


Tips & Hints For New Mums

A guide for the first
weeks with bub



The First  Weeks

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Congratulations! You're about to embark on the wonderful journey of motherhood. If you're getting ready to bring home your new baby, you're probably feeling mixed emotions – excited, thrilled, overwhelmed, or even anxious.

This brochure has been developed as a quick guide to help you prepare and plan for the arrival of your baby and includes some valuable tips to help with the transition over the first few months. If you have any concerns, be sure to speak to your healthcare professional.

What To Expect After Birth

Your new baby will bring you so much joy and happiness. But giving birth can be tough and after the initial excitement of having your baby wears off, you may feel flat and exhausted. You are likely to be uncomfortable, worried and overwhelmed with everything you need to think about and do. It's a good idea to have a family member or friend available to support you at home for the first couple of days.

Physical changes

Your body will be going through some big hormonal changes. For example:

- As you begin lactating, you will notice changes in your breasts and your nipples may be tender when your baby feeds
- You will also experience some bleeding, which can last up to several weeks
- Some hair loss about 3 months after childbirth is quite common, but don't worry – your hair will grow back normally
- Naturally, you will be very tired from lack of sleep, so be sure to try and rest whenever you can.

New Mum 'Me Time'

With everything you've just read, you might be thinking: "I'll never get time to myself." As busy as you'll be taking care of your new baby, it's important to make time to look after yourself as well. Here are some quick tips that can help:

- Say yes when anyone offers to help you, and don't be afraid to ask for help
- Take a nap when your baby does – the housework can wait!
- Don't forget to look after your relationship, as happy couples have a positive effect on their children
- Get support from other new mums by joining a local mother's group or online mum's forum
- Go for a walk with a friend, so you can exercise and socialise at the same time
- Once a week, prepare some simple, healthy snacks that you can keep on hand for the week e.g. cut up vegetable sticks to eat with dips
- Take time to do something you enjoy regularly, even if it's just reading a magazine or taking a relaxing bath
- Don't feel guilty about hiring a babysitter to give yourself a break every once in a while.

For other information specific
to your baby's age, visit
www.meandmychild.com.au

Are You Ready For Baby to Arrive?

Use this tear-out checklist to help you prepare for your new baby's arrival.

- ☐ Learn as much as you can before your baby arrives – ask your doctor and friends to recommend useful books, websites or apps
- ☐ Prepare the nursery, including cot and bedding



- ☐ Buy and install a rear-facing child restraint
- ☐ Buy a pram, change table, baby carrier, baby bath and breast pump if required



- ☐ Buy bibs, muslin wraps, thermometer and baby toiletries



- ☐ Buy bottles and teats, sterilising equipment if needed
- ☐ Wash baby clothes, linen and towels before use



- ☐ Stock up on nappies – consider getting a couple of different brands and sizes early on until you find the ones you like



Baby Safety Tips

It's essential to provide a safe and secure environment for your baby at home and away from home. Some key points to consider are detailed below.

Some Do's and Don'ts in the Home

- ✓ **DO** try and keep your home clean, as newborns have very little protection against infection.
- ✓ **DO** make sure anyone who gives your baby a cuddle washes their hands first.
- ✓ **DO** choose nursery furniture that meets Australian standards – you can find further information about this on the SIDS and Kids website.
- ✓ **DO** supervise young children when they are near the baby, as they can be unpredictable.
- ✓ **DO** change your baby on the floor or a change table with raised edges, to prevent them from rolling off.
- ✗ **DON'T** leave your baby alone on the change table.
- ✗ **DON'T** allow animals near the baby.
- ✗ **DON'T** drink hot drinks when holding your baby.



Carrying your baby

Newborns have not yet developed head control, so it's important that you support their head and neck every time you pick them up or carry them. There are many different techniques for carrying your baby, so ask your doctor, nurse or midwife for what they recommend.

When picking up your baby, use one hand to support their head and put your other hand beneath their bottom. When putting down your baby, support their head, neck and back, and allow them to get comfortable before you gently slip your hands out from under them.



In the car

When travelling in the car, babies younger than 6 months must use a rear-facing child restraint with an in-built harness. Make sure the restraint you choose meets the current Australian standards and is installed or checked by an approved fitter. The safest position for the restraint is the middle rear seat of the car.

Before each trip, it's a good idea to double check the restraint is secure and doesn't wobble, twist, tilt or move more than a couple of centimetres. Remember, it is illegal to leave your baby unattended in the car, even for a short time.



