



Baby Care

Positive Parenting

Parenting is hard work, even in the infant stage. Your attitude can define the level of connection you have with your child, as well as how much enjoyment you gain from your role as a new parent.

Even though you may be overtired during those first few months of baby being at home with you, it's important to keep a positive outlook on what a special time it is for you and your family.

DEALING WITH FATIGUE

If this is your first child, you have surely heard advice by now about how tired you're going to be with a new baby in the house. Heed this advice. Dealing with fatigue is as much mental as it is physical, so prepare yourself now for what's about to come. That mental preparation will help you keep focused on caring for your newborn.

If you're lucky enough to have a baby who sleeps well during the day and night, it will be important to make sure you give yourself some rest. Try to catch some sleep when your baby naps instead of cleaning the house or doing laundry. Every little bit of rest counts toward making you feel more refreshed and excited to be a parent.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Parenting is no cakewalk, especially when you're dealing with a lack of sleep and hormones that may still be

lingering from pregnancy. Taking care of yourself physically, mentally and emotionally is important to creating a bond with your newest family addition.

New moms must follow doctor's orders on physical activity for about six weeks, so vigorous workouts are out of the question. But walking and stretching can go a long way toward making you feel like you're getting your body back after all it's been through to bring a baby into the world.

Dads and moms alike should pay attention to their diets. Eating right and getting as much sleep as possible are keys to making your parenting experience a positive one.

POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS

Take the following advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to build a healthy, positive relationship with your new baby:

- Talk to your baby often;
- Repeat sounds that your baby makes and add words or sounds; and
- Read and sing to your baby to help develop language skills.



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Caring for Colic

Colic is one of the most mysterious conditions impacting babies. Of course all infants cry, but colic occurs when babies cry without being hungry or in pain.



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Dealing with a baby with colic can be a frustrating experience for parents, especially if they are unsure of how to handle it.

About 10 percent of babies have colic, according to the California Pacific Medical Center. Here are some of the most common symptoms of colic, according to the medical center:

- Unexplained crying
- Intermittent crying one or

two times per day

- Bouts of crying usually last one to two hours
- Child usually consolable when held
- Onset under four weeks of age.

COLIC IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Although dealing with colic can be exhausting and puzzling, parents need to know that it is not their fault. Colic also is not linked to excessive

gas issues or other physical conditions.

Many parents think babies with colic may be experiencing abdominal pain because their belly muscles feel tight during strenuous crying fits. In general, this doesn't cause babies pain but instead is simply an indication that the muscles are being used during crying.

If you have any concerns about your baby's physical

condition that could be leading to extra crying, set up an appointment to get him checked out by a professional.

TIPS FOR HANDLING COLIC

Some of the best ways to comfort babies with colic is by holding and soothing them through their stretches of crying.

This gentle, loving attention can help settle them down,

especially if they are overtired.

Baby experts tell you that you can't spoil a newborn during the first three or four months of life, so feel free to hold your baby as much as you like. Whether this is by rocking your baby in a chair, placing your newborn in a carrier or performing gentle massages, give your baby plenty of attention to help her get through this period.

Breastfeeding Basics

From essential antibodies to critical nutrients, it's clear that breastfeeding produces many benefits for infants and moms.

Research has shown that breastfeeding is linked to optimal baby weight, higher IQ scores later in childhood and reduced chances for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Along with the physical and mental benefits you are giving your baby by breastfeeding, doing so also can help save you a lot of money during the first year of your baby's life. Breastfeeding is obviously cheaper than buying expensive bottles or formula mixes, enabling you to put more money toward diapers, toys and healthy food to fuel you while you breastfeed.

THE DECISION

If you have chosen to breastfeed your baby rather than formula feed, congratulations. Healthcare professionals point to the many benefits in urging mothers to engage in this natural, special activity.

But the decision to breastfeed also comes with a great responsibility and commitment.

Something to consider is the amount of time and energy you will



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be devoting to your newborn, especially if you choose to be an on-demand feeder. Within the first few months, babies can struggle to settle into a structured feeding schedule, eating as often as every hour. This means minimum sleep for mom.

Remember that you're not only giving your baby a special gift, but also helping contract your uterus back to normal size after having been

stretched during pregnancy and giving you priceless time with your newborn.

ASK FOR HELP

If you run into any issues such as pain, stress or fatigue while you're breastfeeding, consider the help you can find in your local hospital or gynecology practice. Look into services offered by certified lactation

consultants, who specialize in breastfeeding.

These professionals are trained to help walk you through different techniques or recommendations to help you have a more positive breastfeeding experience.

If breastfeeding becomes a challenge, physicians urge you to seek help to keep you committed to doing the best thing for your baby.

Early Milestones

Unfortunately, the bustle, cheer and excitement of bringing home baby doesn't last forever. Between all of the feedings, baths, cries and laughs, the first few months of your baby's life will fly by.

Baby's weight generally doubles within the first six months, while rolling over, sitting up and standing are some of the most exciting development milestones that will take place. While physicians are able to predict when your baby will start experiencing some of these critical events, it is important to remember that no two babies are the same.

Below are some of the most important developmental milestones, as defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Again, these are general guidelines that are not guaranteed to be universal for all children. Pay attention to when your child begins displaying certain behaviors to make sure they are in the general vicinity of the guidelines.

