

YOUR CHILD AT BIRTH



The moment you've been dreaming of has finally come! You are now the proud parent of a tiny little bundle of joy. Feeling anxious? Overwhelmed? Exhausted? Then it's official, you are a new parent! You may be surprised by all of the new emotions, new experiences and new worries that come along with your new baby. As you begin to adjust to your new life, try to remember that getting as much information and support as you can now will help you make the best decisions for your family in the days ahead.

Crying The average newborn cries two to three hours a day, and sometimes more. Babies this age may cry for no reason and a parent may not be able to stop the baby from crying. **For tips on Coping with Crying, turn to page 9.**

Sleep Newborns may sleep up to 20 hours a day, but will not have any sort of sleep pattern for the first two months. It can take up to six weeks

for babies to learn to be awake during the day and asleep at night. Let babies form their own schedule by feeding them when they are hungry and putting them to bed when they seem tired.

Nutrition Newborns need to be fed every two to four hours. The American Academy of Pediatrics and many other worldwide organizations strongly support breastfeeding. Baby formula is a popular alternative to breastfeeding for infants less than one year of age. To meet your baby's nutritional needs, baby formula must be prepared exactly as described on the container.

Physical Development – Many babies lose a little weight (5–7% of birth weight) during the first few days of life. They will usually return to their birth weight within two weeks as they begin to eat more during feedings. After the first two weeks, newborns typically gain around one ounce per day for the first two months, and

- Have almost fully developed senses of taste and smell
- See objects best when they are 30 to 40 inches away from their face as their eyes cannot yet fully focus at close range
- Try to lift their head and look around

Social and Emotional Development – Newborns typically

- Recognize the voices of mom and dad
- Recognize familiar caregivers
- Look at parents when they speak
- Quiet when a voice is heard

Cognitive Development – Babies respond purely through reflexes at birth. Some common reflexes are:

- *Grasp reflex:* baby will tightly grasp objects placed in hand
- *Sucking reflex:* baby begins sucking when mouth area is touched
- *Startle reflex:* baby pulls arms and legs inward after hearing a loud noise
- *Step reflex:* baby makes stepping motions when sole of foot touches a hard surface



Your Newborn's Safety

Safe Infant Sleep According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies are safest when sleeping alone, on their backs in a crib near their parents' bed for the first year of life. The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends the following:

- The crib mattress should fit tightly in its frame and have a snug fitted sheet
- The crib should be undamaged and meet current Consumer Product Safety guidelines (www.cpsc.gov)
- No other objects should be placed in the crib
- The crib should always be placed in a room that is smoke free
- Offering a pacifier has also been linked to a decreased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

For more information on infant sleep, **see pages 5–6.**

Other Safety Tips for Newborns A Home Safety Checklist should be completed at each stage of your child's development. A sample checklist is provided for you on **page 61.**

Most INFANT FALLS are from furniture. Help prevent falls by:

- Never leaving your baby unsupervised on any surface above the floor
- Always using the safety belts on changing tables, bouncy seats and swings

Most BURNS IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE are caused by scalding liquids. Help prevent burns by:

- Setting your hot water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below
- Never carrying hot liquids while carrying your infant
- Never warming baby bottles in the microwave—microwaves heat unevenly and your baby may be burned by hot spots

DROWNING can happen quickly and silently. Help prevent drowning by:

- Always staying with your baby during bath time
- Never leaving an older child to watch your baby near the water

Many everyday items can cause CHOKING OR SUFFOCATION in infants. Help prevent choking and suffocation by:

- Removing small objects and plastic bags from your baby's environment
- Keeping balloons, blind cords and strings away from your baby

You can keep your infant safe and help prevent MOTOR VEHICLE INJURIES by:

- Always placing your newborn in a rear facing infant car seat whenever you travel in a vehicle
- Never leaving your infant alone in the car—even in mild weather, the temperature inside a car can reach dangerous levels in minutes



Positive Parenting Activities that Promote Nurturing and Attachment

- Breastfeeding
- Responding promptly to your baby's cries
- Rocking, singing and comforting your baby
- Maintaining loving relationships with other caregivers
- Keeping primary caregivers consistent over time so attachments can form

HERE'S HELP

Use the **Family Resources on pages 95–99** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.