

Newborn Care

Brigitte Rhody- Garrison CNM

Temperature & Respirations: Newborns cannot easily regulate their temperature. Keep the room warm (70-75°F) for the first few days. Normal newborn temperature is **97-99°F under the arm**. If the baby is warmer, undress and recheck in 45 minutes. If the baby is colder, dress warmly and use your own body heat to help him warm up (cuddling skin-to-skin) and check again in 45 minutes. If the temperature is outside that range after the second check, call your midwife. Normal respiratory rate for a newborn is **30-60 breaths per minute**. Your baby may breathe a little faster when he is crying, but should be within this range while resting. **Babies breathe irregularly and normally have short pauses in their breathing patterns, lasting 5-10 seconds.**

Feeding: Colostrum and breastmilk provide for all of your baby's nutritional needs during his first several months. Before your milk comes in, nurse as often as he shows any interest and you can tolerate it. Frequent feeding helps your milk to come in earlier and prevents excessive engorgement. After your milk comes in, nurse him frequently, at least every three hours (from the beginning of one feeding to the beginning of the next) during the day. You can let him go as long as six hours once each night if he is sleeping. He needs to **average 8-12 feedings every 24 hours**. In order to help him get the right balance of fluids and fats, nurse him on the first breast until he comes off on his own. You can then offer him the second breast, which he may or may not take. Start with the second breast at the next feeding. If you have a concern about him getting enough, you can record his wet and messy diapers and check his weight. Normal weight gain for the first three months is $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 ounce a day (4-7 ounces a week). Call if the baby will not nurse or seems listless.

Suctioning: Babies sometimes have some mucus left to clear from their time inside the womb. If your baby seems stuffy or congested, you can lie him with his head lower than his body, gently pat or rub his back, and use the bulb syringe to clear mucus from his mouth or nose. Be sure to squeeze the bulb before putting the tip inside his mouth or nose. Babies sneeze to clear their upper respiratory tract; this does not mean that he is sick, allergic, or cold.

Bathing and Dressing: **Wait to immerse your baby in water until his cord falls off and his navel is healed.** Until then, you can give him sponge baths as desired. Use plain water, a mild, non-scented soap, or a little salt in the water. Beware of letting him get cold during the bath. Warm the room and keep him covered as much as possible. Be sure to dry him completely after the bath and put on dry clothes. You can rub olive or arnica oil into any dry skin. Dress your baby about as you dress yourself in that temperature range, with maybe one extra layer during the first few days. If in doubt about dressing him too warm or cold, check his temperature.

Cord Care: Take care to keep the cord stump clean and dry. You will need to fold back his diaper to prevent contamination. We will remove the cord clamp at the one day visit, and the stump will fall off sometime between four days and two weeks. A small amount of blood when the cord separates is fine. Call if you are concerned. If the area at the base of the cord becomes sticky/ smelly, clean with a cotton ball saturated with saline and warm water,. Exposing the area to air via blow dry on low setting or open to room air for 2 minutes is helpful in healing process.

Elimination: The baby will usually have **at least one wet and one messy diaper in the first 24 hours**. He will have a few more in the next few days. After three days, he should have at least **6-8 wet cotton diapers (5-6 if disposable) and 1-4 BM diapers each day**. His stools will gradually change from black, sticky meconium to yellow breastmilk stools around 2-5 days. Olive oil makes a nice diaper ointment, and helps to prevent meconium from sticking to his skin during the first few days.

Sleeping: **Newborns sleep about 16-20 hours a day.** Most of your baby's waking time will be spent nursing. After your milk comes in, you can help him learn to sleep more at night by keeping him awake for 15-30 minutes after each day-time feeding. This is a good time for interactions between the baby and members of the family.

Jaundice: Normal jaundice appears 2-3 days after birth. Nursing frequently is the most important remedy for jaundice. You can also give the baby sun baths in a warm window for 5-15 minutes a few times a day. ~~Call if the baby~~ seems too yellow, if there is any yellowness on his legs, feet, or hands, if he looks yellow during the first 24 hours after birth, or if he is lethargic and has a weak suck.

Call if the baby seems ill or you are worried about him for any reason.