

# Newborn Care Basics

## ST. PATRICK HOSPITAL - SCREENS AND PROCEDURES

The following is a list of the most common procedures administered to newborns at St. Patrick Hospital, and a brief description of the purpose. It is always important to fully educate yourself on the reasons, benefits and risks of each practice. If you have any questions, concerns, or alternative wishes, it is important to discuss with your OB and/or Pediatric provider in advance, and to communicate alternate requests in your written birth preferences.

### IMMEDIATE:

- **Thermoregulation**  
As long as baby is stable, he will be placed on your chest, skin-to-skin, immediately at birth. He will be dried and stimulated with warm blankets, and a hat will be put on his head. Through out your stay, our staff will encourage on-going skin-to-skin with your baby to help maintain body temperature.
- **Clearing the Mouth and Nose**  
Crying at birth expands the lungs and expels amniotic fluid. In most cases, your baby will not require additional support to clear the lungs and will be left alone as he acclimates skin to skin at your chest. If your baby does require additional support in expelling fluids, suctioning of the mouth and nose with a nasal aspirator may be done.
- **Cord Clamping**  
After birth, the umbilical cord will need to be clamped and then cut. There are no nerve endings in the umbilical cord, and so this causes no pain or discomfort for mom or for baby.
- **APGAR**  
At birth, your provider will assess your baby for Appearance, Pulse, Grimace (cry), Activity and Respiration. Each of these five areas are assessed and assigned a score of 0-2. The total number is your baby's APGAR score.

### 1 HOUR CARE PROCEDURES:

- **Erythromycin Eye Ointment**  
This antibiotic eye ointment is routinely applied immediately after birth to prevent a form of pink eye, ophthalmia neonatorum (ON) that can cause blindness.
- **Vitamin K**  
Vitamin K is required by the body for blood clotting. Without sufficient levels of Vitamin K, hemorrhaging can occur. Babies are born with low levels of Vitamin K to prevent their blood from clotting in the brain when the head is compressed coming through the birth canal. The concern is that the head compression can also cause hemorrhaging in the brain in rare circumstances, and so Vitamin K is recommended at birth to prevent this occurrence. If you have a boy and are planning to circumcise right away, Vitamin K will be necessary to control bleeding. St. Patrick Hospital administers Vitamin K supplementation via an injection.

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### 24 HOUR CARE PROCEDURES:

- **Hepatitis B Vaccine**  
Routinely administer to prevent contraction of Hepatitis B.
- **Newborn Metabolic Screen (PKU)**  
A Newborn Screening Test is collected between 24 and 48 hours after birth. This is a blood test, conducted by pricking the heel and collecting a few drops of blood. This is done to test your baby for several rare genetic disorders, including: phenylketonuria (PKU), cystic fibrosis, thyroid disorders, or galactosaemia.
- **Transcutaneous Bilirubinometer (TcB)**  
At 24 hours of age, babies receive a cutaneous bilirubin assessment to help identify jaundice. If the assessment identifies possible jaundice, further assessment will be conducted. It is possible for a TcB to be done earlier or later than 24 hours if necessary.
- **Newborn Hearing Screen**  
A standard newborn hearing test is also conducted before you leave the hospital. The newborn hearing screen is a non-invasive test, conducted when your baby is asleep, to see if his hearing is intact. Early detection of hearing issues prior to 30 days of age is essential to social and language development.
- **Critical Congenital Heart Defect Screen**  
Babies with a critical congenital heart defect are at risk for disability or death. Newborn screening allows for earlier detection of several congenital heart defects, but not all.

### OTHER PROCEDURES:

- **Weighing/Measuring**  
Weighing your baby can wait until you have shared the critical first moments of skin-to-skin. Eventually you will need to know your baby's measurements so that weight gain and growth can be properly monitored.
- **Bathing**  
When your baby is born, she will be covered in vernix (a waxy substance which covers your baby's skin). Vernix protects your baby's skin, and is quite literally the best moisturizer money could possibly buy! It will take time for the vernix to be fully absorbed into your baby's skin, you can assist by massaging it in. The longer you postpone your baby's first bath, the more the vernix will be absorbed. In addition, delaying your baby's first bath helps with temperature regulation of your newborn. St. Patrick Hospital delays bathing for these reasons.
- **Circumcision**  
If you are planning to circumcise, this should be scheduled with your primary pediatric provider and will be performed at his/her office.

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## **SAFE SLEEPING** **PREVENTING SIDS and SUFFOCATION**

Approximately 3500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related infant deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and accidental suffocation in bed. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a safe sleep environment that can reduce the risk of all sleep-related infant deaths. The following list contains research based preventive measures with excellent success rates in reducing occurrences of SIDS and accidental suffocation.

