

Caring for your new baby at home

The following article is produced by NSW Department of Health.

Bringing your new baby home can be exciting. But it's busy and demanding too. It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes.

These tips will help:

- All new parents need support, especially if they're single or have no family close by. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You can contact your Child and Family Health Centre, or other services listed at the end of this fact sheet.
- Joining a new mothers group and/or attending your Child and Family Health Centre are good ways to meet other new parents and share ideas and suggestions.
- Show your partner how to bath and change the baby. It's good for everyone. It helps your partner get to know the baby. It gives you a break and helps the baby feel close to both parents. It's okay if your partner does things in a different way to you.
- Do as little as possible. Keep housework to a minimum (looking after yourself and the baby is more important). Family and friends often like to help with housework and some cooking as a 'welcome' gift.
- Save energy by sitting down to do things, e.g. changing nappies or folding laundry.
- Don't worry if breastfeeding isn't as easy as you thought it would be – it gets easier. Your Child and Family Health nurse can help. Most women can breast-feed successfully. Breastfeeding is best for your baby.

The baby's cord

Your baby's cord will drop away from the belly button in one to two weeks. Until then, clean the cord daily after the baby's bath. Clean around the base of the cord and along the stump with a clean cotton bud. Don't use creams or powders on the cord. Fold the baby's nappy down so it doesn't cover the cord. This helps the cord stay dry.

Rashes

Nappy rash makes the baby's bottom red and sore. Help prevent it by:

- Changing nappies often
- Washing and rinse cloth nappies thoroughly
- Leaving the nappy off for a while each day
- Washing the baby's bottom in water only, or with perfume and alcohol-free baby wipes.

The best nappy rash treatment is zinc and castor oil cream. If the rash doesn't get better, tell your Child and Family Health nurse or your doctor.

Rashes on the face

This is common in babies at around four weeks, and may affect the body too. It usually goes away after a couple of weeks. If you're worried, ask your Child and Family Health nurse.

Baby's stools

Breastfed baby's stools are normally greenish-yellow. Formula fed baby's stools are more yellow and formed. See your doctor if the baby's stools are:

- Watery
- Have a very bad smell
- Have blood in them

When to see a doctor

If you're worried about your baby, your Child and Family Health nurse can usually help. See your doctor if your baby:

- Has a fever. A temperature over 37.5°C (taken with a thermometer under the arm) may mean the baby has a fever. Some babies with a fever become hot flushed and upset. Others are pale and floppy.
- Has redness around the belly button
- Seems sick
- Has a big drop in appetite

Reflux (regurgitation)

Reflux is when the baby brings up a small amount of milk after a feed. It's common in young babies, and usually not a problem. Babies generally grow out of it by six months to a year. See your doctor if the baby brings up so much milk that he or she isn't growing well.

For more information, contact your Child and Family Health Centre, or

- **Tresillian Telephone HelpLine** (24 hours)
- **Karitane Care Line** (24 hours)
- **Kidsnet Helpline** (for advice if a baby or child is sick)

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.

You can find more health information in your language on the Multicultural Communication website at <http://mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au> including:

- Early Childhood Centres - How can they help?
- Settling baby to sleep
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) – How to lower the risk
- Exercises before and after birth
- Sad feelings after childbirth - A hidden problem
- List of publications related to infant and child feeding