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BIRTH TO 2 MONTHS

By Dr. Chad Preston

Congratulations on the birth of your baby! Many exciting changes are ahead.

Nutrition

For the first 2 weeks, aim for 8 to 12 feeds per day (every 2 to 3 hours). Some babies will be sleepy and need to be awakened to achieve this many feedings. Almost all babies lose some weight in the first few days after birth. Once babies have had at least one office visit, are above their birth weight, and continue to feed well, I recommend demand feeding: as much as they want, as often as they want. In other words, for babies that are growing well, don't worry too much about watching the clock for meal time, and certainly don't wake a sleeping baby to feed at this point. Sometimes babies will have a "growth spurt" where for 2 or 3 days they seem to want to eat all the time. Many families tell me that this happens at about 2 weeks of age. Again, if your baby is showing hunger cues like crying, rooting, or lip smacking, let him eat, no matter how long it's been since the last feeding. Babies will not become "obese" at this time. They will stop eating when they are satisfied, and unless their stomach is so full that they have vomiting or reflux, they aren't being overfed.

Breast milk offers the benefits of low cost, constant availability, easy digestion, and protection from diarrhea, respiratory illnesses, and allergies. Mothers who breastfeed lower their risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer later in life. Try to alternate which breast you offer first, and switch sides halfway through each feeding. Keep in mind that your baby will obtain 90% of the calories in the first 10 minutes on each breast. Therefore babies that seem to feed forever may actually just want to suck. Once feeding is well established and the infant is gaining weight, I think it is reasonable to offer a pacifier to these babies. There is a theoretical concern for "nipple confusion" before one month of age, but this is not based on scientific research, and in the real world, no one has ever told me their baby forgot how to nurse after starting a pacifier. Pacifier use also may offer some protection against SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

Because breast milk does not supply enough vitamin D for most babies, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies who get any breast milk start a vitamin D supplement within the first few days of life. D-vi-sol or Tri-vi-sol is an over-the-counter supplement that can be given once per day. A few minutes of safe sun exposure each day can also stimulate the infant's skin to produce more of the vitamin D that she needs for strong bones.

If breastfeeding, continue to take prenatal vitamins, and check if any medications you take are safe to use while nursing. Let your doctor know if you develop any rashes on your breast, or if your infant has signs of thrush (white spots on the tongue, gums, or inner cheeks that don't wash away). Parents often ask how they know if their nursing baby is getting enough milk. The short answer is that if they are gaining weight when seen in our office, they're getting enough.

Pumped breast milk can be kept in the refrigerator for 48 hours, or in the freezer for one month.

Formula fed babies should start with a formula based on cow milk protein, such as Enfamil Lipil or Similac Advance. A store brand (Wegmans, BJ's) is OK too. All infant formulas are fortified with iron. This is *not* a cause of constipation. People who take iron supplements for iron deficiency may be constipated, but this is because the amount of iron is above the needs of an average person. Your formula fed baby gets the amount of iron she needs, just like adults get iron from the meat and vegetables in their diet.

Parents often ask how much formula they should be giving. Again, the answer is "as much as the baby wants." I am less concerned with the amount at each feeding, which may vary, than with the long term picture. After 1 to 2 weeks of age, a rough guide is that most babies take about 2 ½ ounces per pound of body weight per day. That is, an 8 pound baby takes 20 ounces per day, a 10 pound baby 25 ounces per day, and so on. This is for reference only. Some will take more and some will take less, and that is fine.

If feeding formula or pumped breast milk in a bottle, the bottle and nipple should be clean, but it is no longer considered necessary to sterilize them. Never heat a bottle in the microwave as this can cause pockets of heat that can burn the baby's mouth. Never prop bottles, leave an infant alone with a bottle, or leave a bottle in the bassinet or crib with them.

Please do not change to a different formula without discussing with your doctor first.

Many babies will start to develop gas at about 2 weeks of age. Over-the-counter gas drops (Mylicon, simethicone) will likely not be curative, but may make some babies more comfortable.

Unless directed by your doctor, infants should not have anything other than breast milk or formula. They do not need juice. Before the age of 6 months, babies should not drink water because their immature kidneys are not good at clearing it from the body.

Elimination

Most babies will gradually increase their urine output during the first week of life. After that, having 5 wet diapers per day is a good sign that the baby is well hydrated. Once feeding is established (and the breast milk has come in for nursing mothers), many new babies will have a bowel movement with every feeding. By about 2 weeks of age, the frequency will decrease. Formula fed babies may settle into a pattern of stooling once or twice each day. Because breast milk is so efficiently digested and there is not a lot of waste left over, breastfed babies may stool only once or twice a week. If the stools are not hard or uncomfortable to pass, this is fine and you should appreciate the reduction in your diaper bill.

