

Going Home Basics

Hello, I'm Xanthe Tilden. If you're watching our program, you're probably a new mother. Congratulations! With your labor and baby's birth behind you, you're almost ready for the excitement of going home. Today we're going to help you prepare for that next step.

I'm a new mom myself. My son, Max, two months old. Before we went home, I felt nervous and anxious. And I know I'm not alone. But being prepared can help make the experience less overwhelming. If you're already a mom keep in mind each baby is different and reminders never hurt.

In this program we'll give you information and advice that will make your transition home easier and help you fully enjoy those precious early days with your new baby.

For starters, have a support network. People you trust to help you. Those first weeks at home are going to be busy, so use your network to help with things like running errands and household chores.

"You go do the dishes, you go sweep the floor, you vacuum, make dinner, you do the laundry. Anything you can do to help is a big help to her."

Chris foreman is a first-time dad who speaks from experience – son Jack is now 7 months old.

"Well Chris made breast feeding so much easier for me just because he was my support. He was my rock."

"Dads play a really important role in taking care of newborns even though they may not realize it at first. Their primary job is to really to be supportive of mom, whether that's helping out with just basic childcare or really, they can provide major care in terms of taking care of the house."

"Now, babies don't have very much support in their head so whenever you're holding the baby you always want to make sure that your hand is underneath the head."

Caring for a newborn can be intimidating – especially for first time dads. But it's important for them to bond with baby too.

"I was nervous, I was nervous holding Jack for the first time. His head was just flopping around you're like 'Oh my goodness, I'm going to break him,' something is going to go wrong."

"Dads especially may be afraid of a newborn baby, and with practice they will achieve a wonderful level of comfort and develop a nice lifelong relationship with their child."

Whether your support comes from dad, grandparents, other relatives, or friends, be clear what kind of help you need while you care for the baby. If you're a single parent, this is especially important. When those around you ask if they can help, take them up on their offer. Most babies will remain perfectly healthy once they're discharged but sometimes you may have questions or concerns. So, you need to know whom to call – day or night.

"Make sure you have your pediatrician's phone number handy in case you have a question. Also find out what the plan is for afterhours questions if you need to talk to a doctor or a nurse and the office is closed. Finally, find out what hospital your pediatrician likes to use in case there's an emergency."

Call right away if you see any of these signs: Your newborn's breathing is faster or irregular; Unusual blue or dark color in the face or lips; An abnormal temperature, meaning one that's below 97 or 100.4 degrees

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Fahrenheit higher on a rectal thermometer; Signs of dehydration – that is, fewer than 3 to 4 wet diapers in 24-hours; A belly button or circumcision that looks infected; Jaundice, or yellow skin, that doesn't decrease by the 5th day; Or excessive crying and sluggishness.

Be sure to have your doctor's number on hand as well in case you have concerns about your own health – even if it's in the middle of the night.

"Hey how you doing."

"Good and how are you?"

"Good."

To get your baby off to a healthy start, set up a well-child visit with your pediatrician for 2 to 5 days after coming home. This is a must!

"It does pinpoint problems early and in pediatrics we truly believe that if you can pinpoint a problem and intervene, you can actually have a better outcome."

The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends well child visits at 1 month, 2, 4, 6, 9, and 12 months old.

It's also important to take care of yourself and your health as a new mom. Make an appointment with your OB/GYN for 4 to 6 weeks after your delivery for a postpartum examination. A visit within 7 to 14 days of delivery may be advised if you had a cesarean delivery or complicated pregnancy.

"During a postpartum exam we will evaluate how a woman is doing in regard to her emotional state, if she's getting any sleep after having the baby, how she's feeling regarding the child and bonding experiences. We'll also do a physical exam, which involves a breast exam. Feeling the uterus and making sure it's gone back down to normal size."

It's important for breastfeeding moms to check with their doctor before taking any medication. The good news is many medications are safe to use while nursing. If you or your baby is having difficulty with breastfeeding or you're concerned whether your baby is eating enough, get in touch with your hospital lactation center or ask your doctor for a referral.

Before you and your baby can be discharged from the hospital your child will be given a number of screening tests to detect various medical conditions. The March of Dimes recommends all newborns be screened for at least 31 conditions.

The exact tests will vary by state, but all states require a blood test using a simple heel prick to look for genetic and other conditions, as well as a hearing test. Also, most states now require pulse oximetry, a test measuring oxygen in the blood that can pick up heart problems in your baby. Some states also require a second screening when the baby is 10 to 14 days old to be sure that the results are accurate.

"Newborn screening is an important component of initial baby care and what it really helps identify is whether there are any preexisting risk factors in the baby that could potentially cause problems as the baby's growing that we would want to know sooner rather than later in order to be able to intervene and correct those problems."

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Babies come into the world vulnerable to infectious diseases. That's why it's so important for them to get immunizations.

"Babies are challenged every day with hundreds if not thousands of germs or foreign objects that their immune system has to fight off."

All babies should get a vaccine against hepatitis b before leaving the hospital. As a new mom, Maria Uresti knows it's up to her to be sure her son Jose gets the tests and vaccines he needs.

"I did ask a lot of questions while he was in the hospital making sure that everything was for his wellbeing and I knew that with the vaccinations it would help him get better and not get sick."

By the time children reach their 2nd birthday, they'll have been vaccinated against 14 preventable diseases. Keeping up with the vaccine schedule is another reason for you to make those well-child visits with your pediatrician.

Billing procedures vary from hospital to hospital – so you may want to work with the staff to help you understand the billing for baby's delivery and your hospital stay.

It's likely that you'll receive bills from both the hospital and your doctor. The type of insurance you have will determine what you have to pay out of pocket. And, if you haven't already, touch base with your insurance company to have your baby added to your policy or apply for insurance for your baby.

If you're unable to pay the medical bills from your delivery, talk to the hospital about your options.

While we're on the subject of paperwork, here's a document that's crucial: Your child's birth certificate. This is my child's. While you're in the hospital you'll get paperwork to fill out for your baby's birth certificate. It requires that parents provide their Social Security numbers. As part of the process, many states also allow you to apply for a Social Security card for your child.

The time will eventually come to use these documents for our children to enroll in school, get a driver's license, or perhaps a marriage license. Seems hard to imagine now!