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Introduction

Réamhrá

Welcome to **Caring for Your Baby: Birth to Six Months Old**. If you have just had a baby, this is the information pack for you! It contains valuable information to help you care for yourself and your baby over the next six months.

The birth of a baby is an exciting and challenging time for all. This booklet will help you deal with the everyday concerns of being a parent. It will also point you to further information and support.

The information contained in this booklet is also available on Audio Compact Disc (CD). Ask your public health nurse for more information.

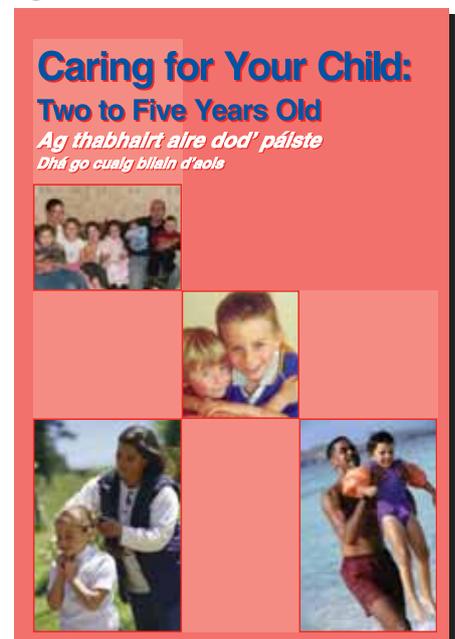
Here are some comments from parents who made good use of the second and third information packs.

The booklet: "It was very easy reading, I really enjoyed it."

"We really appreciate and value the information and research that went into this pack. The support and encouragement we got from it allows us to strengthen our relationships as parents, as a family and as part of our community".



Contact your local public health nurse or health promotion office if you wish to get a copy of these two information packs.



1. Taking care of yourself as a parent

Ag tabhairt aire duit féin mar thuismitheoir

Becoming a parent changes your life. It is important to take care of yourself so you can take care of your family.

Especially for Mams

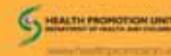
Go h-áirithe le h-aghaidh máithreacha

Eating well

A healthy balanced diet is always important, especially after giving birth. Use the food pyramid to help you choose a balanced diet. If you are breastfeeding, choose five servings of milk, cheese and yogurt. To avoid constipation, especially if you had stitches or bruising, eat foods high in fibre, such as vegetables, fruits and wholemeal cereals. Aim to drink a lot of fluid.



Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion size



Drink water regularly - at least 8 cups a day

FOLIC ACID - AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN MAKING A BABY. YOU CAN GET FOLIC ACID FROM GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES BUT IF THERE IS ANY POSSIBILITY THAT YOU COULD BECOME PREGNANT THEN YOU SHOULD BE TAKING A FOLIC ACID TABLET (see MICROGRAMS PER DAY).

Postnatal exercises

You experienced many changes in your body during your pregnancy. Now that your baby is born, most of these changes will return to normal. Special postnatal exercises will help. These are important to help you regain your figure and prevent future health problems such as leakage of urine (incontinence). In the hospital, your midwife or physiotherapist will give you information on how to do postnatal exercises. Do these exercises regularly.

Postnatal check

Six weeks after your baby is born, you are due for a routine postnatal check by your doctor, including a breast check. If you have not had a recent cervical smear test before your pregnancy then you should discuss your need to have one with your doctor at your postnatal check up. Use this time to talk with your doctor about any questions or concerns you have about yourself or your baby.

Baby blues

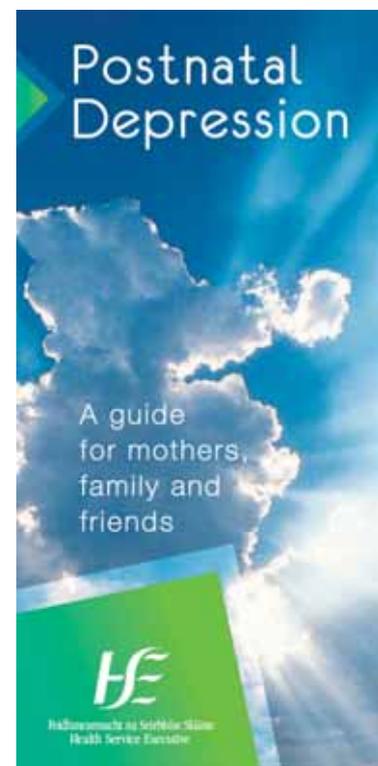
You may feel tired or strained due to lack of sleep and coping with your new role as a parent. Most new mams feel **baby blues** a few days after the birth. This is mainly due to a change in your hormone levels. As your body starts to return to normal, these feelings pass.

Postnatal depression

Postnatal depression is a term used to describe feelings of depression you may get after you have a baby. About 10-20 % of women are affected by postnatal depression in the first few months after giving birth.

