



**Advanced  
Pediatric  
Associates<sub>LLP</sub>**

## **Basic Baby Care**

**Babies are Babies! All Babies . . .**

### **Sneeze Cough, and May Sound Congested**

Sneezing is how the baby cleans his or her nose of mucus, lint or milk curds. Coughing is often baby's way of clearing his or her throat. Your newborn may also sound congested. This is not only because newborns primarily breath through their noses until they are about 4 months of age, but also because the humidity in Colorado is so low.

### **Hiccup**

Hiccups are little spasms of the diaphragm muscle. Giving a few sips of luke-warm water from a bottle or cup may stop them.

### **Are Uncoordinated**

Except for sucking, baby's actions are poorly coordinated. Arms and legs twitch, tremble and move without purpose. Breathing is often irregular and noisy. Babies respond to sudden movements or stimulation with jerky arm and leg movements and crying.

### **Cry**

In most instances crying babies need to be held. They need someone with a soothing touch and voice. During the early months of life too much holding cannot spoil babies. It is, however, normal for a newborn to cry occasionally without reason. In fact, some babies cry in order to fall asleep. When your baby cries make sure that he or she is not hungry and is dry and comfortable. Then if holding your baby does not console him or her, it is fine to let your baby cry for 10 to 15 minutes to see if he or she will fall asleep.

### **Bathing Baby and Skin Care**

Clear water sponge baths should be given until the umbilical cord has fallen off and the navel is completely dry. Then you can tub-bathe the baby with water and a mild soap such as "Dove." Avoid deodorant and highly scented soaps. Since Colorado has a dry climate, baths normally need to be given only every 2 to 3 days. Wash your baby's hair once or twice a week with a mild baby shampoo.

Normally, baby's skin does not need any ointments or baby oil. If, however, the skin is dry or cracked, apply a white non-scented lotion or cream such as Aveeno, Moisturel, Eucerin or Keri once or twice a day to damp skin.

### **Diapers and Diaper Care**

Disposable diapers and cloth diapers are both fine for baby. If you choose cloth diapers, make sure the diaper is pre-rinsed and soaked in a vinegar solution or Diaperene. It is also important to do two rinses following washing to eliminate soap and ammonia residue, which are two of the causes of diaper rash.

The baby's diaper should be changed whenever it gets wet or soiled. After removing the diaper, rinse baby's bottom with a warm wet washcloth. If the baby had a stool, it is ideal to wash him or her in a tub of warm water using a mild soap to make sure that the baby is clean. Water is preferable to baby-wipes that contain alcohol.

### **Fingernails and Toenails**

Trim the baby's nails once a week after a bath when they are soft. Use clippers, baby scissors or a nail file. Round off the corners of the fingernails so that baby won't scratch himself or herself. Cut the toenails straight across to prevent ingrown toenails. It is often easiest to trim fingernails and toenails while the baby is asleep.

### **Umbilical Cord Care**

Try to keep the cord dry. It may take from one to three weeks for the cord to fall off. *If during this time you smell a foul odor or there is redness surrounding the cord, please call our office.* After the cord falls off, there may be some oozing of fluid or blood that is harmless. Clear water can be used to clean the cord base once the cord has fallen off. *If the area continues to ooze or is raw for more than five days after the cord falls off, please call our office.*

### **Care of the Male Genitalia**

If your baby is uncircumcised you do not need to retract the foreskin of the penis any further than it does naturally. Retraction usually occurs gradually over the first four years of life.

If your baby was circumcised using a plastibell (a small plastic ring encircling the end of the penis), you do not need to apply creams or Vaseline to the penis. Clean the area with warm water until the plastibell falls off, usually within 5 to 7 days.

If your baby is circumcised without a plastibell, use Vaseline jelly on the tip of the penis for the first couple of days to keep it from sticking to the baby's diaper. During the healing process it is normal to see yellowish patches over the head of the penis and tiny spots of blood on the diaper.

### **Care of the Female Genitalia**

Baby girls sometimes have a bloody or mucous discharge from the vagina for the first week or two of life. This is normal. It is also normal to have a thick white substance in the inner labia. Some girls have a hymenal tag, an extra tag of skin in the vaginal area. This is also normal. When changing a diaper or bathing the baby, clean the entire labial folds and creases by wiping from front to back. It is not necessary to remove the thick substance.

