! If your baby seems stuffed up, you might want to use a cool mist humidifier, put 3 to 4 saline water drops to each nostril and gently clean the nose with a blue bulb (bulb syringe). Do not give the baby any cold medicine without first speaking with us. Babies do have some irregular breathing due to immature brain development. Call us if the baby coughs more than 20 times an hour, lips and skin have bluish tone, breaths much faster (more than 60 times/minute), pauses more than 20 seconds for respiration, looks very uncomfortable or is having trouble breathing.

All babies have hiccups, frequent yawning, trembling of the chin and are startled when a loud noise is heard. This is normal as long as it is not too excessive.

Babies very rarely have teeth at birth and when they do, it is always at the lower front. Many babies have shiny white pearl-like objects on the gums or on the roof of their mouth, which are not related to teeth. They will soon vanish.

Baths

For the first few days after your baby comes home, sponge him/her gently with a soft, warm, damp, washcloth and a mild soap such as Dove or Johnson's baby soap. You may give regular baths after the remnant of the umbilical cord had come off in a small tub containing about 3 inches of comfortable warm water. In the case of boys, wait until the circumcision heals. Once your baby is ready for full-fledged baths, be sure that the room is warm with no drafts and the water is about 85°F (when you stick your elbow in the water, it should feel warmer but not hot).

Your baby will find bath time a highlight of his/her day if you take a few precautions such as keeping soap out of his/her mouth and eyes. Wash your baby's face with plain water, mild soap and a soft-cloth. Wash your baby's head gently, working from front to back, to keep the soap out of his/her eyes.

To clean the area around the eyes, use a cotton napkin dipped in cool clean water. Clean the outer areas of the nose and ear only, using a moist washcloth dipped in water. Wipe away any yellow-orange earwax that is collected in the visible part of his/her ear with a wash cloth. It is important not to poke inside the ear with Q-tip; it is risky, painful and unnecessary.

Do not try to clean any area inside his/her mouth with a toothbrush until she/he gets teeth. Until then you may clean the gums with a washcloth after every feeding and while giving a bath.

Sleeping

Newborn babies sleep a lot (up to 20 hr), usually waking up every 2 to 4 hours for feedings. At about 1 to 2 months of age, they generally start sleeping through the night, although a few cooperative babies start sooner.

Make sure your baby sleeps on a firm mattress or firm surface. The bar of your infant crib should be less than 2.25 inches apart. The mattress should fit snugly, so that the baby's head can't get stuck between the mattress and the crib. Keep side rails up all the time when the baby is unattended. Always use crib bumpers. Don't use fluffy blankets or comforters under the baby. Do not let the baby sleep on a waterbed, sheepskin, a pillow or other soft materials. When your baby is very young, do not place soft stuffed toys or pillows in the crib with him or her. Avoid toys with large strings, cradle gyms that are not tightly suspended and small objects including safety pins.

Babies should be kept warm, but they should not be allowed to get too warm. Keep the temperature in your baby's room so that it feels comfortable to you (70 to 74°F). Do not overbundle or over clothe the baby. They should be clothed just like you would like to get clothed to be comfortable. Keep the baby out of the Sun. Do not use sunscreen for the first two months.

Create a smoke free zone around your baby. No one should smoke in the house or around the baby.

You may have heard that starting solid foods will make a baby sleep through the night; but there are no evidence that this is true. It might invite problems with allergies later in life. Infants can not digest starch until four months of age. The coordination of lips, tongue and swallowing movements reaches the right maturity for handling solids somewhere between four to six months of age.

It is now recommended that you place your baby ONLY on his/her BACK during sleep.

Recent research shows that putting a baby to sleep on its back might help to reduce the rate of Sudden Infant Death (SIDS or crib death). While awake, try to keep the baby on his/her stomach to prevent the back of the head from flattening. There are important exceptions: preemies and babies with medically significant "reflux" should still be placed on the stomach. Please make sure the baby does not always sleep in exactly the same position. The head and face will become unattractively flattened. Put the baby to sleep on each side equally often.

