

# Baby Care



# Baby Checkup Schedule

Welcoming a baby into the world comes with many lifestyle changes and alterations to a familiar routine.

In addition to nurturing them through infancy to the toddler age, you can expect numerous trips to the pediatrician to make sure your little one is developing healthfully.

While the baby checkup schedule can vary between children and recommendations from their doctor, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these visits during their first year: three to five days, one month, two months, four months, six months, nine months, 12 months.

During the first 12 months of your child's life, a pediatrician can expertly perform screenings and assessments to ensure they are growing correctly.

It's also a great way to familiarize your baby with the medical professionals who will protect them during childhood development. The AAP urges new parents to be diligent when visiting their child's doctor for these significant reasons.

## PREVENTION

Since infants are more susceptible to developing illnesses, a pediatrician recommends numerous immunizations to offer support. Within the first



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few months, babies should be treated for hepatitis B, polio, rotavirus and pneumonia. If left untreated, the development of these diseases may cause lifelong complications for a person.

## TRACKING GROWTH

Pediatricians insist on regular checkups to analyze how a

baby is developing physically and emotionally. If they deem that children are not growing correctly, they can make recommendations on diet changes or find underlying health conditions.

Visits to the doctor's office are also a great time to discuss your child's social behaviors and learning milestones.

## RESOLVE CONCERNS

Checkups are not only crucial for the health and growth of a little one, but parents can also benefit from addressing concerns that arise during parenthood. Create a list of pertinent questions before the appointment. Here are some sample questions as recommended by the AAP.

- Why is my baby always getting diaper rashes?
- What should I do if I am worried about my child's development?
- How much formula or breast milk should my infant have?
- Is telemedicine a good alternative for healthcare for a growing child?



# Secure a Network of Helpers

It's no secret that babies don't come with an owner's manual. New parents are required to learn on the fly and experience situations they aren't always prepared to face.

Before your child is due, take the time to network with experts and loved ones to ensure you can ask for advice when guidance is needed.

When visiting with your obstetrician during regular checkups, ask for referrals to medical professionals who will help you after the pregnancy.

Consider inquiring about feeding specialists, behavior experts and mental health advocates as your body may face difficulties post-birth. With a team of professionals on your side, resolving problems or answering questions is easily accomplished.

## PEDIATRICIAN

It's essential to begin your search for a pediatrician while an infant is still in utero. Once a newborn is welcomed into the world, this medical professional will typically visit the hospital or discuss the birth with on-site experts via phone call. They will then lead the way in scheduling regular checkups, analyzing developmental



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progress and offering advice for your little one to thrive.

Finding a pediatrician is not a task to take lightly. It may require several meetings or facility visits before deciding on the right choice. During interviews, consider asking these questions, as suggested by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- Is the office accepting new patients and do they accept your insurance?

- What are the office hours; are emergency calls available day and night?

- When is the best time to call with routine questions?

- Are billing and insurance claims handled in house, and is payment due in full at the time of a visit?

When finding a network of pediatricians to interview, a valuable resource is asking friends and family about their experiences with their chil-

dren's health care providers.

## IN-HOME HELP

Raising a newborn can be exhausting and may require assistance to ensure you receive enough rest to be an efficient parent. Talk to a medical professional for referrals for traveling night nurses or home health agencies. You may only need assistance for a short period as you adjust to your new lifestyle.

## NURSING OR BOTTLE-FEEDING SPECIALIST

Whether you choose to breastfeed or use a bottle, sometimes an expert's hand is required to ensure an infant is eating correctly and getting the necessary nutrients.

Your local hospital will likely employ a specialist who can offer advice on how often to feed, techniques and digestion issues.

# Bonding During Pregnancy

Bonding with your baby usually comes naturally after birth. However, forming a relationship during pregnancy can lead to benefits for your little one outside of the womb.

According to the University of Cambridge, mothers who connect with their babies in utero positively impact an infant's development and ability to learn.

Studies were performed to analyze the relationship between parents and their children, both pre- and post-birth. Some positive results reported by the Centre for Family Research include these categories:

- Sensitivity.
- Ability to notice.
- Reaction time to children's signals.

