

## Signs of Infection

### *Caring for your premature baby*

Premature babies have a higher risk of getting an infection. We want to help you recognize the signs of infection so you will know when you need to call your baby's primary care provider (PCP).

### Warning Signs

Watch for sudden changes in your baby's usual:

- Feeding habits, such as:
  - Throwing up
  - Changes in eating patterns – not wanting to eat as much as usual or demanding to eat more often than usual
- Sleep patterns, such as:
  - Being very fussy
  - Suddenly having lower energy level (*lethargy*) than usual
  - Being very sleepy and hard to wake up
  - Being very weak

### Signs of Infection

Signs of infection may include:

- Diarrhea (watery stools).
- Eye drainage.
- Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C).
- Body temperature lower than 97°F (36°C) even when wearing extra clothes and wrapped in a blanket.
- Cough, stuffy nose, or nasal discharge.
- Poor feeding (see “Warning Signs,” above).
- Fussiness or lethargy (see “Warning Signs,” above).



*You know your baby better than anyone. Trust yourself if you think your baby may have an infection.*

- Urine smells bad or is a dark color.
- No wet diapers in past 8 hours.
- Rapid breathing or having a hard time breathing.
- Pale or grayish skin.
- Thick, white patches on gums, inside cheeks, on tongue and/or roof of mouth (thrush). Your baby may have a hard time feeding and need medicine to help clear the area.
- Rash on your baby's bottom, groin, or skin folds. This rash may look like shiny, red bumps and increased redness. It may be tender to touch and may need ointment medicine.

## What to Do

If you think your baby may have an infection, call your baby's PCP right away. You know your baby better than anyone. Trust yourself, if you are concerned.

Before calling your baby's PCP, have this information ready:

- Your baby's temperature
- How many diapers your baby has had in the past 12 to 24 hours
- How much more or less your baby is eating, and if your baby is throwing up or has a tender stomach

## Before Discharge

Before your baby leaves the hospital:

- Talk with your nurse about signs of infection so you will be able to recognize them at home.
- Post your PCP's phone number where you and others can find it quickly.
- Know what number to call after hours and on weekends and holidays.
- Know when to:
  - Call your baby's doctor
  - Go to the emergency room
  - Call 911

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Talk with a member of your baby's healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit:  
206.598.4606