

When to Call the Doctor

After arriving home from the hospital, many new parents are filled with questions. At the first sign of a cough, snuffle, or fever, for instance, you may wonder whether it's serious enough to call the doctor.

You should always feel comfortable calling your child's health care provider. Medical professionals are there to help you and keep your child healthy.

"If you're ever worried about your baby or if you're just worried that something's not right, there's no silly question. The doctors and nurses are always happy to take phone calls and their happy to provide guidance as to whether it's something that's concerning that you should bring your baby in or maybe just give you some advice over the phone."

Call your child's health care provider if you see any of these signs or symptoms: A fever of 100.4 or higher in your baby younger than 3 months; An unexplained rash; Your baby refuses to eat multiple feedings in a row; Repeated vomiting, more forceful than the occasional spitting up; Diarrhea; Ear drainage; Yellowish skin or eyes, which could be a sign of jaundice.

If your baby is not eating regularly, dehydration could be an issue; signs include fewer than 6 wet diapers in 24 hours; crying with no tears; and a sunken soft spot on the baby's head. Watch for these and call the doctor if you suspect your child is dehydrated. If your baby's umbilical cord or penis turns red, bleeds, or starts to ooze. Or if your baby is lethargic, unusually hard to wake up, or inconsolable, call your child's health care provider.

Remember to trust your instincts, they're usually right. If you think something is wrong, call the doctor.

There's a chance it will only be a minor issue, and that your baby is fine, but watching for these symptoms and contacting your pediatrician is an important first step in keeping your little one safe and healthy.