



Baby Care

Importance of Prenatal Care

If you're expecting a new baby, you probably have lost sleep wondering if your home is properly prepared for your child's debut. You have the nursery set up, a truckload of diapers and an ever-growing wardrobe for baby.

Your home is all set for the birth, but don't forget the importance of your baby's current home in your womb. Planned Parenthood says that the key to having a healthy baby is taking good care of your own health. Good choices give you a better chance to have a healthy, strong baby.

Fortunately there are many simple steps you can take to make this happen.

THINGS TO AVOID WHILE PREGNANT

Everyone has heard that drinking and smoking while pregnant can be dangerous for your baby's health. Here are some lesser known dangers that may surprise you:

- **Hot tubs:** At least during your first trimester, stay out of hot tubs. They will raise your body temperature, which can harm your baby.

- **Kitty litter:** Kitty litter raises your risk of getting toxoplasmosis. It is caused by a parasite that is often found in litter. Infants who are born to mothers with this disease can have serious complications.

- **Vitamin A:** The Teratology Society states that high levels of Vitamin A can cause birth defects in your child. Avoid sweet potatoes, fish and liver.

THINGS TO DO WHILE PREGNANT

Prenatal vitamins are much better for your pregnancy than a regular multivitamin. They are packed with folic acid and iron, two vitamins that aid in prevention of birth defects and support your baby's growth.

Exercising while pregnant is a bit

tricky but still recommended for a healthy mom and baby. You don't want to overdo it and raise your body temperature to unsafe levels. Some safe exercises include brisk walking, using an elliptical machine or swimming.

REGULAR CHECKUPS

Your doctor visits may differ depending on your schedule and that of your doctor. Most physicians recommend one visit a month up until your 28th week.

After that, the visits should be more regular. That means a visit every two weeks until your 36th week. Then a visit every week until week 40 lets your physicians keep a close eye on your condition as baby's arrival date nears.



Car Seat Safety

There are so many car seats in today's market, it's easy to get confused when it comes to choosing one for your infant. The good news is that all car seats are given guidelines based on a child's weight and age, making it easier to determine which one you need.

Before you leave the hospital with your new baby, the nursing staff may check to see if you have chosen the right seat. They also can help you with installation if you need some assistance.

WHICH CAR SEAT DOES YOUR CHILD NEED?

As your child grows, the way they sit in your car will change. Newborns are required to ride in a rear-facing car seat. These seats will cradle your baby and protect his head and spinal cord in case of an accident.

Different states have different regulations regarding when you should switch your baby to a forward-facing car seat. Check local laws to see what is required. Either way, it is a good idea to consult your seat's owner manual and go by the listed weight limits.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that children remain in a rear-facing car seat until they outgrow the seat. Depending on how your baby grows, this will typically be around the age of 2 or 3.

INSTALLING A CAR SEAT

New parents may be surprised to learn there are anchors in the backseats of their cars. These anchors may have gone unnoticed before but are relied upon to properly



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secure your child's car seat.

Different car seat manufacturers may have different installation methods. Be sure to pay attention to their instructions.

There are a few universal rules when it comes to installing any car seat. It must be secured tightly. Check this by

making sure the seat moves no more than 1 inch when moved side to side or front to back. Also, a rear-facing car seat has an angle indicator that will help you check that you have it angled properly.

COMMON MISTAKES

AAA has laid out some com-

mon car seat mistakes that parents make:

- **Forgetting the top tether.** The top tether will hold the top section of the car seat in place. Forgetting the tether can result in aggressive forward movement in an accident.
- **Installing in the center.**

Most cars aren't equipped with proper anchors in the middle of the back seat. Instead, be sure to install your car seat directly behind the driver's or passenger's seat.

• **Installing too loose.** Not installing the seat tight enough can subject your child to greater force in an accident.

Understanding Diaper Rash

Diaper rash is a common irritant that infants may experience. In most cases, it can be totally preventable as long as you follow certain guidelines.

