



NICU: Discharge Care Reminders

Temperature

- Temperatures can be taken under the baby's arm: 97 degrees is too low and 100.4 is too high.
- If the temperature is too low, add another layer of clothing. Babies often need to wear 1 more layer of clothing than you do to be comfortable.
- Holding skin-to-skin is a way to warm babies when they are cold.
- If your baby does not get warmer within 1 hour, call your baby's doctor.
- If the temperature is too high, try cooling your baby by removing 1 layer of clothing.
- If your baby does not get cooler within 1 hour, call your baby's doctor.

Bathing/Skin Care/Clothing

- Bathe your baby 2-3 times a week.
- Give sponge or tub baths. (Do not give a tub bath if the baby still has a cord stump or a circumcision that has not healed.)
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time.
- Gather all supplies first and test the water. If you have a thermometer, the water should be 98-100 degrees—NOT scalding. Set your water heater at 120 degrees or below.
- Take your baby's temperature before bathing. It should be at least 98 degrees.
- Do not have the bath last longer than 15 minutes.
- Do not put soap on a baby's face. Start by wiping the eyes with a clean, wet cloth. Then, wipe the rest of the face. Use soap on the rest of body, and finish with the diaper area. Clean and dry creases well. Pat cord area dry. If washing hair: Use fresh, clean water; wash and rinse the hair last.
- Dress the baby as soon as the bath is over.
- Lotions and oils are not needed in the first few weeks.
- Powders are not recommended as they can get into the baby's lungs.
- NEVER use cotton swabs in your baby's ears.
- Wash new clothes before use with soap that has no fragrance or dyes. Fabric softeners or dryer sheets should have no scent.

Diaper/Cord Care

- Wipe front to back with a clean area of the cloth for each wipe; be sure to clean between the skin folds.

- Your baby's cord will fall off within 3 weeks. Keep the stump and area dry. Use water only to clean the stump. Pat the stump area dry. Do not let the diaper cover the cord.
- Change diapers with every feeding. Do not wake a baby just to check its diaper.
- Expect to see 6-8 wet diapers a day.
- In the first month, expect 4-8 poops a day; some babies poop after every feeding. At about 1 month, most will poop 1-4 times a day.
- By about 4 months, breastfed babies may poop 1-2 times a week. This usually isn't a problem if the baby is healthy and growing, seems comfortable, and the poop isn't hard.

Circumcision Care

- The circumcision site should heal in 10-14 days.
- For the first 4-7 days after the circumcision, put white petroleum ointment (Vaseline) around the site with each diaper change.
- The area may be red and swollen for a few days after the procedure.
- White or yellow patches on the head of the penis are normal—do not wipe them off.
- Pain or discomfort can last 3-14 days.
- Call your baby's doctor if you notice bright red bleeding, thick green drainage, a foul or unpleasant smell from the area, or if you have any concerns.
- If your baby's doctor used a "plastibell," let the plastic ring fall off by itself. The doctor may instruct you NOT to use Vaseline.

Care of an uncircumcised baby: The best advice is to "leave the area alone." Follow routine diaper care only. Do not pull back the foreskin. Ask your baby's doctor about what care and when more care will be needed.

*Please refer to the AVS attachment, "**Learning About How to Care for an Uncircumcised Penis,**" for more information.*

Feeding

- Hunger cues include being alert or active, putting fingers in the mouth, rooting and sucking.
- Crying is a late hunger cue—it is best to feed before crying begins.

- Feed per doctor's orders, usually every 2-3 hours for breastfeeding and every 3-4 hours for formula.
- Never go longer than 4 hours between feedings.
- Burp babies by holding them over your shoulder or sitting them up with neck support while gently rubbing or patting their back. Burp for every ounce and then 1-2 ounces as they grow.
- Breastfeeding Basics:
 - Be patient. Most premature babies are not ready to fully breastfeed until they are 1-2 weeks past their due date. Even ill, full-term babies may need extra help. You will need to pump your breasts after nursing while your baby is still learning to eat. Once your baby is nursing well and gaining weight, you can back off to only pumping 3-4 times a day. Follow the guidelines provided to you by lactation experts.
 - Signs that your baby is getting enough milk: Your baby will wake on its own every 2-3 hours, stay latched for at least 10 minutes before falling asleep and have 8-10 rhythmic sucks with swallows followed by a 5-10 second pause. You should be able to hear your baby swallow.
 - Call your baby's doctor or a lactation expert at (864) 455-BABY (2229) if you need help or have concerns about breastfeeding or pumping.
- Breastmilk
 - Store any breastmilk in sterile bottles or bags made just for breastmilk. Breastmilk should be kept cold or frozen until ready to use. Thaw or warm milk in warm water. NEVER use the microwave.
 - Once milk is thawed, it can only be refrigerated for 24 hours. Warmed milk must be used within 1 hour.
- Formula
 - Follow the label's recipe or use hospital-provided directions.
 - Store mixed formula in the refrigerator and use within 24 hours.
 - Heat formula by running it under warm water until room temperature. NEVER use the microwave. A bottle warmer may be used, but follow manufacturer's directions.
- **Do not reuse any milk left in a bottle at the end of feeding.**
- Wash bottles and nipples in warm, soapy water or a dishwasher.

Safe Sleep

- Babies should always sleep ALONE (without people, pets or objects) and on their BACK in a safety-approved CRIB, bassinet or portable crib at the start of EVERY sleep until they are 1 year old. The mattress should be firm.
- YOUR BABY SHOULD NEVER SLEEP IN YOUR BED! The crib, bassinet or portable crib should be NEXT to your bed if you share the same room.
- Sharing a room is recommended until your baby is 1 year old.
- Do not leave your baby in car seats, swings or bouncy seats to sleep.
- Sleep sacks or swaddling is ONLY recommended for the first 8 weeks (less if your baby can roll over).