Prams

It's important to follow the manufacturer's instructions and use the pram's safety features:

- Choose a pram with a strong frame, easy steering, durable wheels and locks that work
- Always use the five-point safety harness, even for short trips
- Protect your baby from the sun and wind with a sunshade
- Don't hang shopping bags from the handles, as the pram could tip over.



Slings

A baby sling is a practical way to carry your baby, but be very careful when using a sling with a baby under 4 months old, and remember to regularly check on your baby. An easy way to help remember how to position your baby correctly in a sling is the **TICKS** rule:

- **Tight** – the sling should be tight, with your baby positioned high and upright with their head supported
- **In view at all times** – you should always be able to see your baby's face when you look down, and make sure it isn't covered
- **Close enough to kiss** – the baby should be close enough to your chin that you can easily kiss the top of their head when you tip your head forward
- **Keep chin off the chest** – make sure your baby's chin is up and away from their body, never forced onto their chest, which can restrict breathing
- **Supported back** – your baby's back should be supported in a natural position, with their tummy and chest against you. When you bend over, bend at the knees and support your baby with one hand behind their back.



Wrapping

Babies can be wrapped until they are old enough to start rolling, at which point they should use a safe sleeping bag. To safely wrap your baby, make sure you:

- Use muslin or a light cotton wrap, not bunny rugs or blankets
- Give them enough room to expand their chest and breathe easily
- Bend their legs at the hips with knees apart, and allow free movement of their legs
- Do not overdress them under the wrap – use a singlet and nappy in warm weather, or a light grow suit in cool weather.

zzZ Sleeping

The following six points will help your baby to sleep more safely, and reduce the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI), including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):

- 1.** Put your baby to sleep on their back from birth, not their tummy or side.
- 2.** Keep your baby's head and face uncovered while they sleep:
 - A good way to do this is to position your baby with their feet at the bottom of the cot, so they can't slip down under the bedding.
- 3.** Keep your baby in a smoke-free environment before and after birth:
 - Don't let anyone smoke in the house, the car or around your baby.
- 4.** Provide a safe sleeping environment, night and day, including:
 - Safe cot – must meet the current mandatory Australian Standard for Cots and be placed in a safe spot away from hazards, and be fixed in position with locking brakes
 - Safe mattress – must be the right size, firm, flat and clean
 - Safe bedding – remove pillows, doonas, loose bedding or fabric, lambs wool, bumpers and soft or fluffy toys from the cot.
- 5.** Put your baby to sleep in their own safe sleeping place in the same room as an adult caregiver for the first 6–12 months:
 - Sharing a sleep surface (e.g. bed or sofa) with your baby may increase the risk of SUDI.
- 6.** Breastfeed your baby if possible:
 - Breastfeeding reduces infant illness and death, including SUDI.

Nappy changing FAQs

How often should I change my baby's nappy?

Your baby will need changing eight or more times in a 24-hour period, and sometimes as often as hourly when they're awake.

Should I change my baby when they are sleeping or after a night-time feed?

You don't need to change your baby at night unless they are very wet and uncomfortable, or have had a bowel movement.

Should I use baby cream or powder?

There is no need to use creams, ointments, lotions or powders unless your baby has a rash or irritated skin. If your baby does have a rash, speak to your GP or nurse about the best treatment.

What should I do with the used nappy?

For cloth nappies, shake any solid waste into the toilet and put the nappy into the nappy bucket until it gets washed. For disposable nappies, some parents also shake solid waste into the toilet, then tape up the nappy and throw it in the bin or nappy bucket. You may want to put the nappy into a plastic bag first to reduce the smell.

Bathing tips

Your nurse or midwife will show you how to properly bathe your newborn, but here are some points to remember:

- Prepare everything you will need for the bath in advance, including washcloths, towel, fresh nappy and change of clothes
- Fill a plastic tub, baby bath or sink with about 5 cm of water at 36–37°C
- Do not use a baby support or bath seat to prop your baby up in the bath
- To help soothe your baby in the bath, speak to them gently, or try wrapping their body in a cloth nappy or towel, then let the wrap float away in the bath
- You don't need to bathe your newborn every day, but do make sure you clean their face, neck, hands and bottom
- NEVER leave your baby unattended in the bath.

Understanding Crying

As a new mum, your baby crying is probably one of your biggest worries. It can help if you understand why babies cry and what it means.

Crying is very important for babies because it is the only way they can communicate to get what they need. Babies don't cry to annoy you, make you feel bad, or even make you come to them. They cry simply because something is making them unhappy, such as they:

- Are hungry or thirsty
- Are uncomfortable, tired, too hot or cold
- Are unwell or in pain (e.g. tummy ache or earache)
- Need a nappy change
- Are scared or lonely
- Need to be comforted or close to you.