Crying

Tiny babies have limited ways of communication. Crying is one way how your baby makes his/her needs known and his/her displeasure felt. You will quickly learn to identify whether your baby is crying from hunger, restlessness, pain, anger, or some other reason. Many babies go through unexplainable fussy periods each day as they adjust to living in this world. Do not worry about spoiling a tiny baby by pampering. He/she needs to know that you are there to meet his/her needs. Many babies begin to have intense crying spells or colic around 2 weeks of age, which may last until 3 to 6 months of age. Most commonly, the crying episodes occur in the evening hours and stop only momentarily when you attempt to calm or burp him/ her. The infant will likely draw his/her knees up to his/her chest and expel gas with vigorous crying. Mother's diet rarely has a disturbing effect on the babies. However certain foods such as tomatoes, onions, cabbage, chocolate, and spicy foods may adversely affect your baby. If you cannot think of a reason for your baby's loose stools, colic or excess gas, review your diet for the past 24 hours. It may help you eliminate foods mentioned above from your diet. Colic is not a serious condition. It is self-limited and will resolve with patience.

There are a number of things you can do to comfort your baby:

- Check the diaper and make sure it is clean and dry.
- Lengthen feeding times.
- Give the baby more physical contact and movement. Walk, rock or pat him/her.
- Take the baby for a stroller ride or car ride.
- 'Bundle' the baby (wrap him/her snugly in a blanket) or raise the temperature in his/her room if you think it is cold.
- Change his/her position.
- If all other trial fails just let the baby cry. He/she may just need to let off some steam. Often babies fall asleep after a good cry-so allow him/her up to 20 minutes on his/her own.
- If the baby cries for a prolonged period of time (2 to 3 Hr.), looks very sick or lethargic, breathing abnormally or fast, persistently vomiting, not eating for a long period of time, please call us as soon as possible or take the baby to the nearest emergency room.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS IN THE NEWBORN PERIOD

Entry into this world is a major adjustment for your baby. During this period of adjustment, your baby will go through some major changes and exhibit certain characteristics that you should be aware of. Some of these normal conditions of the newborn period are described below.

Umbilical cord

Your baby's umbilical cord will fall off by itself in 1 to 4 weeks. Until then, keep the area clean and dry and do not cover it with any bandage. Move the stump from side to side as you clean the whole base. This will not hurt the baby. It is normal to see a little blood or clear moist fluid oozing from the navel for a while after the cord drops off. It should not worry you. Keep the baby's diaper below the cord so the cord can dry. Notify us for persistent oozing (for more than 2 days), foul-smelling discharge, red skin around the cord, or if your baby gets a fever.

Genitals & Breast

The decision of circumcision is one based on personal preference. If your little boy has had a circumcision, each time you change his diaper apply Vaseline® to the circumcised area. You might notice a yellowish or grayish coating around the top part of penis. It is normal and do not confuse it with pus. Do not attempt to remove it and just clean it with water. Call us if you see any swelling, bad odor or persistent bleeding. If your baby has not been circumcised, do not pull the foreskin on the penis until after his first visit with us. The tip of the penis (*glans*) of newborn boys is generally red at first and sometimes has thin yellow crusts. The skin looks more normal in 2 to 3 weeks. Notify us if your son does not produce a strong urine stream. Some male kids might have a collection of fluid in the scrotum called hydrocele. It might take 6 to 12 months to clear it completely.

Many newborn girls have a whitish or red blood stained discharge from the vagina for few days. As this is a normal phenomenon, there is no need to worry. Just clean the area with a cotton ball soaked in sterile water. Some girls have swollen folds of genitalia (labium) due to mother's hormones and it is normal. It will disappear in a few months.

