

## **YOUR NEWBORN**

***Congratulations on the birth of your baby! We know that this is a very exciting time – but also a time when parents experience anxiety and concern as they desire to be the very best parents possible. We hope that the following information will help you feel comfortable and confident in your new roles.***

***You will likely receive much information (wanted and unwanted) from relatives, friends, books, and the Internet. Remember that every baby is unique and has an individual temperament and personality. You will soon know your baby much better than anyone else knows him – so trust yourself and trust your natural instincts as you care for and respond to your infant.***

### **PHILOSOPHY OF PARENTING**

There are many different ways to parent your child – different philosophies promoted by various experts. Currently in America, there are two conflicting philosophies of parenting that are presented in popular books. Both of these philosophies acknowledge that infants have needs and encourage parents to meet those needs. Both philosophies promote the idea that infants who do not have their needs met will not grow up to be emotionally healthy adults. The problem is that the philosophies disagree on what the infant needs.

One philosophy may be called “infant guided parenting” or “attachment parenting”. Parenting experts who promote this idea usually encourage close physical contact and frequent breastfeeding as a way to enhance the infant’s sense of security that will ultimately lead to improved self esteem.

The opposite philosophy may be called “parent guided parenting”. These experts encourage parents to realize that one of the first things an infant can do for herself is to comfort herself. If she is allowed to cry a little to console herself instead of immediately being picked up or fed, she will become a more competent individual with improved self-esteem. You can see that these philosophies differ in the interpretation of the infant’s cry and the appropriate parental response.

As a new parent, one of the most important things for you to do is decide which parenting philosophy feels most comfortable to you. Your ideas are formed by your culture, your own background and how you were parented as a child, your temperament, and your attitudes and expectations. Your partner will usually have a different approach to parenting. Please know that this is very normal, so your partner may interpret your infant’s cries differently than you do. Don’t worry! Learn from and listen to each other and together you will be able to care appropriately for your baby. Please don’t criticize each other if you view the baby’s needs differently. Instead, we encourage you to begin now to talk about your different ideas so you can both feel comfortable caring for your baby. Also realize that as you work together, you will probably find yourself parenting “somewhere in the middle” – and this is fine. There is no need for you to feel guilty if you don’t follow all the guidelines given in a book.

## ***BEHAVIOR***

Many babies grunt and groan before they have a bowel movement or before they pass gas. They may also draw their legs up tightly, turn bright red in the face, and cry. The babies act as if they are in pain. We do not know why babies behave this way, but we know this is normal for most babies. Some parents think this means the baby has gas or a problem with his intestinal tract. It is more likely that this is just normal behavior for your baby. Babies often respond to gentle pressure on their abdomens or gentle massaging. You may also find “bicycling” your infant’s legs helps with the distress. There are several nonprescription medicines that parents often use, but we encourage you to check with your doctor before using any herbal teas or over the counter medications. New research shows that probiotics taken by the breast feeding mother may also help with these behaviors.

## ***SLEEPING***

Newborn babies sleep a lot. Babies are very noisy when they are sleeping. They may make sounds and move around when they sleep. They also breathe very irregularly when asleep and can sound congested. This is normal because babies must breathe through their noses until they are 4 months old.

Where should your baby sleep? Parents often differ on their ideas of where the baby should sleep. Some people feel strongly that babies should always be close to their parents. Others believe that babies should sleep in a separate crib. Wherever your baby sleeps, please make sure that your baby is safe.

**ALWAYS** place your infant on her back to sleep.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your infant sleep in a crib in your bedroom.

If you choose to have your infant sleep in a crib or bassinet:

- The mattress should fit very tightly next to the sides

- The crib should not have decorations or toys that could strangle or trap the baby

- There is no need to use crib bumper pads – these could trap the baby

- The crib should meet current recommendations. Make sure you evaluate the crib carefully if you are using a previously used crib. You should consider buying a new mattress for the crib.

If you choose to have your infant sleep with you:

- Do not sleep on a water mattress

- Do not use heavy blankets

- Take all side rails and head boards off the bed so the baby will not become trapped

- Move your bed away from the wall to avoid trapping your infant between the mattress and wall.