At first it can be hard to know why your baby is crying, but over time you will get to know them and learn what some of their cries mean. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to finding out what your baby needs. You can only try different things and see what makes them feel better. Just remember, responding to your baby's needs when they cry will help them learn the world is a safe and friendly place.



Do's and Don'ts for Helping to Settle Your Baby

- ✓ **DO** make sure they are fed and changed.
- ✓ **DO** pick them up and hold them close to your chest if you think they are scared or lonely.
- ✓ **DO** hold them upright against your shoulder if you think they are uncomfortable.
- ✓ **DO** wrap them in a cotton sheet and gently pat or rock them.
- ✓ **DO** take them for a walk in the pram, or gently push the pram back and forth.
- ✓ **DO** watch what happens when they are settled and learn to know what they need (e.g. a dummy, music or your voice).
- ✗ **DON'T** ignore their cries – responding to cries does not spoil your baby.
- ✗ **DON'T** jiggle them – it can be scary or even hurt your baby.
- ✗ **DON'T** ever shake them – it can cause serious or permanent brain damage, or even death.

Umbilical Care

You probably know that when your baby is born, their umbilical cord gets cut. A small stump will be left, which will get darker and shrivel during the first few days after birth. After a week or two, the stump will fall off, leaving behind your baby's belly button.

In these first couple of weeks, you may see some clear, sticky or brownish oozing around the area, which might also smell. This is normal and part of the belly button's healing process.

How to care for the cord stump and belly button

- Avoid touching it whenever possible
- Wash your hands before handling it
- Use only water to keep it clean; no soap, creams, antiseptics, alcohol or bandages
- If the stump gets poo on it, wash it off using clean water and mild soap
- Make sure the stump dries properly after bathing
- Expose the stump to air as much as possible, and try not to cover it with pants or nappies.



See your GP as soon as possible if:

- You still see oozing several days after the stump has fallen off
- Your baby's belly is hot, red or swollen, and they have a fever or are otherwise unwell
- Your baby develops a lump near their belly button.

Trimming Your Baby's Nails

Your baby's nails grow quite fast, but because they are soft and get worn down easily, they won't need trimming very often. However, keeping their nails short will stop them from scratching themselves and you.

While you may feel nervous about trimming their nails at first, rest assured that it's very unlikely you will hurt your baby.

Some tips to make it easier

- Trim their nails while they are asleep, drowsy or very calm
- Use special baby nail clippers or just smooth the nail edges with an emery board
- If you prefer not to use clippers or scissors, you can gently nibble the nails off
- Ask someone to help you, so one person holds your baby while the other trims their nails
- Trim toenails straight across to prevent ingrown nails
- Talk calmly or sing to your baby to help distract them
- If they're still scratching themselves, cover their hands with a pair of soft, cotton mittens.

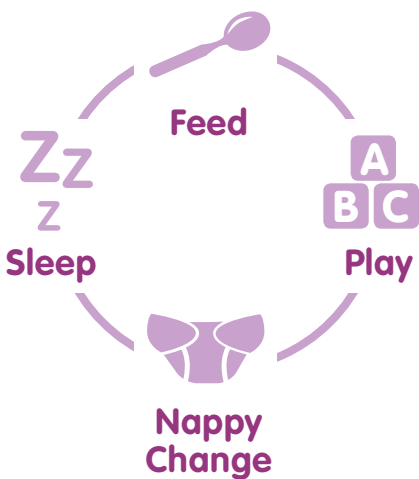
The Importance Of Routine

Because every baby is different, there is no right way to address the issue of newborn routines. Some parents choose not to follow a routine at all. Many others agree that a simple routine helps their baby, and allows them to feel more in control. But flexibility is key, and you should be prepared for your baby to not always fit into your best-laid plans.

Early on

Newborns don't know the difference between day and night. They sleep for up to 20 hours a day, and wake every 2–3 hours for a feed and attention. So it isn't always possible to get your baby into a routine straight away. However, you can start to establish a pattern to your day.

Your baby's routine is structured around four core activities:



You should try to do these activities in the same order and ideally, at the same time each day.

Over time, you will learn your baby's body language and tired signs, so you will know when is a good time for them to sleep or play. Eventually, you can help your baby learn distinct daytime and night-time routines.

Daytime routine tips

- When your baby is alert, smile and talk to them
- Take them for a walk, even just around the house, to allow them to observe their environment
- Let them have some time on the floor, take their nappy off for a while, or hang some toys in front of them
- Give them tummy time each day, as it's good for their development; however, make sure they are awake, watch them closely and don't let them fall asleep on their tummy.

