

Newborn Care Basics

Essential information
for the first weeks at
home

Feeding Your Newborn

In the first weeks, expect to feed every 2-3 hours (or more often!)

Hunger Cues (from early to late):

- Early: Stirring, opening mouth, turning head (rooting)
- Active: Stretching, increasing movement, hand to mouth
- Late: Crying, fussing, agitated (try to feed before this!)

Is Baby Getting Enough?

- 6+ wet diapers per day (after day 4)
- 3-4+ bowel movements per day (may decrease after 6 weeks)
- Baby seems satisfied after feeding
- Steady weight gain (after initial loss)

Safe Sleep (ABCs)

A - Alone

Baby sleeps in their own space (no blankets, pillows, toys)

B - Back

Always place baby on their BACK to sleep

C - Crib

Firm, flat surface (crib, bassinet, play yard)

Room-sharing (baby in your room in their own sleep space) is recommended for the first 6-12 months. This is different from bed-sharing.

Diaper Basics

What to Expect:

- Day 1-2: Dark, sticky meconium (tar-like)
- Day 3-4: Transitional greenish-brown
- Day 5+: Yellow, seedy (breastfed) or tan/yellow (formula)

Diaper Change Tips:

- Clean front to back (especially for girls)
- Point penis down in diaper (for boys)
- Pat dry, apply diaper cream if needed
- Fold diaper down under umbilical cord stump

Umbilical Cord Care

- Keep the stump clean and DRY
- Fold diaper below the stump
- Sponge baths only until it falls off (usually 1-3 weeks)
- Don't pull on it—let it fall off naturally
- A little blood when it falls off is normal

When to Call Your Pediatrician

- Fever over 100.4°F (rectal) in baby under 3 months
- Refusing to eat or eating much less than usual
- Difficulty breathing or very rapid breathing
- Yellow skin or eyes (jaundice) that worsens
- Fewer than 6 wet diapers in 24 hours (after day 4)
- Blood in stool
- Extreme fussiness or limpness/lethargy
- Redness, swelling, or pus at umbilical stump

Soothing Your Newborn

The "5 S's" for soothing a fussy baby:

- Swaddling: Snug wrap for security
- Side/Stomach position: Hold baby on side/stomach (back for sleep)
- Shushing: White noise or "shhhh" sounds
- Swinging: Gentle rhythmic motion
- Sucking: Breast, finger, or pacifier

Newborn Sleep Patterns

- Newborns sleep 14-17 hours total, in short stretches
- Expect to wake every 2-3 hours for feeding
- Day/night confusion is normal—keep days bright and active, nights dark and calm
- Longer stretches usually develop around 3-4 months

Normal Newborn Things That May Surprise You

- Sneezing frequently (clearing nasal passages)
- Hiccups after feeding
- Loud breathing/grunting
- Startle reflex (arms flailing)
- Crossed eyes (eye muscles are developing)
- Baby acne and peeling skin
- Sleeping with eyes partially open

As a postpartum doula, I help families navigate these early weeks with hands-on support and education. You don't have to figure it all out alone!

