

BABY CARE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



FERNANDEZ
HOSPITAL


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Units of **FERNANDEZ FOUNDATION**

Caring for a newborn

Caring for a newborn is one of the greatest challenges a parent or caregiver faces. A newborn is completely dependent on loved ones to care for him/her. This is a simple guide to important aspects of essential newborn care and is based on guidelines which present recognized methods and techniques of clinical practice, based on published evidence. The ultimate judgment regarding what is good for your baby must be made in consultation with your paediatrician.

How do I schedule further appointments

At the time of your discharge from hospital, an appointment will be scheduled with the doctor who will attend to your baby. You can call us between Monday and Saturday at 040-40632301 / 040-40222397 or use our online scheduler.

Will there be a waiting period, even though I have an appointment?

We try our best to maintain our schedule, but there may be times for reasons beyond our control, when you may have to wait, even though you hold a confirmed appointment.

Do I need to wash my hands every time I touch my baby?

We would recommend that anyone handling the baby has clean hands as the newborn are prone to infections. Wash your hands or use a hand sanitizer to avoid infections being passed to your baby.

Is there anything I need to know about carrying my baby?

Make sure you support your baby's head and neck at all times. Do not throw your baby in the air or shake him/her hard, as this can cause bleeding in the brain, which can result in death.

How many motions will my baby pass in a day?

Just like us, babies too will differ in their bowel movements. There may be times when they pass several motions in a day, or at times pass them once a week. A breastfed baby's bowel movements are looser than a formula-fed infant's, and maybe more frequent (especially in the early weeks). It is not unusual for a newborn nursing baby to have a loose stool every time he/she feeds, but this is not diarrhoea (unless accompanied by fever, lethargy, vomiting, or other symptoms of illness).

How do I know that my baby's motions are normal?

Here is a colour-by-colour guide:

- Green-black: After birth, a baby's first bowel movements are greenish-black and tarry.
- Green-brown: As the baby begins digesting breast milk, green-brown and then yellow-brown bowel movements are seen.
- Yellow: By about five days after birth, breastfed babies usually have seedy, loose bowel movements that are yellow to yellow-green or tan in colour.
- Brown: If you feed your baby formula, his or her bowel movements might become light brown and pasty.
- Other colours: When your baby begins eating solid food, his/ her bowel movements might become dark brown – although seemingly odd colours are possible as well. You might also find chunks of undigested food in your baby's stool.

Pay attention to the consistency of his/her bowel movements. Contact your baby's doctor if your baby's bowel movements are:

- Black after the first few days after birth
- Red or bloody
- White or grey
- Consistently watery
- Consistently large, hard or difficult to pass

How will I know if my baby is constipated or has diarrhoea?

If your baby has very watery or loose motions, it may be a sign of diarrhoea. On the other hand, constipated babies have dry stools and difficulty in passing a motion. You need to remember that most babies make noises and keep staring while passing a motion, but this does not mean that it is a sign of constipation. What is most important is keeping an eye open on the consistency of the motion, rather than the number of times a newborn has a bowel movement.

Do babies get dehydrated and, if so, can I give water or juice?

The signs of dehydration are:

- Fewer than 4 wet nappies per day
- Mouth and/or lips turn dry
- The eyes and the soft spot on the head appear sunken
- Decreased activity and tiredness
- Extra irritable and no tears when crying

You need to seek immediate medical attention for your baby should you observe any of these signs. Please note that fruit juice is not given to babies below six months. It is advisable, not to give a baby less than six months old, even boiled cooled water to drink, unless recommended by the doctor. Please consult your doctor for specific guidance.

My baby has sticky eyes and they water a lot. Is that cause for concern?

This is no cause for concern. Although newborns don't cry with tears, they do produce tears to keep their eyes moist. These tears drain from ducts near the nose and maybe blocked in infants. This is when you would see tears stream down the cheeks and at times mild inflammation, causing the eyes to swell a bit and stick together.

The eyes usually become normal in a few weeks or months, with simple gentle massage near the nose and wiping of the eyes with clean boiled water and a clean soft cloth. If you have any concerns please discuss with your doctor.

Can babies see?

Although the eye muscles of a baby may not be very strong and eyes may turn in or out for the first four months of their life, they have sight right from day one and can see up to 12-18 inches in front of them.

What care do I need to take of my baby's umbilical stump?