If you're currently carrying, consider these beneficial bonding tips from the American Pregnancy Association.

## SING

Did you know a baby can hear your voice while in the womb? The vibrations of the sounds you make create a soothing and comforting effect. Take advantage of this unique situation by introducing calming lullabies to your baby in the womb.



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Consider singing nursery rhymes or the alphabet, or make up singalongs. After birth, make sure to repeat the same tunes to help an infant adjust to their new reality.

## TALK TO YOUR BABY

Another way to bond is by involving them in your daily

routine. Share your experiences during the day by describing actions and places you visit. It's essential to call the baby by name if you have chosen one and talk to others who will be present in your little one's life.

Make sure to say "I love you" often.

## PREGNANCY JOURNAL

Jot down important details about your pregnancy in a journal. Keep notes about the first time you feel the baby kick or funny moments when he is extra active in the womb. You can also write entries about doctor visits, your feelings after discovering the baby's

gender and the excitement of delivery as the time nears.

As your baby begins understanding words and develops communication skills, share your journal entries. The experience will help you look back on this exciting time while sharing the joy your little one created.



# Sleeping Basics

If you're an expecting first-time parent, you have probably heard the horror stories about the upcoming lack of sleep you will face.

However, the Nemours Foundation experts suggest that newborns can sleep up to 16 hours a day. As a caregiver, it's crucial to ensure they are sleeping well and create a routine that allows you to rest so you can be at your best.

During the first few weeks, it's common for an infant to sleep in short bursts of a few hours. This is mainly due to their developing digestive system, which requires regular nourishment. Plan to create a schedule that allows a feeding time at least every four hours to help a newborn become accustomed to a beneficial routine.

Follow these tips from the National Sleep Foundation to encourage positive sleep patterns during infancy.

## **FOLLOW THEIR LEAD**

Newborns are prone to sharing their need for sleep by fussing, crying or rubbing their eyes. Watch for these patterns throughout the day to strategize a sleeping schedule. The NSF recommends putting a baby down for a nap when they are sleepy, rather than allowing them to fall asleep before



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transferring them to their crib or bassinet.

This practice helps an infant understand that the area is meant for slumber and encourages them to learn how to get themselves to sleep. During the day, expose your newborn to light, noise and playtime. Once

nighttime approaches, introduce a dimmer environment with less activity to prepare them for a full night's sleep.

## **STRICT ROUTINE**

A routine is crucial when teaching an infant about bedtime. It will be a process they

expect and remember as they grow into the toddler stage. To establish a sleeping schedule, be diligent about incorporating a wind-down phase to build a sleep association. The NSF recommends:

- Use softer vocal tones as the evening nears.

- Put on pajamas around the same time each night.

- Follow with brushing teeth alongside your little one.

- Tuck a child in, in the same manner each time.

Before long, your kiddo will find comfort in the familiarity of slumber.

# Taking an Infant's Temperature

Since a baby's body temperature isn't as adaptable as adults, it's crucial to ensure they are properly warmed or cooled.

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia reports that a drop of only one degree from 97.7, increases an infant's oxygen use by 10%. A digital thermometer is a beneficial tool to keep in the nursery to ensure their temperature is within safe levels.

Not only does the American Academy of Pediatrics urge parents to avoid mercury thermometers, but they also encourage us to remove them from the home altogether. The dangerous metal component used to display the results can lead to extreme poisoning if children are accidentally exposed. Before investing in your baby's first thermometer, consider the different ways the AAP recommends to take baby's temperature.

## FOREHEAD

Using the forehead to find a newborn's temperature is called temporal artery thermometry. While it's a relatively new way to discover results, it is thought to be one of the less stressful tools for a newborn. The incredibly accurate process gets its name by measuring the blood's temperature flowing through one's temporal artery.



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It should be administered by placing the sensor directly in the middle of a baby's forehead and then is slowly moved across the skin toward the top of the ear. Scan up until to hairline before releasing the button to find the outcome.

