

# Infancy

(Birth - 11 months)

## For parents

Raising healthy children is important, rewarding hard work - 24 hours a day. Along with the excitement of getting to know your new baby, you'll learn how to be responsive to your baby's own unique personality. Newborn babies and infants, birth to 11 months, show us how fast change happens. Babies double and triple their weight in a very short time and learn to smile

and coo within weeks. Babies need you so much - you're the center of their universe. Along with the easy, fun times, there will also likely be harder moments - times when your baby cries uncontrollably or can't get to sleep. Even if you're an "experienced parent" there are likely to be challenges. Your family, friends, and your child's health provider can help. You'll need to think about your priorities and values to decide how best to raise your baby. There are many right ways to raise healthy children!





## Thinking Ahead: Family Relationships

### Teamwork, Building a Team

- ☼ It takes teamwork to take care of infants. Each parent and family member will want to get to know the baby and develop a special relationship with this new being.
- ☼ Identify your personal support system. Every parent needs to know there are others to talk to and get support from - raising children is hard work!
- ☼ Let go of less important tasks around the house for awhile, and cut down on outside activities. If friends and family offer to help, be ready to ask them to - do some of your errands along with theirs, care for your other children, cook a meal or two, etc.
- ☼ If there is a problem at birth or if your baby shows signs of a disability, seek extra help as you deal with complications of your own health or an illness or disability of the baby. Most of the information in this pocket guide is useful for all families, including families with children with special needs but you'll need other information, too. See *Resources for children with special needs* on page 89.

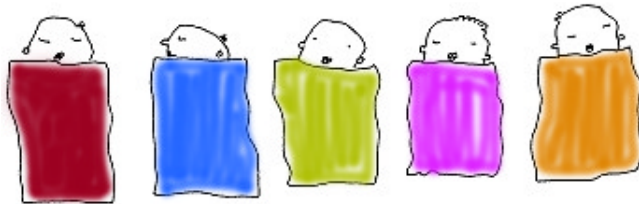
### Changing Bodies, Changing Lives

- ☼ Mothers should go over their postpartum care with their health care provider. As a new mother, you will need plenty of rest, lots of fluids and time to eat properly and take care of your body as you recover from childbirth.
- ☼ If you have concerns about any of the advice you receive, talk it over with your health care provider.

- ✿ Make time for your friends and relatives. You might want to introduce your new baby and have company, but don't be afraid to limit the number of visitors and the length of visits while you are recovering from childbirth.
- ✿ Expect that, along with the joy of a new baby, there may be times when you will feel tired, overwhelmed, or even depressed. Get as much rest as you can and don't expect to be your old self right away.
- ✿ This is a good time to think about family planning and what size you imagine your future family to be. Take time to share your hopes and thoughts.

### Sharing Time (and Yourself)

- ✿ Continue to provide attention to other children in the family. Let them know that when a baby first comes home, life may be a little hectic, but things will settle down and return to a more regular pattern.
- ✿ Take time for yourselves. Mothers and fathers need to spend some time alone, as well as together.





## Thinking Ahead: Getting to Know Your Baby

### Feelings

- ☼ Your baby needs lots of love. Show him your love and affection by holding, cuddling, rocking, and by talking and singing to him.
- ☼ You will soon get to know your baby's temperament and how it determines the way she relates to you and her world. Within days you will know your baby better than anyone else. You will continue to learn how to read her particular signs and signals that tell you when she is tired, when she is hungry, and when she is ready for your attention.
- ☼ When the baby is unhappy, try to console him, but know that it's not your fault if this doesn't always work. Sometimes babies will continue to cry regardless of what parents do.

### Learning and Language

- ☼ Be sure to talk to your baby, especially when she is quiet and alert. This is a time when she is most likely to respond and learn the beginnings of language.
- ☼ Read to your baby. Play music. Play social games with him. These are ways to help your baby learn about the world and people, right from the start.
- ☼ Help your baby develop a bedtime routine that signals the day is over. Include habits that let your baby help herself get to sleep easily. This might help reduce the number of times she wakes up at night.





## Exploring the World

- ✿ By the middle of the first year, offer safe opportunities for your baby to explore her world - nothing fancy, just a clean, warm place to play - the floor will do. See page 95 for tips.
- ✿ Help your baby begin to understand what is off limits. You can find ways to gently distract him and words that let him know what you want him to understand.
- ✿ Toys labeled for your baby's age group will likely match your baby's interests and developing abilities. Babies learn from their play experiences, starting with rattles, mobiles, stuffed toys and soft balls. Pots, pans, and wooden spoons will do, too. Of course, you should avoid small things, such as toys with breakable parts, that a baby could choke on.
- ✿ As you start to use baby-sitters or make child care arrangements, talk to your health provider about important points to consider - how to continue patterns of eating, sleeping, breast-feeding, playtimes, etc. Talk about any problems your child has being away from you. See page 92 for *Child care checklist*. To find a child care center near you, call Child Care Aware at (800) 424-2246.





## Thinking Ahead: Being Part of the Community



### Meeting Others

- ☼ Learn about parent-child programs that are part of most communities. Ask about them in libraries, schools, hospitals, and community centers. Check the newspaper or bulletin boards at your local grocery store.
- ☼ If you are new to the area and have a baby, these programs can be a good way to get to know others with young children.
- ☼ As your time and energy allow, decide whether to cut down on or expand ties to your community.