After the birth, you may:

- have no interest in your baby or yourself;
- feel panic, anxiety, dizziness, a fast heartbeat, sick in your stomach or sweaty;
- cry;
- be afraid of being left alone with your baby;
- feel resentful towards your partner;
- feel tired but unable to sleep;
- have no appetite;
- overeat;
- find it hard to concentrate; or
- lose interest in sex.



If you or your family notice some of these signs, then speak with your partner, a family member, doctor or public health nurse. Remember, postnatal depression does not last forever and the sooner it is recognised, the sooner you will get better. Ask your public health nurse or Health Promotion Office for a copy of this leaflet.

For Mams and Dads

Do na máthair agus athair

Physical activity

Some gentle exercises can help increase your energy levels and help you manage the added work in your life following the birth of your baby. Build physical activity into your lifestyle. Try:

- going for a walk with your baby, inviting your partner or a friend along gives you a chance to spend time together; and
- going swimming once you feel ready.



Family planning after childbirth

It is possible to become pregnant again soon after the birth of your baby, even if your periods have not returned. Now is the time for you and your partner to decide on a method of family planning that you are both happy with. You can get information on family planning and contraception from your midwife, doctor, public health nurse or practice nurse.

Rest and relaxation

Extra rest is important for both parents, especially after your baby is born. In the first few days at home, try to:



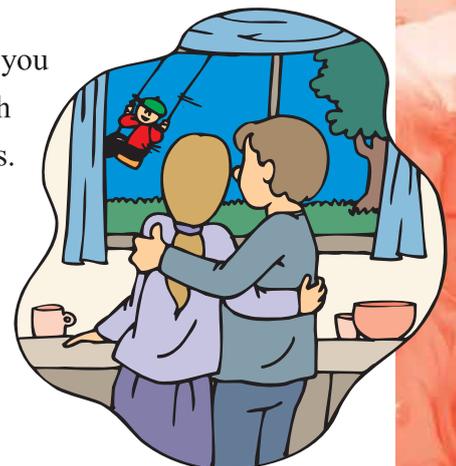
- limit the number of visitors who call to see you and your new baby;
- have a rest or a sleep when the baby sleeps;
- accept offers of help with routine shopping or housework;
- allow some of the housework to go undone for now and focus on your baby and yourself, especially if you are breastfeeding; and
- prepare and freeze meals ahead of time to cut down on daily housework.

Looking after your relationship

Relationships can become strained between parents, especially when you are tired and tense. At times, you may feel that it is hard to cope with your role as a parent and to balance this with work and other interests.

Take care of your relationship by:

- saying a caring word or doing something for each other;
- letting your partner know that you appreciate their support in parenting and caring for your relationship; and
- talking openly together and sharing your feelings in a calm and listening way.



Getting extra supports for parents

Ag fáir breis tacaíochta do thuismitheoirí



Being a parent can be a difficult as well as a rewarding time. Every parent needs support at some time. It may be more difficult if:

- this is your first baby and you are unsure of what to expect;
- you do not have a partner or support person to share the joy and the work of being a parent;
- your relationship with your partner is in difficulty;
- you feel there is support for your baby and your partner but little to support you; or
- you now live away from your home and family.

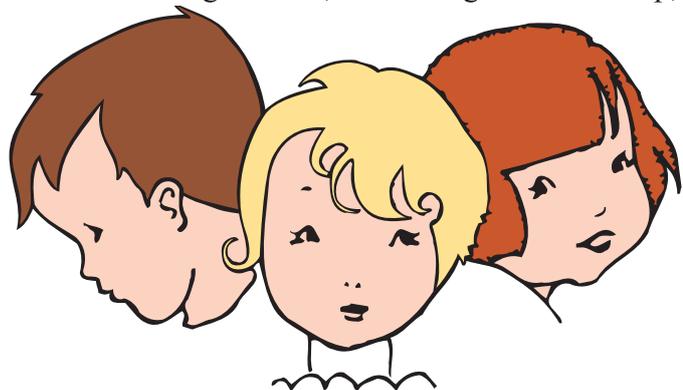
Getting help and support is important. Ask your public health nurse about supports available such as:

- breastfeeding support groups;
 - parent and baby support groups; and
 - peer led support, for example the Community Mothers Programme where local trained parents who have had similar experiences visit you at home to offer support and information.
-
- **The Support for Families Directory** is a guide to groups who provide local marriage and relationship counselling, family mediation, child counselling and bereavement support. Ask your local Social Welfare Office for a copy.

A new brother or sister in the family

Deartháir nó deirfiúir sa chlann

If this baby is not your first child, then this is a time of change for other children in your family. It will take time and patience to cope with the extra demands. An older child may go back to baby behaviour for a time, such as wanting a bottle, or wanting to be lifted up, or may even be jealous.



There are ways to help an older child adjust to your new baby:

- if possible, spend some time with the older child, for example by going for a walk, or a swim or playing a game. This may help to make your older child or children feel secure and adjust to their new position in the family;
- encourage your older child or children to become involved in caring for your baby; and
- talk with your older child about when he or she was a baby. Use old photos or toys to help you.



