

# Newborn - Protecting from Infections

## Definition

- Fever is a body temperature above normal. Your baby has a fever if the temperature is 100.4° F (38.0° C) or higher. Rectal temperature is the most accurate.
- Fevers during the first 3 months (12 weeks) of life can be from a serious infection.
- Serious infections include blood infections, urinary tract infections, pneumonia and meningitis (a brain infection).

## Health Information

### Fevers in Young Infants: What Needs to Happen

- Infants younger than 3 months old with fever need to be seen right away. This can be in the ER or doctor's office.
- They need to be examined. They need lab tests and may need some procedures. Reason: without these tests, there's no way to know if the fever is from a serious infection.
- Sometimes infants need to be admitted to the hospital.

## Care Advice

### 1. Key Points

- Fever during the first 3 months of life can be from a serious infection.
- Your infant will need to be seen in the ER or by your doctor for an exam and tests. They may need to be admitted to the hospital.
- To prevent the need for an ER visit, try to protect your baby from infections.
- Here are some precautions you can take to prevent an infection in your newborn.

### 2. Avoid Exposing Your Baby to Known Infections

- Have everyone who touches your baby wash their hands first.
- Avoid exposure to anyone who is sick, even with a common cold. Don't let them visit your home. Reason: colds can be more serious in newborns.
- Don't let anyone with cold sores (fever blisters) hold your baby.
- If siblings are sick, don't let them hold or kiss the baby.
- If you have a respiratory infection, try to wear a mask when feeding your baby.

### 3. Limit Exposing Your Baby to Potential Infections

- These precautions are harder to follow. Do what is practical for your family.
- Limit visitors during the first month of life. Instead, share photos or video chat.
- Avoid visiting other people's homes, especially if they have children in child care or school. There are almost always infections spreading in those settings.
- Avoid any crowded indoor spaces, such as stores.
- Avoid any large family gatherings. This one is especially hard.
- Avoid airports. If air travel is essential, avoid it during the first month of life.
- Don't let others kiss your baby on the face.

#### 4. **Breastfeeding for Protection**

- If you are able, breastfeed your baby.
- Breastfeeding mothers have antibodies against common infections. These antibodies get transferred to your baby through breastmilk.
- These antibodies help protect your baby from infections.

#### 5. **Vaccines for Protection**

- Be sure everyone in your family is up to date on their vaccines.
- Annual influenza and COVID vaccines are important. Reason: the spread of these infections is very hard to stop.
- Giving vaccines during pregnancy is just as important. Reason: the mother's protective antibodies go through the placenta to the baby.
- This includes the Tdap vaccine, which protects against whooping cough. Whooping cough can be deadly in newborns. If mom gets the vaccine, the baby is born already protected.
- Another important vaccine to get during pregnancy is the RSV vaccine. It will protect your baby against bronchiolitis, a serious respiratory infection.
- Finally, don't let unvaccinated people visit your baby.

#### 6. **What to Expect**

- By taking these steps, your baby's risk of getting an infection is much lower.

### **Call Your Doctor If**

- Baby younger than 3 months develops a fever
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

#### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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