Diaper rash is most commonly caused by not changing dirty diapers quickly enough. A dirty diaper on a baby's delicate skin will cause bright red, tender spots on their bottoms and thighs.

IDENTIFYING DIAPER RASH

The most obvious sign of diaper rash is redness or chafing on skin that is covered by the diaper. If a rash is just developing, you may notice your baby becoming difficult to change.

Changing a diaper during a case of diaper rash is extremely uncomfortable for your child. If you notice these tantrums during changes, plan to begin treatment because a rash is likely developing.

PREVENTING DIAPER RASH

The American Academy of Dermatology states that the best preventive measure is to keep your baby's skin as clean and dry as possible. Changing a diaper as soon as it is soiled is your best defense against diaper rash. Keeping the skin dry will reduce moisture that may cause inflammation and rash.

Keep your child's diet healthy and regular. Different eating schedules or introducing new foods to a baby's diet can lead to diarrhea than can lead to diaper rash.



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TREATING DIAPER RASH

According to the ADA, most cases of diaper rash should be totally clear within three to four days with proper treatment. So how do you treat a case of diaper rash that is in

full force?

Let your child go diaper-free for as long as possible. This will allow the air to dry the problem spot and begin the healing process. It also should ease the pain your child may feel when

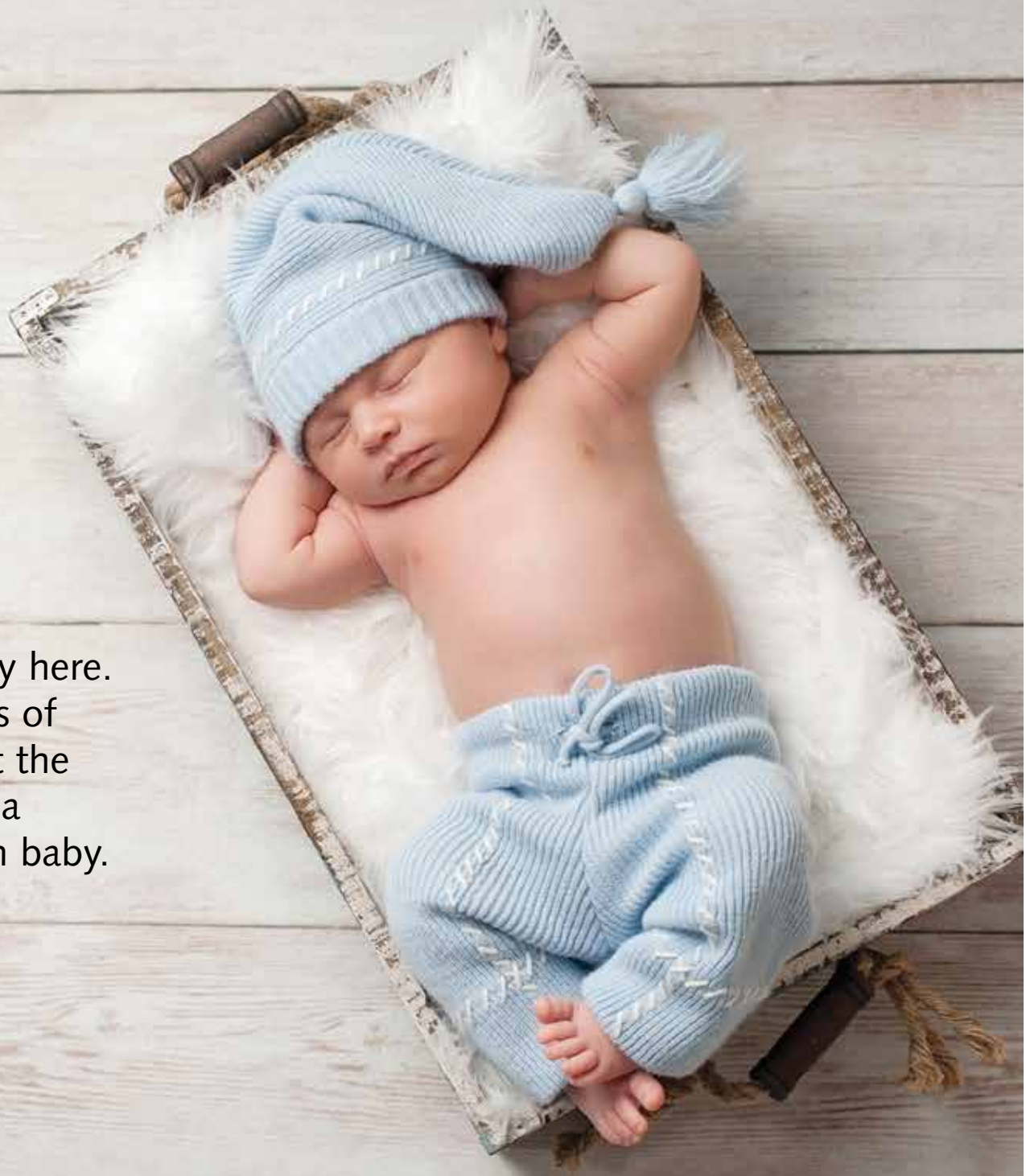
having her diaper rubs against the rash.