Caring for twins or more

Ag déanamh cúran do cúpla nó níos mó

Caring for twins, or more, is very different. There is certainly a lot more work! You need as much support as you can get. Ask your family and friends for help with the routine baby care or with the housework. The Irish Multiple Births Association offers information and support on a range of topics for parents of twins, triplets or more. Its web site address and telephone number are at the back of this booklet. Support may also be available from other organisations. Ask your public health nurse, doctor or community welfare officer for details.



2. Feeding your baby

Ag tabhairt bia dod' leabh

Breastfeeding

Cothú cíocha

Research comparing the health of children who are breastfed with children fed on formula milk shows that breastfeeding reduces the risk of illness. This protection from illness can last for many years after you stop breastfeeding. The health benefits of breastfeeding include **less risk** of:

- cough and colds;
- stomach upsets;
- ear infections;
- kidney infections;
- cot death
- childhood leukaemia;
- childhood diabetes;
- asthma and eczema;
- obesity (very overweight); and
- high blood pressure in later life

There are many other benefits of breastfeeding, such as:

- it is always available;
- there are no feeds to be made up;
- the milk is always at the right temperature; and
- it costs nothing.

Breastfeeding will also help you regain your figure and help to protect your health by reducing your risk of:

- breast cancer;
- ovarian cancer;
- osteoporosis (bone thinning); and
- diabetes in later life.

Breastfed babies need only milk for the first six months. You should feed your baby when he or she looks for milk. Encourage your baby to feed for as long as he or she wishes to. This ensures a good supply of milk. You will know your baby is thriving if your baby is putting on weight and has wet and dirty nappies every day.

Breastfeeding is a skill that you will develop. New mothers and babies usually take a week or two to get good at it. After that, breastfeeding becomes much easier and very rewarding. With practice and support, you will soon gain confidence. You can get support



from your midwife, public health nurse, doctor, practice nurse and groups like Cuidiú and La Leche League. Ask your public health nurse for information on local support groups. For more written information on breastfeeding, read the booklet **Breastfeeding Your Baby**. It contains useful information, such as:

- starting to breastfeed;
- how to avoid common problems;
- expressing your breastmilk; and
- storing breastmilk.

Ask your public health nurse for a copy.



Formula feeding

Cothú formula

If you decide to use formula milk, your midwife will give you information while you are in hospital on what you need and how to make up the formula. At home, your public health nurse and practice nurse will give you information and show you how to formula feed your baby.

What do I need to make up formula feeds?

You need:

- a bottle brush and tongs to help you grip the equipment;
- fresh water, (bottled water may contain salt);
- the formula milk of your choice;
- a chemical, steam or microwave kit for sterilising bottles; and
- at least 6 bottles, lids, discs and teats.

If you have a visual impairment, use wide-necked bottles. They are easier to fill.

How do I sterilise equipment?

- 1 Wash your hands.
- 2 Wash the bottles, teats, discs, lids and tongs in warm soapy water.
- 3 Sterilise the bottles, teats, discs, lids and tongs, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- 4 Wash your hands before removing the bottles from the steriliser with the tongs.
- 5 Do not rinse out the bottles after they are sterilised.

Once put together correctly, sterile bottles with tight fitting caps or sealing discs are sterile for 24 hours as long as they remain unopened.



Clean and sterilise all feeding equipment before using it.

How do I make up a formula feed?

1. Boil the water and let it cool for 30 minutes.
2. Clean surfaces and wash your hands.
3. Read instructions carefully.
4. Pour the correct amount of cooled boiled water into the sterilised bottle.
5. Then, put the correct amount of formula powder into the bottle using scoop provided.
6. Put the teat and lid on the bottle. Make sure they are not loose.
7. Cool the feed **quickly** by holding the bottle under cold running water or place in a large bowl of water. Make sure the water does not reach the neck of the bottle.
8. Check the feed is not too hot by shaking the bottle and placing a drop of liquid on the inside of the wrist - it should feel lukewarm, not hot.
9. Use immediately.
10. Throw away any feed that your baby has not taken within two hours. If your baby is a slow feeder use a fresh feed after two hours.



How do I measure the exact amounts of formula and water?

It is important to measure the formula and water carefully as too much or too little formula can cause health problems.

- Basically for each 30 mls (each ounce) of water, 
- You need one level scoop of formula powder. Use the scoop in the formula box and run a clean knife across the top to get the scoop level. 
- So for example, if you are making up a 90mls (3 ounce) feed, you will need to add 3 level scoops of formula to 90mls of cool boiled water.

How do I prepare more feeds in advance?

- It is safest to prepare a fresh feed each time you need one, and to give it to your baby straight away. This is because warm milk provides ideal conditions for bacteria to grow - especially at room temperature.
- If you need to prepare feeds in advance to use later follow steps 1-8 as above.
- Seal the bottles with discs and lids.
- Store in the back of the fridge (5°C or below) Throw away any feed in the fridge that you have not used within 24 hours.
- When a feed is needed, remove from fridge just before you need it.
- Warm it by placing it in a bowl of warm water, making sure the level of the water is below the neck of the bottle. You can also use a bottle warmer. Do not warm it for more than 15 minutes.
- Then follow steps 8 - 10 as above.