Sleep

According to the Monroe County Child Fatality Review Team, "Of the 58 children younger than 1 who died in 2007 in Monroe County, 10, or 17.2 percent, did so at least indirectly as a result of

unsafe sleep practices. That makes unsafe sleeping one of the leading preventable causes of death in our community. Those children's parents have learned the hard way the lesson we now must bring to our entire community: The safe way for a baby to sleep is alone, on his back, in a crib or bassinet without blankets, bumpers or toys and in a smoke-free environment." (quoted in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, May 15, 2008) My feeling is that even if the chance of harm is one in a million, it's preventable. Therefore I strongly recommend that parents and infants never share a bed.

Skin care

You don't need to apply alcohol to the umbilical cord unless your doctor advises otherwise. Before the cord falls off, the baby can have a sponge bath. Once the cord is off, you can bathe the baby once or twice per week. They're not really getting dirty or sweating, so they don't need more than this. Also, because babies lose a lot of moisture by evaporation, overbathing them can actually make their skin more dry. Immediately after the cord falls off, the tissue inside the belly button may look yellow or moist, and may have an odor. This is normal and does not represent an infection. At this point, applying a little bit of alcohol with a Q-tip may help dry things out. Call for any bleeding.

The circumcised penis can be kept clean by gently dabbing it with a moist cloth. If your son has a circumcision ring, when it falls off it's OK to apply some Neosporin or Vaseline to the tip of the penis for a few days to prevent chafing against the diaper. The uncircumcised penis can be gently cleansed with soapy water. Never forcefully attempt to pull back the foreskin—it will separate on its own in a few years.

Many babies will peel in the first week. This is normal and no lotion needs to be applied. Newborns get several kinds of rashes. Most of these do not represent infection and do not need any specific treatment, but let us know if you have any concerns.

Safety

The infant car seat must be in the back seat (preferably center) and face the rear of the car.

Babies should never be exposed to smoke as it increases their risk of illnesses such as asthma and ear infections, and SIDS. If you must smoke, do so outside of the home and car. Try to wear an old jacket or sweatshirt that you remove before returning inside, as smoke gets absorbed into the clothes. If you smoke, perhaps the birth of your child signals a good time to improve the health of the whole family by quitting. There are many options available to help including patches, gums, inhalers, and other medications. Talk to your doctor or get free help from New York State (1-866-NY-QUITS or <http://www.nysmokefree.com>)

Even non-colicky babies will spend a lot of time crying. If they don't want to be fed, held, rocked, sung to, or have their diaper changed, they may just be letting off steam. It is important to realize that you can't be a good parent every waking moment without having some time for yourself. If you are having feelings of anger or frustration toward your baby, never shake the baby. Put him down and take a few moments in another room. He will not be harmed by crying for a few minutes. If possible, have a friend or relative watch the baby for an hour or two.

Also, it is very common for women to have postpartum depression. The severity of symptoms varies and can affect your ability to adequately take care of your baby. Feeling somewhat overwhelmed, nervous, irritable, or sad about your new responsibilities is normal. Feeling hopeless

or unable to have any pleasure is not. Please call your doctor immediately if you have any concerns.

Other

Don't forget about the needs of older siblings. Try to have some one-on-one time with them each day, and involve them in the baby's care. Simply bringing over a diaper or selecting the baby's outfit can make a big brother or sister very proud.

Watch for these phenomena which are normal newborn occurrences: Cross-eyes (normal until 6 months), eye discharge from a clogged tear duct (normal until 12 months), startle reflex, baby acne, swelling of breast and genitals due to maternal hormones, small amount of vaginal discharge in baby girls.

It is recommended that parents and grandparents of newborns be immunized against pertussis (whooping cough). If your baby is less than 6 months old during flu season, then it is recommended that parents get a flu shot as well.

Illness

Have a digital rectal thermometer at home and check your baby's temperature if she is acting sick in any way at all. Taking a rectal temperature is the only way to be accurate in a baby. A fever in a baby less than 3 months old is a medical emergency. Call the doctor immediately (regardless of time of day) at 342-5665 if your baby is younger than 3 months and has a rectal temperature greater than 100 degrees.

Call for repeated vomiting, any trouble breathing, decreased urine output, or anything at all that concerns you about your baby. Remember that there is a doctor to see patients in the office in the morning every Saturday and most Sundays.

Much more information about infant care is available at our Web site:

<http://www.ppgkids.com>

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