



Top 20 Questions Parents Ask About Newborn Health GatorMD.com

1) My mother-in-law says I'll spoil my infant by holding him too much. Is this true?

Definitely not. Evolutionarily speaking, babies are meant to be held. You can not spoil a baby in the first three months. Holding and loving your baby will help them grow and thrive. While it's fine to have your infant attached to you (via a wrap or a baby carrier) during the day, nighttime is a different story. Babies who are used to being held or rocked to sleep have a hard time drifting off independently and soothing themselves back to sleep when they awaken during the night. Put your child in the crib drowsy but awake, on his back, and let him learn to do it himself.

2) My child doesn't exactly "sleep like a baby." He's constantly moving his body. Is something wrong?

There is generally nothing to worry about. Babies spend up to half of their sleeping time twitching, jerking, making noises, and moving their limbs. By 6 months, your child will spend more time in quiet sleep mode. Especially at night, babies can have a breathing pattern called "Periodic Breathing". They take a few quick breaths, followed by a short pause, then they may gasp for air and go back to normal breathing. This is very common and normal. If your baby has long pauses in breathing, more than 20-30 seconds or turns blue in the face, that would be abnormal and should be evaluated promptly.

3) I heard a few things about bilirubin and jaundice. What do I need to know about this?

Very basically, babies are born with more red blood cells than they need. So, soon after birth, they start to break down hemoglobin into bilirubin in the blood. We normally excrete bilirubin in our urine and stool. In the first few days of life, a certain amount of jaundice is normal, but above the normal level, jaundice needs to be treated. Your physician will keep an eye on the bilirubin level through a skin or blood reading. If that number gets to a concerning level, your physician may recommend that you offer supplemental feedings to increase urination and bowel movements or special lights (at home or in the hospital) will be used to help your body excrete the bilirubin. If you notice the skin or whites of the eyes becoming yellow, let your physician know.

4) Can we talk about breastfeeding for a second please?

How often should I feed my newborn and how do I know if my baby is getting enough to eat?

Newborns need to be feeding at least every 2-3 hours for the first few weeks of life. It's not until they get back to their birth weight, which is around 2 weeks of life, that they will start to space out their feedings. You may have to wake them up to do so to make sure they're getting enough to eat. You know your baby is getting enough to drink if they are having an appropriate number of wet and dirty diapers. Roughly one wet diaper per day of life up to a week (about 1-3 diapers on the first three days and then 5 or more after that). Other than that, the baby can feed on demand. After the first few days, you can monitor the weight. If the weight is progressively increasing, your baby is likely getting the calories they need.

Breastfeeding is natural. It should be easy right?

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Everyone assumes breastfeeding will go absolutely swimmingly with no problems at all. It's a rare parent and family that doesn't struggle with breastfeeding in some capacity. Yes, everyone should do it and, yes, it's the right way to go, but it's so rare that there's not an obstacle or two with it. A large percentage of families need to supplement with formula in the first week of life while they work on breastfeeding. Sometimes it is difficult for the baby to latch, other times, the milk has not fully come in, sometimes, the baby needs extra fluids to help clear bilirubin from the body. You can't beat yourself up. Try your best, but in the end, if you do encounter struggles, seek help. Ultimately, it may not be for everybody but there is a lot of support if you seek it out. If you need some help with breastfeeding, usually the hospital where you delivered will have lactation consultants, so you should be able to see someone in the hospital. The [La Leche League](#) website and also [KellyMom.com](#). are excellent resources. There are numerous lactation consultants that can come to your home and work with you 1 on 1 as well.

5) Do I need to sterilize bottles and pacifiers after every single use?

In a perfect world, yes. But since that's not realistic for many parents, we recommend washing bottles with soap and water after every feeding, and sterilizing them overnight. This kills the bacteria and viruses that caregivers can pass on to a baby. Keep in mind that frequent hand-washing and good hygiene are just as important as sterilizing.

6) Do I need to worry about this rash?

Newborn rashes are extremely common and are generally benign and go away on their own. In the first 2-3 days, Erythema toxicum is a common benign newborn rash and looks like blotchy red spots with overlying white/yellow papules. In the first few weeks, many babies develop some neonatal acne. If you are unsure or concerned about a rash, send a picture to your physician or schedule an appointment to see your pediatrician.

7) What causes diaper rash, and how should I treat it?

The most common diaper rash is just an irritant diaper rash from moisture being held against the skin. The best way to prevent that is frequent diaper changes. Sometimes if the baby is on antibiotics, that can change the bowel flora and germs in the poop and irritate the baby's bottom. In rare instances, babies are allergic to some of the materials in diapers. If it's run-of-the-mill irritant diaper rash, you can use ointments containing zinc oxide. Desitin is a good one. Avoid wipes with chemicals as they may further the irritation. If you're consistently using that high concentration of zinc-oxide ointment with every diaper change for two to three days in a row and it's not getting any better, or it's getting worse, the baby should see a doctor.

8) What color poop is normal?

There are many normal colors such as brown, light yellow, and seedy mustard. These variations in color depend on whether your baby is drinking formula or breast milk. You can ignore the color unless it's white and chalky, or red. You should contact your physician if you notice blood or mucous in the stool.

9) How many layers of clothing does my infant need to go outside?

Dress your newborn in about one more layer than you have on in the first 2 weeks.

10) Can a newborn truly have her days and nights mixed up?

