



Leaflet – The first night

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INTRODUCTION

Newborns are incredibly attentive. Shortly after birth, they search with all their senses – for the smell, the voice, the eye contact, the touch. This initial bonding is the ideal time to practice with breastfeeding for the first time. The maternity nurse or midwife will assist. Especially so quickly after the birth babies possess a very strong suckling reflex, you should make use of that. Often afterwards they will sleep for a few hours, exhausted by the birth and all the new things they have experienced. When the baby wakes up and is alone in the cot, it is highly likely the baby will cry. For nine months the baby felt warm and secure, protected by the comfort of the womb and suddenly all of this has disappeared. No more soothing sounds from the mother's heart and intestines, no more the protecting shell of warm water. In order to have the baby adapt to the outside world as best as possible it is recommended for the cot to be placed next to the bed of the parents. The baby will be awake regularly and will feel safer if you are near. In addition it will be more convenient to caress the baby during comforting if it is near the bed.

Until recently it was advised to have the baby sleep with you in bed. Although the baby will find this the most comfortable it would be wise to not make this a habit. Research has shown that cot death (SIDS) is more common in children who sleep between the parents.

When the baby cries he can often be comforted by placing him on your or your partners chest, facing downwards and draping a blanket over the back. Most babies are not very hungry the first day as they still have plenty of reserve from the womb. Although the baby does have a regular need to suckle. Should you decide to breastfeed then it is recommended to have the baby latch on regularly, this will also stimulate milk production. In case of bottle feeding you may of course feed the baby a little if he cries. If you have finished feeding and the baby is still crying it may help to place your little finger in his mouth.

BABY

Feeding

Lie down in the most comfortable position when breastfeeding. Lying on your side with a pillow supporting your back is usually the most relaxing position. Lie down, with your body and your baby's body parallel. Snuggle up to your baby and bring the baby's mouth right to your nipple. The baby must be allowed to suckle the nipple and most of the areola and / or be able to practice with latching on. Do this often to stimulate the milk production. Please note that feeding should not cause too much discomfort to your nipples, initial discomfort should subside after a minute or so. With severe discomfort the baby is likely not latched on correctly. Break the suction by placing your little finger in the corner of the baby's mouth and gently pulling away your nipple.

When you bottle-feed, the baby is allowed 10 to 15 cc every three hours. This hardly seems enough but the baby's intestines are still developing so the baby slowly needs to get used to food.

Temperature

It is very important that you keep the baby sufficiently warm. The baby is accustomed to a temperature of 37 degrees and need to acclimatise to a new, colder environment. The easiest way to keep the baby warm is to place him on your chest. The normal body temperature of a baby is between 36.5 and 37.5 degrees. Or else a hot water bottle filled with nearly boiling water; so approximately 90 degrees. Make sure the bottle overflows a little in order to remove excess air and then seal it firmly. Always cover the hot water bottle with its own pouch or a cotton diaper. Position the hot water bottle behind the baby while placing a rolled up towel in between, in order to prevent the bottle from touching the baby. Never position the hot water bottle above shoulder height. We advise against having a plastic mattress protector.

Changing

When changing the diaper it is recommended to rub some baby oil on the baby's buttocks the first few times. The first stool has a tarry consistency and tends to stick to the skin. Applying some oil will make cleaning the baby's buttocks easier.

Nausea

It is possible during the first 24 hours that the baby feels sick due to the swallowing of amniotic fluid and / or blood during the birth. Do not be alarmed if the baby really gags and / or begins to spit / vomit. Lay the baby always on his side and gently tap on his back. If necessary, clean the mouth with a cloth.

If you have just had a baby girl, she may have a little bloody vaginal discharge in her nappy. This is due to the withdrawal of your hormones from her body after she was born. The bleeding should stop as her hormones adjust to normal levels.

MOTHER

If you've had a normal delivery, you can usually take a shower, but it is not mandatory. If you feel too tired it might be more comfortable to have the maternity nurse give you bed bath.

Urinating

It is important that you try to urinate as soon as possible after the delivery. A full bladder can prevent the uterus from contracting. Therefore you may suffer extra blood loss. Because it all feels a bit strange and sore, there is often no urge to urinate although the bladder does fill up quickly after childbirth. All the extra fluids you were carrying during your pregnancy are now leaving your body again. Rinse yourself down with warm water while urinating. This will reduce the soreness and would rinse any stitches clean also. Urinating while under the shower would be easiest.

Getting out of bed

If you wish to get out of bed, start with sitting upright slowly and dangle your legs over the edge of the bed for a little while. If you start to feel lightheaded, lie back down again. Otherwise, odds are you will pass out on the toilet or in the shower.

Contractions after the birth and blood loss

Make sure you regularly change your maternity towel. It is common to experience a heavy flow for the first few days. Sometimes the flow contains clots as well; there is no need to be concerned if they happen to be the size of your fist. It may also be the case you suffer from after pains (post partum cramping); the uterus forcefully contracts after birth. In case of severe cramps it is recommended to take 1 or 2 paracetamol.

It may be that you will not sleep very well the first night after delivery. This is the result of hormones that your body produces during and after childbirth. After childbirth it is wonderful to have your baby with you in bed, you can stare at your baby for hours and it is also a good way in keeping the baby warm.