



## FAMIPED

**Familias, Pediatras y Adolescentes en la Red. Mejores padres, mejores hijos.**

## Newborn children's care

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[Volumen 8. N.º2. Junio 2015](#) [1]

**Palabras clave:** [newborn](#) [2], [breastfeeding](#) [3], [sudden death](#) [4], [navel](#) [5]

Newborn children's care can usually provoke doubts, worries and visits. When a baby is born, it is not unusual that some feelings of frighten, uncertainty and even distress appear in experienced and well informed parents. In this context, there is countless advice, well-meant most of the times, from family, friends, acquaintances, strangers and health care professionals. This article does not mean to be the desired newborn children's instruction manual but a summarized guide to settle all this advice and recommendations.

- **Diet**

If we had to choose just one, the best recommendation for a mother is that her baby is fed only with her own milk since this is the most effective way of caring for their health. It is the best possible food since it has everything that a newborn child needs to achieve the best nutritional status. Mother's milk protects from infections, contributes to healing and reduces possible complications. When there is a family history of eczemas, allergies, diabetes or asthma, it is less likely that a baby suffers from these illnesses if they are breastfed. There are some studies that point out to a higher intellectual development of children who are breastfed. Ovary and breast cancer in ages prior to menopause are less likely in women who have breastfed their children. Other advantages of natural nutrition have been proved by scientists.

If we want to have a successful breastfeeding, it is important to do it in the first hours of life, letting the baby skin have contact near the mother's breast. In these first hours, the smell of colostrum and some innate reflexes let the baby creep and get to grasp the breast and start suctioning spontaneously. In the first days of life, the contact with the mother must be closer, letting children nurse the number of times they need, not less than 8 times a day, without night pause. Fathers' help, comprehension and support are fundamental.

The best way to produce more milk is to increase the frequency and duration of intakes, ensuring that the breast is

emptied. For this reason, it is not recommended to use breast milk substitutes. This is the main cause of breastfeeding failure since the opposite effect is achieved, that is to say reducing milk production. Babies have milk enough if they are calm and sleep among the intakes or cries but they get relieved eating, if the nappy gets wet 4 or more times a day and have bowel movements.

It is better to avoid using pacifiers and nipples until the newborn child is an expert breastfed baby.

It is normal that there are some problems at the beginning. In these cases, the best thing to do is to visit someone who knows about breastfeeding, it can be a midwife, a paediatrician, a nurse, a doctor or a mother who has successfully breastfed. In this sense, there are support groups for breastfeeding in all autonomous communities. This can be checked in the [website IHAN](#). [6]

Breastfeeding and its continuation are so important that any related problems should be treated by a paediatrician before making any decision that implies its discontinuation.

- **Bonding**

Parents' smell and heat help newborn children to adapt themselves to live outside the womb. For this reason, separations between children and mothers are to be avoided but for health reasons. Intense crying is not desirable, comforting with heat and mother's odour releases substances in the baby's mind that mitigate pain and avoid unnecessary energy expenditure and loss of heat. Babies' care will be more rewarding if, from the beginning, both parents are implied. Comfort crying with hugs, mimes and caresses, ignoring those who say "that it creates a bad habit in them" and without feeling guilty because you cannot understand why the baby cries.

- **Sleeping**

Leave your baby on their bed on their backs, on a solid mattress and without pillows. Avoid excessive clothes and blankets and, if you use heating, this must not go beyond 22°. Necklaces increase the risk of choking so it is better not to use them.

If you decide to leave your baby in the mother's bed to foster mother breastfeeding this is called co-sleeping but be careful: always in a bed with a solid mattress, never on a sofa or armchair; don't use this technique if you have drunk alcohol or have had medicine that provoke sedation; avoid cigarette smoke at home, it is better that none of the parents smoke and when breastfeeding begins, using a pacifier protects from sudden death. However, there are still some authors who advise co-sleeping and offer alternatives such as attaching the cradle to the height of parents' bed.

- **Hygiene**

Baths can be daily actions even though the umbilical cord has not fallen and a proper hand hygiene is necessary before touching the newborn. The baby should be immersed in a little deep bath tub, not under the tap to avoid burns or sudden changes in the temperature. Always check water temperature before immersing your baby. Hold the baby and grasp them in their armpit. Use mild soap and not abundantly, wash them with your hand or a sponge, avoiding vigorous skin brushing, Dry with mild touches, paying special attention to skin folds.

Do not use cotton swabs, they cause injuries. It is not necessary to aspire nasal secretions, they usually have some nasal noise that do not imply difficulty to breathe. If there are rheum or eye secretions, physiological serum can be irrigated and then dry but avoid rubbing your eyelids. Some signs of eye infection are: red eye, pus secretion or eyelid swelling.

Do not leave your child alone in the changing table, not even a moment, nor in the bathroom. The first days of their life, they do not need any pastes, or hydrating lotions, do not quit the white paste on their body when being born, this is called caseum, it keeps skin hydrated and protects babies from temperature falls. Do not use perfumes even

though they are labelled as "for babies".

- **Umbilical cord**

The main goal is to keep it clean and dry. In order to do so, clean it with water and mild soap. After drying it with a gauze or clean cloth, leave it dry until it is completely dry. Do not tie any humid gauze since this would delay the umbilical cord stump's fall. If it gets wet with urine or it gets stained with faeces, clean it again and dry. Normally antiseptic products are not necessary. Nevertheless, avoid using iodine to care for the umbilical cord.

Your navel is infected when: there is a putrid smell, there is pus and it is red, bright or increase of heat in the skin that surrounds the cord. The navel can have some traces of blood, it is not important if blood is not abundant.

- **Nappies' care**

Change it when it contains faeces or it is wet. Avoid to wash it too much and the use of tissues, it is better to use water and mild soap. Do not rub vigorously. Dry well with a cotton cloth without rubbing but with gentle touches. Clean it from its front to its back. If the skin is not irritated, there is no need to use any paste. Do not use talcum powder since it can be aspirated (and go to the aspiratory system then). Phimosis is frequent when being born, it is not necessary to do any retraction action at this age.

- **Avoid cigarette smoke**

Children who are exposed to cigarette smoke have a higher risk of suffering from respiratory illnesses, otitis and sudden death. Protecting your child can be a good reason to give up smoking. If this is not possible, try not to smoke at home or in your car, no matter if the baby is not there.

- **In the car**

Never travel with your baby in your arms, from the day they are born, they must be carried in a carrycot or approved baby carrier. These are children's restraint systems in groups 0 and 0+.

- **Warning signs**

A baby who is younger than a week does not eat, is irritated or is too asleep and does not get up to eat. The baby has fever, blue colour, breathes quickly or groans when breathing, the baby bleeds.

The following ones are not warning signs: crying too much if they get calm when eating or in somebody's arms, faeces in each intake, vomiting something after each intake, willingness to breastfeed nearly all the time.

There is much commercial pressure related to a baby's care but the only fundamental things are parents' affection, dedication and time.

More information on:

Family  
and

health <http://www.familiaysalud.es/crecemos/el-primer-mes/el-recien-nacido-consejos-para-el-primer-mes-de-vida>  
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Caring for newborn children. Myths and mistakes. Author: Isidro Vitoria. Ed Exlibris

Support group for breastfeeding <https://www.ihan.es/index3.asp> [6]