To protect your baby from illness such as gastro-enteritis (vomiting and diarrhoea), you should make up each feed as you need it.

Can I use bottle water to make up bottle feeds?

Tap water is usually safe to use. However, there may be times when you need to use bottled water - if you are on holiday, have a boil notice on your water supply or have a water softener system.

When using bottled water to make up bottle feed:

- Use still water only. Never use fizzy/sparkling water.
- Use bottled water that has a sodium content of less than 20mg/L. This information will be on the label. Please note - Sodium is also called salt, sodium Chloride, Na & NaCl and 20 mg can also be written as 20000ug - **please** read labels carefully.
- Always boil bottled water before making up feeds

For more information about sterilising and preparing each feed read the HSE/Safefood information leaflet on '**How to prepare your baby's bottle feed**'. Ask you Health Promotion Office or public health nurse for a copy.

How much formula milk should my baby take?

This is only a guide. If you are bottle-feeding, let your baby decide how much he or she wants, unless your baby is sick. Do not try to make your baby finish a bottle if he or she does not want to. Never re-use leftover milk once your baby finishes feeding. Throw it away.

Your Baby's age	Number of feeds	Amount of formula feed
Birth to 1 month	6	90 –120 mls (3 – 4 oz)
1 – 2 months	5	150 – 180 mls (5 – 6 oz)
2 – 3 months	5	180 – 210 mls (6 – 7 oz)
3 – 4 months	5	210 – 240 mls (7 – 8 oz)
5 – 6 months	5	240 mls (8 oz)
Use some of this milk to mix up spoon feeds so that the feed is soft and easy to swallow.		

When can I stop sterilising the bottles?

You must sterilise all bottles until your baby is at least 1 year old. An unsterilised bottle can make your baby sick.

What other drinks can I give or not give my baby?

- Breastfed babies need nothing except breast milk.
- If your baby is formula fed, you can give cooled boiled water particularly if your baby is constipated.

Attention!

- Diluted pure unsweetened fruit juices are **not** suitable until your baby is 4 - 6 months old.
- Cow's milk is **not** suitable for babies under 1 year old, as it is a poor source of iron.
- Do **not** add sugar, rusks or baby rice to your baby's bottle.
- Do **not** give your baby tea, as it reduces your baby's iron uptake.
- Do **not** add any medicines to your baby's bottle.

Vitamin D3'

Vitimín D3

Vitamin D is needed by the body to grow healthy bones by helping it absorb important nutrients especially calcium. Vitamin D comes from sunlight through the skin and from some foods, including fortified dairy products, cereals and oily fish (salmon, mackerel and sardines). Vitamin D is also needed by the body to prevent rickets. Rickets causes soft, weak bones in children that break easily and can lead to major bone deformities. It is most common in children between 3 and 18 months of age. Vitamin D deficiency is common in Ireland because we have less sun light over the months of October to March.

All infants from 0-12 months whether breast or formula feed should be given a Vitamin D3 **only** supplement of 5 micrograms (the product used should contain Vitamin D3 alone and not in combination with other vitamins). Ask your public health nurse, midwife or doctor if you need more information on this. If your baby is ill or premature you should follow your doctor instructions.

Weaning to solids

Ag tosú ar cothú le do leanbh

What is weaning?

Weaning is the gradual introduction of solid food, which is fed with a spoon into your baby's diet.

Weaning your baby off the breast means that you introduce another form of food such as formula milk or solid food. For more details about weaning off the breast, ask your public health nurse or local support groups or log onto www.breastfeeding.ie

When can I start weaning to solid foods?

Breast milk gives your baby **all** the nourishment he or she needs in the first 6 months of life. After this, the iron stores that have built up at birth begin to reduce and your baby needs other foods. For formula fed babies, weaning to solid foods usually begins between 4 to 6 months old.

If your baby has special needs, was premature or has a food allergy, then weaning may be delayed. If you have any questions about when your baby may be ready to move on to solid foods, ask your public health nurse, practice nurse or dietician for advice.

What first weaning foods can I give my baby?

You can give:

- gluten-free cereals such as baby rice;
 - fruit such as banana, stewed apple or pear;
 - vegetables such as cooked carrot, turnip or potato; and
 - traditional foods from other cultures such as yam or pumpkin.
- Purée, sieve or mash weaning foods until they are a soft and runny consistency. Ask your public health nurse for a copy, of this booklet.

What liquid can I use to soften my baby's food?

Use:

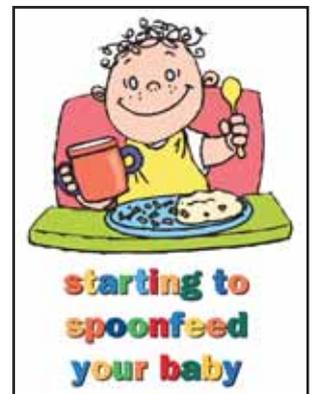
- breast milk;
- formula milk; or
- cooled, boiled water.