### Resources

- ☼ The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1974 requires businesses with 50 or more employees to allow workers to take unpaid leaves of absence to attend to: birth and care of a newborn baby; the care of a newly adopted child or child in foster care; or the health needs of family members. For more information call the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor at (800) 998-7542 or visit the web site [www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov).
- ☼ Evaluate your health insurance benefits and other programs that pay for health care. Does your insurance cover the kinds of care and services you and your child need? The health department in your city, county, or state should have information about resources.
- ☼ Ask about other kinds of financial help available for families. Talk to your health care providers about resources for food, housing, transportation, and other services designed for families with young children.

## Child care

- ❖ If you plan to return to work soon after the baby's birth, talk to your health care providers about:
  - being away from your baby
  - keeping a close relationship to your baby
  - handling sickness, stress, or any difficulties that may arise.
- ❖ Talk to family, friends, and professionals about choosing and evaluating child care options. Contact Child Care Aware at (800) 424-2246 to locate approved child care centers and providers. They can offer information to help you decide which center or family day care provider meets your child and family's needs. See page 92 for a *Child care checklist*.





## Thinking Ahead: Healthy Habits

### Health and Development

- ☼ Before you leave the hospital ask for a phone number to call if you have questions once you get home.
- ☼ Talk with hospital staff and your health care provider about your baby's care including: skin and nail care, burping, spitting up, sleep patterns, using a thermometer, dressing your baby for the weather, weight gain, etc.
- ☼ You'll know that your baby is gaining enough weight by:
  - checking for wet diapers and bowel movements
  - taking your infant for regular health care visits and weighings.
- ☼ For successful breast-feeding, go over breast-feeding practices with your health care provider, lactation specialist or La Leche League Leader (see page 84 in resources section). Keep track of feedings. Your new baby should be nursing 8-12 times in 24 hours and long enough to satisfy his needs. Eat well and care for yourself too. You may want to talk to your health care provider about getting enough rest, drinking plenty of fluids, relieving breast engorgement, caring for breasts, eating properly, and your use of alcohol or tobacco.
- ☼ If bottle-feeding, ask your health care provider which type of formula to use, how to prepare it, how often to feed, suggested feeding methods, and necessary equipment. Check the temperature of the formula or the milk before feeding. Remember, microwaving is not a good idea since milk may heat unevenly and become too hot.



- ✿ Talk to your health care provider about when to introduce solid foods - usually at about four to six months. Discuss good foods to start with, such as iron-enriched cereal, pureed fruit or vegetables, and then meat. Wait 7 days before introducing a new food to check for reactions.
- ✿ At four to six months of age, babies usually begin to explore food. Sometimes they grab what you are eating!
- ✿ Choose finger foods your baby can't easily choke on. (see pages 94 for ideas)
- ✿ Help your baby get used to new food textures.

### Oral Health

- ✿ Care for your baby's future teeth:
  - don't let your baby go to bed with a bottle
  - clean gums and new teeth with a soft brush
  - talk to your health care provider about fluoride supplements





## Thinking Ahead: Keeping Your Baby Safe

- ☼ Talk with your health care provider about helpful guidelines for keeping your baby safe. See page 95 for tips to prevent injuries in your home.
- ☼ Recognize early signs of illness (fever, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, seizures, skin rashes, etc.) You may be unsure at first, but you will probably notice that your baby's behavior doesn't seem quite the same. List the things that seem different to you and then call your health care provider to discuss them.
- ☼ Think ahead about what to do in case of an emergency. Have emergency numbers nearby for yourself and others who help care for your baby. See page 80 for *Important phone numbers* - keep this in a handy place.
- ☼ Do your best to make your home and car non-smoking zones, with smoking done outside. Try to minimize your baby's exposure to smoke.
- ☼ Ensure that your crib is safe. Check that the slats are no more than 2 3/8" apart. The mattress should be firm and fit snugly into the crib. Keep the sides of the crib raised when the baby is in the crib. Avoid soft bedding or pillows that might interfere with breathing.
- ☼ Put your baby to sleep on his back on a firm tight-fitting mattress with no soft bedding. This helps prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Call the Back to Sleep Campaign (800) 505-2742 for more information.
- ☼ Babywalkers should be avoided. They're not good for a baby's physical development and can cause dangerous falls.

- ❁ Install smoke detectors if they're not already in place and make sure they work properly. Check the batteries regularly. Talk with your family about fire emergency evacuation plans.
- ❁ Set your hot water heater thermostat at 120 degrees F or less. Not only will you avoid the risk of burning your baby or anyone else in the tub/shower or at the sink, but you'll save money.
- ❁ Test the bath water temperature with your wrist to make sure it is not too warm before bathing your baby. Remember that babies cannot be safely left alone even for a few seconds in a tub of water.
- ❁ Protect your baby from the sun. Infants should only spend a short amount of time in the sun. Babies, even those with dark skin, need sunscreen when exposed to the sun, even on cloudy days. Sunscreen is safe to use on babies 6 months and older. During the summer, take her out early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the sun's rays are less strong. Don't forget to reapply sunscreen regularly when outside for longer periods. Babies should wear hats with brims.
- ❁ Use an infant safety seat all the time when transporting your baby in an automobile. Keep the car seat in the back seat. Make sure it is an approved model and is properly placed and secured at all times. For more information, contact the National Safe Kids Campaign (800) 441-1888 or visit their web site at [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

