

Parent Express

A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



TOPIC

Newborn baby

Dear parent,

Congratulations, you have a new baby! Welcome to parenthood!

Do you sometimes feel that you will never sleep through the night again? Are you a little nervous about taking care of this helpless-yet-demanding baby?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then you are like most new parents. Remember one thing: You are not alone.

Many changes take place and there are new things to learn when you become a parent. It doesn't happen overnight.

There will be good times and bad times, and you and your baby will survive them all.

This issue of *Parent Express*, and those that follow, describe a typical child at each age. Each child is special, and each develops at his or her own pace.

Perfectly normal children might do things earlier or later than what is described in *Parent Express*, and that's ok.



If you are concerned about your child's development, consult your doctor.

Parent Express gives equal time and space to both sexes. That's why we sometimes refer to children as he and at other times as she.

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Please remember that when we use he or she, we are including all children.

A special word for fathers

Some fathers feel shy about touching their babies. Others are willing to try, even if they feel all thumbs.

Knowing how to care for a baby takes time and practice. Give yourself a chance – pretty soon, you will feel like you've been a father all your life.

What it's like to be a newborn baby

- I need others to take care of me.
- I can't decide things for myself.
- I need someone to love, feed, hold, and play with me.
- I like to feel warm, and I don't like a lot of noise.
- I like to be held gently and closely.
- I like to sleep a lot.
- I am hungry every few hours.
- I might be fussy and cry a lot.
- My face might be wrinkled, puffy, or red, and I might have a large head – don't worry; I'm normal!

Schedule vs. self-demand feeding

Experts agree that a rigid feeding schedule is not recommendable especially in the first few weeks. Most babies set up their own fairly regular feeding times. Offer your breast or the bottle every two to three hours at first or as your baby seems hungry.

Until your baby reaches about 10 pounds, she'll probably take one to three ounces per feeding. Don't force more than she seems ready to eat. Your baby's doctor should advise you about suitable amounts for your child as she grows.

Newborn babies drink only breast milk or formula. Do not give your baby cow's milk until she is 12 months old, and don't give her water until she's at least 6 months old.

Some babies like to sleep for longer periods during the day than at night.



If your baby is a lengthy daytime sleeper and stays awake most of the night, you can reverse this pattern. Try waking him up for feeding instead of letting him sleep for long periods during the day.

You can get a good idea of your baby's feeding pattern by noting the times when he seems to be hungry. You also will learn to recognize the hunger cry.

Your baby might not be hungry every time he is fussy. He might need burping, a diaper change, or a drink of water – or he might just want to be held.

Breastfeeding

Relax. Being tense affects the natural flow of milk. You can sit in a chair or lie down, whichever is more comfortable for you. Positioning yourself with pillows will help.

Your baby's nursing also helps your milk flow. Don't rush. Take your time. This is a learning experience for both of you.

During the first few days, your nipples might be slightly tender from your baby's sucking. Your health-care provider might recommend a product containing lanolin to help treat the tenderness.

As you learn to relax and your milk flows freely, the soreness will disappear. If your breasts remain sore, it might be that they are extra full of milk.

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Nursing your baby often and long enough to empty both breasts helps. Or you might notice that your breasts leak a little because you have too much milk.

If this happens, tuck a clean handkerchief or a breast pad into your bra. You also can apply a warm washcloth to the breast and then gently squeeze some milk from it to relieve the pressure.

Your initial breast milk is yellow-colored and called colostrum. It provides nutrients to your baby and helps prevent some infections and allergies in your baby.

After a few days, your breast milk changes to a white color.

Remind yourself that the time you spend relaxing and enjoying your new baby is important for both of you. Continue eating a healthful diet and drinking six to eight glasses of liquid per day. This is essential for you to produce enough milk for your newborn.

You should be eating approximately 400 to 500 extra calories a day to support breastfeeding a newborn.

If you are interested in breastfeeding, you can get more information from your health-care provider or WIC nutritionist.

Bottle-feeding

If you decide to bottle-feed your baby, use an iron-fortified formula. Formulas usually are made from cow's milk or other special products to meet the needs of a growing baby.

There are three different types of formula:

- Powdered formula – Mix one scoop (provided) of formula with two ounces of water.
- Concentrated formula – Mix 13 ounces of concentrated formula with 13 ounces of water.
- Ready-to-feed formula – Simply open the can and pour it into bottles.



Whichever formula you use, follow instructions carefully. Make sure that bottles and nipples are clean. Your health-care provider or WIC nutritionist can review preparation and sterilization processes with you.

Never microwave your baby's bottle.

When you bottle-feed your baby, keep the nipple full of formula so your baby doesn't swallow air. Hold him close with his head up.

Don't leave your baby alone with the bottle propped up, and don't put him to bed with a bottle.

Burp your newborn after every two ounces.

Water

Do not give water to babies younger than 6 months. Once your baby is 6 months old, it's okay to give him sips of water when he's thirsty, but too much water can cause a tummy ache.

At his first birthday, you can let him drink as much water as he likes.

Don't add sugar to the water unless prescribed by your doctor. Don't give flavored drinks, soda pop, or even fruit juice to a newborn.

Games babies play

Babies learn through playing games. Games are more than just fun. They teach babies many different lessons:

- How to use their bodies
- Learning language
- Developing their thinking
- Feeling good about themselves
- Feeling good about the person taking care of them

Play with your baby by quietly talking, singing, or reading to her, or by smiling at her.

Even though she is a newborn, she will respond by listening to you and will love the attention.

As she grows older, she will reward you with a smile, a coo, or a gurgle, and will try to reach for you.

Sources and recommended readings

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Parent Express guides you through parenting of children through age 36 months. For other publications in the 27-part series, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office.
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