- Keep the stump clean. If the stump becomes dirty or sticky, clean it with plain water, then dry it by holding a clean, absorbent cloth around the stump or fan it with a piece of paper.
- Keep the stump dry. Expose the stump to air to help dry out the base. Keep the front of your baby's diaper folded down to avoid covering the stump. In warm weather, dress your baby in a diaper and T-shirt to improve air circulation.
- Let the stump fall off on its own. Resist the temptation to pull off the stump yourself, even if it is hanging on by only a thread.

How do I know if the umbilical cord stump has developed infection?

It's normal to see a little crust or dried blood near the stump. Contact your baby's doctor if your baby develops a fever or if the umbilical area:

- Appears red and swollen around the cord
- Continues to bleed
- Oozes yellowish pus
- Produces a foul-smelling discharge
- If your baby has an umbilical cord infection, prompt treatment can stop the infection from spreading.

Should I circumcise my baby?

Circumcision is normally a religious or cultural ritual, a matter of family tradition, personal hygiene or preventive health care. Sometimes there is a medical need for circumcision. Your decision can be based on the following:

PROS	CONS
Easier hygiene	The foreskin might be cut too short or too long
Decreased risk of urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases	The foreskin might fail to heal properly
Prevention of penile problems	The remaining foreskin might reattach to the end of the penis, requiring minor surgical repair

When and how frequently should I bathe my baby?

- Sponge bath should be given after baby stabilizes at birth preferably after 24 hours
- Stick with sponge bath till the umbilical cord falls off.
- Daily bath with lukewarm water in hot weather.
- Once or twice a week in cold weather.

Unless your baby has very dry and cracked skin, do not use creams or ointments. Avoid using talcum powder, as this can cause irritation in the lungs if your baby inhales it.

What is the right time to start breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding should be initiated in the first hour of birth. The initial milk known as colostrum, is protein-rich and will help your baby to develop resistance.

Should I wake my newborn for feeds?

While waking up a sleeping baby might seem like a bad idea, frequent feeds early on are important for a couple of reasons. Crying is a late sign of hunger that can interfere with feeding. The sooner you begin each feeding, the less likely you'll need to soothe a frantic baby. Also, most newborns lose weight in the first few days after birth. Until your newborn regains this lost weight – usually within 10 days to two weeks after birth – it is important to feed him/her frequently (at least 8-10 times in 24 hours).

How do I know that my baby is getting sufficient milk and has normal growth?

General indicators of sufficient milk production:

- Baby urinates at least six times or more in a day after 3–4 days of life.
- Weight gain is adequate.
- Baby is satisfied, happy and playful and sleeps for at least two hours before crying for the next feed.

Most babies lose 5-10% of their body weight during the first 3-5 days. Birth weight is regained by 7-10 days and subsequently they gain, on an average, 20-30 g/day for the first three months of life.

Why do babies go on breastfeeding strikes?

It is not always easy to figure out why your baby refuses to nurse. Common causes of a breastfeeding strike include:

- Pain or discomfort
- Illness
- Stress or distraction
- Unusual scents or tastes
- Reduced milk supply

You can try a combination of methods mentioned below to encourage your baby to breastfeed.

- Keep trying.
- Try different breastfeeding positions.
- Try feeding your baby in a dark, quiet room with no distractions. Increase the amount of time you spend cuddling, stroking and soothing your baby. Skin-to-skin contact between you and your baby can help re-establish trust.
- If your baby is teething, rub his or her gums with a cool washcloth or your finger before feeding. If your baby bites you during breastfeeding, slip your finger into your baby's mouth to quickly break the suction.
- Evaluate changes in your routine. Think about any changes in your routine that might be upsetting your baby. Are you experiencing stress? Are you taking any new medications or using any new products? Has your diet changed? Could you be pregnant?
- Avoid using perfume, fragranced soap, lotion or deodorant around your breasts.

Is it necessary to burp my baby?

Burping help to release the air that babies tend to swallow while feeding. your baby, gently pat the back in a down to up motion. There is no need to pound your baby. We suggest that you keep your baby in an upright position for 10-15 minutes after feeding, for the first six months. This helps to prevent the baby spitting milk out. Always burp your baby after feeding.

What is colic and how is it caused?

In the first few weeks of life babies often cry about 60-90 minutes per day. If a healthy infant cries more than three hours per day, more than three days per week between the ages of three weeks and three months, then the baby has colic. There is no one specific reason that can be named as the cause for colic, and nothing you as a parent do, can cause colic.

How can we calm a crying baby?

