



# BABY CARE **AT HOME**

You went through pregnancy, labor and now you are ready to go home and start life with your baby. But once home, you may feel like you have no idea what you are doing. Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed, caring for newborns becomes easier as the days go by. These tips can help, even new or more nervous parents, to quickly feel confident in caring for a newborn.

## HANDLING A NEWBORN

If you have not spent much time around newborns, their frailty may be intimidating.

Here are some basics to keep in mind:

- **Wash your hands (or use alcohol disinfectant) before handling your baby:** Newborns do not yet have a strong immune system, so they are at risk for infections. Make sure everyone who touches the baby has clean hands.
- **Hold the baby's head and neck:** When rocking the baby, raising her/him upright or lying down, it is necessary to hold her/his head.
- **Never shake the newborn:** Shaking can lead to bleeding in the brain and even death. If you need to wake up the baby, do not shake her/him; just stroke her/his feet or cheeks.
- **Be sure the car seat is installed correctly:** the car seat must have the installation authorization permit issued by the Fire Department and needs

to be installed before taking the baby from the hospital.

- **Remember that the newborn is not prepared for rough games:** Such as rocking on the knees or throwing her/him into the air.
- **Pediatric visits are important:** keep your follow-up appointment with your pediatrician after discharge from the hospital.

## FEEDING

- Feed your baby when she/he asks (when the baby seems hungry). Do not set schedules.
- During the first 2 weeks, your baby may breastfeed at least 8 times in a 24-hour period. If she/he is fed formula it could be at least 6 times every 24 hours.
- Sometimes a newborn receives breast or bottle milk only for a few minutes. Little by little she/he will feed for longer.



For more information, please contact the Preventive Management Unit at **787-277-6571**.

## SLEEP

- The baby should always sleep on her/his back and not on her/his stomach. In this way, the risk of sudden infant death syndrome is reduced.
- Most babies sleep a total of 18 hours a day. They wake up for a short time, at least every 2 or 3 hours.
- Newborns have some moments of active sleep. The baby may make noises or appear restless. This occurs in intervals of approximately 50 to 60 minute and usually lasts a few minutes.
- When the newborn wakes up, she/he is usually hungry and needs to be fed.

## CHANGING DIAPERS AND BOWEL HABITS

- Try to check your baby's diaper at least every 2 hours. If she/he needs to be changed, do it as soon as possible. This will help prevent diaper rash.
- For the first few days, the baby may have about 3 dirty diapers a day. Later, you can expect 6 or more dirty diapers a day for the first month of life.
- Keep track of what bowel habits are normal or usual for your baby.

## UMBILICAL CORD CARE

- Keep your baby's diaper folded under the umbilical stump. If that does not work well, before putting the diaper on, trim a small area near the top of the diaper so that the cord is in the air.

- To keep the umbilical cord dry, give the baby a sponge bath instead of bathing her/him in a tub or sink.
- The umbilical stump should fall off after a week or two.

## ASKING FOR HELP AFTER BIRTH

Consider getting help during this time, which can be very overwhelming and hectic. While you are in the hospital, talk to the experts around you. Many hospitals have feeding specialists or lactation consultants who can help you start breastfeeding or bottle-feeding.

Nurses are also an excellent resource for learning how to lift, burp, change, and care for your baby. To get help at home, you may want to ask for help from family members, friends or neighbors.

