

# Welcome Home

A Guide for You and Your Newborn

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**IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY  
TO FEED YOUR BABY WELL**



# CARING FOR YOURSELF

Helpful Information  
for New Moms

## Your Postpartum (After Childbirth) Visit

The eight weeks after delivery are a time of healing. Your body uses this time to return to its pre-pregnant condition. To be sure that this happens correctly, it is recommended that you have a postpartum (after childbirth) exam by your doctor or midwife between 21 and 56 days after delivery. If you delivered by C-section, you also need to see your doctor a week or two after delivery so your doctor can check your incision. This office visit does not take the place of your postpartum exam.

During your postpartum exam your doctor or midwife will do a complete examination, talk to you about how you're managing at home with your family and discuss family planning. Take this time to ask questions about your delivery and to discuss your plans for future pregnancies.

**To be sure you can get to see your doctor or midwife during the 21 to 56 day period after delivery, call to make your postpartum appointment during your first week home from the hospital.**



### **Baby Blues and Postpartum Depression (PPD) —**

During the postpartum period, women appear to be at much higher risk of suffering from emotional instability than at any other time in their lives. The “Baby Blues,” the mildest form of postpartum mood change, can occur in up to 80 percent of new mothers. These mood changes appear within three to four days after childbirth, are frequently short-lived and generally disappear within ten days after birth.

Although these feelings can be upsetting, there is usually no cause for concern. During this period, you might experience rapid mood shifts that may be disturbing. You may feel overwhelmed, angry, inadequate, unlovable, sad or numb. You may experience decreased concentration, lack of interest in food, irritability and difficulty sleeping, even when your newborn is asleep.

If these feelings continue, you may be experiencing a more serious condition called postpartum depression. This could develop into an emotional mood disorder that can last months or even years.

Caring for your baby while dealing with postpartum depression can be a lot to handle. Early, effective care for postpartum depression is available and can make it easier for you to give your baby the attention he or she needs to be healthy.

### **Deciding if You Need Help**

No question or concern is too small — we encourage you to seek help whenever you feel troubled. You can talk to your doctor or another trusted medical professional, get help from the Employee Assistance Program at your workplace (if offered) or call us to locate confidential counseling services in your area. For immediate access to a mental health counselor, you can call the Mental Health and Substance Abuse department at the phone number listed on the back of your ID card.

### **Staying Smoke-Free**

Some mothers who quit smoking during pregnancy may start smoking again after delivery. To safeguard your health and the health of your family, it is important that you stay smoke-free.

**A crying baby may make you want to reach for that pack of cigarettes.**

**Here are some things you can do instead:**

- Put on some soothing music for you and your baby to listen to.
- Take a walk with your baby.
- Ask someone you trust to handle the baby while you walk away for a few minutes.
- Have a healthy snack instead of a cigarette.

**Call 866-NY-QUITS (866-697-8487) to find resources in your area that can help you quit tobacco for good. TTY/TDD: 711.**