Do not use:

- gravy;
- stock cubes; or
- jars of sauce.

Are there any tips to help me wean my baby to solids?

- Do not give your baby weaning foods until he or she is at least 4 months old.
- Always wash your hands before you prepare food or feed your baby.



- Choose a time when your baby is relaxed and fully alert.
- Be prepared for a mess. Dribbling bibs and floor mats are useful.
- Thoroughly clean your baby's spoon and bowl before you use them.
- Start weaning on to solid foods once a day. Gradually add weaning foods to other meal times.
- Start with 1 teaspoon of food per meal. Gradually increase the amount.
- Introduce new foods one at a time and allow your baby to get used to the taste.
- Offer the solid food first and then follow with breast or formula milk.

- Never leave your baby alone while he or she is eating, in case of choking.
- Do not reheat food.
- Do not add honey, sugar or rusks to the formula feed.
- Do not add salt or sugar to your baby's food.
- Convenience foods, jars or packets of baby food are useful for emergencies or when you are going out. They are unsuitable for everyday use because they are costly and may have added salt and sugar.

For more information and advice about weaning, ask your public health nurse or practice nurse or doctor.

Caring for your baby's teeth

Ag déanamh cúram do fiachla do pháiste

Start taking care of your baby's mouth from birth.

- Breastfeeding is good for your baby's teeth and reduces their risk of having tooth decay.
- Before teeth appear, clean your child's gums twice a day with a clean soft wash cloth or gauze.
- As soon as the first tooth appears, introduce gentle toothbrushing twice a day using water and a small, soft toothbrush.
- If your baby uses a bottle, do not use it as a comforter, and do not let them sleep or nap with a bottle in their mouth.
- Never put sweet drinks including fruit juice, into the bottle
- Do not add sugar to your baby's foods.
- If your baby uses a soother (dummy), never dip it in sugar, syrup, honey or anything sweet.
- If your baby needs a soother between feeds, give a clean soother that has been recommended by your dentist or doctor.

Teething and gums

Your baby may start teething from about 13 weeks, although no teeth may appear until your baby is 6 months or more.

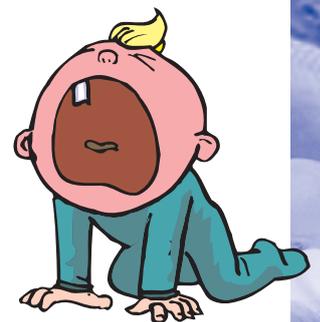
What are the signs that my baby is teething?

Your baby may:

- Have red, flushed cheeks;
- Dribble, which may lie in the skin folds on your baby's neck, causing soreness;
- Chew on their fists or on their toys more than usual;
- Have sore and tender gums; and
- Have a nappy rash.

How can I help my baby cope with teething?

To help sooth your baby's gums, give your baby something hard to chew such as a clean cool teething ring. Massage your baby's sore gums with a sugar-free teething gel - that is suitable for your baby's age.



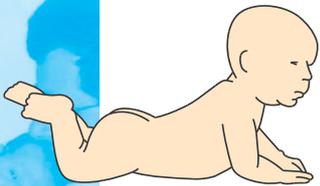
3. Sleeping and crying

Codladh agus goil

How should my baby usually sleep?

Suimh coirp is s'abhalta ag an codlata?

- The best position to put your baby down to sleep is on their back with their face upwards.
- Change their sleeping position in the cot. This encourages your baby to move their head to the left and right as they naturally turn towards the bright side of the room. This will help your baby's head and neck muscles to develop strength equally on both sides. It will also help to develop the shape of your baby's head.
- During the day you can place your baby on their tummy with their hands out at either side to support them. This 'tummy time' helps to strengthen their head, neck and back muscles. It also lets your baby experience feeling to the front of their body.
- You **must** stay close to your baby while they are in this position. **Do not** let them sleep lying on their tummy.



How much sleep does my baby need?

Cé mhíd codladh a theastaióinn ó mo leanbh?

The first few weeks can be a difficult time, especially if your baby slept very well in hospital but will not sleep at home. It will take time to adjust to a new routine.



Your baby's age	Your baby:
From birth - 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● needs about 16-20 hours over a day, and may go straight to sleep after a feed. Some babies sleep more than others. Background noises such as music or children playing may not wake them but a sudden loud noise might.
3 - 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● needs about 16-18 hours over a day, and● may still go straight to sleep after a feed then wake for a while before the next feed is due. By about 6 months your baby will stay awake and be more alert between feeds.

Are there tips to help my baby sleep at night?

Build a routine around the last feed before you settle your baby down to sleep.

- Feed your baby after a bath or after you change him or her into sleeping clothes.
- Use a dim light when you feed your baby at night. A light that is too bright may over-stimulate your baby.
- Do not talk out loud when you feed your baby at night. Talking may encourage your baby to stay awake. You can whisper to your baby if you need to.

