

THE NEWBORN

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEWBORN- POSITIONING:

At first, the baby may lie in the same position he had in the uterus -back rounded and legs drawn up. It may take several days before he relaxes and straightens out.

LEARNING TO BREATHE:

The baby's breaths may be irregular and shallow, at times very quiet and at another times extremely noisy.

FAST HEART RATE:

A baby's heart rate is much faster than an adult's, It may beat 130-140 times a minute and go as high as 180 when crying.

EARLY LOSS OF WEIGHT:

Expect the baby to lose almost one-tenth of his birth weight in the first five days of life. When he is born his body contains much extra water, which he loses rapidly. After about the fifth day he will begin to gain and by the tenth day he has usually regained his birth weight.

A DEEP FLUSH:

A deep flush spreads over the entire body if the baby cries. Veins on head swell and throb. You will notice no tears as tear ducts do not function yet.

SKIN:

The skin is thin and dry. You may see veins through it. Fair skin may be rosy red temporarily. Downy hair is not unusual. Some vernix caseosa (white, pre-natal skin covering) remains on the skin or in the creases. Skin may be blotchy on removal of clothing.

HEAD:

The head usually looks too big for the body. It may be temporarily out of shape - lopsided or elongated - due to pressure before or during birth. On the skull you will see two fontanelles, one above- the brow, the-other- close to crown of head in the back. All the bones are soft and pliable. Soon the head takes on the familiar roundness of babyhood. The newborn baby is often able to raise his head while lying-flat on his tummy. Some babies are born with a full head of hair others with none. The new baby hair gradually wears away and new hair comes in. This may be a different colour.

FACE

The face may disappoint you unless you expect to see pudgy cheeks, a broad, flat nose with mere hint of a bridge, receding chins undersized lower jaw.

EYES:

Before birth the baby's eyes develop earlier and more fully than other parts of his body. At birth the eyes are three-quarters the adult size. A new baby cannot see clearly but, he can see

The Newborn

light from dark. In a few weeks the baby's eyes take on their permanent colour. They appear dark blue and have a blank staring gaze. You may catch one or both turning or crossed. Lids are characteristically puffy.

HEARING:

During the time when the baby is in the uterus he is surrounded by the steady throbbing of his mother's heart beat which gives him comfort. The baby responds to loud sounds with quick, Jumpy movements.

TASTE:

Taste is the baby's best-developed sense. He reacts to sweet, sour, bitter and salty tastes.

SUCKING REFLEX

The baby sucks his thumb long before he is born so at birth this reflex is well developed.

TRUNK

Normal details - a short neck with small sloping shoulders and swollen breasts. a large rounded abdomen with umbilical stump (future navel); slender narrow pelvis and hips. His arms and trunk are well rounded.

HANDS:

The hands, if you open them out flat from their characteristic fist position, have finely lined palms, tissue paper thin nails, dry loose fitting skin and deep bracelet crease at wrist. The sense of touch is still undeveloped in the newborn baby's fingertips, so he explores his world with the palm of his hand.

LEGS AND FEET

The legs are less finished in appearance and thin in comparison with the rest of his body. They are often drawn up against the abdomen. Extended legs measure shorter than expected compared to arms. The knees stay lightly bent and legs are bowed. The feet look more complete than they are. There is only one real bone at the heel, the remaining bones being cartilage at this time.

GENITALS

Genitals of both sexes will seem large (especially scrotum) in comparison with the scale of for example, the hands to adult size.

SLEEP:

A baby's sleep is lighter than an older child's. His eyes roll around, his mouth twitches, he may smile. At first, the baby may sleep during the day and be wakeful at night.

CRYING:

A baby needs to cry for exercise purposes and in order to communicate with you. He cries when he is wet or soiled, too hot or too cold or Just hungry. Your tender loving care will help him over these uncomfortable moments.

The Newborn

BABY NEEDS LOVE:

The experience of being outside the womb is new to the baby. He likes to be held and loved. He likes to feel the warmth of his mother's body. He likes to be rocked and hear his mother talking to him and humming. He likes to be fed and to have a chance to suck. He quickly learns when he is being held by his mother. He knows her through his sense of smell, taste and touch; he recognizes the sound of her voice. All this tells him he is being mothered and it is very important to him.

ELIMINATION:

In Hospital- meconium

Breast-Fed Baby - first weeks usually 4 or 5 stools a day

- later, 1 to 3 stools a day
- may go 3 days or longer without a stool

if baby is gaining normally and is happy, no need to worry if no stool for several days

- after first week. stool of breastfed baby is curdled, mustard coloured and slightly acid in odour.

-Bottle-fed - stool is yellow or brown in colour,

Baby on kind of feeding, usually one stool a day

--do not use suppositories, enema, or laxatives unless on advice of doctor.

COLIC - during the first three months babies frequently develop colic-which causes them to have Abdominal pain - it usually comes about an hour after the last feeding - baby cries, lustily and often pulls up his legs – may drop off to sleep for a- few minutes only to awaken howling - cause not known - usually a temporary condition.- ask doctor's advice re- treatment.

SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS:

- very irritable or very drowsy
- cries in a certain way (either loud, sharp cry or whiny one)
- refusing food for several feedings
- vomiting
- diarrhea-
- runny nose, rapid or grunty breathing,
- hoarseness or cough
- convulsions
- rash
- fever

CONTACT PEDIATRICIAN FOR ADVICE.