

TAKING YOUR BABY HOME

When it is time to take your baby home, the following topics will aid you and your baby in making the transition.

Visitors

We realize you are eager to show off your new baby. However, people often carry infections unknowingly and may unintentionally transmit illness to your baby. We recommend that you carefully screen visitors for the first two months, and require everyone who will hold your baby to wash their hands. Avoid passing your baby around, particularly at large gatherings. Friends and family may be unhappy with you, but they are unlikely to be up all night with you when your baby falls ill. Better safe than sorry.

Clothing and Bed Covering

The baby's clothing should be light, loose and simple. Most babies are overdressed; they require no more clothes than adults. The room temperature should be maintained at 68 to 72 degrees. The room should not be too dry, and should be well ventilated with an even temperature day and night. Keep the baby dressed in diaper, shirt and gown except in hot weather when the gown may not be needed. You may use a lightweight cotton blanket at night. Your baby's mattress should be firm and fit snugly against the sides of the crib or bassinet. Pillows and heavy blankets should never be used in a baby's crib or bassinet.

Fresh Air and Sunshine

If the weather is pleasant, your baby may be taken outdoors. In fact, you are less likely to encounter germs outside than in crowded indoor places. Your baby should avoid direct sun exposure for extended periods of time.

Diapers and Cream

Most people use disposable diapers and many different brands are acceptable. There is a wide array of prices. Try starting with an inexpensive brand and work your way up as you see necessary.

The best treatment for diaper rash is prevention. We recommend prompt diaper changes, gentle cleansing and thorough drying of the diaper area. You may apply a diaper cream after cleaning, but this is generally unnecessary unless rash is present. There are many types of diaper creams, no particular brand is superior.

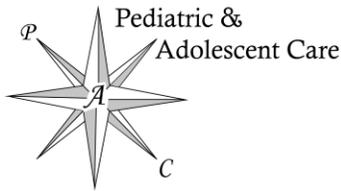
Bathing

Your baby's dirtiest parts end up being cleaned many times each day. Two or three baths a week will suffice until your child can crawl (on the floor) and eat (wear) solid foods. Sponge baths should be given until the umbilical cord falls off and the circumcision has healed. Tub baths may be given in a small tub or kitchen sink. Water should be lukewarm (about body temperature). Support your baby's head with one hand and wash the face using a soft wash cloth without soap. For the body you may use a mild bath soap or baby shampoo. The scalp needs washing only once or twice a week. After the bath, baby lotion may be used if desired. Baby oil is not ordinarily needed. Use the corner of a washcloth to clean around the nostrils and the ears. Never push a cotton swab in the nose or ears.

Sleeping

To minimize the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) we recommend that all infants be **positioned on their back every time** they are put down to sleep. Side positioning is barely safer than tummy positioning and is not recommended. Commercially available *sleep positioners* have **no** proven benefit and may actually make your baby less safe. **When your baby is awake, stomach positioning is safe and will help with head and neck development.**

Babies have a wide range of sleep needs, 12 to 20 hours a day. Initially their sleep is broken into fairly equal segments distributed over the whole 24 hour period. Do not expect that your baby will sleep from 8 PM to 8 AM when he is 2 weeks old. Only half of all babies sleep for 6 hours straight at 6 weeks of age. It takes some time for a baby to appreciate our habit of sleeping more at night than in the day.



Patterns and habits take time to change. Feeding cereal at night or trying to tire your baby out before bedtime have little effect on changing patterns. The easiest course initially is to work with the baby's innate sleep pattern. Take naps during the day when your baby is asleep. Frequent (every 2 hour) daytime feeds are a good way to reinforce daytime wakefulness, and eventually nighttime sleepiness. When your baby awakens for overnight feeds, make it a business session. Turn on just enough light to find, change, feed and put him back to bed. Save your social interaction for the daylight hours. This is the way that you inform your baby of the sleep pattern that you would prefer.

It is a good idea to put the baby to bed when they are awake so they can learn how to fall asleep. There is nothing wrong with rocking your baby. However, *rocking your baby to sleep* each night sets up a pattern that may lead to difficulties down the road. If these suggestions are not working or if you are becoming frustrated let us know.

Automobile Safety

More children are injured and killed in car crashes than in any other type of accident. Proper use of car seats and seat belts will prevent many of these tragedies.

Children who are less than two years old should be placed **rear facing** in either infant-only or convertible seats. **Infant-only car seats** have the advantage of portability (smaller size and convenient handle), but usually cannot be used beyond one year. They have height and weight restrictions which may further shorten their use. **Convertible seats** are less portable but can fit children up to thirty-five pounds (rear facing) and sixty-five pounds (front facing). Forward facing car seats are only for children two and older, or exceeding the weight capacity of rear facing seats.

No car seat is safe if not properly installed. With all models, you are strongly urged to read (and save) your car seat instructions, in addition to the car owner's manual. This will insure proper installation and continuing adjustment as your child grows. Local organizations, such as the Safe Kids Coalition, hold regular events where parents can have their seat and installation inspected.

Your child will not graduate from booster seat until he is **80 lbs and 4' 9"**. For most children, this occurs **between 8 and 12 years**. We will continue to advise you on car safety as your baby grows.