A thin discharge from the nipple is also seen in some babies, both male and female. Some of them may have enlarged or swollen breasts. No treatment is necessary since the condition will go away by itself. However, notify us if you notice any redness in the swollen areas.

Head

Most babies have some amount of swelling on their head right after birth called "Caput Succedaneum". This swelling is usually created as the baby passes through the birth canal and will disappear on its own. Sometimes due to the birth process, there might be a collection of blood on the side of the head called, "Cephalohematoma". It might take 6 to 8 months to resolve. There is no need to worry about it.

It is normal for newborn babies to have white dandruff-like flakes in their scalps. These flakes are old skin being shed and not a dry scalp condition. Do not use lotions or Vaseline® that may paste these flakes on to the scalp and thus make the condition worse. Thick yellowish scales are called *cradle cap*, a very common condition in infants. It too is associated with old dead skin and it will only get worse by oils, lotions and so on. Washing may not help much. You can treat the cradle cap by removing the scales with a soft brush.

All babies have a diamond shaped area on the top of the head, which feels softer than the rest of the head. The soft spot on your baby's head (*fontanelle*) is an area where the skull bones have not yet joined. A thick tough tissue that protects the brain tissue underneath covers the soft spot. You do not need to worry about hurting it. It is also normal to notice the soft spot pulsating at times. You may also see small lumps, bumps, and irregularities that are also normal. There is no need to put baby oil/any oil in hair.

Eyes

Many babies look slightly cross-eyes at birth. Usually muscles that are temporarily out of balance cause this. Also the wide nasal bridge may make the eyes look crossed when they are actually not. Crossed eyes generally correct themselves by the end of the first year. Some babies may get bleeding in the white part of the eye during birth and it is normal. It will go away in a few weeks. Some babies have a mild gray color of eyes initially and this will change with the time. If your baby's eye waters continuously and has a mucoid discharge, he/she might have a "blocked tear duct". This condition frequently clears up spontaneously by the age of twelve months.

Ears

The newborn ears are normally soft and floppy with the edges folded sometimes. This will assume its normal shape as the cartilage becomes firmer over the next few weeks of life.

Skin

Some babies have little white dots on their noses. They are called milia and will go away without treatment. One of the most common newborn rashes is newborn acne, which appears during the first two weeks of life and disappears in 4 to 6 months. No treatment is necessary for this condition. It is helpful to wash the area with a mild soap once or twice a day. Do not apply oils, lotions or creams; they only worsen the condition.

About 60% of babies get another kind of rash called Erythema Toxicum. It contains 1/4 to 1/2 inch red blotches with tiny white lumps in the center. They are numerous and can occur anywhere on the body. The cause is unknown. The rash is harmless and usually disappears in 2 to 6 weeks.

Droping rash is caused by contact with saliva or milk. Normally it happens on the face (cheeks), neck or upper chest, it comes and goes. Keep skin clean and dry, then apply Vaseline® twice a day.

Congenital Dermal Melanocytosis (formerly called "Mongolian spots") are bluish gray flat birthmarks over the back and buttocks and vary greatly in size and shape. Most fade away by 2 to 3 years of age.

Stork Bites (Angel Kiss) are flat pink birthmarks that occur over the bridge of the nose, eyelids or the back of the neck in more than 50% of the newborn babies. They are harmless and most of them disappear by 2 years of age.

All babies peel their skin and it is normal. There is no need to apply any lotion or oil on it. There is no need to do oil massages on babies. If you do, please be very gentle.

Babies do have long nails! You can buy a special small nail cutter from the baby section in the pharmacy store and cut them while he/she is sleeping.

Legs

Most newborns have legs that curve inward because that's the way they were positioned in the womb. The curve is normal and will usually straighten out on its own after 6–12 months.

Pacifiers!

Use or not to use? There is no perfect answer. It is up to parental preference. Please keep it clean and do not hang it around the neck. Check the pacifier to ensure that it can not be pulled apart and it is large enough, so the baby does not choke on it.