



Infection Risk

Babies are at high risk for infections before, during and/or after they are born due to their immature immune systems. Signs and symptoms can be very generic but can include problems maintaining blood sugar, breathing difficulties, fever, low temperature, skin color changes, decreased activity, and a lack of response to stimuli.

While in the hospital the staff may perform blood tests, chest x-ray, or even a spinal tap to rule out infections. Family and friends who are not feeling well are discouraged from visiting the baby.

Signs of Illness

Call your doctor right away if you notice any of the following signs of illness:

✓ Change in Your Baby's Appetite

Your baby refuses two consecutive feedings, becomes too sleepy to wake up when sucking the breast or bottle, or has difficulty feeding.

✓ Difficulty Waking

Your baby is very sleepy and unusually difficult to arouse.

✓ Crying

Crying lasts for three hours and shows no signs of letting up. Call sooner if your instinct tells you your baby is ill or in pain.

✓ Fever

If your baby is less than three months of age, not overwrapped and has a temperature of 100.4°F taken in the armpit. Be sure to tell your physician the reading was taken in the armpit. A temperature less than 97.7°F for smaller babies may also be a sign they are sick. Call your doctor if attempts to warm your baby fail.

✓ Diarrhea

It is normal for breastfed babies to have soft, mushy stools. However, your baby's stool should not be loose or watery for more than 2-3 diaper changes. Water loss stools will have a ring of water in the absorbent part of the diaper. The danger of diarrhea is becoming dehydrated.

✓ Dehydration

Dehydration is a serious side effect of vomiting and diarrhea for infants and warrants an immediate call to your doctor. Signs may include failure to urinate (no wet diapers) two or more dry diapers in a row, sinking of the soft spot on the top of the baby's head, dry lips, decrease in skin elasticity and no tears.

✓ Vomiting

All babies spit up occasionally and some spit up more than others. Vomiting is a continuous throwing up of large quantities of food or liquid. It can occur at times other than feedings.

✓ Ear Pain

Watch for pulling at an ear and/or failing to respond to sound. Babies with ear infections may also have a fever. They may become fussier when lying flat in their crib than when held upright.

✓ Rashes

Diaper rashes may be treated with over-the-counter creams but if the area becomes red or raw, seek medical attention. Yeast rashes are also common. They appear as red, pinpoint bumps or peeling of the skin that doesn't go away with over-the-counter rash creams. A prescription from your doctor will be necessary to cure a yeast rash. Also call your doctor if your baby suddenly develops an unexplained rash or a rash accompanied by a fever.

✓ Eye Drainage

Eyes with yellowish-green drainage may signal a blocked tear duct or conjunctivitis (pink eye).

Preventing Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection

Respiratory Syncytial Virus or RSV acts a lot like a bad cold in healthy babies. It has the same symptoms and is very contagious. Unfortunately, RSV can also be very serious and lead to pneumonia, bronchiolitis and even death. The most common time to acquire RSV is from fall to spring but infections can happen any time of the year. Most babies get RSV before the age of two and it is the #1 cause of hospitalizations in the U.S. for that age group.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever (especially over 100.4°F in babies under 3 months of age)
- Cold temperature below 97.7°F despite interventions to re-warm
- Coughing or wheezing that doesn't stop
- Difficulty breathing
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Excessive sneezing

Babies at High Risk

- Babies that are around other children or adults that are sick
- Babies born early (36 weeks or less)
- Babies with certain types of heart disease
- Babies with certain types of chronic lung disease

Call Your Pediatrician if Your Baby is:

- Projectile vomiting and or having bloody stools
- Displaying breathing problems (coughing, wheezing, breathing fast, or blue/grey skin color)
- Having trouble feeding, drinking, or sleeping and seems sick
- Taking breathing pauses

RSV Prevention Tips

- Caregivers should wash their hands often
- Do not let anyone who is sick with a cold care for your baby – including siblings
- Wash your baby's toys and clothes often
- Do not share pacifiers, cups, toothbrushes, eating utensils, washcloths, or towels
- Do not smoke around the baby
- Stay away from crowds especially in the fall and spring

If You Need To Visit Your Pediatrician

Your pediatrician will likely need to run some tests in order to help determine a diagnosis. This might include obtaining a sample of the fluid from your baby's nose or an x-ray of your baby's lungs.

Synagis Candidates

Synagis is a prescription injection of antibodies that is given monthly to high-risk infants during RSV season to protect them from the disease. It is not a vaccine but the antibodies have been shown to fight the virus that causes RSV. Check with your pediatrician to see if your baby is a candidate to receive Synagis.

Hand Hygiene

The best way to prevent the spread of harmful bacteria, germs, and all infections is to frequently wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Everyone should clean their hands before they touch your baby. A good rule is to wash your hands for 15 seconds or have children say their ABCs while washing.

When to Wash Your Hands

- After diaper changing
- Before making your baby's bottle or food
- Before eating
- After using the bathroom
- Before, during, and after cooking
- After touching an animal
- After blowing your nose
- After you get home from running errands