

# your child @™

## birth

highlights of what's happening  
at this stage of your child's development...



**Welcome to a whole new world!** No parent is ever really ready for the changes that come with having a new baby. It's a wonderful time, but it's also a challenging time, full of new worries, new feelings and new experiences. Just remember, ask for help when you need it and don't expect everything to be perfect.

### your child's health

#### take note...

The AAP suggests that you tell your doctor if you notice any of the following during your baby's second, third, and fourth weeks of life:

- sucks poorly or feeds slowly;
- doesn't blink in bright light;
- doesn't focus and follow movement of a nearby object;
- rarely moves arms and legs, seems stiff;
- seems very loose in the limbs or floppy;
- lower jaw trembles constantly, even when the baby is not crying or excited;
- doesn't respond to loud sounds.

#### Well Visits

Before leaving the hospital, your baby should have a complete physical exam. Unless there are health problems, your baby should have her first well visit sometime during her first month, and another one at eight weeks. If you are concerned about your child's health in between visits, call her doctor.

#### Sleep

Your infant's sleep will be disorganized during her first six weeks, because she doesn't yet know the difference between day and night. At six weeks, her total sleep may be about 16 hours per day, including a stretch of 4 to 6 hours at night.

You can help to soothe your newborn to sleep by:

- Swaddling her securely in a blanket or cloth.
- Letting her suck on a pacifier, bottle, hand or wrist.
- Rocking or swinging your baby gently.
- Giving her a soft massage.

#### SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is also known as crib death. To reduce the risk of SIDS:

- Always place your baby on his back to sleep, and remind other caregivers to do so as well.
- Keep toys and other small objects out of your baby's crib to prevent choking.
- Make sure the mattress and bedding are firm and flat and fit perfectly into the crib without gaps between the crib walls.
- Do not place your infant to sleep on soft surfaces such as waterbeds, sofas, soft mattresses, pillows, comforters, or sheepskins. Also, keep toys and stuffed animals out of the crib. They can smother your baby.
- Dress your baby in as many layers of clothing as you would wear and keep the temperature in your baby's room comfortable for an adult.
- Do not smoke around your baby.

#### Nutrition

Feed your newborn breast milk or formula at least every three to four hours. Don't let him skip a feeding until at least four weeks of age. Remember to burp him after each feeding.

#### Cleaning and Bathing

##### Sponge Baths

Your infant's umbilical stump will fall off 10 to 20 days after birth, leaving a small wound that will take a few days to heal. Until then, wipe your baby's body with a clean, warm, wet washcloth instead of using a bathtub. Be sure to regularly wipe her face and hands and carefully clean her genitals.

##### Tub Baths

After the umbilical stump heals, you can give your baby a traditional water bath in the kitchen sink or a plastic baby tub. To bathe a newborn:

- Fill the tub with 2 to 3 inches of warm water. (Double-check the water temperature before placing your baby in the tub.)
- Gradually slip the baby into the tub using your hand to support her head and neck.
- When using the sink, seat your baby on a washcloth and hold her under the arm to prevent slipping.
- Pour cups of bath water over her instead of water directly from the spout.
- Wash her with a gentle hair and body soap.
- Wrap your baby in a towel and pat her dry.

#### Jaundice

Many newborns have a jaundiced or yellowish skin color, which may last the first week or two — until the newborn's liver begins to remove bilirubin from the blood. Your baby should be examined for jaundice at the hospital. If she has been diagnosed with jaundice at the hospital, it is important that she be examined again between 3 and 5 days of age. If you have any concerns, you should call your baby's doctor.

Sources: *Your Baby's First Year* and *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Steven P. Shelov, MD, FAAP, editor in chief; *Understanding Children*, Civitas and Richard Saul Wurman; *KidBasics*, Civitas; *Healthy Sleep, Happy Child*, Marc Weissbluth, MD.

Civitas thanks Parents as Teachers, an international early childhood parent education and family support program, for their ongoing support.

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## your child's health continued

### **Skin Care: Sun Exposure**

Do not expose your baby to the sun and do not use sunscreen until she is at least 6 months old, because the risks of sunscreen are not yet known. Consult with your doctor if your newborn needs to be outdoors.

### **Skin Care: Baby Acne**

*What it is:* Pimples that develop on the face or back between 2 weeks and 2 months of age and lasts until 4 to 6 months of age.

*Treatment:* Probably none, unless severe. Ointments and cleansers may cause more harm than good to your baby's skin.

### **Skin Care: Cradle Cap**

*What it is:* A dry, flaky, harmless scalp condition that usually goes away on its own after several months.

*Treatment:* Washing with water or gentle baby shampoo and brushing the hair regularly can help. If the problem continues, talk to your doctor about special shampoo to treat the condition.

## your child's growth and development

### **The AAP says that your infant should achieve these milestones by the end of his first month:**

#### *Movement:*

- Makes jerky, quivering arm thrusts
- Brings hands up to eyes and mouth
- Moves head from side to side while lying on stomach
- Has strong reflex movements

#### *Eyesight:*

- Focuses 8 to 12 inches away
- Eyes wander and occasionally cross
- Prefers black and white or high contrast patterns
- Prefers human faces to patterns

#### *Hearing:*

- Has fully matured hearing
- Recognizes some sounds

#### *Smell and Touch:*

- Recognizes the scent of his mother's breastmilk

## nurturing your child

**Take Care of Yourself.** Becoming a parent is overwhelming and exhausting. Make sure you get plenty of support from friends, family or community groups. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Call your doctor if your "baby blues" last more than two weeks.

**Follow Your Baby's Cues.** As you respond to your baby's needs, you will learn what her different cries mean and how to soothe her. If she likes what you're doing, you know you are getting it right! If she does not, experiment. After all, this is a learning process for both you and your baby.

**Understand and Respond to Your Baby's Needs.** You cannot spoil an infant, so be sure to go to him whenever he fusses or cries. When you answer him, he learns that you understand his signals and are going to take care of his needs.

**Talk, Sing, Read and Play with Your Baby.** Just as a baby's body depends on parents for food to grow, his brain depends on experiences to grow and develop. Talk, sing, read and play with your baby right from the start to help him learn.

## your child's safety

### **note...**

Never place a baby in the front seat of a car with an activated air bag. The strength of the air bag could kill your baby.

### **General Safety**

- Never leave your baby unattended on any surface above the floor.
- Don't attach pacifiers or other objects to your baby or the crib with a cord, string or necklace of any type.
- Always support the baby's head and neck when moving her body.
- Never shake your baby.
- Call 1-877-KIDS-NOW to see if your baby qualifies for free or low-cost health insurance.

### **In the Car**

The law requires that your baby ride in:

- a properly installed, federally approved car seat every time she is in the car.
- the rear facing position.
- the back seat.
- For more information, go to [www.fitforakid.org](http://www.fitforakid.org).

*Born Learning™* is a public engagement and material distribution campaign that provides important information about what young children need every day to ensure quality early learning. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, Born Learning materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas.

For more information, visit us online at [bornlearning.org](http://bornlearning.org).

