A Guide to Your Baby’s Care—The First Year
Congratulations! Your baby is finally here. Having a baby is a special gift. You'll want to take good care of this little one and make sure your baby grows up healthy, strong, and safe.

Whether you just gave birth, adopted an infant, or became a parent to a foster baby, this booklet about your baby's first year will help you. You'll gain key facts about how to care for your child—and yourself—as you journey into parenthood. Share this booklet with your family and friends who may be helping you care for your newborn.

The booklet is broken into 3 parts:
- Taking Care of Your Baby
- Taking Care of You
- How to Get Help

Some new moms like to read the booklet from start to finish. Others browse the table of contents and turn to the section they want to learn more about. Keep the booklet in a handy place so you can pull it out over the next year. The charts on pages 5 and 9 will be a good reminder of well-baby visit times and needed shots this first year.

We wish you and your child a happy life—and hope you enjoy reading A Guide to Your Baby’s Care.

For more information on caring for your baby, visit us at www.startsmartforyourbaby.com.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your doctor. There may be variations in treatment that your doctor may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.
A Word for Dads

Dads, although this book is focused on mothers, we haven’t forgotten you. We know that dads matter just as much in their child’s life as moms do.

In the first few months after your baby is born, you may feel a bit left out. Mother and child may be busy with one another. Plus, family and friends often pay lots of attention to moms and babies, and very little to dads.

“I was there for my daughter Tania’s birth and even cut the cord. That was pretty amazing. Now she’s 3 months old and starting to give her mommy and me smiles. I never thought anyone that small could bring out such a big feeling in me. Now I can’t imagine life without my daughter.”

What dads can do

You may feel like there is nothing for you to do. But in fact, the only thing dads can’t do is breastfeed. You can help care for your baby in all other ways.

Take care of your baby’s basic needs

You can:

- Dress your baby.
- Keep your baby safe.
- Take your baby to doctor visits.

Help your baby learn

You can:

- Hold your baby.
- Play with your baby.
- Read to your baby.
- Talk and sing to your baby.

By caring for your baby, you will give the baby’s mom a chance to rest and heal after birth. Plus, you will start to build bonds with your child that will last a lifetime.

Choosing your baby’s doctor

Choosing your baby’s doctor is a key step in helping your baby stay healthy and well. That’s why it’s important to choose wisely.

Type of doctor

Some parents pick a family doctor for their baby. Some choose a pediatrician—an expert in treating newborns, infants, children, teens, and young adults. Other parents bring their child to a nurse practitioner. The doctor may work alone, with a team of doctors and nurses, or at a clinic.

"My husband and I chose to take our baby to a pediatrician instead of going to the family doctor we both use. Pediatricians know a lot about kids’ health, and we wanted our child’s doctor to be very up on the needs of babies and children.

We picked our baby’s doctor when I was pregnant. Quite a few moms-to-be in my childbirth class did too. I wanted Kendrick to have a healthy start—right from the very start of his life."

3 steps in choosing a doctor

Looking for a doctor for your baby? Take these 3 steps.

Step 1: Find out the facts.
- Ask your doctor, family, friends, and coworkers for names of doctors they like.
- Ask your health plan for the list of doctors it covers.
- Think about where the office is located. Do you need it to be close to your home or a bus route? In the first year, you will need to take your baby to the doctor often for well-child visits. (Your health plan may be able to help you get to the doctor’s office.)

Step 2: Call the doctor’s office.
- Ask if the office accepts your health plan.
- Find out how long it takes for your sick child to be seen.

Step 3: Set up a meeting to talk with the doctor.
- Write out a list of questions. Talking with the doctor will give you a sense of whether this doctor is a good match for you and your baby.
- After the visit, ask yourself, “Does this doctor listen, answer questions, and seem interested?” Above all, ask yourself, “Do I like and trust this doctor?”
Your baby’s first checkup

The doctor or nurse will check your baby in the hospital after birth. Your baby will also need to be seen between 3 and 5 days of age. If your baby leaves the hospital before age 72 hours, this checkup will be done in the doctor’s office.

The doctor or nurse will check your baby for jaundice. Jaundice happens when a chemical called bilirubin builds up in a baby’s blood. It causes the skin to turn yellowish.

Most newborn babies have mild jaundice. This type is harmless. But in rare cases, the bilirubin level can get very high and might cause brain damage. This type of jaundice needs treatment.

Well-child visits

Your baby should see the doctor often during the first year. At each of these well-child visits, the doctor will check your child to make sure he is healthy and is eating and growing well. Of course, call the doctor or make an appointment any time your child is ill or if you are concerned about your baby’s health or development.

Write how to reach your baby’s doctor.

Doctor’s name: ____________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________
Phone number: _____________________________________________
After-hours phone number: _________________________________
Office hours: Monday through Friday:_________________________
Saturday hours (if available): _________________________________

Well-child visits during your baby’s first year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your child’s age</th>
<th>Check here if you went to the visit.</th>
<th>Write the date and time of the visit here.</th>
<th>Write your baby’s weight and height here.</th>
<th>Write any notes from your visit also.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 to 5 days after baby was born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>By 1 month</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 2 months</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
About vaccines

One of the key things you can do to keep your child healthy is to make sure she gets all the vaccines she needs.

