

Patient information factsheet

Keeping your baby safe

We have written this factsheet to make sure your baby is cared for as safely as possible, outside and at home. It includes information about safe sleeping, slings and baby carriers, and car seats. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or health visitor.

Crying

Babies cry for many reasons and some babies cry more than others. Babies start to cry more frequently from about two weeks of age. The crying episodes usually reach a peak when babies are six to eight weeks old. After eight weeks of age, babies usually become more settled again. You may also find that there are certain times of the day when your baby is more likely to cry. Crying is particularly common during the early evening when you may also be feeling tired. It is normal to feel upset, anxious or frustrated when your baby cries.

Crying is your baby's way of telling you they need comfort and care. Sometimes it's easy to work out what they want, and sometimes it's not. The most common reasons for crying are:

- hunger
- a wet or dirty nappy
- being too hot or too cold
- tiredness
- wanting a cuddle

Checking your baby's nappy and temperature, and offering your baby a feed or a cuddle may cause the crying to stop. Sometimes babies cry because they are uncomfortable due to colic, reflux or constipation, or because they are unwell. For more information, please read the 'Checking your baby is well' factsheet and the 'Signs of an unwell baby' factsheet, which can be downloaded from our website www.uhs.nhs.uk/maternity and visit www.iconcope.org

If you think there is something wrong with your baby, or the crying won't stop, speak to your GP, midwife or health visitor. You should always seek urgent medical attention if you suspect your baby is unwell. If they are having trouble breathing or you are unable to wake your baby, call 999 for an ambulance.

If your baby is well, and has been fed and changed but continues to cry, try comforting your baby by:

- calmly talking, singing or humming to them
- playing a repeating or soothing sound, such as soft music or 'white noise' (for example the sound of a washing machine or tumble dryer)
- holding them close to you (skin-to-skin contact)
- going for a walk with them
- giving them a bath

Patient information factsheet

If your baby doesn't stop crying:

- try taking some deep, slow breaths, as this may help you feel calmer.
- try putting your baby in a safe place, such as their cot or pram, and walking away, especially if the crying is making you feel stressed or angry.
- try to calm yourself down by doing something that takes your mind off the crying. For example you may find it helpful to make yourself a healthy snack or warm drink, listen to music, or phone a friend or relative who is supportive and willing to listen.

After a few minutes, when you are feeling calmer, go back and check on your baby. Losing your temper, handling your baby roughly, shouting or getting angry with your baby will only make things worse.

Never, ever shake or hurt your baby

Sometimes parents get so angry and frustrated with their baby's cry that they lose control. They act on impulse and shake their baby. Shaking your baby is very dangerous and can cause:

- blindness
- learning disabilities
- seizures
- physical disabilities
- death

It isn't just parents who get frustrated at a baby's cry. Think very carefully about who you ask to look after your baby. Make sure you share this information with anyone who may look after your baby.

Remember it is normal for parents to become anxious, especially when their baby is crying. Taking time each day to eat healthily, exercise, rest, and seek support from family and friends will help you to look after yourself. Looking after your own needs will help you cope with the needs of your baby. Speak to your midwife, GP or health visitor if you need support.

Community midwifery co-ordinator

Telephone: **023 8120 4909** and **07786 266529** (7.30am to 5.30pm)

Broadlands Birth Centre

Telephone: **023 8120 6012** (out of hours)

New Forest Birth Centre

Telephone: **023 8074 7690** (out of hours)

Breastfeeding Babes

Telephone: **07786 267584**

For more information, please visit:

ICON

Website: www.iconcope.org

Cry-sis

Telephone: **0845 122 8669**

Website: www.cry-sis.org.uk

Safe sleeping

The safest way for your baby to sleep is:

- on their back (for every sleep, day and night)
- in a separate crib, Moses basket or cot in the same room as you for the first six months (even during the day)
- on a firm, clean, dry mattress that is protected with a waterproof cover
- in a room where the temperature is between 16 and 20°C
- in a smoke-free environment (please speak to your midwife for advice)
- in an empty cot, without bumpers, toys and loose bedding (unnecessary items in a baby's cot can increase the risk of accidents)

Looking after a baby can be really tiring, especially in the first few months after the birth, when your baby is likely to wake several times during the night. Following this advice may seem challenging when you are tired and you may be tempted to do something different. However, encouraging your baby to sleep for longer or more deeply than usual can be harmful, and can increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), also called 'cot death'. Although the incidence of SIDS is rare, each year over 200 babies in the UK die suddenly and unexpectedly.

The number of babies dying due to SIDS has reduced by 82% since 1991 when parents began following the recommended safe sleeping advice. Research to find the underlying cause of SIDS and identify babies at a higher risk is ongoing. However, a recent research study conducted by the Lullaby Trust has shown 46% of parents did not follow safe sleeping advice when they were tired. Following the advice in this factsheet for every sleep (day and night) is essential to reduce your baby's likelihood of SIDS. For more information about SIDS and the different types of sleeping products available, please visit www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Hats

Babies lose excess heat through their heads. To prevent your baby from overheating, it is important that you remove hats when your baby is indoors. However, your midwife or paediatrician may advise you to place a hat on your baby if their temperature is low during the first 24 to 48 hours after they are born. Please discuss this with your midwife, who will be able to advise you according to your baby's individual needs.