- Do not allow older children to sleep with the infant

- Never sleep with your baby if you or your partner smokes, uses drugs, or alcohol

- Never sleep with your baby on a couch or chair with soft pillows. You may fall asleep and suffocate your infant in the cushions or pillows.

Infants often have their days and nights mixed up. You can help your baby to sleep a little longer at night by making night time a boring time to wake up. Don't talk to your baby or sing to her when she awakens at night. Try to keep the room dark and quiet at night. You may want to use a nightlight instead of turning on bright lights.

Young infants usually fall asleep after feeding, but sometimes parents do things at night - like changing diapers and burping - that actually wake up the baby. Then it is difficult for the baby to go back to sleep. So you may want to skip one diaper change in the middle of the night to avoid waking your baby. You can use extra diaper ointment to protect your baby's skin.

Parents often think they should keep their newborn babies awake during the daytime to help them sleep better at night. Actually babies who sleep better in the day time are learning how to lengthen the intervals between feedings - and, so, they sleep better at night. "Sleep begets sleep" is the phrase some people use to remind parents that babies need to be sleeping - day and night.

You may have noticed that newborn babies sleep better when they are being held. Do not be afraid to let someone hold your baby so both of you can sleep better and longer. Parents often hear that they will be "spoiling their baby" if they allow the baby to be held for long periods of time. They also hear that they will be teaching their baby bad sleep "habits" so the baby will only sleep when being held. Although "experts" differ on how to help infants sleep, infants need to be in close contact with adults at this time of life. Instead of learning bad sleep habits, it is more likely that your baby will be learning she can stretch out her sleep without needing to wake for a feeding. Holding a sleeping baby is a great "job" for grandparents and other relatives - and then parents can sleep better, too.

### ***FEEDING***

Babies normally spit up a few teaspoons of milk after every feeding. They can sometimes throw up what appears to be their entire feeding. If your baby throws up just once a day, you probably do not need to be concerned. If he throws up more than once a day, please call your doctor.

Babies often swallow air while feeding, so burping them is helpful. But if your baby does not burp for several minutes, you don't need to keep trying. (Breast fed babies often need less burping than formula fed infants.)

Babies also hiccup frequently. You might have noticed that your baby hiccupped before she was born. Sometimes feeding your baby will stop the hiccups. But if this does not help, you do not need to worry. Fortunately, babies do not seem to be bothered by hiccups and they can often eat and sleep even while they have hiccups. So there is no need for treatment.

Babies have frequent bowel movements, usually after every feeding. Breast fed infants have watery yellow stools that look like mustard paste or scrambled eggs. This is normal and is not diarrhea. Occasionally infants will have greenish colored stools and this is usually normal. If you see blood in your infant's bowel movement, please call your doctor.

### ***CLOTHING***

Babies have immature circulation systems. This means that their hands and feet can look blue or feel cold. It does not necessarily mean that your infant is cold. You can feel her neck to see if her temperature feels comfortable or you can take her temperature.

When you are not holding your baby, keep a hat on his head to prevent him from losing too much heat. He needs to have on as many layers of clothes as you have on, plus a blanket. When you are holding your baby, he may not need the blanket or hat because he will feel your body's warmth. Be careful not to bundle your baby too much. Making your baby too warm is just as dangerous as letting him become cold.

If you use disposable diapers, you may notice tiny beads of gel on your baby's skin. This is just the absorbent material from the diaper and is not dangerous.

### ***DEVELOPMENT***

Newborns need to sleep and do not need much stimulation. Imagine opening your eyes in a new world as your baby is doing. She is hearing, seeing, feeling, touching, and tasting so many new things that it is easy for her to become overwhelmed. Just seeing your face, hearing your voice, feeling your touch, smelling you and tasting milk is all plenty of stimulation for your baby. Please do not think you should be reading to her, showing her pictures, holding her in front of a mirror at this age. That time will soon come – but for now, enjoy her as she eats and sleeps.

Used with permission: Jane E. Anderson, "Prescriptions for Parents"