

Getting to Know Your Baby's Body

What's normal in the first 2 months?

From head to toe, your baby is wonderfully unique. You will become an expert on how your baby looks, moves, and sounds. In this chapter, you will learn what is normal and expected.



Sneezing

Sneezing is the way babies clear their nose. It does not mean your baby has a cold.

Ask your baby's provider if you have any questions or concerns about your newborn's health.

Skin

It is normal for newborns to have dry and peeling skin for the first 1 to 2 weeks of life. A few other rashes are also normal in new babies. They are:

- **Salmon patches or “stork bites.”** These deep-pink patches are usually on the back of the neck, bridge of the nose, upper eyelids, and lower forehead. They are the most common birthmarks, especially in light-skinned babies. They usually go away over time.
- **Slate grey spots.** These large flat areas contain extra pigment (skin coloring). Slate grey spots are greenish or blue, like a bruise, and may be on the lower back or buttocks. These spots are very common, especially in dark-skinned babies. They usually go away over time. You can ask your baby's healthcare provider to note these in your baby's medical record.
- **Milia.** These tiny white bumps or yellow spots spread across the tip of the nose or chin. They are smooth to the touch. Do **not** squeeze or try to pop them. They usually go away in the first month of life.

- **Erythema toxicum.** This rash of red splotches has yellowish or white bumps in the center. They usually appear during the first few days of life and go away within the first week or so. They do not need any treatment.

Crossed Eyes

Most babies have times when their eyes wander and seem to “cross.” This is common during the first 4 to 6 months of life.

Breast Swelling

Most babies, both boys and girls, have some swelling of their breast tissue. This is from the hormones they received from their mother during pregnancy. A baby’s breasts might even leak a little milk at first.

Hiccups

Most babies hiccup from time to time. Hiccups will not harm your baby. You do not need to try to stop them.

Chin Quivering

A newborn’s chin often shakes or quivers during the first few months of life. This will go away as your baby’s nervous system matures.

Cough

Your baby may cough and sputter after the first few breast or bottle feedings. Coughing should stop once your baby adjusts to the feeding routine.

Moro Reflex

This is often called the *startle reflex*. It occurs when your baby is alarmed or surprised by a noise, bright light, or quick movement. The baby suddenly flings their arms and legs out and straightens their body.

Rooting Reflex

Stroking your baby’s cheek with your finger will cause their head to turn toward your touch and their mouth to open. This “rooting reflex” is strongest when your baby is ready to feed.

Sleep and Wake Cues

Infant cues are body movements that tell us what they need. When your baby is ready to interact with you, you will see *engagement cues*:

- Eyes open wide
- Body turning toward you with smooth and calm movement

This is the time to gaze face-to-face, talk, sing, or read to your baby.

When your baby has had enough interaction, you will see *disengagement cues*:

- Eyes looking away
- Sharp body movement
- Frowning or crying

This is the time to stop activity and help your baby to be calm. Swaddle or hold and comfort your baby.



Watch for early feeding cues.

Feeding Cues

When your baby wants to feed, you will see cues that get more and more active. Beginning the feeding is usually easier if you respond to the early cues.

- **Early cues:** Opening and closing mouth, smacking lips or mouth, sucking lips or hands
- **Active cues:** Rolling and rooting toward the caregiver's chest, moving into feeding position
- **Late cues:** Frantic movements and crying, problems calming down

Crying

Newborn babies cry for all kinds of reasons. They cry when they are hungry, overstimulated, tired, gassy, or need a diaper change.

Crying is one way babies communicate. It may not mean that they are feeling bad. Here is a quick check list to use when you want to soothe your child:

- **Fix the cause:** Is your baby too warm or too cold? Wet or dirty? Hungry (again)? Do they want a cuddle or company?
- **Soothe your baby:** Some ways to soothe a baby are swaddling,



During the period of PURPLE crying, your baby can cry as much as 5 hours a day.

holding or gently rocking, or walking while you gently bounce up and down. Babies like repeated movements.

- **Help your baby feel safe:** Wrap your baby snugly in a blanket, or carry your baby in your arms, a front pack or sling.

All babies have times when they cry and we cannot figure out why. Sometimes it may be because they have entered “the Period of PURPLE Crying.” If you are concerned about your baby’s crying, see your baby’s healthcare provider. (See the chapter “Period of PURPLE Crying” in this workbook.)

Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.

Questions?

Your questions are important.

If you have questions or concerns about your baby’s health, call your baby’s primary care provider.