

Preparation for Your Newborn

It is understandable that first-time parents can feel anxious on taking up a new role. Do allow more time to prepare for the new arrival. You may want to consult experienced relatives or health professionals who can help you adjust to your new role as parent.

I. Get Ready Before the Due Date

1) Baby's Clothing

- Clothes made of 100% cotton can prevent skin allergy.
- Woollen underwear is better worn between cotton clothes.
- Clothes in simple style with loose collars and sleeves are preferable.
- Shoes are not necessary and socks are good enough to keep the baby warm.
- Have several large towels ready for wrapping the baby after bath and during sleep.
- Have cloth nappies or disposable nappies ready.



2) Baby Crib

- Choose a crib that meets safety standard:
 - The distance between the bars should be less than 6 cm;
 - The mattress should fit snugly within the crib;
 - Top of the crib rail should be at least 60 cm from the top of the mattress;
 - The crib should be finished with unleaded paint;
 - The boards should be solid and smooth with no cutouts.
- Babies do not need pillows. Do not place fluffy comforters, heavy blankets, stuffed toys in the crib with an infant. These can cause smothering.
- Never leave your baby unattended in the crib with the side-rail lowered. Make sure the side-rail is locked and cannot be accidentally released before you leave.

3) Baby Stroller

- Be sure that the stroller has brakes.
- Do not hang bags on the handles of the stroller.
- Use seat belt and harness to strap the baby in the stroller properly.



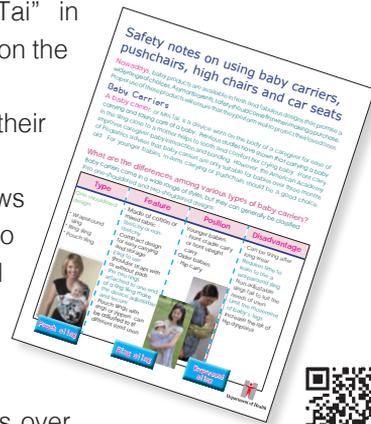
4) Baby Car Seat

- Use a baby car seat that meets safety standard when driving with your baby. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when installing a car seat. Once the baby is in the harness, adjust the straps so that they fit snugly.



5) Baby Carrier

- Baby carrier, also called “Mei Tai” in Cantonese, is used to carry a child on the body of caregiver.
- Babies who were held more by their caregivers, they cried less.
- By carrying the children in front allows the caregivers and the children to communicate interactively and increases their bonding.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that front carriers are only suitable for babies over three months old.
- For younger babies, parents can hold them, use the newborn baby carrier or strollers when going out.



II. Learn About General Baby Care

1) Feeding

- When the baby cries, or sucks hastily, air will be swallowed and gathered in the stomach. Small amount of milk may spit up with air from the stomach after feeding.
- To decrease spitting up, you can try to:
 - increase the frequency of burping;
 - hold the baby upright for 10 to 20 minutes before putting her down on bed;
 - avoid feeding the baby when she is too hungry or overfeeding her.
- Hiccup is normal and common and will be gone after a while. Burping helps. Let the baby feed on the breast for a longer while or feed the baby (if on bottle feeding) with small amounts of water may stop the hiccup.

2) Pees and Poos

- Stool passed out in the first few days of life is dark green in colour and is called meconium.
- Breastfed babies pass loose yellow stool more frequently than formula-fed babies, sometimes after every feed. As they get older, they may pass stool on alternate days or once every few days. It is normal as long as the stool is soft and wet.
- Formula-fed babies pass soft green, yellow or greenish yellow stool more regularly and in larger amount than breastfed babies.
- When the baby has diarrhoea, she will pass frequent and watery stool. There may be blood or mucus in the stool. Keep the nappy and bring the baby to the doctor as soon as possible.
- When the baby has constipation, the stool will look dry and hard. Check if the milk is prepared with correct proportion of water and powder; or if the baby is too hot and sweating too much. If the condition persists, bring the baby to the doctor. Do not use medication of any kind without consulting the doctor.

