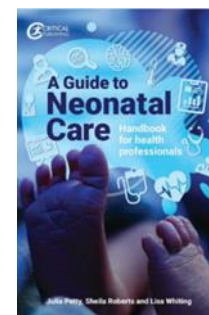


Chapter 5 Important practices for neonatal health

A Guide to Neonatal Care - Handbook for Health Professionals
Petty J, Whiting L and Roberts S (2024) Critical Publishing



Supplementary information

Adapted from the NICE [2021] guidance on Postnatal care.

At each postnatal contact, parents should be asked if they have any concerns about their baby's general wellbeing, feeding or development. reviewing history and assessment, including physical inspection and observation. If there are any concerns, appropriate further action can be taken.

Weight and head circumference should be in the first week and around 8 weeks of age, and at other times only if there are concerns. The results should be plotted on the relevant growth chart – see chapter 3, book & web companion.

Parents should be given advice and information about:

- feeding (see recommendations on planning and supporting babies' feeding)
- bonding and emotional attachment (see recommendations on promoting emotional attachment)
- how to recognise if the baby is unwell, and how to seek help (see recommendations on symptoms and signs of illness in babies).

Follow the recommendations in the NICE guideline on neonatal infection on:

- assessing and managing the risk of early-onset neonatal infection after birth (within 72 hours of the birth)
- risk factors for and clinical indicators of possible late-onset neonatal infection (more than 72 hours after the birth).

- Fever may not be present in young babies with a serious infection. If a baby has a fever, follow the recommendations in the [NICE guideline on fever in under 5s](#).
- If there are concerns about the baby's growth, follow the recommendations in the [NICE guideline on faltering growth](#).
- Be aware of the possible significance of a change in the baby's behaviour or signs, such as refusing feeds or a change in the level of responsiveness.
- Be aware that the presence or absence of individual symptoms or signs may be of limited value in identifying or ruling out serious illness in a young baby.
- Recognise the following as 'red flags' for illness in young infants.....
 - appearing ill to a healthcare professional
 - appearing pale, ashen, mottled or blue (cyanosis)
 - unresponsive or unrousable
 - having a weak, abnormally high-pitched or continuous cry
 - abnormal breathing pattern, such as:
 - grunting respirations
 - increased respiratory rate (over 60 breaths/minute)
 - chest indrawing
 - temperature of 38°C or over or under 36°C
 - non-blanching rash
 - bulging fontanelle
 - neck stiffness
 - seizures
 - focal neurological signs
 - diarrhoea associated with dehydration.
 - frequent forceful (projectile) vomiting
 - bilious vomiting (green or yellow-green vomit).

- established guidance on safer sleeping (including [recommendations on bed sharing](#))
- maintaining a smoke-free environment for the baby (see also the [NICE guideline on tobacco](#))
- vitamin D supplements for babies in line with the [NICE guideline on vitamin D supplement use](#)
- Immunisations in line with [Public Health England's routine childhood immunisations schedule](#).

Stop and think

Parents can be given information about the Baby Check scoring system to decide whether to seek advice from healthcare services if they think their baby is unwell. For example, if their baby has not passed meconium within 24 hours of birth, this may indicate a problem and requires medical advice. Similarly, if the behaviour and/or appearance of the baby indicates they may be unwell (eg colour changes, lethargy, poor feeding), these may be signs of illness. They should be advised to contact a healthcare professional if they are concerned, and / or to contact emergency services.

Glossary

Also see - the terms used in the [NICE guidance on postnatal care](#)

Casein: A protein found in cow's milk giving it the white colour.

Colostrum: the protein and immunoglobulin rich first milk produced in the late stages of pregnancy.

Cradle cap: A common and harmless condition that results in greasy, flaky crusts on an infant's scalp.

Diphtheria: A highly contagious infection that affects the nose and throat.

Haemophilus influenzae type B: A bacteria that can cause life-threatening infections such as meningitis or sepsis.

Hepatitis B: An infection of the liver caused by a virus.

Immunoglobulin rich: A high volume of immunoglobulins (antibodies) which protects the infant.

Kangaroo Care: Skin to skin or chest to chest holding of an infant.

Measles: A contagious viral infection, generally of childhood, causing a widespread rash.

Measles, mumps, and rubella (German measles) (MMR): The MMR vaccine protects against these three infectious diseases.

Meningococcal group B (Men B): a bacteria known to cause meningitis.

Metabolism: The chemical reaction within the body to change food into energy.

Oxytocin: A hormone linked to increased feelings of social interaction and bonding.

Pertussis (whooping cough): A contagious bacterial respiratory infection causing bouts of coughing followed by a whoop.

Pneumococcal disease: A bacterial infection causing a range of illnesses such as pneumonia.

Polio: A highly infectious disease caused by a virus which invades the nervous system and can cause total paralysis.

Rotavirus: A virus causing diarrhoea and vomiting.

Skin to skin: A newborn or older neonate is placed bare skinned directly onto their mother or father's skin usually the chest.

Swaddling: wrapping an infant securely in a blanket.

Tetanus: an infection caused by bacteria called Clostridium tetani, causing painful muscle contractions.

Tuberculosis (TB): A bacterial infection affecting the lungs.

Whey: One of the two main proteins in milk.



EXTRA READING

To add to the direct links provided in the supplementary information, here are a few more resources:

- For the full guidance on postnatal care, refer to NICE (2021) **Postnatal care of the baby**
- NICE Quality statement 2: **Information and advice about babies' feeding**
- UK Routine **Immunisation schedule**
- **Guidance from BNFC on Vitamin K at birth** – see the Konakion® MM Paediatric
- Here is the **Baby Check Tool** that parents can be referred to, to check if their baby is unwell.