Look for zinc oxide diaper pastes. These pastes are designed to create a barrier that repels water and promotes healing on your child's rash.

Lastly, see your child's physician if you suspect skin infection in the affected area. You may notice fever or blisters located in the rash. These are all signs to call the doctor as soon as possible.

Your Baby's First Month

After nine long months, your baby is finally here. You are probably experiencing high levels of stress, sleepless nights and utter joy all at the same time. It's important not to let the stress of a newborn keep you from enjoying your time with baby.



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Your baby's first month will be full of obstacles and achievements.

This first month of your child's life gives you the opportunity to begin setting guidelines and schedules for things like sleeping and eating. While obvious changes may be subtle in the first month, there are many progressions that your baby is making right before your eyes.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Your child is born near-sighted. This means he can see things more clearly if they are about 12 inches away. You have probably noticed that your child crosses his or her eyes when trying to focus on something. This is not an issue to worry about, as baby is just adjusting to sight.

At one month, your baby's hearing hasn't fully developed yet, either. She will recognize

the voices that are present in a room, which may be useful when you're trying to soothe a tantrum. Speak in your normal voice rather than an irritated or impatient tone. If your child is not responding to any sounds you are making, be sure to mention this to your physician.

SLEEPING PATTERNS

What sleeping patterns, right? A newborn has no

sense of time. They sleep when they're tired and seem to be wide awake when you're tired. It is up to you to set a sleeping structure.

Good ways to do this can be to fill the daytime with busy and fun activities. In turn, night time should be kept quiet and dark. It won't take your newborn long to get the hang of the sleeping schedule that you have set in place.

EATING SCHEDULE

Depending on whether you're breast or bottle feeding, your baby will have different eating patterns. Breastfed babies tend to eat a few more times a day than a baby being fed formula.

You will have to decide if you will stick to a schedule or let your baby tell you when he is hungry. A baby that is eating enough will produce four to six wet diapers each day.

Choosing Child Care

When it comes time to go back to work after maternity leave, you are likely faced with the struggle of choosing a child care center. There are many different options you should weigh and numerous questions you should ask.

Leaving your child at a new place can be unsettling, no matter their age. Even if you have done the research and have chosen a center that is highly qualified, you may still find yourself worrying. Practice due diligence by spending time at the center and getting to know the staff.

HOURS AND FEES

The first thing you need to inquire about is the center's hours. It is crucial that you have plenty of time to pick up your child in case you end up staying a little late at work. Most facilities charge a fee if you arrive later than a designated time.

