



St. Vincent Physician Network

"Parenting 101"

from www.kidsgrowth.com

The following comments are designed to help you enjoy your new baby and develop confidence in yourself as a parent. This information is not intended as a substitute for well-baby visits with your newborn's pediatrician.

Remember, no two babies have exactly the same makeup or the same needs. Your baby is an individual with his or her own special growth pattern. Comparing your infant's growth and development with other children is not a good idea and usually causes needless worry.

Never hesitate to ask your child's physician for guidance concerning specific problems. This is the reason for regular well-baby checkups!

Parenting and Behavioral

- Hold, cuddle, talk to, sing to and rock your baby as much as you can. A lot of your infant's development depends on his or her interaction with you. Every touch stimulates the baby's brain.
- Recognize the fact that parents can not always console their baby. Expect this. Of course, always check your baby when he or she seems uncomfortable, to make sure the infant is not too hot, too cold, hungry, wet or needs to burp. Give your child the benefit of the doubt and do not worry about "spoiling."
- Try to spend time nurturing your baby when the infant is quiet, happy and alert, instead of waiting for him or her to cry and fuss for attention.
- Parents should make sure they get adequate rest. Take the phone off the hook and nap when the baby naps. Encourage dad and other family members to help care for the infant. Keep in contact with friends and relatives. Go for a daily walk with the baby for fresh air.

Development

- Begins to recognize family voices and makes small "throaty" noises.
- Recognizes sounds by blinking, crying or showing the startle reflex (arms and legs move away from the body equally).
- Blinks at bright light and may begin to follow, but eyes often do not focus together.
- Watch for the first smile ... truly a milestone. It is the earliest sign of mental growth ... the first thing your baby can do on his or her own! (Usually not seen until 2-3 months).
- Lifts head briefly when lying on his or her stomach.

Feeding

- Make feeding a pleasant time for the entire family. Remember, your baby's first love for his or her parents arises from the bonding obtained during feeding time. The affection and touching the baby gets during the feeding period is an important part of the diet.
- Babies need only breast milk or iron-fortified formula at this time unless otherwise directed by your baby's doctor.
- Your baby's feeding habits will vary from day to day just like you. This is just another way your baby is letting you know he or she is a unique individual.
- If prescribed by your child's doctor, remember to give vitamins and/or fluoride.
- Call the doctor if you feel the baby is not gaining enough weight.
- Do not use a microwave oven to heat formula.

- Delay the introduction of solid foods until they are suggested by your infant's doctor.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle or prop it in his or her mouth.
- Never give an infant honey to prevent infant botulism.

Sleep

- Always put your baby to sleep on his or her back.
- Infants sleep most of the day but a child's sleep patterns vary from baby to baby. It is not unusual for a baby to have a "fussy" period during the late afternoon or early evening. This is how the infant's immature nervous system handles all of the day's stimuli so ... prepare yourself for it.
- Most babies will sleep through the night by 3 months old. "Lucky" parents get a good night sleep sooner. To achieve this, many babies need encouragement. Put the infant to bed when he or she is drowsy, but awake. Avoid rocking your baby to sleep or holding him or her until he or she falls asleep. Your baby needs to learn to fall asleep on his or her own. Try to ignore the baby if he or she is just squirming or whimpering. Your infant may go back to sleep on his or her own!

Immunizations

Since immunization schedules vary from doctor to doctor, and new vaccines may have been introduced, it is always best to seek the advice of your child's health care provider concerning the child's vaccine schedule.

- Most physicians give the first of three Hepatitis B vaccines at the 2 week or one-month checkup, unless it was given in the hospital.

Safety

- Always use a rear-facing infant car seat placed in the center of the back seat.
- Never leave a baby alone with a young sibling or a pet.
- Never leave your baby alone in a tub or on a high place, such as a changing table, bed or sofa.
- Set hot water thermostat at less than 120 degrees F.
- Insist on a smoke-free environment for your baby. If there is a smoker in the family, do not permit any smoking in the house or in the car.
- Make sure smoke detectors are in place and working.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.
- Avoid sun exposure to baby's tender skin.

Eliminations

- Every baby has his or her own unique pattern to the frequency of their bowel movements. Some go after every feeding, some once a day and others every two or three days.
- Most babies strain, grunt and fuss even when they have a loose bowel movement.
- Stool color and consistency varies from yellow in breast fed babies to brown and green in formula fed babies. Consistency can be anywhere from thin to a thick paste.

When to Call the Doctor

- Anything that bothers you is important to your child's pediatrician. That's our job!
- Fever (over 100.2 degrees F rectally).
- Not gaining weight.
- Excessive vomiting, especially if it is forceful and goes across the room.
- Uninterested in eating.
- Irritability or lethargy.
- Unusual skin rashes.

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