- Do not let anyone smoke around your baby. Smoke increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Tummy Time: Your baby should have "tummy time" 2-3 times a day for about 10 minutes each time, but ONLY if awake and being watched by you.
- Newborns need 16-18 hours of sleep a day in 2-4 hour blocks.

Please refer to the AVS attachment, "Learning About Safe Sleep for Babies," for more information.

Crying/Emotional Needs

- Babies communicate (talk to you) by crying.
- It is normal for babies to cry 1-5 hours a day.
- Crying increases at 3-4 months old and decreases at 6-8 months old.
- To calm a baby, hold it skin-to-skin, decrease stimulation, massage, rock, sing or provide "white noise."
- To prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome, plan what to do when you feel frustrated or out of control. You could ask your partner or a trusted friend to take over for a bit OR place your baby in the crib, close the door, go to another room, and take a calming 5-10 minute break before returning.

Please refer to the AVS attachment, "Crying Baby: Care Instructions," for more information.

Bulb Syringe/Choking

- Use a bulb syringe to remove mucous from the nose or mouth.
- How to use: Squeeze the bulb, gently place it into the baby's nose or inside cheek, and then slowly release the bulb.
- Clean the bulb syringe with hot, soapy water. Rinse with clean water after each use. Squeeze the bulb to blow out the water; let it stand in a glass with the tip down to dry.
- If your baby is choking, lean the baby forward while supporting the chin and give good pats on the back until you hear crying/breathing.

Please refer to the AVS attachment, "Learning About Rescue Breathing and CPR," for more information.

Signs of Illness

Call your baby's doctor whenever any of the signs below are present. Any of these may require you to call 911 or go to the ER if you cannot reach your baby's doctor right away.

- Trouble breathing or change in breathing pattern.
- Looks blue around the nose, lips or on the skin.
- Sudden jerky movements that don't stop when you put your hand on the jerking part.
- Trouble feeding—refuses to take 2 feedings in a row.
- Projectile vomiting—vomit that goes across the room.
- Hard to wake up—not as active as usual.
- Constant crying with distress—more fussy than usual.
- Diarrhea—watery poop for more than 1 day.
- Blood in the pee or poop.
- Fewer than 4 wet diapers a day.
- Temperature above 100.4 degrees and unable to cool the baby within 1 hour after removing a layer of clothing.

- Temperature lower than 97 degrees and cannot warm the baby within 1 hour after adding a layer of clothing.
- Oozing or draining from the eyes, cord or circumcision.
- Sudden rash that develops all over the body.
- Changes in skin color—very yellow or very pale.
- Thrush—white patches in the mouth that cannot be wiped away.
- Bulging or sunken fontanel (soft spot on top of the head).

Keeping Your Baby Well and Safe

- Do not take your baby out of the house except for follow-up appointments until approved by your baby's doctor.
- Avoid crowded places until approved by your baby's doctor.
- Keep your baby away from other sick people. Ask people NOT to visit if they are sick, especially during flu season and in cold weather.
- Hand-washing Hygiene:
 - Always wash hands before touching your baby—this means you, your family members and all visitors!
 - Always wash your hands before breastfeeding or pumping.
 - Always wash your hands before and after changing diapers.
- Keep all baby equipment clean, such as toys, bedding, clothing, pacifiers, nipples and bottles. Wash all bottles and nipples immediately after every feeding.
- Do not feed your baby when flat on its back.
- Do not prop a bottle while feeding. Always hold your baby during bottle feedings.
- Dress your baby properly for the weather. If you need a coat, your baby needs heavier clothing. Your baby will need a hat when outside during cold weather.
- Your baby will need 1 more layer of clothing than you need to be comfortable.
- Keep all well-baby check-up appointments.
- Talk to your baby's doctor about preventing flu and respiratory illnesses.
- Keep a record of your baby's shots.
- Do not let anyone smoke around your baby.
- Limit perfume use around your baby.
- Always supervise your baby when pets are around.
- Keep all cords out of reach and cover all electrical outlets.
- Set the temperature of your water heater to 120 degrees or less.

Traveling With Your Baby

- Use a car seat for EVERY ride. A parent's arms are NOT strong enough to protect a baby during a crash, even at low speeds.
- Limit long car rides for the first month. On longer rides, make sure to stop to feed, change and reposition your baby every 2-3 hours.
- NEVER get your baby out of the car seat when the car is moving.

Car Seat Checklist

- Retainer clip should appear at armpit level.
- Harness should come through the seat at or below the shoulders.
- Harness should be snug and flat.
- Car seat straps should be secure—use the pinch test.
- Place the car seat in the back seat (middle is the safest).
- Be sure the seat faces the rear. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children use a rear-facing seat until they are AT LEAST 2 years old OR until they reach the maximum height and weight of the car seat.
- Be sure the car seat is at an angle where your baby's head does not flop forward (45 degrees is recommended). Check the manufacturer's recommendations for your brand of car seat.
- Turn off any air bags around the car seat.
- Store loose items such as umbrellas, purses, toys, etc., under the seat (the trunk is even better) to prevent them from hitting your baby if the brakes are applied quickly.
- Once at your destination, remove your baby from the car seat. Do not use car seats as a place to sleep.
- NEVER use a car seat if it has been in an accident. Get a new one and contact your insurance company about reimbursement.
- Schedule a car seat safety check by calling (864) 454-1109 or visiting Safe Kids™ Upstate at safekidsupstate.org.

It is your responsibility to know how to properly secure your baby's car seat. Please schedule a "Car Seat Safety Check" 1-2 days before discharge.

This information is provided as reminders of information shared in the hospital. Always contact your baby's doctor if you have questions or concerns.