



guide to

your baby's first weeks

Caring for your newborn...

The first weeks at home with your new baby can be quite difficult, especially if you are feeling weak and emotionally low. Don't get upset if the house is a mess, it is much more important for you to spend time with your baby.

any questions?

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the first few days at home

- If your baby still has his umbilical cord attached, you will need to keep the area around the cord dry and clean to avoid the risk of infection. Try to let the air get to the healing navel as much as possible so that moisture from wet nappies does not affect it.
- Your baby has soft spots known as fontanelles on his head; usually a large one on the top of the skull and a smaller one further back. These are the spaces between the skull bones where they have not yet joined. They are covered with a tough membrane to protect the brain; you should never press on them hard.
- Some babies are born with a lot of hair whilst others are almost bald. Any first hair that a baby has will rub off within a couple of months and will be replaced with new hair growth.
- Although a newborn baby may cry quite a bit during these early weeks, there probably won't be any tears. Some babies don't produce tears until they are six months old; this is not a cause for concern.
- Slightly swollen or bloodshot eyes are common in newborn babies. This is caused by pressure from the birth and will disappear within a week or two.
- Enlarged genitals and breasts are common in both boys and girls when they are first born. In some cases the breasts may even ooze a little milk and baby girls can have a slight vaginal discharge. This is caused by your hormones, which are still in your baby's bloodstream. In a few days these effects will disappear.

how to hold your baby

- Your baby may seem fragile at first but is actually quite tough so don't be worried about picking him up and holding him.
- Slide one hand under his neck and head and then place the other under his back and bottom to support his body.
- Lift him so that he is cradled against your chest with one arm supporting the head and the other holding the lower back.
- Hold him close to your body to make him feel secure
- Touch is very important to a newborn baby. A gentle massage with baby oil can be soothing.

bathing your baby

- Bath time can be fun but if your baby is unhappy about a bath, don't feel you have to bathe him every day. A top and tail wash every other day is quite sufficient until you both feel more comfortable.
- Undress your baby down to his nappy and using cooled boiled water gently wash his face with pieces of cotton wool. Never use any kind of soap on your baby's face or near his eyes.
- Gently lift his chin so that you can wash in the folds of his neck and then use another piece of cotton wool to carefully dry between the folds.
- Your baby's ears and nose are self-cleaning so don't be tempted to clean inside them with a cotton bud. Take a dampened cotton bud and carefully remove any visible mucus from his nose.
- Put a clean vest on your baby and then remove his nappy, wiping away any solid matter with a clean corner before placing the dirty nappy in a bag.
- Gently wipe his bottom area with lotion or damp cotton wool, making sure that you clean in all the folds and creases of his legs.
- Dry the nappy area and apply a small amount of barrier cream to help prevent nappy rash.
- Place a clean nappy under your baby's bottom and draw it up carefully between his legs and fasten securely.

cradle cap

- Cradle cap is very common in the early months. Dry white or yellow scales form a crusty cap on the scalp.
- Rub olive oil, baby oil or a specially formulated treatment into the scalp and then comb out the loosened flakes.
- Wash your baby's head afterwards with baby shampoo and dry thoroughly.
- You may need to repeat this process several times to remove all the flakes. As soon as the condition is under control you will only need to do this once a week.
- Cradle cap usually disappears by the time a baby reaches about eight or nine months.

fingernails

- Your baby's fingernails will grow quite quickly and you will need to keep them short to stop him scratching himself.
- Babies often scratch themselves accidentally when they are very young so put mittens on him to avoid him catching his face with his fingernails.
- You should cut your baby's fingernails and toenails short by cutting them straight across with a pair of blunt-ended scissors.
- You may find it easier to cut his nails whilst he is asleep.