

Essential Care Tips for Newborns: Sleep, Feeding, and Bonding



Highlights

Newborns sleep for around 16 hours in a 24-hour period and need about 6 to 8 feeds each day.

If your baby is crying, check if they are hungry, tired, or uncomfortable.

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Understanding your baby

Newborns spend most of their time sleeping, eating, crying, and pooping. As you bond with your baby, you'll also spend time cuddling and playing together. Your

baby's eating and sleeping habits will evolve, and it may take time to settle into a routine. Every baby is different, so be flexible and follow your baby's cues.

Sleep patterns of your baby

Newborns typically sleep for 14 to 20 hours a day, with sleep periods lasting 2 to 3 hours at a time. Your baby may need help settling back to sleep after about 40 minutes. They can't tell day from night, but they might start sleeping longer stretches at night around 1 month of age. By 3 to 6 months, your baby may sleep for 4 to 5 hours at a time. Establishing a sleep routine can help, and babies often feel sleepy after a feed.

Feeding needs of your baby

Your baby will need about 6 to 8 feeds in a 24-hour period, totaling about 2 to 5 hours each day. Breastfed babies may feed up to 12 times daily. Cluster feeding, or frequent feeding sessions, is common and may help your baby sleep longer afterward. It's helpful to keep track of feeding times from the start of the last feed. Feeding is also a great time to bond with your baby.

Cuddling and engaging with your baby

Cuddling and play are crucial for your baby's development. You can engage with your baby by:

- Making eye contact, smiling, and talking
- Singing nursery rhymes
- Going for walks
- Reading or storytelling
- Making faces or blowing raspberries

Additional play ideas include:

- Giving your baby things to look at and feel
- Doing supervised tummy time
- Giving your baby a gentle massage

Pay attention to your baby's signals. If they seem upset or unsettled, try a quieter activity.

Crying patterns in newborns

Crying is a normal way for newborns to communicate. About 1 in 10 babies cry for more than 3 hours a day. Newborns often cry more in the late afternoon or early evening. If your baby cries, check if they are hungry, tired, or uncomfortable. They may need a feed, a nap, a nappy change, or may be too hot or cold. Responding to your baby's cries helps build trust and bonding.

Daily care tasks

In addition to feeding and sleeping, your daily routine will include nappy changes and washing your baby. Expect at least six to eight wet cloth nappies or four to five heavy disposable nappies in 24 hours.

Building a routine with your newborn

You might consider setting up a simple routine with your newborn. It can follow a similar order for sleeping, feeding, and play:

Offer a feed when your baby wakes up.

Change their nappy during or after feeding.

Engage in cuddle, talk, and playtime.

Settle your baby for a nap.

At night, you might skip playtime and focus on settling them back to sleep.

Tools and Assistance

Caring for your newborn can feel overwhelming at times, but having the right tools and support can make the experience easier and more manageable. Here are some tools and tips that might help:

Baby Monitor: A good baby monitor will help you keep an eye or ear on your baby while they sleep, giving you peace of mind and allowing you to respond quickly when needed.

Baby Sleeping Bag: A baby sleeping bag provides a safe alternative to blankets,

helping to regulate your baby's body temperature while avoiding the risks of loose bedding.

Baby Carrier or Sling: A baby carrier allows you to keep your baby close while leaving your hands free. It can be especially useful when you need to move around or complete tasks while caring for your baby.

Swaddle Blankets: Swaddling can help some newborns feel secure and calm. Soft, breathable swaddle blankets are designed to mimic the feeling of being held, providing comfort to your baby.

Feeding Supplies: Ensure that you have enough bottles, sterilizers, and nipple shields if you're bottle-feeding. For breastfeeding moms, a comfortable nursing pillow can help with positioning during feedings.

Diaper Changing Station: A designated space with easy access to nappies, wipes, and creams can make diaper changes more efficient and less stressful.

Tummy Time Mat: Tummy time is important for developing your baby's muscles. A soft mat with engaging textures and toys can make this activity enjoyable for both of you.

Pacifiers and Teething Toys: A pacifier can provide comfort to a fussy baby, while teething toys can help soothe your baby when their teeth begin to come in.

Baby Thermometer: Keeping track of your baby's temperature during illness or on hot days can help you respond appropriately to their needs.

Health and Parenting Apps: There are numerous apps designed to help track your baby's sleep patterns, feeding times, and growth milestones, as well as offering advice for first-time parents.

Baby Monitor for Sleep Safety: Consider a baby monitor that tracks movement, sound, and breathing. These devices can alert you to any potential issues while your baby is sleeping.

Support Groups and Online Communities: Connecting with other parents can provide emotional support and useful advice. Parenting groups, whether in-person or online, can offer helpful tips and a sense of community.

Having these tools at hand, and knowing where to turn for support, can help reduce stress and ensure both you and your baby are well cared for.