



# Welcoming Your Baby & Postnatal Care

## Before You Go Home

Congratulations, you have a new baby! What happens now? Before you bring them home from the hospital, here are a few things that will happen. Keep in mind that a regular stay after a vaginal birth is about 2 days, and a regular stay after a c-section is about 3 days. If you or your baby need a little extra care, your stay may be longer. This is common if your baby is premature and needs some extra attention in the NICU.

Right after your baby is born, they'll usually be placed on your chest for some mom-and-baby bonding. You may have to wait to hold your baby if he or she needs immediate medical care.

## Newborn Tests

Your provider will perform the following tests to make sure your newborn is healthy:

**Apgar score** - This test is performed at one and five minutes after birth. Your provider will test your baby's activity, heart rate, reflexes, and breathing. This helps your provider determine if your baby needs additional medical attention.

**Blood spot test** - This test will check for metabolic disorders like phenylketonuria at 24 hours of age.

**Hearing test** - It is important to do this while in the hospital, since babies begin taking in sensory information from the world around them as soon as they're born. Catching hearing disorders early increases the chance that treatment can help your baby make sense of the world of sounds around him or her.

\*The MN Department of Health has a complete list of [newborn screenings performed in Minnesota](#). Testing varies slightly by state. If there are other tests you'd like performed, check with your insurance and your provider before your due date to make arrangements.

## Routine Newborn Procedures

**Vitamin K Shot**- A newborn has incomplete liver function and lower levels of blood clotting proteins. This shot helps to improve both.

**Antibiotic Eye Ointment** - This is placed in the baby's eyes but does not cause pain or irritation. It prevents eye infections for vaginal bacteria.

**Hepatitis B Vaccine** - This can also be given at your first visit with your pediatrician. Hepatitis B vaccines are usually given in 3 doses: immediately after birth, around 1-2 months, and after 6 months.

**Circumcision** - If you've decided to have your baby boy circumcised, this can be done before leaving the hospital, or as part of a follow-up visit at your clinic. Clinic circumcision is usually about half the cost of a hospital procedure. Check with your provider to see what options are available to you.

## New Mother Check-Up

Before you go home, your provider will make sure your recovery is on schedule. You'll need to be able to use (and walk to) the bathroom unassisted, keep solid food down, be free from fever or other signs of illness, and your vaginal bleeding has decreased appropriately. Your doctor will also check to make sure that your uterus is shrinking normally and that vaginal repairs or abnormal incisions are starting to heal.

## Breastfeeding

Many new moms begin breastfeeding within the first hour of their baby's birth, when they first hold their newborn. Don't worry if you or your baby don't catch on to breastfeeding right away, though - your baby may not be hungry at first, and hospitals usually have trained lactation consultants who will help you get comfortable with the process.

### Why breastfeeding?

Breastfeeding is a great way to bond with your baby and give him or her a healthy start in life. Human breast milk contains all the necessary nutrition your baby needs for the first six months, and also supplies antibodies that help protect your baby from viruses and bacteria.

Mother's milk contains a unique and powerful combination of nutrients important for your baby's health, growth, and development. Human breast milk is also easy for babies to digest and can promote overall health of the baby's digestive system. Babies who are given human milk have less

weight gain during their first year, and are less likely to suffer obesity than babies who are formula fed. However, breastfeeding is a personal choice, and may not be feasible for every new mother.

## Postpartum Visit

Schedule a postpartum visit for 4-6 weeks after you deliver. Please call sooner if you are experiencing: depression, difficulty breastfeeding, fever, breast pain, uterine pain, increasing vaginal bleeding, significant shortness of breath, chest pain, sudden onset of pain, redness and/or swelling in the back of your lower leg.

## After leaving the hospital

### Self-care

Do not douche, medicate yourself for vaginal discharge, use tampons, or have intercourse for six weeks following delivery.

### Postpartum depression

Adding a baby to your home life requires significant adjustments. If you feel that you may be suffering from postpartum depression, know that you are not alone, and that there are resources available to you. Don't wait until your postpartum checkup - contact your provider as soon as possible to get the help you need during this chaotic adjustment period.

Learn more about emotional self-care and [postpartum depression here](#).

### Postpartum Follow-Up

If you haven't already, call your clinic shortly after going home from the hospital to schedule your postpartum check at 4-6 weeks postpartum, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor. For

example, if you had a c-section, your first prenatal visit will often be sooner.

During your postpartum follow-up, your provider will evaluate your recovery and make recommendations for your care going forward.

## Postnatal Care: Baby's Physician

If you haven't already decided on a doctor for your newborn, now is a good time to consider your options. When looking for a family practitioner, make sure your clinic offers services including:

- Well child preventive visits
- Acute childhood illness and injury
- Immunizations
- Hearing and vision screenings
- Developmental screenings

To provide the best continuum of care, consider a clinic which specializes in both prenatal care and family practice.



### **Call to schedule an appointment at Voyage Healthcare's Center For Women's Health.**

We are dedicated to providing personal, quality care to women of all ages and stages of life.

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