

## Newborn Well Visit

The doctor you have chosen for your newborn will probably give your baby a full physical examination within 24 hours of birth. This is a good opportunity to ask questions about your baby's care.

### What to expect

- Weight, length and head circumference will be measured.
- Temperature will be taken, and your baby's breathing and heart rate will be measured.
- The doctor or nurse will monitor skin color and your newborn's activity.
- Eye drops or ointment to prevent eye infections.
- A shot of vitamin K will be given to prevent the possibility of bleeding.
- A sample of your baby's blood (usually done by pricking the baby's heel) will be taken to screen for a number of diseases that are important to diagnose at birth so effective treatment can be started promptly.

Find out when the doctor would like to see your newborn again. Most healthy newborns are routinely examined at about 1 to 2 weeks old. But if your baby is discharged home less than 48 hours after delivery, your doctor will want to see you again within 48 hours after discharge.

### The first visit

During the first office visit, your doctor will assess your baby in a variety of ways. The first office visit will differ from doctor to doctor, but you can probably expect:

- measurement of weight, length and head circumference to assess how your baby's been doing since birth
- observation of your newborn's vision, hearing and reflexes
- a total physical examination to check for any abnormalities of the body or organ function
- questions about how you are doing with the new baby and how your baby is eating and sleeping
- advice on what you can expect in the coming month
- a discussion of your home environment and how it might affect your baby's health (for example, smoking in the house can negatively affect your baby's health in many ways)

Also, if the results of screening tests performed after birth are available, they may be discussed. Bring any questions or

concerns you have. Jot down specific instructions given regarding special baby care. Keep your own record that includes information about growth, immunizations, medications and any problems or illnesses.

### Immunizations

Babies are born with some natural immunity because their mothers' infection-preventing antibodies are passed to them through the umbilical cord. This immunity is only temporary, but babies will develop their own immunity against many infectious diseases.

Breastfed babies receive antibodies and enzymes in breast milk that help protect them from some infections and allergic conditions.

At birth or shortly after, some infants receive their first artificial immunization, a hepatitis B vaccine (HBV) that is given in 3 doses. However, there are combination vaccines that include HBV and aren't given until the 2-month visit.

In either case, familiarize yourself with the standard immunization schedule ([cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)).

### When to call the doctor

- Eye problems can be caused by blockage of one or both tear ducts. Normally the ducts open on their own before too long, but sometimes they remain clogged, which can cause mucus-like tearing of the eyes. The white discharge can crust up on the eyes and make it difficult for your baby to open them, and the blockage can lead to infection.
- Fever in a newborn (rectal temperature above 100.4°F or 38°C).
- A runny nose can make it difficult for a baby to breathe, especially during feeding. You can help ease discomfort by using a rubber bulb aspirator to gently suction mucus from the nose. Be sure to call your doctor — even a common cold can be dangerous for a newborn.
- It's normal for newborns to have loose stools (poop) or to spit up after feedings. However, very loose and watery stools and forceful vomiting could mean there is a problem. Call your doctor if your baby has diarrhea, is vomiting, or has signs of dehydration, which include a decreased number of wet diapers, a dry mouth, and lethargy (being very sluggish or drowsy).

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