- Do not change your baby's nappy if the nappy isn't dirty.

Where can my baby sleep safely?

Cén áit ar feidir le mo leanbh codlagh go sabhála



- Keep your baby's cot in your room for at least the first 6 months.
- To avoid a draught, do not place your baby's cot below a window or against an outer wall.
- Do not place your baby's cot next to a radiator or heater, as it may be too hot.
- Do not hang ribbons and bits of strings from toys over your baby's cot.

Reducing the risk of cot death

Ag laghdú baol bás cliamháin

What is cot death?

Cot death (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) is the sudden death of an infant or young child that is unexpected; tests after death fail to show the cause of death.

How can I reduce the risk of cot death?

- Always put your baby on his or her **back to sleep** in a face up, face clear position.
- Do **not smoke or allow anyone to smoke** in your home or in your car.
- The **safest place for your baby to sleep** at night is in a cot in your room.
- Place your baby's **feet to the foot** of the cot.
- Make sure your baby's head stays uncovered when asleep.
- Don't put quilt, duvets, bumper pads, pillow or toys in the cot.
- Dress your baby for bed in a nappy, vest, and babygro. In hot weather, your baby needs fewer clothes. Always remove the bib (dibbler) before you put your baby down to sleep.
- Do not let your baby get too **hot** or too **cold**. To check how warm your baby is feel his or her tummy - It should feel warm, but not hot. If your baby's tummy feels hot, or if you baby is sweating anywhere, then your baby is too warm, so remove some of the bedding.
- Make sure the room your baby sleeps in is not too warm. The ideal room temperature is between 16-20°C (62 - 68°F). If the room feels too warm for you, it is too warm for your baby.
- Don't fall asleep in bed with your baby if you or your partner
 - Smoke, have taken alcohol, drugs or medication that makes you sleep more heavily.
 - If your baby is less than 3 months old, was born prematurely, or had a low birth weight (less than 2.5kg or 5.5lbs when born)
- Never fall asleep with your baby on a sofa or an arm chair.
- If your baby is unwell, call the doctor quickly.



Why does my baby cry?

Cad a dhéanfaidh mé má mó leanbh ag gol?

Crying is the main way that your baby tells you he or she needs something.

Common reasons for crying include:

- hunger or thirst;
- having a wet or dirty nappy;
- having pain from wind or colic;
- being too hot or too cold;
- being overtired or over-stimulated;
- loneliness and boredom; or
- being unwell. Contact your doctor to check there is no underlying health problem.



How can I soothe my crying baby?

- Pick up your baby and hold them close, and move gently.
- Feed your baby.
- Change your baby's nappy.
- Gently rock your baby up and down in the pram.
- Gently talk or sing to your baby or listen to music together.
- Massage your baby gently with unscented oil.
- Go for a short walk or drive in the car with your baby.
- If the crying continues, if it sounds unusual, or if you are concerned that your baby is ill, contact your doctor.

Never shake your baby

If you are finding it hard to cope with your baby's crying, then take time out.

- Put your baby down in his or her cot and go into another room.
- Ask someone to care for your baby.
- Phone Parentline for support and advice: 1890 927 277.
- Contact a relative, friend, your doctor or your public health nurse for advice and help.

Never shake your baby, as this can damage your baby's brain.

What is baby wind or colic?

Cad é gaoth sa bholg?

Wind is air that your baby has swallowed while he or she is feeding, crying, or yawning. Help to relieve the trapped wind. Hold your baby up against your shoulder after a feed and massage his or her back. If you are formula feeding, change the teat on the bottle.

Colic is a tummy pain. Nobody is sure why some babies get colic. It happens much less in breastfed babies. Colic pain usually starts when babies are about 2 weeks old and ends when babies are about 3 to 4 months old. It is more common in the evening time. If your baby has colic, he or she will cry. Your baby can also draw up his or her legs and go red in the face. To help relieve the colic:

- massage your baby's tummy;
- try different types of teats if you are formula feeding; or
- ask your pharmacist, doctor or public health nurse about medicines and other options that may help.

If you are worried, contact your family doctor for advice.