FIRST MONTH

- Make jerky, quivering arm movements
- Bring hands near face
- Keep hands in tight fists
- Move head from side to side while lying on stomach
- Focus on objects 8 to 12 inches away
- Recognize some sounds, including parents' voices

THIRD MONTH

- Raise head and chest when lying on stomach
- Support upper body with arms when lying on stomach
- Stretch legs out and kick when lying on stomach or back
- Bring hands to mouth
- Follow moving object with eyes
- Begin to babble and imitate some sounds

SEVENTH MONTH

- Roll over both ways
- Sit up
- Reach for objects with hand
- Transfer objects from one hand to the other
- Respond to own name
- Struggle to get objects that are out of reach

ONE YEAR

- Sit without assistance
- Get into hands-and-knees position
- Crawl or walk
- Pull self up to stand
- Use simple gestures, such as shaking head or waving



Look Before You Lock

As unthinkable as it may be, the issue of babies dying or being seriously harmed after being left in hot cars is a real one. No trip inside a store, no matter how quick, should be made while your child is still in the car.

Even at an outside temperature of 60 degrees, the temperature inside your car can reach 110 degrees, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

By following some simple tips from the NHTSA, you can make sure your family and friends aren't affected by such a terrible tragedy.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

If a child is left unattended in a hot, humid car, many negative things can happen. Death is the most critical consequence, while symptoms of heatstroke can set in quickly. Some of the most noticeable signs of heatstroke include red, hot and moist skin or a strong, rapid pulse. Nausea or strange behavior also can set in.

Secondarily, people who commit this tragic misstep can wind up being arrested and jailed, in addition to living with a lifetime of regret for their actions.

NHTSA TIPS

Here are some tips from the NHTSA on keeping your child safe in the car:

- Always check the back seats of your vehicle before you lock it and walk away;



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- Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat; and

- If someone else is driving your child, or your daily routine has been altered, always

check to make sure your child has arrived safely.

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Have you ever been walking through a parking lot and discovered a child sitting alone in a hot car? If so, hopefully you took it upon yourself to get

involved. Don't worry about hurting anyone's feelings or invading someone's personal business. If you see a child strapped into a car with no adults around, protect him by having someone else search for the driver or ask the facility to make an announcement.

If the child is not responsive, immediately call 911, get the child out of the car and enlist others around you to help. You may feel like you're overstepping your boundaries, but there is never an excusable time for leaving a child in car unattended.

Baby Bath Basics

One of the most enjoyable experiences of having a newborn baby at home is bath time. The activity can be a special bonding experience between you and your new baby, especially if your baby responds well to the water.

Many physicians advise giving a newborn a bath only a few times per week. Bathing more often can dry out your baby's skin since it is so sensitive and delicate.

Where the guidance gets tricky is figuring out the definition of a bath. While a full bath is not recommended for babies very often, you are urged to wash your baby's face, chin, neck and bottom every day.

SPONGE BATH BASICS

A baby bath doesn't necessarily require a tub of water. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends sponge baths until the umbilical cord stump falls off, which can sometimes take up to three weeks.

To perform a sponge bath, find a warm place with a flat surface, such as a bathroom or kitchen counter. Spread out a soft blanket for your baby to lie on, preferably one with a built-in hood. Use two separate washcloths — one for washing and one for rinsing — to thoroughly clean your baby. Always handle your baby with care, especially if he is slippery.

REGULAR BATHS

Once your baby's umbilical cord stump has fallen off, you



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can start giving regular baths. The ideal amount of water is anywhere from 2 to 3 inches of warm water.

Be sure to hold your baby securely during the bath to prevent him from suddenly

turning over. Regularly pour warm water over your baby's body to reduce heat loss. Be ready with a towel and a set of new clothes after the bath to help your baby warm up quickly.

KEEP SKIN HEALTHY

Babies' skin is naturally soft and moisturized, so adding lotion and powder is not necessary unless it is recommended by a health care professional. Other things to keep away from

baby's skin are fabric softeners, bleach and chemicals that can be found in laundry detergent. It's best to use all-natural products that are as mild as possible. This will help prevent allergic reactions or breakouts.

Safety First

With a new baby comes new responsibilities — ones that are impossible to comprehend without firsthand experience. You may feel overwhelmed by the amount of time and care that goes into raising an infant.

Remember that plenty of parents just like you have raised babies. The proper safety precautions are just as important as the confidence to know that you, too, can successfully survive the sometimes stressful experience.

BABYPROOFING THE HOUSE

Babyproofing refers to steps you take to safeguard your home when your child begins to crawl and walk. Babyproofing actually should start much earlier in your child's life, even before he or she is born.

It is your job to ensure that you create a safe home for your baby. It also is important that you take the necessary steps to make sure that you are on top of any issues that could pose a threat to your baby's well-being.

Take regular walk-throughs of your house during your child's early years to make sure enough safeguards are in place. Immediately address hazards that could lead to your baby choking or being pinned down by falling objects such as a TV.

SAFETY TIPS

Never shake a baby. Sounds pretty easy, right? Babies have very weak neck muscles and



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are not able to support their heads and brains. Shaking a baby can lead to serious injury or even death.

If you're frustrated by your baby's crying or sleeping habits, ask your spouse, family members or friends to help. Knowing your own temperament and patience level is key

to making sure your baby is in a safe, healthy place.

Another important safety tip to remember involves your baby's eating habits. Once your baby is old enough to start trying foods, be sure to cut everything into small pieces and keep an eye out for foods that may be causing

allergic reactions such as red or itchy skin.

SAFE SLEEPING

Make sure you always put your baby to sleep on her back to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (commonly known as SIDS). Babies generally are not strong enough

to turn themselves over from the belly position and can eventually suffocate.

Also never allow your baby to play with anything that might cover his or her face. Avoid loading your infant's crib with toys or blankets, and never give your baby a pillow.