- Firstly, remember that neither the colic, nor the crying, will harm your baby.
- No matter what, never shake your baby.
- Remain calm and patient with each other and the baby.
- Try burping your baby.
- Change the nappy to make the baby feel more comfortable.
- Wrap your baby in a blanket and gently rock in your arms.
- Take the baby for a walk in the stroller or for a ride in a car.
- If you are breastfeeding, avoid onions, garlic, broccoli, cabbage, beans, sprouts, spicy food, tea, coffee, fizzy drinks and alcohol.

Please call your doctor if your baby does not calm down even after three hours and if you are concerned there is something wrong with your baby.

When can I introduce my baby to cow's milk and semi-solid food?

Infants who have not reached their first birthday, should be breastfed, as breast milk provides the best nutrients needed for their growth. It is only after the age of one and in consultation with your doctor, that you should introduce cow's milk. Semi-solid foods are generally introduced after six months. It is preferable to feed your baby home-cooked food, rather than ready-made foods, including packed juices. Continue breastfeeding, for as long as possible, even though you may introduce semi-solid foods.

How long do babies sleep and is it a problem if my baby does not sleep through the night?

Firstly, a baby does not make out the difference between day and night. They keep getting up as and when they need food, as they can feed on only tiny amounts of milk each time. A baby will sleep up to 16 hours a day but this will change as your baby grows. The key would be in trying to get as much rest as possible when your baby is asleep.

Can we have a dog or cat in our house when there is a newborn?

It is fine to have a pet in the house, but it needs to be monitored for any signs of aggression. To avoid any infection you should make sure that the pet does not lick your baby's face. You also need to ensure that you maintain hygiene levels of your pet and have all vaccinations updated.

Can I take my baby out of the house?

It is fine to take your baby out for short spells in the open, where the air is fresh and clean. This may be a bit difficult in cities where there are crowds and a lot of air pollution.

What is the ideal temperature that I should maintain in my room for my newborn baby?

The temperature of the room should be maintained at 26-28° Celsius. Make sure the hands and feet are warm to the touch.

Do babies get a common cold?

Babies are especially susceptible to the common cold, in part, because they're often around other older children who don't always wash their hands. In fact, within the first year of life, most babies have up to seven colds.

What are the symptoms of a common cold in babies?

The first indication of the common cold in a baby is often:

- A congested or runny nose
- Nasal discharge that may be clear at first, but then usually becomes thicker and turns shades of yellow or green

Other signs of a common cold may include:

- A low-grade fever of about 100.4° F (38° C)
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability
- Difficulty in sleeping

Should I treat my baby at home or take him to a doctor?

If your baby is younger than 2 to 3 months of age, a common cold can quickly develop into croup, pneumonia or another serious illness. Even without such complications, a stuffy nose can make it difficult for your baby to nurse or drink from a bottle. Consult the doctor early in the illness.

What are the most common causes of infant choking?

Food is the most common cause of infant choking. However, small objects, small parts from toys and certain types of behaviour during eating – such as eating while distracted – can also cause infant choking.

What can I do to prevent infant choking?

You can take these simple steps to prevent infant choking:

- Properly time the introduction of solid foods. Introduce your baby to solid foods after he/she is at least six months old, and introduce pureed solid foods.
- Don't offer high-risk foods. Don't give babies or young children small, slippery foods, such as whole grapes, hard candy, popcorn, raw carrots etc.
- Supervise mealtime. As your child gets older, don't allow him/her to play, walk or run while eating. Remind your child to chew and swallow his/her food before talking. Don't allow your child to throw food in the air and catch it in his or her mouth.

- Carefully evaluate your child's toys. Don't allow your baby or toddler to play with latex balloons, small balls, marbles, toys that contain small parts, or toys meant for older children.
- Keep hazardous objects out of reach. Common household items that may pose a choking hazard, include safety pins, coins, pen or marker caps, buttons, small batteries, baby powder and bottle tops.

Is it good to give my baby a pacifier?

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
A pacifier might soothe a fussy baby	Early pacifier use might interfere with breastfeeding
A pacifier offers temporary distraction	Your baby might become dependent on the pacifier
A pacifier might help your baby fall asleep	Pacifier use might increase the risk of middle ear infections
A pacifier might ease discomfort during flights	Prolonged pacifier use might lead to dental problems
Pacifiers might help reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)	

Is it OK for my baby to be put to sleep on the stomach?

Studies have shown that Cot Deaths are greatly reduced if the baby sleeps on the back and not the tummy or the side. It is also recommended that the bed be firm and not too soft.

We trust you find this information useful. In case you have any questions about your baby, the best course of action would be to consult your Paediatrician.