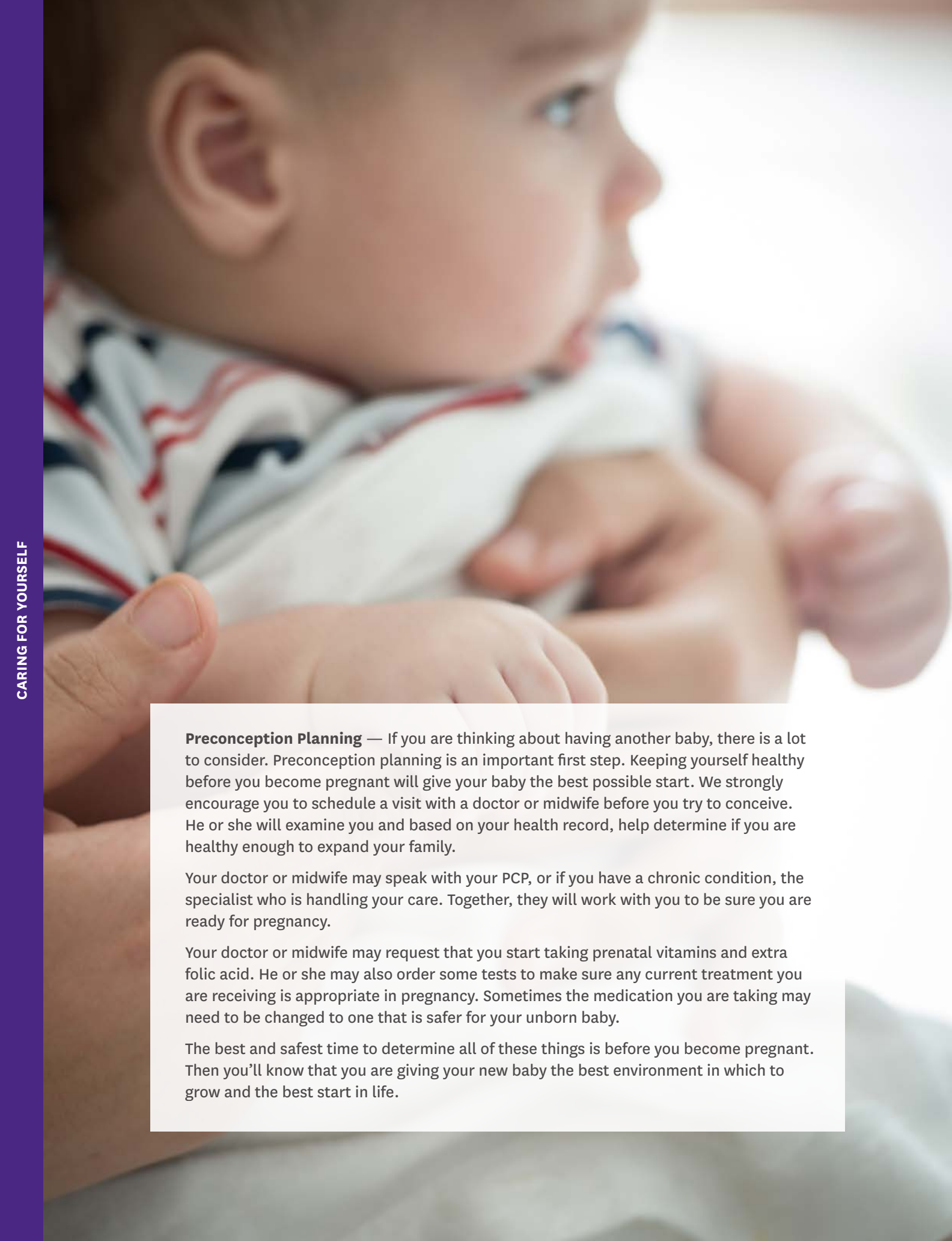


## Tips for New Moms

Being the mother of a new baby is a huge responsibility. No one is born with the skills necessary to care for a baby. Simply put, you learn mothering skills by taking care of your baby. If you are already a parent, the duties may be more familiar, but each new baby is amazing and unique.

**Following are a few tips that will help you build your confidence as a new mother and maintain your own health so you can care for your newborn:**

