

BABY ADVOCATE

At 2 weeks

Health

My baby is hiccupping/straining/sneezing a lot. Is this behavior normal?

- These behaviors are very normal and indicate that your baby's bodily systems are still developing. He is learning the regular patterns of swallowing, breathing, and movement. Newborns have jerky movements that indicate their nervous system is developing normally, starting with reflexes. These will gradually disappear as your baby learns to control more of his movement. Hiccups are also very normal. If hiccups occur during a feeding, you can stop the feeding and try to change his position, burp him, and/or try to get him to relax. Wait until the hiccups disappear or five to ten minutes have passed before you resume feeding. Newborns have small nasal passages that can get clogged quickly, so they sneeze a lot to clear their noses and breathe better. Sneezing at this age is unlikely to indicate a cold.

How will I know if my baby is sick?

- Your baby might show any of the following symptoms: fever, irritability, change in appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, lack of urinary output (possible dehydration), change in usual behavior, rash, seizure, or change in sleep patterns — along with other symptoms not listed. It is important to contact your doctor immediately if you think your baby might be sick.

Is my baby growing well?

- Your doctor will check the growth of your baby at each office visit. Your baby will be weighed on an infant scale and both length and head circumference will be measured. These measurements will be put on a graph to show her growth curve in relation her own history and to other babies her age. This is the most reliable way to tell if she is growing normally.

My baby sleeps all day and is up all night. What can I do?

- It is very normal for young babies to have their days and nights mixed up. When you were pregnant, the baby didn't have to keep such a schedule. You can begin to establish nighttime sleep patterns by offering little stimulation at night. Keep the room dark, warm, and quiet. When your baby wakes, try not to turn on the lights. Feed or change the baby quietly and then put her right back to sleep. During the daytime and early evening, try to lengthen her awake time by playing with her when she seems to be drifting into light sleep (the state where she looks uncomfortable with eyes opening and closing as she is trying to enter or wake up from sleep). Remember that it takes a long time to bring sleep patterns into sync with your own, so be patient in the process.

Feeding

I am worried that my baby isn't getting enough breast milk. I am worried that I don't have enough breast milk. What can I do?

- Your baby's diapers are a great indication of whether he is getting enough to eat. At this time, you should be concerned if your baby wets fewer than six diapers a day. If your baby stops breastfeeding after ten minutes or less, or appears hungry shortly after feeding, he might not be getting enough. In addition, your baby should not sleep for more than four hours at a time without feeding. Babies generally lose a little bit of weight in the first week. By the end of the second week of life, your baby should be back to his birth weight. Signs that you are producing sufficient amounts of breast milk include feeling full before feedings and less full after feedings. If you still have concerns about your baby not eating enough, contact your doctor or nurse practitioner.

I will need to go back to work in six weeks. Should I stop breastfeeding now?

- Many mothers continue to breastfeed after returning to work by pumping at work and saving the pumped breast milk for bottles for the baby during the day. Each week that you can continue to breastfeed is important for your baby's health, so even if you are going to stop breastfeeding, you don't need to stop now. When you do decide to present the bottle, you can do so about two weeks before going back to work. Introduce the bottle at a time when your baby is alert, but not desperately hungry. To get used to a bottle, he does not need a bottle for every feeding. In fact, two bottles a week have proven to be enough for him to get used to it. It will be important for someone else to feed him a bottle so that he can get used to feeding from other caregivers.

Development

My baby cries until picked up, then stops. I am worried about spoiling. What can I do?

- You don't need to worry about spoiling your baby in early infancy. Many babies cry just because they need some comfort or a change of position as they get used to the new world around them. It is okay to pick your baby up and comfort him when he cries. This will not spoil him, it just teaches him that he has supportive adults to help him get used to the world. As your baby gets older you may notice that your baby has different cries—one for hunger, one for fussiness, one for pain. As you learn his cries, you will be able to figure out what he is telling you.

Can my baby only see black and white things now?

- Babies at this age like contrast in patterns, which is why your baby likes to look at black and white objects. Newborns also prefer the color red, so we know they see some distinction between colors, but we are not sure if it is because of the color or the brightness. Babies like to look at objects held about 8 to 15 inches from their face because they can best focus at this distance. Their favorite thing to look at is definitely the human face! Your baby's color vision will be mature around four months of age.

My mother is always telling me what to do with my baby. How can I talk to her about my feelings?

- It is very common for grandparents to want to be involved with the care of the newborn. It might be helpful to acknowledge what a great job your mother did raising you, and then state that you would like a turn to try to do it well. While you might not do things exactly the same as she did them, it is important for you to figure out what works for your family. Instead of focusing on areas you disagree about, try to understand each other and talk about issues you have in common.

Prevention

I am worried about SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). Is there anything I can do to prevent it?

- The best thing you can do to prevent SIDS is to place your baby on his back to sleep. Since the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended in 1992 that babies sleep on their backs, the number of SIDS-related deaths has dropped almost 50%. You can also make sure that the crib is clear of excess bedding and pillows. Overheating also increases the risk of SIDS, so your baby should go to sleep unbundled and in appropriate clothing. There is also a link between exposure to cigarette smoke and SIDS. It is important that all of your baby's caretakers support a smoke-free environment.