



CARING FOR YOUR NEW BABY

Congratulations on the birth of your new child. We trust that the following information will be helpful in assisting you to care for your new baby and help him/her to grow up healthy and strong.

Please ask the doctors and nurses if you have any questions. They are there to help and guide you. Please tell them if you are unhappy about anything. You have the right to open honest communication and redress if you are not satisfied with the care you or your baby is receiving.

If your baby is very premature or sick the hospital where he/she was born may not have the skills or equipment to give your baby the care he/she needs. Your baby may need to be transferred to a Regional or Tertiary hospital for further management. If your baby is born at a Regional hospital but is not very sick your baby may be transferred to a District hospital.

The 1st few weeks /months of a premature or sick baby's life are very difficult and it may feel like you are on a roller coaster ride. Unfortunately we can't tell you exactly how long your baby will be in hospital or what the outcome will be but we will do our best to inform you on a daily basis as to how your baby is progressing. Whether your baby is sick or well you need to be involved in his care. Make sure that you are fully confident in how to look after your baby before you leave the hospital. Use the Family Monitoring tool to help you become confident in looking after your baby.

BATHING:

Be careful when you bath your baby that he doesn't get too cold. Undress him just before putting him in the water.

Check the temperature of the water carefully with your forearm. It should be warm but not hot. Remember -never leave the bath unattended as your baby or other children could drown.

Oil may be applied just before bathing the baby.

Do not let baby become cold during the bath.

Make sure you dry him thoroughly afterwards. Dry all skin folds. Dry the ears carefully – do not put oil in the ears.

Powder may be shaken on and rubbed to smoothen. Lumps of powder cause irritation of the skin.

When your baby is in hospital he may not be bathed every day depending on his condition. Ask the nurse if it's alright to bath him and make sure she shows you the correct way to do this.

ELIMINATION

Urine may be passed as often as 20 times during 24 hours. This is important – when babies become dehydrated this number of nappies will be dramatically reduced.

Stools are passed a few times per day. In breast fed babies the stools are fewer and occasionally not passed for days. This indicates that the breast milk components are completely digested and absorbed so there is no residual material to pass. Breast fed babies have non-offensive stools which may be somewhat watery initially. This is due to the sugar content of the breast milk. As the baby's gut matures and the sugar is absorbed the stools become normal. After the baby passes a stool the nappy area must be thoroughly cleaned with cotton wool and warm water. Wet wipes may be used so the skin is moisturised and dries rapidly.

The skin must be allowed to dry before placing on the next nappy. Nappies must be changed frequently to avoid nappy skin rashes and skin infections.

KEEPING YOUR BABY WARM:

Your baby loses most of his warmth through his head so make sure you always cover it with a blanket or cap. Your baby should always feel warm but not hot or cold. Look at the weather and dress your baby appropriately. Your baby cannot shiver to keep warm so he may need extra blankets if it is cold. If your baby is sweating -he is too hot and you need to take some clothes off. If you think your baby has a temperature take him to the clinic so they can check his temperature for you.

TOUCH AND STIMULATION

It is very important that you touch and interact/play with your baby as much as possible as this helps his brain develop better. Gentle massage is also good to help soothe your baby and help strengthen his muscles.

Start reading to your baby as soon as he is born. It helps him realize as he is growing up how important reading is. He is more likely to enjoy reading and this will help him do better at school. It also helps develop his speech, hearing and language ability. It can be a special time for you and your baby.



SLEEP:

Sound sleep is essential for your baby's brain development. If he is sleeping don't wake him up even if his nappy is wet unless a sister asks you to. Sleep patterns differ from baby to baby. Generally babies sleep 16 hours or more a day and less as they grow older.



HYGIENE

As babies catch infections very easily we need to keep the nursery/ babies sleep area clean so that the babies are not exposed to any extra infections.

Please make sure you shower /bath every day and tell the nurses if you have any health problems. When you enter the nursery you will see a hand basin. Please wash and dry your hands thoroughly before going to your baby. There is a poster at the sink to show you how to do this. At your baby's crib there will be a pink hand lotion that you spray onto your hands before touching your baby.

Please do not touch any other babies or use items from their beds.

If you drop anything on the floor - it must be washed before being put back. Do not put it in your mouth to clean it as this can make the baby sick.

It is also important to clean his cot or incubator every-day. Again ask the nurse to assist you with this.

At home the area he sleeps must be kept clean and the blankets washed often.

CORD CARE

This is very important in order to prevent infection.

- The cord must kept dry and clean at all times
- Do not bind the abdomen – the cord can become infected
- Alcohol based solution can be applied to the cord every time you change the nappy or bath the baby

DEVELOPMENTAL CARE

Although, at first, you may be frightened of touching your baby as he is so small and has all sorts of pipes, tubes and machines attached to him, he needs YOUR-LOVE and TOUCH and VOICE to help him grow and develop well.

- It is important that your baby is correctly **positioned** and cared for to support his/her normal development. He should always lie on his tummy or side with his legs and arms tucked in close to his body. There should be a “nest”/blanket around him to hold him tight and make him feel secure.
- When you take him **home** you need to put him on his side or **back** as this decreases the risk of cot death.
- Try and keep as quiet as possible as loud noises upset him.
- We protect him from bright lights by covering his incubator and turning the lights off. He will have a monitor on to call us if he is in trouble.
- When your baby is sick and in pain & isn't able to suck from you, we may use a dummie and sugar water to comfort him and to help his mouth & tongue to develop normally. As soon as he is sucking from breast this will be removed as it is no longer necessary.



He/she is tied on with a blanket. We call this "KANGAROO CARE".

KANGAROO CARE

This is something **only you** can do for your baby and will help you bond with him/her. Please make sure you have a gown on that opens at the front. The baby will be put against your bare chest and will only have a nappy and cap on.

Your baby is less likely to die and will go home sooner the more time he spends in KMC. Your baby will keep warm, grow quicker, tolerate his/her feeds better, start sucking from you earlier, and have less infections.

When the baby is in the incubator ask the nurse to help put your baby in KMC position as often as possible. Even if your baby is sick on a ventilator he can be kangaroo nursed. You should do this everyday for at least an hour particularly in the afternoon. Read the

JAUNDICE


Your baby may develop jaundice in the 1st week. He will have a yellow colour to his skin and maybe his eyes. If this happens in the 1st couple of days or if your baby becomes irritable/lethargic and won't suck it is serious and you must immediately take your baby to hospital as he could get brain damage.

Jaundice is treated using photo therapy lights. This should not last longer than a week.

Your baby will be nursed naked and his eyes will be covered to protect them from the light.

You can continue to breast feed him but he must spend as much time as possible under the lights. He may need a drip for extra fluids. If he is very jaundiced he may need an exchange transfusion-the doctor will explain the procedure to you. Read the separate KMC

DISCHARGE CRITERIA

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- Baby is gaining weight and sucking well at your breast
 - Baby is comfortable – not requiring oxygen, tube feeding
 - No chest or heart problems (apnoea)
 - You are confident about caring for your baby at home, know how to identify danger signs in your baby and are able to continue KMC at home (for preterm babies)