- **Believe in your ability to be a good mother.** Trust your instincts. Take pride in the things that you do well and build on them.
- **Get to know your baby.** Talk to, massage and sing to your baby. Babies are born fully aware. Before very long, your baby will know you and will respond to your touch and the sound of your voice.
- **Disregard advice that does not work for you.** Babies are not all the same. There is no universal rule that applies. When in doubt, talk with your pediatrician.
- **Relax when you can.** When your baby is sleeping, take a little time for yourself. Late night care of your baby can drain new mothers of much needed energy; therefore, when the baby is resting, lie down for a nap or put your feet up and rest.
- **Learn to say “no” to visitors.** Limit visitors for the first week or two after bringing your baby home, even though everyone will be anxious to see your new baby. Too many people can be overwhelming and tiring for you and your baby.
- **Ask for help.** If you feel overwhelmed, ask your partner, family or friends to assist you with the housework, meals and laundry. Keep the care of your baby in your hands and those of your partner for the first few weeks.
- **Eat for energy.** Your body is still recovering so don't limit your diet the first month after giving birth. Good nutrition is important for a healthy energy level and a quick recovery. Continue taking your prenatal vitamins if your doctor recommends. Do not worry about losing weight right now. Your goal is to feel healthy!
- **Do not participate in risky behaviors.** You need to remain healthy to best care for yourself and your newborn. Stay away from smoking, drugs and alcohol use.
- **Keep your postpartum visit with your doctor.** Have your after childbirth checkup with your doctor within 21 to 56 days after your delivery. If you had a cesarean delivery, you will also need an incision check within the first 2 weeks after delivery to make sure you are healing well. Make a list of questions you have about how you're feeling, family planning, contraception, exercise, HIV status and testing, and follow-up care for conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes. This is your time to make sure that your body is returning to its pre-pregnant condition.



**Preconception Planning** — If you are thinking about having another baby, there is a lot to consider. Preconception planning is an important first step. Keeping yourself healthy before you become pregnant will give your baby the best possible start. We strongly encourage you to schedule a visit with a doctor or midwife before you try to conceive. He or she will examine you and based on your health record, help determine if you are healthy enough to expand your family.

Your doctor or midwife may speak with your PCP, or if you have a chronic condition, the specialist who is handling your care. Together, they will work with you to be sure you are ready for pregnancy.

Your doctor or midwife may request that you start taking prenatal vitamins and extra folic acid. He or she may also order some tests to make sure any current treatment you are receiving is appropriate in pregnancy. Sometimes the medication you are taking may need to be changed to one that is safer for your unborn baby.

The best and safest time to determine all of these things is before you become pregnant. Then you'll know that you are giving your new baby the best environment in which to grow and the best start in life.



# CARING FOR BABY

Helpful Information  
for New Parents as  
You Welcome Your  
New Baby Home

## Enroll Your Baby Now

If you plan to enroll your newborn with your health plan, now is the time to add your baby to your health insurance policy. This must be done within 30 days of your child's date of birth.

*Enrolling is easy!* If your employer provides your health care coverage, you should contact your benefits administrator and ask to complete a Coverage Change form. To ensure uninterrupted coverage for your newborn, your benefits administrator must sign the completed form and return it to EmblemHealth within 30 days of your baby's birth. Forms that are submitted to the plan without your benefits administrator's signature cannot be processed.

If you receive your coverage through a state program such as Medicaid, and would like to enroll your baby in ChildHealthPlus, you must apply coverage on the NY State of Health Marketplace.

Since your child's birth, you probably have a lot of questions about your health insurance coverage and claims. We are here for you with the answers! Call the Customer Service number listed on the back of your ID card or visit **[emblemhealth.com](http://emblemhealth.com)**.



## Breastfeed or Bottle Feed?

EmblemHealth and the NY State Department of Health recommend that you exclusively breastfeed for six months and continue to breastfeed once solids are introduced for a year or longer, if desired. Nursing provides ideal nourishment and a special bonding experience that many mothers cherish. Some of the many benefits of breastfeeding are:

- **Protection against infection**—Antibodies passed from a nursing mother to her baby can lower the risk of many conditions, including ear infection, respiratory infection, allergies and asthma. Breast milk also provides babies with temporary immunity to some communicable diseases, such as chicken-pox, if the mother is already immune.
- **Nutrition and ease of digestion**—Breast milk contains all the vitamins and minerals that a newborn requires and is easily digested by his or her immature digestive system.
- **Cost**—Breastfeeding is free! All mom needs to do is to eat well and drink plenty of water. There are no other costs!