### **Baby's Stools**

Baby's stools initially are sticky, dark greenish-black (meconium). After a few days the stools become yellow-green and seedy (transitional). Formula-fed babies stools become yellowish curdy to semi-solid about the third day. Breast-fed babies have mustardy, more liquid stools. The normal number of stools varies from one every feeding to one large, soft stool every second or third day. Most babies strain, cry and become red-faced when passing a stool. This is normal!

### **Constipation**

Constipation is hard, dried-out pellets of stools. Infrequent stools do not mean that the baby is constipated. If your baby has gone for longer than four to five days with no bowel movement (assuming all else is well), try taking the baby's temperature rectally. This often stimulates a stool. *If that stool is hard and dry or if this does not produce a stool, call our office.* Breastfed babies may go 7 to 10 days without having a stool.

### **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a marked increase in both the amount of liquid in the stool and/or the frequency of the stools. A diarrhea stool appears to be mostly fluid that soaks into the diaper. *Call our office if true diarrhea persists over several hours or if you see blood in the stool.*

## **Home at Last**

### **Sleeping**

Newborns normally sleep 16 to 18 hours per day. Your baby will like to be wrapped snugly for the first two or three weeks when sleeping. Babies are used to this snugness from the previous nine months. If possible, have the baby sleep in his or her own room in a standard-sized crib with a firm mattress. Since your baby will spend much of his or her time in the crib, make certain it is safe. Crib bars should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart. (If you are using an older crib, please make sure you check the distance between the crib bars.) All cribs should be checked for loose or defective crib bars before using. The mattress should be the same size as the crib and should be waterproof. Bumper pads and wedges are unnecessary and can even pose a safety threat. Stuffed toys, pillows and other items should be removed from the crib, as they also pose a hazard to a sleeping baby. Co-sleeping (sharing sleep time in bed with your newborn) can also be dangerous, especially in households where there is smoking.

### **Clothing**

Your baby will be comfortable in the same amount of clothing that you require at any particular time of year. Light loose-fitting cotton or synthetic fabrics are best. Avoid wool or silk fabrics and wash all new clothing and blankets before using them.

### **Pacifiers**

A pacifier can be useful for soothing babies. The shield should be at least 1½ inches in diameter and the pacifier should be one single piece. Recent studies have shown that babies who use pacifiers at naptime and bedtime throughout the first year of life may have a reduced risk of SIDS.

### **Going Outdoors**

You may take your newborn outdoors whenever the weather is pleasant. Babies born in the summer may be taken out after they are about a week old; you may want to wait awhile longer to take a newborn out in the winter. Make sure the baby's head is covered -- especially in the cold, wind, and sun. Avoid direct sun -- babies sunburn easily and that can be very dangerous.

### **Room Temperature & Humidity**

Try to keep an even, comfortable temperature in the house. Ventilation is important in warm weather. A thermostat setting of 60 to 68 degrees is acceptable as long as baby is wearing an extra layer of clothes

and booties. A light receiving blanket is adequate in the summer, with one or two heavier blankets in the winter.

A cool mist humidifier is highly recommended for baby's room. This is useful for dry winter months and for treatment of many respiratory illnesses. No additive fluid or medicine is advised. Steam humidifiers should be avoided because of the possibility of burns. It is important to wash the humidifier with vinegar and soapy water at least once a week to prevent a build-up of minerals and mold. Water in the humidifier should be changed daily.

### **Visitors and Crowds**

It is best to keep your baby inside, away from a lot of contacts, especially in the first two months of life. If your baby goes with you to crowded places during the first two months of life, a Snugli type carrier is ideal. These carriers keep the baby next to mom or dad and away from other people.

Everyone wants to hold, feed and play with your new baby. Unfortunately, some of these people, especially other children, may have a cold or other infection. Your baby should not be passed around from person to person -- you may have to be very firm about this.

Crowds of people are not healthy places for new babies. This includes supermarkets, churches, department stores, restaurants, and schools. Babies less than two months of age should not be taken to places where there is an increased risk of exposure to germs.

When you need a babysitter, a supportive family member or a good friend is often the best solution. Try to avoid leaving the newborn at a place that has older toddler children because of the increased risk of exposure to germs. If your baby gets ill, he or she should always remain at home or in the care of immediate family.