

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEW PARENTS

Congratulations on your baby! This is an exciting time for new parents. This handout covers important information to keep your baby healthy, happy, and safe.

1. **Crying and spoiling:** Babies cry for many reasons. They may be hungry, tired, sick, want attention or have a dirty diaper. Hold your baby when he/she cries; you cannot spoil them at this age. Responding to babies when they cry builds trust by teaching babies that their parents will keep them safe, secure, and happy. When your baby cries you can try soothing techniques like swaddling, letting your baby nurse, body contact or massage, gentle rhythmic motions, and soothing sounds or background noise. It is important to never shake a baby!
2. **Brain development:** Your baby's brain is like a sponge and thrives on interaction. Love, hold, and enjoy your baby. Sing, read, and talk to your baby. Make funny faces and laugh with your baby. Make funny faces and laugh with your baby. This interaction teaches language, communication, and social skills that they will use for life.
3. **If your baby has a fever, call your doctor.** Take your baby's temperature if you think your baby is sick or feels warm. A fever is a rectal temperature of 100.4 °F (38 °C) or greater. Fever in infants can be a sign of a serious infection, thus call your baby's doctor immediately. Remember to place a small amount of petroleum jelly on the thermometer tip before inserting, and to wash the thermometer with soap after every use.
4. **Nutrition and breastfeeding.** Breast milk is the ideal food for babies. It has all the calories, fluid, and nutrients a baby needs to grow. Breastfed infants have fewer infections and illnesses than formula fed babies. Newborns need to breastfeed on cue (at least 8-12 times per day), and will have 6 or more wet diapers and 3 or more bowel movements by four days of age. If you plan to formula feed, prepare the formula as directed. Do not give your baby liquids other than breast milk or formula before 6 months of age. No juice, pure water, or tea. Talk to your doctor before starting new foods. If you need breastfeeding advice, contact your doctor or the Breastfeeding Help Line at (916) 875-2120. You can receive this WIC service even if you do not receive other WIC services or are not WIC-eligible. La Leche League provides support at (916) 442-5920, 1- 800-525-3243, [www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org) or [llnocal.org](http://llnocal.org).
5. **Sleep positions and sleeping environments:** Newborns will sleep for 16-20 hours a day in stretched of 2 to 4 hours. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends always placing babies to sleep on their backs. Babies who sleep on their backs have a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or "crib death". Babies should sleep on a firm surface. Do not have pillows, bumper pads, blankets, mattress coverings, toys, quilts, etc. in the crib. The AAP recommends sharing a room (but not a bed) with the infant. Consider offering a pacifier at naps and bedtime, starting at 3-4 weeks for breastfed babies.
6. **Bed sharing is a controversial topic.** Bed sharing is associated with increased risk of SIDS and **preventable** sleep-related deaths in infants up to 1-year of age. Sleeping on the couch with your baby is very dangerous and is not recommended. If you do not have a safe place to sleep your infant (**Alone, Back, Crib**), please let your nurse or physician know before hospital discharge
7. **Umbilical cord care:** Keep the umbilical cord clean and dry. Do not cover it. You may give your baby sponge baths, but do not bathe your baby until the cord falls off. On average, the cord will dry and fall off in 7 to 14 days. Sometimes there can be a small amount of bleeding or discharge when this occurs. If there is discharge at the base, clean it with water (alcohol is not necessary). Call your doctor if the area around the belly button is red, inflamed or has pus.
8. **Skin care:** It is normal for babies to have dry, peeling skin for the first couple of weeks. Once this dry skin peels off, your baby will have soft baby skin underneath. You do not need to use lotions, oils, or creams for the dry skin. For deep cracks you can use petroleum jelly or a mild, unscented lotion. Babies are clean and do not need

to be bathed very day. Babies have sensitive skin so use pure tap water without soap or use a mild, nondrying soapsparingly. Rinse your baby well with pure water at the end of the ball. Do not leave your baby alone in the bathtub. Avoid bubble baths, baby powder, and lotions and soaps with dyes or perfumes.

9. **Parental support and baby blues:** Having a baby changes your life! Lack of sleep, hormonal changes, soreness from the delivery, combined with caring for a new baby can be stressful and emotionally challenging. You may find yourself tearful, overwhelmed, or feeling anxious. These “baby blues” are common. Talk to your partner, family, and friends about how they can help with the baby, house chores, meals, or caring for other children. Take care of yourself and rest when you can. Do not be afraid to ask for help if you are overwhelmed. A percentage of people who give birth will develop a medical condition separate from “baby blues” called “postpartum depression” and may benefit from counseling and/or antidepressant medication. Talk to your doctor if you feel depressed or if your “baby blues” are severe or lasting more than a few weeks. Resources can be found through the Sacramento Department of Health and Human Services, [www.sacdhhs.com](http://www.sacdhhs.com), Sacramento’s 24-hour crisis hotline (916) 368-3111, or Birth and Beyond, [www.birthing-beyond.com](http://www.birthing-beyond.com) or (916) 498-1000.
10. **Never smoke around your baby!** Second-hand tobacco smoke is harmful to a baby’s lungs and increases their risks of lung disease, colds, ear infections, SIDS, and other illnesses. Do not smoke in the house, in the car, or around your baby. If you smoke, do it outside and change yourclothes before coming near the baby. For help quitting smoking call 1-800-NO-BUTTS.
11. **Sibling rivalry:** The addition of a baby is a big change for the entire family. If you have olderchildren, try to include them in the care of the new baby. It is also important to continue tomake individual time for your other children.
12. **Car seat safety:** All infants should ride rear-facing in a car seat until they have reached at least 2 years of age (or reach the maximum height or weight for their seat). If you have questions about installing your car safety seat, your local California Highway Patrol (CHP) station will inspect yourcar seat for free or go to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/inquiry/childps/contacts/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/inquiry/childps/contacts/). A list of inspection stations is available in both English and Spanish at [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org) or toll free at 866-SEATCHECK (866-732-8243).
13. **Keep a list of important numbers by the telephone.** This list should include your baby’s doctor, emergency contacts, your local police and fire department, and Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222.

**For more information and resources, follow the QR code to be redirected to our patient and family resource page:**