Night-time routine tips

- Learn your baby's sleep cues, which may include: yawning, rubbing their eyes, crying, fussing or having clenched fists
- Before putting your baby to bed, try settling them with a baby massage, warm bath or soft music
- When they awaken during the night, keep the lights low and feed them quietly
- Only change their nappy if really necessary
- Try to get them back to sleep quickly
- Once you've established what's right for you and the baby, try to stick to it, as night-time routines are learned.



Travel Tips



By car

- Plan to drive during your baby's nap times, so they can sleep in the car
- Take frequent breaks to get some fresh air and allow your baby to move around
- Give your baby toys designed to attach to the car seat
- If your baby starts crying, play music or sing to calm them down, then stop to settle them as soon as you can.



By public transport

- Plan travel during your baby's nap times, so they can sleep through the journey
- Board as early as possible to get a spot that gives you plenty of room
- Choose a window seat if you think watching the scenery will entertain your baby; choose an aisle seat if you want to be able to get up often when they get restless
- Bring a baby carrier so you can take your baby with you if you need to go to the bathroom
- Pack a few toys for your baby to play with, so you can give them a new one when they get bored of the old one.



By plane

- When booking flights, ask for a seat with a bassinette or check if it's possible to use infant restraints
- Bulkhead seats offer more room to move, but less storage space
- Most airlines offer early boarding for travellers with babies, but consider if more time on the plane will actually be an advantage
- To help ease your baby's ear pressure, time their feed with take-off and landing, or offer a dummy to encourage swallowing
- To prevent dehydration during the flight, give your baby plenty of milk and cool boiled water between feeds
- If you're travelling alone and need to use the bathroom, ask the flight attendant to look after your baby
- Once you've landed, it's a good idea to get off the plane last so you have more time to gather all your things.

FAQs for the first few weeks

Ask your doctor or midwife to answer the following questions, which will help you in your first few weeks at home with your baby:

- Where should I go for my 6-week check-up?
- Do I need to be careful about driving or lifting/carrying heavy things?
- How many feeds will my newborn need and how long should these take?
- How can I recognise my baby's cues for feeding and comfort?
- What's the best way to bathe my baby and change nappies?
- Who should I call if my baby gets sick?
- How do I contact my local child and family health nurse?
- Who can I contact for breastfeeding and other support?



A note about Accidents and First Aid

Because babies grow and develop rapidly, accidents and injuries can happen in and around the home. These include falls, burns and choking, which are often preventable. Many accidents can be treated at home with first aid, so it's a good idea for new parents to learn first aid for children.

Always contact your doctor if you think your baby may need medical attention. Immediately dial 000 for an ambulance if your baby:

- Stops breathing or is struggling to breathe
- Won't wake up, is unconscious or seems unaware of what's going on
- Has a seizure (fit) for the first time, even if you think they've recovered.

Are You Ready For Baby to Arrive?

- ☐ Baby-proof your house with gates, child-resistant locks, electrical outlet covers and stove guards
- ☐ Find out from your GP when to call or visit for a sick baby



- ☐ Consider child-care options, get on waiting lists for day care centres, and/or interview babysitters



- ☐ Fill your pantry with staples like pasta, rice, cereal and canned goods for convenience in preparation for meals for you
- ☐ Cook big batches of meals in advance and freeze them, to ensure you will have home-cooked meals that you can simply reheat
- ☐ About a month before you're due, pack a bag for the hospital and put it in an easy-to-grab place. Include:
 - Comfortable clothes, including spare tops
 - Nursing bras
 - Slippers or non-skid socks
 - Headbands or ponytail holders
 - Toiletries
 - Your birth plan and insurance information
 - Camera
 - Some cash or change for vending machines
 - Clothes/toiletries for your partner
 - Clothes, nappies and blankets for your newborn

Important Statement:

Breastfeeding is the normal method of infant feeding, and is best for babies. It has benefits for the infant, such as reducing infection risk, and for the mother. It is important to have a healthy balanced diet in preparation for, and during breastfeeding. Infant formula is designed to replace breast milk when an infant is not breastfed.

Breastfeeding can be negatively affected by introducing partial bottle-feeding, and reversing a decision not to breastfeed is difficult. Infant formula must be prepared and used as directed. Unnecessary or improper use of infant formula, such as not properly boiling water or sterilising feeding equipment, may make your baby ill. Social and financial implications, including preparation time and the cost of formula, should be considered when selecting a method of infant feeding.



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