- **Back to Sleep:**  
The most current recommendation from the American Pediatrics Association is to place your baby on his back to sleep, for every sleep.
- **Use a Firm Sleep Surface & Clear Away Bed Clutter:**  
Baby should sleep on a firm mattress free from pillows, blankets, toys, or bumpers.
- **Share a Room, but Not a Bed:**  
American Academy of Pediatrics warns against co-sleeping, but recommends infants sleep in the same room as parents on a separate sleep surface.
- **Don't Dress Too Warmly:**  
Take care that baby does not overheat while sleeping. Sleep sacks keep the arms uncovered which are excellent for keeping baby warm, but not too warm.
- **Breastfeed**  
A recent study demonstrated that infants who were breastfed were about 60% less likely to die from SIDS. This protective effect increased the longer the baby was breastfed and if they baby was exclusively breastfed.
- **Avoid Smoking, Excessive Drinking or Drug Use**  
These practices have been shown to increase the instances of SIDS.
- **Pacifiers**  
The use of pacifiers when baby is sleeping has also been shown to reduce the occurrence of SIDS. If you are breastfeeding, consider pacifier use once breastfeeding has been well established.

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## INFANT CAR SEAT SAFETY

Before your baby can head home with you from the hospital, a rear facing infant car seat must be installed in your car.

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends a rear-facing car seat until the age of 2, or until the child reaches the height and weight limits of the car seat.**
- There are 3 options for car seats suitable for a newborn:
  - Infant-Only rear facing car seats.
  - Convertible car seats, facing backwards.
  - 3-in-1 or All-in-One seats, facing backwards and used with the 3-point harness.
- Read your car seat labels and instruction manual for information on proper use, installation, and height/weight/age limitations.
- Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission for updated lists of car seat recalls:  
<https://www.cpsc.gov/>
- It is highly recommended that you have your car seat properly installed by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. In the Missoula area, this can be done at 3 locations:
  - **Missoula Rural Fire Station**  
(406) 549-6172  
\*2nd Saturday of the month, 10am-2pm (must call in advance to reserve a spot).
  - **St. Patrick Hospital Family Maternity Center**  
(406) 329-5300  
\*By appointment only
  - **Nursing Nook**  
(406) 721-5440  
\*By appointment only

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## SAFE BABY WEARING

Wearing your baby is a wonderful way to bond *and* free up your hands at the same time. Babies are often comforted by the closeness that comes with baby wearing, and it can be one of the most practical ways to take your baby out and about. But, there are some important safety considerations when choosing a baby carrier.

- **Ensure your baby's head and neck are supported, maintain airway, and the protect hips.**
- **Baby slings are often considered a suffocation hazard to infants younger than 4 months of age.**
- When choosing a baby carrier, be sure to read the manufacturers recommendation about age and weight and ensure baby is above minimum weight recommendation before using a carrier. Some products the use of additional inserts for newborns until they reach a certain age or weight.
- Make sure baby's face is uncovered and visible to you at all times while carrying.
- Be cautious when bending, bend at the knees and not the waist.
- Ensure you check on your baby frequently for color changes and breathing pattern.
- Be sure to support hips in a neutral position.
- Monitor your carrier frequently for wear and tear on seams and fasteners.

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## HELPING YOUR BABY TO LEARN AND GROW

The first year of life a critical time for body and brain growth and development. You can take an active role in helping your child to flourish and thrive. This is how your baby learns and grows:

- **Excellent Nutrition**

The best nutrition for your baby is breast milk. Once your baby is eating solids, make healthy choices in what you choose to feed him.

- **Stay Active**

Keep your baby active, beginning with tummy time as a newborn, and provide developmentally appropriate opportunity for your baby/child to move his body and explore his world.

- **Stimulate the Senses with Healthy Input**

Your baby will absorb the world around him through all five of his senses. Introduce his senses to a variety of experiences, such as singing and talking to your baby, playing music, the smells of the outdoors, and plenty of cuddle and hugs. Limit exposure to screen time (AAP recommends zero exposure to screen time or hand held devices for children under 2 years of age).

- **Affection and Attention**

In the first years of life a baby looks to his parents for a sense of safety and security. Giving your undivided, face-to-face love and attention every day will help him develop a strong sense of self-security and self-esteem. Praise your baby, Play with your baby. Respond to him, comfort him, and shower him with affection. It is not possible to spoil an infant. Hold him close and often.

- **Read to Your Baby**

Your baby's brain is wired for language. Studies have shown that reading aloud to young children promotes the development of language and literacy skills later in life.

- **Excellent Health Care**

It is important that your child is seen by a pediatric or family practice professional when sick, but also when well to help monitor healthy growth and development. Your provider will help be sure your child has what she needs to flourish and thrive, is growing on track, and that all of your questions and concerns about her health and development are answered properly.

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## SELF-CARE REMINDERS FOR NEW PARENTS

When it comes to parenting, the very best advice is the instructions you've heard on every flight you've ever taken: "Be sure to secure your oxygen mask before helping others with theirs." If you are not caring for yourself, you will have nothing to give your baby. While this can be easier said than done, it is imperative to find time for yourself and for your relationship. Remember, parenting is a marathon, not a sprint.

- **Eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of water.**
- **Find time for healthy exercise.**
- **Get out of the house and get some fresh air every day.**
- **Establish visiting rules.**
- **Relax your standards for how much you feel you should get done each day, and for how clean the house is.**
- **Be flexible with expectations around your baby and your parenting.**
- **Expect a roller coaster of emotions.**
- **Make time for hobbies and socializing.**
- **Stay connected to your family, friends and community.**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help, ask early, and ask often.**
- **Accept help when it is offered, even if you are not sure you need it.**
- **Make time for your partner and for your relationship.**