4. Caring for your baby every day

Ag tabhairt cúram dod' leanbh gach lá

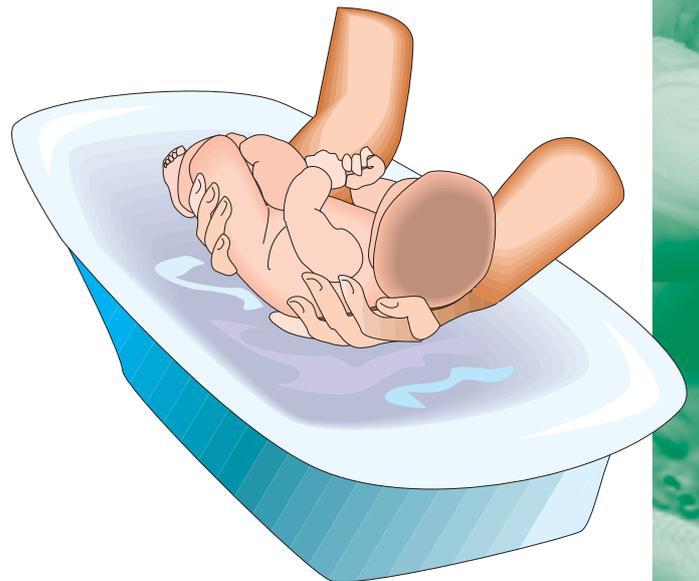
Bathing your baby

Ag tabhairt flocadh do leanbh

Your midwife or public health nurse will show you how to bathe your baby. Do not be afraid to ask for help or to see it done once or twice before you try.

Are there tips to help me bathe my baby?

- Organise everything such as clean towels, creams and clothes before you start the bath.
- Plan the bath for a quiet time of the day.
- Do not bathe your baby just after a feed, as he or she may get sick.
- Close windows to prevent a draught.
- **Never** leave your baby alone in the bath.
- **Do not** rely on a toddler or older child to mind your baby in the bath.
- Put the cold water in the bath first, then warm water. The temperature should be about 36°C.
- The water level should be just high enough to cover your baby's tummy when he or she is lying down.
- Use both hands to lift your baby in and out of the bath.
- **Support your baby's head** while you wash your baby.
- A baby bath two or three times a week is enough to keep your baby fresh.



How do I keep my baby fresh between baths?

A **top and tail** wash is a quick way to keep your baby fresh between baths. This means washing:

- your baby's face;
- the folds under the neck; and
- the nappy area.

Dirty nappies

Naipcíní salach



Your baby's dirty nappy is sticky and green or black in colour for the first few days. This is called meconium. This will later change to a yellow colour. Breastfed babies usually have runny nappies that do not have a smell. Formula fed babies have dirty nappies that are usually more formed and smellier.

Wash your hands after changing a nappy.

How often should my baby have a dirty nappy?

Some babies have a dirty nappy at every feed and other babies have a dirty nappy once a day. Your baby is not constipated if the bowel motion passed is soft, even if the bowels have not moved for one or two days.

How often should my baby have a wet nappy?

Your baby should have 5-6 wet nappies a day. This means your baby is getting a good supply of milk.

Carrying your baby

Ag iompar do leanbh

It is important to support your own back and your baby's head and back when you are lifting and carrying your baby. Useful equipment for moving about with your baby include:

- a baby sling because it supports your baby's head and encourages bonding with you;
- a rear-facing baby seat for carrying your baby safely in a car; and
- a pram or buggy that can lie back (recline) so that your newborn baby can lie down to sleep, especially if your baby is premature.



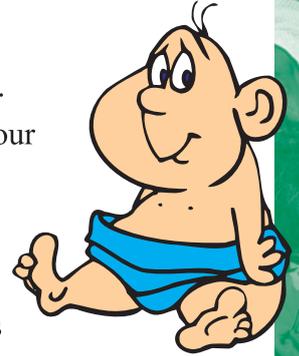
In general, your baby is ready to go outside for a walk or a drive as soon as you feel fit enough to go yourself. You and your baby must wear clothes suitable for the time of year. You will also need to stock up your baby bag with spare bibs, baby clothes, feeds and equipment to change your baby's nappy. With time and practice, it gets easier and quicker to do.

Common skin care questions

Breiteach comónta d'ogánaigh

What is cradle cap?

Cradle cap looks like dry, flaky or yellowish-crusted skin on your baby's scalp. Cradle cap will eventually go away on its own. If it spreads or worsens, ask your doctor or public health nurse for advice.



What is jaundice?

Jaundice is when your baby's skin and eyes have a yellowish shade. Many babies get slightly jaundiced in the first few days after birth. This is because your baby's liver is not yet ready to fully break down blood cells. If jaundice stays for more than the first week after birth or if it worsens, contact your doctor or public health nurse for advice.

What are milk spots?

Milk spots, also called milia, are tiny infected spots on your baby's face and neck. Bacteria causes milk spots. The spots should settle without any treatment.

How do I care for my baby's umbilical cord (belly button)?

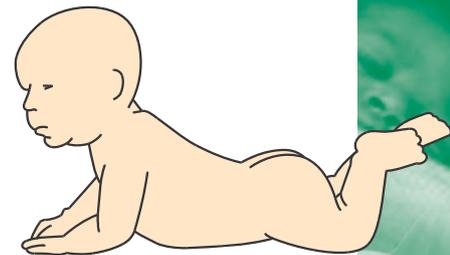
- Wash your hands before and after you touch the cord.
- Clean around the base of the cord if required with cotton wool and cool boiled water.
- Keep the belly button area dry after you clean it.
- Make sure that the nappy is not covering the cord.

The umbilical cord stump should fall off in the first week after birth.

What is nappy rash?