## RECTALLY

For even more accuracy, the AAP recommends taking a

temperature rectally for babies and toddlers up to age 3.

It's good to ask for advice from a medical professional, as inserting the thermometer may perforate the rectum or spread bacteria from the stool.

Tips from Stanford Children's Health include:

- Insert the thermometer only a half to 1 inch, just past

the anal muscle.

- Point the tool towards a child's belly button.

- Comfort a baby with one hand while managing the thermometer and allowing it to move with the infant's motions.

- Immediately remove the device once it beeps and achieves an accurate reading.

- Once you have recorded the results, clean the tool with

soap and water or rubbing alcohol.

## WHEN TO GET HELP

Because a fever within an infant can be extremely dangerous, it's crucial to reach out to a healthcare provider if the reading is 100.4 degrees. Plan to discuss symptoms and the method you used to find the results with a pediatrician.



# Choosing Positive Parenting

Welcoming a newborn is an exciting milestone, but merely the first step during the long journey of parenthood. Commit to being a positive reinforcement in your child's life from infancy to adulthood.

This practice builds an incredible bond with a little one. It will make them feel comfortable discussing problems later in life.

Of course, there is a fine line between becoming friends with your child and being a disciplinarian authority. By correcting mistakes through constructive reinforcement, children will learn lessons that are carried throughout their lives. Check out these tips to act as a positive parent, as suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## INFANTS

Throughout infancy, parents can build a wholesome bond by being an influence on their children. Even if they don't respond through words, infants enjoy the soft tone of their voices. Communicate with them by reading books, singing lullabies or repeating their sounds while including new words.

Moms and dads can also make the little one feel secure



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and comfortable by cuddling and holding their child.

## TODDLERS

As your child becomes more familiar with speaking, utilize learning games like shape sorting and puzzles. Pay attention to their language and help develop skills by correcting mispronounced

words with the correct phrase.

This is also the stage where parents should begin setting expectations for their child's behavior. Respond to unwanted conduct by utilizing brief time outs and showing them what they should do instead.

## MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

By now, your little one will

be exerting more independence and finding satisfaction when completing tasks with little assistance.

Encourage their growth by helping them set goals and showing enthusiasm and affection once they are achieved. It's also beneficial to begin teaching children about patience.

For instance, insist they allow their peers to go first or finish a task before taking a break to play.

During these formative years, think of discipline to guide and protect your child rather than punishment. Make sure to praise good behavior and correct missteps with the proper actions.

# Preparing a Sibling for Baby

When expecting your second child, it's common to feel stress or uncertainty about how their big brother or sister will respond.

You can make the experience of a newborn's arrival positive by preparing your kiddo and making them feel included throughout the pregnancy. Remember that an older sibling will likely become a role model for the new arrival.

The experts at the Child Mind Institute recommend that expectant mothers reveal their pregnancy news to other children as soon as the pregnancy begins to show.

By preparing early, your little one can absorb the information and ask questions about the new addition to their family. Make sure to stress that the news is positive and that your love will not change once the new infant arrives.

## SET ASIDE SPECIAL TIME TOGETHER

Understand that a newborn will require an immense amount of attention and protection. This may lead to an older sibling feeling left out or jealous. It's a good idea to find time to do things as a duo throughout the week.

Consider playing their favorite game or reading a book together while the baby naps or is eating. When possible, ask



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your partner or a loved one to babysit for an afternoon so you can take your other child for a fun-filled day around town.

If they are old enough, ask for help in jobs like diaper changes or preparing a crib for a night's sleep. Ensuring they

are involved in raising a newborn will help form a bond between parents and siblings.

## PLAN FOR REGRESSION

Even if your child is excited about the arrival of their brother or sister, it's normal for them to show disobedi-

ence to gain the attention a newborn receives. It's essential to prepare yourself for how to remediate these common behaviors.

Toilet-trained children may backtrack and have accidents, insist that they should wear diapers again or ask to be

bottle fed.

The experts at Child Mind Institute remind parents that these actions are typical for older siblings. It's their way of telling mom and dad that their care is still needed and helps achieve the attention they crave.