



First Steps

Newborn

Key Thought

Transition and adjustments. In this time of transition while your baby adjusts to life outside the womb, you and your family are adjusting to life with a newborn. As in all times of transition, give each other a little more consideration and lots of encouragement.

Advice to Mom

- This is a time of major adjustments.
- Take time to rest.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Trust your common sense.
- Thank God every day for your baby

What Your Baby is Learning

Trust.

Your child learns trust and security when he knows someone will come and meet his needs.

Vision is developing.

At birth your baby's vision will be blurry. Within the first few days your baby's range of vision will be 12 to 15 inches (30-40 cm). Your face will be the most interesting thing to your baby right now. She will be able to see high-contrast best.

To bring a fist to his mouth.

This is the beginning of muscle control.

Characteristics of the Newborn

Physical:

Your baby's head will seem large for her size and have two "soft spots." The "soft spots" allow the baby's head to compress during delivery. The rear one will close by four months and the front one between nine and eighteen months. The canvas-like material protecting the brain, is safe to touch. Also your baby may have a "cone head" appearance and bruises from delivery. These will go away in the first week or so.

Many babies get a yellowish tinge in the first few days of life. This jaundice generally goes away in the first week, but be sure to mention it to your doctor.

Newborns keep their arms and legs curled up at first. It will take a little while until they fully extend their arms and legs. Most babies look bowlegged, but this takes care of itself by five to six months. Your baby will have jerky, spastic looking movements that smooth out as the nervous system and muscle control matures.

Newborns sleep about 16 to 18 hours a day for the first few weeks. They seldom sleep longer than four hours at a time, day or night.



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Communication

The only way your baby has to express herself is by crying. Here are seven reasons your baby will cry:

1. I'm hungry. Your baby will begin to fuss, make noises, and turn toward your breast when picked up.

2. Change my diaper. Easy to check and fix.

3. I'm too hot or too cold. Babies generally need one more layer of clothing than you do to feel comfortable.

4. I want to be held. Babies need lots of cuddling. You cannot spoil your baby by holding and cuddling. Babies feel secure and relaxed when they see their parents' faces, hear their voices, listen to their hearts, and smell their unique scent.

5. I can't take it any more. Your baby may become irritable, try to turn away, stretch out her arms, or cry continuously when she is over-stimulated. Perhaps you have handled her too much, there are too many loud sounds, or bright lights. Swaddle your baby, wrapping closely, and lay your baby down on her back or side in a dark or dimly lit room. You'll soon learn the signs of over-stimulation so you can avoid it.

6. I don't feel well. If nothing else is wrong, you may consider checking the baby's temperature to make sure she's not ill.

7. None of the above. Try swaddling or holding your baby. Some babies feel too constricted and will respond better to sucking a pacifier or being rocked in a cradle. Try playing soft music or singing a lullaby. Walking around or rocking in a swing may help. If your baby is colicky, rubbing her back or belly may be the most soothing thing you can do. Most babies need more sucking than they get with feeding. Allow your baby to suck her thumb or use a pacifier.

Understanding the signals is mostly trial and error. Don't be too hard on yourself when you misunderstand the cues. You'll get plenty of practice and some mistakes will not scar your child for life. Also remember no baby ever died of crying!

Ways You Can Help

Be a student of your baby.

Observe your baby in different settings, at various times of the day, in different activities. Look for patterns of behavior, what comforts your baby and what seems to annoy her. See what your baby seems to like the most. Learn what behaviors precede crying and see whether feeding, changing the diaper, cuddling or putting to bed is the best response.

Ask for and Accept Help.

Suggest others prepare meals for you, baby sit your older children, change your linens, or help with ironing. Ask your mother or mother-in-law to help with the housework so you have more time with your new baby. You can ask for their suggestions and advice. But remember you are the one who will be taking care of the baby when they go back home. Your adjustment to caring for your baby is most important.



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Talk to your baby.

Your baby will enjoy hearing your voice and seeing your face. Imitate any cooing and gurgling noises your baby makes and tell him what you are doing and what is happening around him. As your baby becomes familiar with your voice, it will have a calming affect on him.

Make Room for Daddy.

You need his help. If you don't include him in the care of your baby now, he may not be interested in the baby later. Your baby needs to build a good relationship with her daddy too. Dad is quite capable of caring for the newborn. He may need a little extra encouragement, but both he and the baby will benefit from the experience.

Play Time.

Give your baby a few minutes a couple times each day to lie on her stomach unrestricted by blankets or clothing. Her arms and legs will begin to uncurl and exercise will begin to strengthen her neck and upper body.

Show her interesting things.

She may look quiet, but she is alert and ready to learn. Keep your baby's life interesting with sounds, smells, sights and things to touch. An active life helps her brain to develop and encourages her "love of learning."

Put Baby to Sleep on Side or Back.

Professionals agree that these are the safest positions for most babies. Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, don't put your baby to sleep on her tummy.

Put safety first.

Protect your newborn's tender skull and her developing brain. Try not to let her head flop or fall back. Support her head with your hand until her neck is strong enough to hold up the weight of her head.

What to Expect Next

- Raises head slightly when on stomach.
- Responds to sound.
- Stares at faces.
- Focuses eyes on objects.
- Oohs and ahhs.
- Grips tightly and holds objects momentarily.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for this precious baby you have given our family. Give us wisdom to take care of this baby. We need strength and patience and grace as we all make the adjustments to living as a family. In Jesus' name.
Amen



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Your baby's one month doctor visit

What will happen to your baby:

- Your baby will be weighed and measured.
- If your baby has not already received a hepatitis shot, it will be done at this time.
- The doctor will check to make sure the cord has fallen off and the belly button is well healed.
- If your baby is a boy and he was circumcised, the doctor will check his penis for healing.
- Baby's hearing and eyesight will be checked.

What your doctor may ask:

1. How is your baby eating? Most babies eat every two to three hours at this age. You will want to be able to tell your doctor how often your baby eats, how eagerly your baby nurses, and how much your baby usually takes at a feeding. Newborns gain an average of one and a half to two pounds per week.

2. What are your baby's bowel movements like? Soft are best. If they are too dry and hard, it can be a sign of dehydration or constipation.

3. How is your baby sleeping? Most babies sleep a total of about 15 hours at this age. Your baby will probably be sleeping two to three hours at a time with one period a little longer than the others.

4. Is your baby awake and alert for longer periods? There is no right amount of alert time, but the periods of alertness should be getting longer.

5. Is your baby fussier in the evening? As your baby stays awake longer during the day, being more tired at night will tend to make your baby fussier in the evening.

6. Does your baby study your face when you are close by? If you and a stranger talk to your baby, does your baby turn to face you? Your baby is beginning to recognize you.

7. Does your baby quiet down, even briefly, at the sound of your voice? Your baby is beginning to see you as a source of comfort and nurture.

8. Does your baby follow you with her eyes? Does your baby watch mobiles? Your baby is learning to track objects with her eyes.

9. Does your baby make soft cooing noises when content and alert? This is the first step toward speech.

10. Does your baby hold her head up, even briefly, when placed on her tummy? This is the beginning of head control necessary for sitting and eventually walking.

My Questions for the doctor:

1.

2.