

Newborn Illness - How To Recognize

Definition

- How infections and other serious diseases can present in newborns

Health Information

Why Newborns Need to be Watched Closely

- Newborns are at higher risk for infections. Infections can happen at any time during the first month. Watch your baby closely for signs of illness. This is especially key during the first 7 days of life.
- Newborns who get a blood infection (sepsis) can get very sick quickly.
- The signs of serious illness in newborns can be subtle. During the early weeks of life, illness can be serious.
- Feeding is the one reliable measure of a newborn's well being. Newborns should be eating machines. If your baby isn't feeding well, call your baby's doctor. Also, call if your baby has an abrupt change in his feeding pattern. (Exception: never a good feeder, but takes enough milk and nothing has changed).
- Keeping a close eye on your baby is always the best plan. If feeding, movement and sleep is normal, your baby is likely just fine.
- If your baby looks or acts different and it's not normal, call now. Don't wait. Call your baby's doctor now for expert help.

Care Advice

1. Symptoms and Signs of Illness in a Newborn:

- Any symptoms of illness such as coughing, diarrhea or vomiting. Vomiting bile (green color) is always serious.
- Changes in feeding. Signs are having to wake up for feeds or can't finish feeds.
- Weak suck or can't suck for very long
- Sweating during feeds
- Sleeping more than normal or can't wake up
- Change in muscle tone (decreased or floppy)
- Decreased movement or not moving at all
- Change in color (such as pale, bluish or gray arms and legs)
- Age under 12 weeks old with fever. (Caution: Do NOT give your baby any fever medicine before being seen.)
- Low temperature below 96.8° F (36.0° C) rectally that does not go up with warming
- New moaning or grunting noises with each breath
- Change in cry, such as weak cry or strange cry

Call Your Doctor If

- Your baby has any symptoms listed above
- Your baby starts looking or acting sick
- Your baby starts looking or acting abnormal in any way
- You think your baby needs to be seen

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

Copyright 2000-2022 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Disclaimer: This health information is for educational purposes only. You the reader assume full responsibility for how you choose to use it. The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Listing of any resources does not imply an endorsement.