Absolutely. It happens all the time. Go for a walk, or get your baby into the sunlight, especially during the morning. Speak to your baby in a happy, energetic tone to signal that it's daytime. In the evening, keep the lights dim, whisper when you speak, and move slowly so they know it's time to sleep.

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11) How should I care for my newborn's umbilical cord? How should I clean it? And when will it fall off?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends keeping the umbilical cord clean and dry. As it starts to crust and/or fall off, and you may want to clean it. You can use a small amount of rubbing alcohol a couple of times a day. If you notice a lot of redness or foul odor, have your baby seen by the pediatrician. The cord should fall off in 2-4 weeks on average. Once the cord is off and the umbilical area looks dry and well-healed, special attention is no longer required. Now your baby can safely get into his infant tub for his first immersion bath and you can gently wash that cute little belly button.

12) Does my baby need vitamin supplements?

The AAP recommends Vitamin D for all breastfed babies from birth. Try getting out in the sun for a few minutes each day.

13) I heard babies are supposed to sleep on their backs. Is that true?

We recommend that all healthy newborns be placed on the back to sleep. Place babies to sleep in a safe environment and on a firm mattress, with no stuffed animal, heavy blankets, or pillows. When the baby starts to roll over, parents no longer have to flip their baby onto his or her back in the middle of the night.

14) When can I take my new baby out in public? I'm afraid she'll catch a cold, but I need to run errands. What should I do?

Try avoiding crowds until your infant is at least two months of age. If an infant under two months of age gets a fever (greater than 100.4), it's hard for clinicians to tell if the infection is serious, so they often have to admit the infant to the hospital for tests. Also, you should request that people wishing to hold your baby first wash their hands, and anyone with an active illness should not be around your little one. Going outdoors is not a problem. Large family events are the most unsafe. A lot of times, people are sick before they even know it. Going out into the world and into the open is absolutely fine, but if you're going somewhere where people would be hugging and kissing and holding the baby, politely say, "Please don't touch my baby."

15) What should I do if my baby just won't stop crying?

It is important to note that babies cry frequently. Normal babies cry 2-3 hours per day. If you feel your baby is crying more than this, or is inconsolable, it is reasonable to call your pediatrician to have an evaluation. Over 95% of the time, there are no medical issues found on exam. There are multiple methods that are useful for soothing a baby including baby wearing, changing feeding position, reflux precautions, gripe water, etc. You can check out a full handout on colic at GatorMD.com.

Importantly, if you feel you are getting overly frustrated with the crying, place your baby safely in their crib and take a 5 minute break. Call someone to assist you if you are feeling overly exhausted and frustrated. Taking a small break can allow you to recharge. Remember, you are a good parent and you are doing nothing wrong. It can feel overwhelming having a crying baby that is not easily concealed. At times parents can internalize and feel like they are failing their baby. You are not. **YOU ARE A GREAT PARENT.** Remember that normal babies cry several hours a day. Over 95% of the time, there are no medical issues causing the crying.

16) I'm not sure that I'm bonding with my baby. Isn't this something that's supposed to happen automatically?

Love at first sight isn't a guarantee. For some parents and infants, bonding can be a slow and gradual process. Keep in mind that you're adjusting to the most intense physical and emotional changes in your whole life. Give it time, and those feelings of attachment will develop. Meanwhile, there are steps you can take to help your natural instincts kick in; breastfeeding, baby wearing, bedtime closeness and many other activities can help with bonding. Take advantage of quiet time at night to get to know each other. Create a soothing routine just before bed that promotes physical intimacy, such as a bath or a few minutes of snuggle time. Most important, maintain a balance. It's natural for new parents to want to give and give to their baby, leaving no energy for themselves. Make a point of sharing responsibilities, ask friends and family members for help, and remember to treat yourself to

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time alone, to read, go out with friends, or do whatever makes you feel relaxed and rejuvenated.

17) What are some signs of postpartum depression?

Everyone is going to feel a little sad at some point and question whether they're being the best parent they can in the first couple months. You're going to worry about things you never realized you could worry about before. But if you're consistently feeling guilty for whatever reason, you're not enjoying your baby or getting pleasure in any of the things you used to get pleasure in, you can't stop crying, you feel this overwhelming sense of either helplessness or hopelessness, or extreme sadness that lasts more than a month, that would be unusual.* Please speak to your physician or pediatrician for resources.

18) When is it ok to use a Pacifier?

Pediatricians recommend waiting to start a pacifier until breastfeeding has been established. At the 2 week weight check, if your baby is past birth-weight and otherwise doing well, it is generally not an issue to start using a pacifier.

19) How can I deal with the stress and exhaustion of being a new parent?

Be realistic. Understand there are going to be limits to what you can do. You can't do everything. It's great if you can partner with a spouse or significant other to divide and conquer some of the duties so that especially a breastfeeding mom can get four consecutive hours of sleep. She'll feel like a million dollars. Rest, rest, rest. There is always work to do, things to clean and things to be done around the house, but if you don't lie down at least once or twice a day for a nap to regain your energy, you're going to make yourself and everyone else unhappy. Take care of yourself. All those other things you'll get to eventually.

20) What are signs that my baby needs to see the pediatrician?

Extreme lethargy where you can not arouse the baby, fever, of 100.4 degrees or higher when taken rectally, if the baby is not peeing or pooping, consistent vomiting, and inconsolable fussiness or crying are a few of the reasons to visit your physician.

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