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TAKING CARE OF YOUR BABY ...First Things You Should Know

Talking to, touching, and holding your new baby in the delivery room is good for you and your baby.

This is a wonderful time to start breastfeeding. Tell your care giver not to let anyone else feed your baby so that your baby will only get your breast milk.

Your health care giver will examine your baby right after birth, checking appearance and color, reflexes, breathing, heart rate, and activity to see whether your baby needs any special care.

Ask to have your newborn placed beside you in bed. Touch and hold your baby, and get to know how your baby feels.

Your baby may look different from the way you expected. Ask the hospital staff if you have questions about the way your baby looks.

Ask the staff to show you how to take your baby's temperature and read the thermometer.

All infants should be protected against hepatitis B. Some doctors recommend the first shot be given before going home from the hospital.

You should take your baby to see the doctor when your baby is about 1 week old unless you are told to come in sooner. Call your baby's doctor right after your baby is born for an appointment.

Before you and your baby leave the hospital, a few drops of blood will be taken from your baby's heel to check for some rare problems.

You will need a car safety seat (marked "federally approved") to bring your baby home. It is the law—your baby must always be in an approved safety seat when traveling in a car, van, or truck. Ask your health care giver, the hospital where you deliver, or health department about programs that loan federally approved car safety seats.

If you or the baby's father have any questions about how to pick up, hold, feed, bathe, diaper, or dress your baby, ask the hospital staff to help you. Your new baby needs all of the love and comfort you can give. You cannot love a baby too

much. Your entire family can share in the joy of this love.

Caring for your baby at home ...

Most newborn babies spend most of their time sleeping and eating. You want to make sure that baby has a safe place to sleep and is put to sleep in a safe position.

A safe crib will have slats no more than 2 3/8 inches apart and corner posts less than 5/8 inch high above the rails.

Baby should sleep on a firm mattress that fits tightly in the crib, cradle or bassinet.

Do not put pillows, comforters or other soft padded materials in the bed under the baby.

Put healthy infants to sleep on their backs or sides.

Keep the sides of crib raised when baby is sleeping in it.

Try to keep sleeping newborns away from pets, other children and large overstuffed toys.

Don't let people smoke around your baby. Your baby's lungs are delicate. Babies are not as resistant to respiratory infections as their parents.