

Patient Information Sheet: Ideas for Comforting your Baby

- **Offer a breastfeed.** Soothes and relaxes a grumpy baby. Can help mum to stop and relax as well.
- **Cuddle, hold and comfort your baby in the warm close security of your arms.** (Preferably in a quiet, perhaps darkened room.) Infants have a high need for close body contact.
- **For babies with tummy ache, using holds with gentle pressure across their tummy can relieve a distended gut.**
- **Rhythmic movements or patting can help soothe an unhappy baby.** Take a cue from the strong steady heartbeat that has been your baby's constant companion while in utero. Patting or rocking movements need to be in a strong steady rhythm for reassurance, comfort and a sense of security.
- **Getting out.** A change of scene can help everyone. Going for a walk with your baby in a baby sling or in the pram can help relieve the tension from both you and your baby.
- **Warm relaxing deep bath for both you and your baby.** Warm water in a warm room can help everyone relax. You can even feed in the bath! (Just make sure everything stays warm. A cold baby is a crying baby.)
- **A swaddled baby is less likely to wake when put on their side or back for a sleep.** Babies' arms tend to jerk in response to muscles relaxing as they go deeper into sleep. Arms left free may spasm and jerk, frightening your baby and causing it to wake crying soon after being put down.
- **Pre-warming the cot or bassinette with a heat pack can help prevent a cold bed from waking your baby.** Once in the cot, rhythmic patting with a cupped hand on the baby's bottom can help soothe the baby to sleep.
- **Elevating / Raising the head end of your baby's cot or bassinette as in hospital.** Can help baby to bring up wind automatically.
- **A drive in the car may help soothe your baby.** The noise and movement often are soothing for babies.
- **Music and continuous noise may also help comfort your baby.** Sudden sounds can frighten a baby. Continuous noises, especially those with a steady beat can be soothing to an unsettled baby.
- **Change of nappy and nappy-free time can help distract babies.** Allow the baby some "free time" kicking on tummy as well as back. The air will help with any rashes and the kicking movements and baby bicycling exercises can help expel trapped wind in the bowel.
- **Baby massage can help both you and your baby.** A few drops of plain vegetable or olive oil rubbed between the palms of your hands can be gently massaged over your baby. REMEMBER to keep the room warm. A massage in a cold room helps no one relax.

Cont. overleaf

**Please speak to the midwife or your doctor if you
would like more information**

Patient Information Sheet

The amazing newborn

Touch

Women touch their babies in a different way to medical students or men. There is an orderly progression of touching behaviour starting with fingertips, massaging, stroking and palm contact. It is not yet known which neonatal characteristics elicit maternal touching.

Eye to Eye

Breastfeeding is the perfect distance for the infant to focus on the mother. Most mothers are eager to put the baby in the en-face position to give a real identity to the baby.

High Pitched Voice

Women instinctively use this voice when talking to a baby. The baby can identify its mother's voice from other women at three days. Babies prefer a female voice to a male voice.

Entrainment

A coordinated movement between speaker and listener described as a synchronised dance essential for attachment. Infants move in time to the structure of adult speech. This is rewarding for the mother and stimulates her to continue with mothering behaviour.

Time-Giver

The baby has been attuned to intrauterine life and its own patterns of rest and alertness. Reorganisation is needed and easier when rooming in facilities are provided.

Antibodies in colostrum

High concentrates of lymphocytes line the baby's intestine to provide protection against foreign organisms. A baby that is 100% breastfed will be protected from some of the most dangerous infections and germs. Some breastfeeding (just one or two weeks) is better than none.

Odour

By the fifth day the baby can distinguish the mother's odour from any other lactating woman.

References: Klaus M. H. & Klaus P.H *The Amazing Newborn* 1986 USA
Klaus M. H. & Kennell J.H *Parent-Infant Bonding* 1982 USA

Patient Information Sheet

ABC of a sick baby

Seek medical assistance for these symptoms:

This sheet is only a quick reference for the type of symptoms which can develop into serious illness if left. Healthy babies should feed, wee, cry, move and look beautiful.

A is for Activity

- Is the baby drowsy and unable to be alert?
- Is there poor eye contact, or a weak cry?
- Are there decreased limb movements?

B is for Breathing

- Is the baby's rib cage retracted with each breath in?
- Is there a respiratory grunt?
- Are the fingernails or the mouth a grey blue?

C is for Circulation

- Is the baby cold from the foot to the knee?
- Is there a general pallor?

D is for Drinking

- Is the baby drinking half as much as usual?
- Is the baby genuinely sucking or just holding on?

E is for Excretion

- Is the baby wetting less than four nappies per day?

Buy yourself a good book about childhood illness and accidents. Find a local doctor who enjoys looking after babies and children. Get to know your local Maternal and Child Health Nurse.