Get your baby vaccinated

“My pediatrician took a lot of time answering my questions about vaccines. She explained that children who don’t get their vaccines or are behind schedule for their vaccines have a greater chance of getting sick or even dying. If you have questions about vaccines, make sure to get them answered.”

The word vaccine is short for vaccination. A vaccine may also be called an immunization or a shot.

Why your baby should get her vaccines

Vaccines have helped children stay healthy for more than 50 years. They are safe, and they work. Vaccines protect children from polio, measles, mumps, chicken pox, flu, and other serious illnesses. Kids who don’t get needed vaccines have a greater chance of getting these diseases. They can also spread these diseases to other people who are not immune.

Did you know?

Your child will need to get her vaccines before she can start school.

When vaccines happen

Most newborns get their first vaccine (hepatitis B) at birth before leaving the hospital. The rest of the vaccines are given at well-child visits.

Kids get most of their vaccines during the first 2 years of life. That’s because the diseases they prevent are most harmful in very young children.

Turn to page 9 in this booklet for an at-a-glance look at when to get vaccines for your child.

Your child’s age | Check here if you went to the visit. | Write the date and time of the visit here. | Write your baby’s weight and height here. | Write any notes from your visit also.
---|---|---|---
Age 4 months |  |  |  |
Age 6 months |  |  |  |
Age 9 months |  |  |  |
Age 12 months—your baby is 1 year old! |  |  |  |

After the first year

Your child should have well-child visits at these ages: 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, and 2½ years. Your child should have a yearly well-child visit from ages 3 years to 21 years.
**Get your vaccines—protect your baby!**

Babies are more likely to get sick from germs in the first 6 months of life. Their immune systems have not matured fully. Plus, in the first 2 months they haven’t had any vaccines, and during the first 4 to 6 months they have had only a few.

To protect your baby from serious diseases, make sure you are up to date on your own vaccines, such as the TdaP and flu vaccines. If you haven’t had all the vaccines you need, or if they have worn off, you could pass diseases to your baby. Talk to your doctor today to find out if you need any vaccines.

**Others who may need vaccines**

Check with everyone who has close contact with your baby. Make sure they are up to date on their vaccines.

**These people may include:**

- Baby’s dad
- Babysitters
- Child care workers
- Grandparents
- Older brothers and sisters

**Keep track of your child’s vaccines**

Bring this record to each doctor visit to make sure your child is on track for key vaccines.

**Column 1** shows the vaccine’s name and how it protects your child.

**Column 2** shows when your child should get the vaccine.

**Column 3** gives you a handy place to write when your child got the vaccine.

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### Immunizations your child needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine name</th>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hepatitis B</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>Depending on the product used, some babies may get doses at birth, 2, 4, and 6 months of age. Check with your doctor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 through 2 months</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 through 18 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rotavirus</strong>&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Depending on the product used, some babies may not need a dose at 6 months of age. Check with your doctor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DTaP</strong>&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 through 18 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hib</strong>&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Depending on the product used, some babies may not need a dose at 6 months of age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 through 15 months</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*For the latest facts about vaccines: [Go to www.aap.org/immunization.](http://www.aap.org/immunization)*

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<sup>1</sup> Babies may also receive Hep A as part of a combined vaccine with Hep B.

<sup>2</sup> Babies may also receive diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP) as part of a combined vaccine with Hep B.

<sup>3</sup> Babies may also receive Hib vaccine as part of a combined vaccine with Hep B.

Continues on next page
**Feeding your little one**

**Did you know?**

By the end of his first year, your baby will have tripled his birth weight. So your little 7-pound newborn will likely be over 20 pounds by age 1! With all that growing to do, your baby needs a healthy diet.

**Breast milk or formula?**

Before your baby arrives, think about whether you will feed him breast milk or formula. All major health care groups around the world agree—breastfeeding is best for babies and moms.

Breastfeeding helps babies

- Gives babies the best nutrition possible
- Lowers the risk of getting sick from germs, such as flu
- Lowers the risk of overweight and diabetes

Breastfeeding helps moms

- Helps moms lose the weight they gained when they were pregnant
- Lowers the risk of mom getting some types of cancer

**If you breastfeed—your questions answered**

**Q:** “How often should I breastfeed my baby?”

**A:**

Your baby needs to eat often, so try to nurse your baby every 2 to 3 hours for the first few days. This will help you make enough milk. Plus, it will help keep your baby’s bilirubin level down. (See “Your baby’s first checkup” on page 4.)

**Q:** “I’ve never breastfed before, and I’m having a hard time. Is there anyone who can help me?”

**A:**

Many hospitals have an expert on staff. This expert may be called a lactation consultant. If possible, see the consultant before you leave the hospital. If you’ve already gone home, ask if you can come in for a visit. Or ask a friend or family member who has breastfed for help.

**Q:** “I’d like to get a breast pump so that Sara can have a bottle of my milk while I’m at work. How can I get one?”

**A:**

Speak to your case manager. She should be able to help you get a breast pump. (See “Your case manager can help” on page 36.)

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### Vaccine name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine name</th>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varicella</td>
<td>12 through 18 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactivated polio (IPV)</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>6 through 18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMR</td>
<td>12 through 15 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>12 through 23 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>6 months through 18 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommended for moms and other caregivers too. Given each year. For children younger than 9 years, a second dose is needed 1 month after the first dose if receiving flu vaccine for the first time or only one dose was received the previous season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>