You also should request a holiday schedule. An independent facility may close for all school holidays and have other designated dates when the facility is closed. Knowing about these days in advance will give you time to schedule babysitters.

Child care is simply expensive. Call around to local facilities to find one that fits your needs and is well within your budget.

MEET THE STAFF

You should know the people who are in charge of your child. Set up a time when you can meet the entire staff during regular hours to see



how they interact with the children.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, for every three children under 12 months, there should be one qualified adult. Be sure your

facility recognizes this nationwide standard.

VISITING POLICY

Choosing a facility that has an open visiting policy for parents will allow you to drop

in see how the facility operates. This can be a great way to ensure that your facility always runs smoothly, not just when parents are expected.

An open visiting policy also

should include an efficient screening process. Make sure you're being properly screened when you do go visit. This means that the facility won't let just anyone inside.

Autism in Babies

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that about one in 68 children in the United States had been diagnosed with a form of autism in 2016. Experts aren't exactly sure what is causing the steady growth in autism cases in America. With the rise in autism cases, there are many scientific studies that help identify the signs of autism in your child and how to cope.

LOOK FOR SIGNS

The organization Autism Speaks has some interesting red flags to look for in your child's developmental stages. Learn these flags and share them with your child's caretaker. Autism Speaks recommends calling your child's physician if:

- Your child exhibits no big smiles by six months;
- Your child does not cooperate in back-and-forth sound sharing;
- Your child shows limited babbling by 12 months; or
- Your child hasn't said his first word by 16 months.

HOW AUTISM IS DIAGNOSED

Unfortunately, there is no blood test that can determine if your baby has autism. In fact, most cases are not properly diagnosed until a child reaches the age of 4. A case of autism is determined by strenuous screenings performed by physicians.

Don't let this distract you or sway you from consulting your baby's physician if you start to notice signs of autism. Catching the signs of autism early can give your child the upper hand in special learning techniques. It also will give you time to prepare for the long road ahead.



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RISK FACTORS

Studies are beginning to show patterns in children with autism and their parents. Autism Speaks funded a study that looked at autism rates in more than 5 million children

across the world.

Here are some of the study's results:

- Autism rates were 18 percent higher in children born to teen moms than moms in their 20s. Rates also were 15

percent higher among children born to mothers in their 40s compared to those in their 20s.

- Another surprising find from this research shows that males over 50 are at a higher

risk for having children with autism. The popular opinion is that genetic mutations in sperm will increase as a man ages. These mutations are believed to contribute to autism.

Bonding with Baby

The bond between mom and baby begins during pregnancy. Studies show that your unborn baby can actually hear your voice and will recognize it on the day he is born. This provides a great deal of comfort to a child who is thrown into a brand new world.

Bringing your new baby home is nothing short of stressful, especially if this is your first child. Focus on the joy of your new addition rather than constantly worrying. You're ready to be a great parent. You can do this!

TRY DIFFERENT THINGS

When your newborn begins to act fussy, it's time to learn which behaviors soothe them. This means trying different things to see which one gets a reaction from your baby.

Keeping close to your child can help you make strides in earning your baby's trust. Take advantage of any situation that requires close contact, such as diaper or clothes changes.

Try playing music or singing lullabies and take note if baby shows a preference for a certain song.

MAKE CONTACT

According to the International Childbirth Education Association, skin-to-skin contact has many benefits in the first hours and days of a baby's life. The contact keeps their temperature regular and supports stability of cardio-respiratory status.

This skin-to-skin contact shouldn't end at the hospital. Studies have proven that this contact will help your baby



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adjust to their new world.

Consider wearing a tank top during those extra cuddly moments to allow your child to feel the comfort of your skin.

SLEEP CLOSE

Most parents feel more comfortable with their child sleeping in their bedroom for the first few months. Add

extra comfort for you and your child by placing a bassinet next to your side of the bed.

By being this close to your

child, you will likely wake up at the sound of any noises of distress and your baby will feel secure knowing you are next to her.