3) Cleaning

Baby bath time

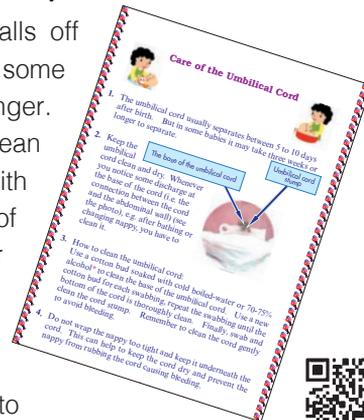
Bathing baby is a basic task for every parent. To better prepare you for the task and to make the bath time easier, you can view the video “Baby bath time”. Remember it is important to support your baby’s head and neck during bath time.

Cleaning baby’s face

Clean your baby’s face with water only because baby’s skin is very sensitive. You can start by cleaning the eyes first. Dip a cotton ball in cool boiled water and squeeze out the excessive water. Gently wipe from the inner to the outer corner of your baby’s eye. Use a new cotton ball for each wipe. For details, you can view the video “How to clean your baby’s eyes”. To clean your baby’s nose, you can wipe gently around the nostrils. Wipe the outer ear surface and behind the ears. Do not put anything inside your baby’s nostrils or ear canals because it may cause damage to them. Lastly, you can gently clean the rest of your baby’s face. Do not miss out cleaning the skin folds of his neck and chin.

Cleaning the umbilical cord stump

The umbilical cord stump usually falls off between 5 to 10 days after birth. In some babies it may take 3 weeks or longer. Parents need to keep the stump clean and dry. Use a cotton bud soaked with cool boiled water to clean the base of the umbilical cord stump. Remember to clean it gently to avoid bleeding. Do not use any dressing to cover the umbilicus (belly button) or apply any medication. Please refer to the leaflet “Care of the Umbilical Cord” for details.



Preventing Nappy Rash

Clean the buttocks with wet soft cloth every time you change the nappy. Keep the buttocks dry. Applying a thin layer of petroleum jelly may help prevent nappy rash. In case there is nappy rash, exposing the buttocks in air as long as possible (10-15 minutes) before wrapping the nappy can help the skin heal. If condition becomes severe, consult the doctor.

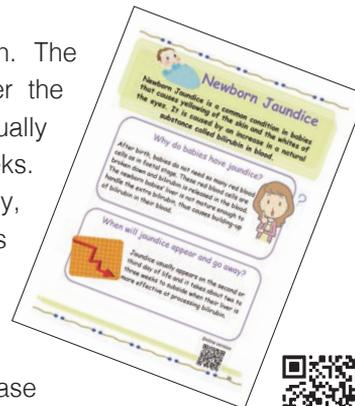


4) Home Environment

- Keep windows open and maintain a comfortable room temperature.
- Keep your home clean. Avoid using carpet.

5) Neonatal Jaundice

This is a normal physiological condition. The baby's skin looks lemony yellow after the first few days of life. This condition usually resolves without treatment in 1-2 weeks. If the bilirubin level rises persistently, treatment will be required. Parents should bring their babies to the Maternal and Child Health Centre or family doctor for assessment soon after discharged from hospital. Please refer to the leaflet "Newborn Jaundice" for details.



6) Safe Sleep Sweet Dreams

We all wish our baby could sleep tight. It is essential to keep sleep safety in mind and create a safe sleeping environment for her, so that you both can share a sound sleep. Taking appropriate precautions can reduce sleep-related accidents and the risk of SIDS. Please refer to the leaflet “Safe Sleep Sweet Dreams” for details.



7) Prevention of Infection

- Keep the living environment clean and avoid going to crowded area.
- Bathe the baby everyday and clean the umbilical cord.
- Wash hands before and after touching the baby.
- Bring the baby to the Maternal and Child Health Centre or family doctor for vaccination according to the recommended immunisation schedule.

8) Others

- Newborns' neck muscles have not fully developed yet. Always remember to support the baby's neck with your arm or palm when holding the baby.
- Babies have different sleeping patterns. Her sleeping pattern will become more regular with time.
- The baby expresses her needs by crying. You should observe the reason for her crying and respond immediately. When the baby feels safe and enjoys the tender loving care, bonding between she and you can be established.

If you want to learn more about child care and parenting. Please refer to the “Happy Parenting” series distributed by Maternal and Child Health Centres.