If you have any questions about looking after your baby safely, please speak to your midwife. Further information is also available from the Lullaby Trust.

Telephone: **0808 802 6869** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm)

Website: www.lullabytrust.org.uk

Sun protection

Take extra care to protect babies and children. Their skin is much more sensitive than adult skin, and damage caused by repeated exposure to sunlight could lead to skin cancer developing in later life. However, it is important to make sure that your baby doesn't overheat when you are protecting them from the sun.

From March to October, the best way to protect your baby from the sun is to:

- keep them out of direct sunlight and in the shade as much as possible
- dress them in lightweight clothing which covers their arms and legs
- use a soft hat with a wide brim to protect their neck
- attach a parasol or sunshade to your pram

Patient information factsheet

Your baby's pram should not be covered with blankets, sheets or covers that prevent the air from circulating. This is because it may cause your baby to overheat, and may also prevent you from being able to see your baby or monitor their temperature easily.

You should start to use sunscreen on your baby once they reach six months of age. Choose a broad spectrum (offers good UVA and UVB protection), water-resistant cream with a SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. Test a small amount of the sunscreen on the inside of your baby's wrist before applying liberally and frequently to all areas of exposed skin. If it causes irritation, you may need to try another brand. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or health visitor, or visit www.nhs.uk

It is important to make sure your baby receives enough vitamin D while protecting your baby from the sun. The Department of Health recommends a daily vitamin D supplement from birth if you are breastfeeding. If your baby has more than 500ml of formula milk per day, the vitamin D supplement is not necessary because infant formula contains vitamin D as well as other nutrients. Free vitamin drops are available if you qualify for healthy start vouchers. For more information, please speak to your midwife or health visitor, or visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk or www.nhs.uk

Using slings and baby-carriers

Slings and baby-carriers are useful when used correctly. However, accidents can occur if babies rest their chin on their chest, or their mouth and nose is covered with clothing. It is important to follow the safety guidelines produced by 'The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents':

- The sling or carrier must keep your baby in an upright position and support their back.
- Your baby's chin must be off their chest, keeping their airway free for breathing.
- You must be able to see your baby's face at all times.

More information can be found on www.lullabytrust.org.uk or www.rospa.com

Car seats

Choosing the right seat

Legally a child must use a car seat until they are 12 years old or 135cm tall. The only exception for children under the age of three is if they are travelling in a taxi or travelling in an emergency and a seat is unavailable. If this is the case, your baby must travel in the rear of the car.

When you buy a car seat, you should:

- try different models in your car before making a decision, as not all car seats fit all cars. If the seat isn't the right seat, or if it isn't fitted correctly, your baby won't be as safe as they should be. Some car seat manufacturers have online guides showing which cars their seats will fit in. If your baby is likely to travel in more than one car regularly, it is important to check the car seat fits both cars.
- find out if your car has Isofix connectors built into it. These make fitting car seats easier. They are often hidden between the seats of the car.
- make sure the seat is fitted properly in the car, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- make sure the car seat you choose conforms to the United Nations standard, ECE Regulation 44.04 (or R 44.03) or to the new i-size regulation, R129 (look for a capital 'E' in a circle on the label).

Patient information factsheet

Do not buy a second-hand car seat. It may have been damaged in an accident, have parts missing or not fit in your car properly. Only accept a car seat from friends or family if you know its history, it's not too old and it comes with instructions.

When you use your baby's car seat, you should:

- make sure you know how to securely strap your baby into the seat according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- fix the seat in the rear of your car and make sure the air bags are de-activated.

Limit the time your baby spends in their car seat

Your baby should not sleep in a car seat for longer than necessary. Car seats are designed to keep your baby safe while travelling, but they should not be your baby's main sleeping place.

Your baby should not be in a car seat for longer than two hours at a time. Research has shown a link between travelling in car seats for long periods and breathing difficulties in young babies.

If you are driving for a long period of time, it is important that you take regular breaks (at least every two hours). This will allow you to take your baby out of their seat, giving them the chance to stretch and move around.

When you reach your destination, you should take your baby out of their car seat, and if they are sleeping, transfer them to a cot or pram with a firm, flat surface.

Avoid overheating

Babies that get too hot are at a greater risk of SIDS. You should remove hats and outdoor clothing, such as snowsuits and coats, once your baby is in the car. This will prevent your baby from overheating and keep your baby safe in the event of a collision. Leaving your baby's coat or snowsuit on in the car creates a gap between your baby and their safety harness. In a collision, the harness isn't as close to your baby's body as it needs to be to allow it to properly restrain them. You should pull the harness tight enough that you can just get two fingers between your baby and the straps.

The best way to check that your baby isn't getting too hot is to feel their tummy or the back of their neck. If their skin feels clammy or sweaty, they are too hot, and you will need to remove a layer of their clothing.

For more information about car seats, please visit the websites below:

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

Website: www.rospa.com

GOV.UK

Website: www.gov.uk

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your midwife or contact the community midwifery co-ordinator.

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Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/maternity

www.iconcope.org

www.cry-sis.org.uk

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

www.rosipa.com

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **023 8120 4688**.

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**