Nappy rash is a red, moist or broken area on your baby's bottom. Most babies get nappy rash at some time in the first 18 months. Your baby can get nappy rash if:

- you leave him or her too long in a dirty or wet nappy;
- a rough nappy rubs against your baby;
- your baby has a thrush infection;
- you use a strong soap or washing powder;
- you use baby wipes that contain alcohol; or
- your baby is teething.



How can I heal my baby's nappy rash?

Gently wash your baby's bottom and pat it dry at each nappy change. Leave off the nappy for half an hour and expose the skin to fresh air, as much as possible. There are treatments available, such as creams and powders, that help to heal nappy rash. Ask your public health nurse, pharmacist or doctor for advice.

Immunisation

Imdhíonagh

What is immunisation?

Immunisation is a safe and effective way to protect your baby against certain diseases. These diseases can cause serious illness or even death. Immunisation works by causing your baby's immune system to make antibodies to fight the disease. Immunisations are free from most doctors. Ask your General Practitioner.

When should I immunise my baby during the first six months?

When my baby is:	My baby should have:	Number of Injections
Birth or soon after	BCG	One
2 months	6 in 1 + PCV	Two
4 months	6 in 1 + Men C	Two
6 months	6 in 1 + Men C + PCV	Three

BCG = to prevent tuberculosis (TB)
Men C = to prevent meningococcal C, meningitis or blood poisoning
6 in 1 = to prevent diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough (pertussis), hib (haemophilus influenzae B), polio (poliomyelitis) and Hepatitis B
PCV = to prevent pneumococcal disease

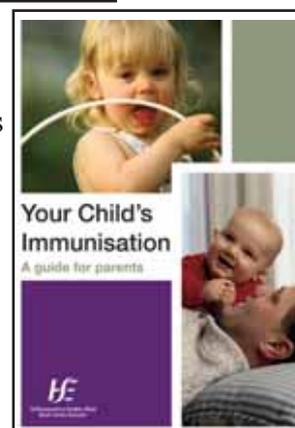
Minor reactions that may occur after an immunisation

include:

- redness, soreness or swelling in the area where the injection was given;
- fever; or
- irritable behaviour.

If your baby is very unwell after an immunisation, there may be some other reason for the sickness. Talk to your doctor about this.

For more written information about immunisation, read **Your Child's Immunisation: A guide for parents**. An **immunisation record** can be found inside the back cover of this Immunisation Booklet or is available from your doctor or Local Health Centre. Please bring this record with you when you go to the doctor for your child's injections so they can record them for you. You can get more information from www.immunisation.ie or contact the National Immunisation Office, Manor Street, Dublin 7. Phone: 01 867 6108



Protect your child - immunise.

Common childhood illness

Breiteach comóna d'ogánaigh

Most babies get ill at some stage. Usually, you can care for your baby at home, as these bouts of illness pass quickly. The table below lists some common childhood illnesses and things you can do to care for your baby. If you are unsure, contact your doctor.



Common childhood illnesses and things you can do to care for your baby

Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The normal temperature for a baby, taken under his or her arm (also called axilla) ranges from 36.5 to 37.2 degrees Celsius. ● Get advice from your doctor if your baby has a temperature, especially if your baby also looks unwell.
Coughs and colds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep your baby warm. ● Give your baby fluids to drink, such as the usual milk feed. ● Contact your doctor if your baby finds it hard to breathe. ● Contact your doctor if the cough doesn't go away.
Vomits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small vomits after a feed are normal and your baby will grow out of this. ● If your baby vomits large amounts, or if the vomiting is forceful or repeated, contact your doctor.
Sticky eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Get advice from your public health nurse, doctor or pharmacist in case there is an infection in the eyelid area.
Thrush (candida)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On your baby's tongue and mouth, thrush is a white spotted fungus with redness around it that does not brush away when you touch it. ● On your baby's bottom, thrush looks like a red rash with white spots or a peeling appearance to the skin. ● Contact your public health nurse, doctor or pharmacist to find out how to treat thrush.
Tummy upsets (gastro-enteritis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If your baby has a tummy upset with vomiting, diarrhoea or both, then he or she can get dehydrated (dried out) if not given enough fluid to drink. ● Regularly offer your baby small amounts of fluids, such as his or her milk feed while he or she is unwell. ● If the problem continues and your baby will not drink, then contact your doctor for advice and treatment.



When should I always contact my doctor about my baby's health?

Always contact your doctor if your baby:

- has a purple or red rash that looks unusual;
- has a raised or sunken soft spot (fontanelle) on his or her head;
- has a fever;
- appears much paler and sleepier than usual and is hard to wake up;
- has an unusual, non-stop, high-pitched cry or scream;
- has a fit (convulsion);
- has difficulty breathing;
- goes blue around the lips or face;
- is not feeding normally or refusing to feed;
- has unusually dry nappies or less than three wet nappies in one day;
- has diarrhoea at each nappy change;
- has an upset, such as a fall or a bump on the head;
- gets an electric shock;
- is burned or scalded; or
- is bitten by an animal.