If you decide to breastfeed, your body will know to produce milk because you will be nursing your baby often. Almost all women produce enough milk, but if you don't use it, your body will stop producing it. Contact your pediatrician if you have questions or need some support.

If your decision is to bottle feed, you should wear a good supportive bra and not stimulate your breasts when they become full with milk. It may take a day or two, but your body will get the message that you will not be using the milk and will stop producing it.

For more information on breastfeeding, visit [l11i.org](http://l11i.org) or go to [emblemhealth.com/healthybeginnings](http://emblemhealth.com/healthybeginnings).



## What if Your Baby Won't Stop Crying?

**Crying is a normal way for babies to communicate and is part of their normal development. Crying can be stressful for adults, so it is important to remember that crying periods do come to an end.**

If your baby is crying, there are some things you can do to help him or her calm down. Through trial and error, you will learn what works best for your baby. Make sure to let your baby's other caregivers know what works so they will also be able to calm your baby down. Here are some tips:

- Make sure your baby is not too hot or too cold, is not hungry, does not need a diaper change and is not sick. If you think your baby may be sick, call your pediatrician.
- Gently cuddle, rock or stroke your baby.
- Play soft music, sing or talk to your baby. Use a gentle voice to soothe your baby.

If you are unable to cope with your baby's crying, take a break. Place the baby in a safe place such as a crib or playpen. You can spend a few minutes listening to music, exercising or talking to a friend to help you relax. After a few minutes, you can try again to soothe your baby. You can also talk with your health care practitioner for further guidance.

## Never Shake Your Baby!

Your baby's neck muscles are not strong enough to control the motion of his head. These weak muscles make your baby very vulnerable to injury from shaking and are the reason you must always support your baby's head when you are holding him or her.

When a baby is shaken or jerked, it causes the brain to move back and forth in the skull. This can cause bruising and bleeding in the brain which can lead to blindness, seizures, paralysis and even death. This is called Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Everyone who spends time with your baby should be told to never shake your baby. If you think someone has shaken your baby, call **911** right away.

For more information on Shaken Baby Syndrome, visit [shakenbaby.org](http://shakenbaby.org).

## HIV and Newborn Screening

**New York State requires that all newborn babies be tested for HIV and other disorders through the Newborn Screening Program. Some of these conditions can affect a newborn's physical and mental development very early in life. Early treatment is very important to ensure your baby's good health!**

- While your baby is still in the hospital, a small amount of blood will be taken from his or her heel. This blood is sent to the state for testing.
- The results of these tests are sent to your baby's doctor who will contact you. You should also ask about the results at your baby's first checkup. There is no cost to you for this testing.
- If you were not tested for HIV during your pregnancy, you will be tested during labor or your baby will be tested after delivery. You will receive preliminary test results in the hospital. These results will then be confirmed, but if the test is positive, you and your doctor will discuss treatment options that are best for you and your newborn.
- Results of HIV testing for both you and your baby will be confidentially reported to the State Health Department. Your doctor and your baby's doctor are the best sources of information about the testing and results. They can assist you in deciding what is best for you and your baby.
- You can visit [health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/](http://health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/) to learn more about HIV and AIDS. For more information about the New York State Newborn Screening Program, go to [wadsworth.org/newborn/](http://wadsworth.org/newborn/).

## WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program

If you need assistance with food for yourself or your baby, there is help available. The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program will help provide nutrition to mothers of infants up to 6 months old (12 months if you are breastfeeding) and children up to 5 years of age. Services are based on your income. To find the WIC office nearest you and find out more about qualifying, call **800-522-5006** or log on to [health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition/wic/](http://health.state.ny.us/prevention/nutrition/wic/).

## Safety First

**When you bring your baby home, it is important to create an environment that promotes safety and well-being. Here are some precautions that will help keep your new baby safe:<sup>1</sup>**

- Make sure your crib meets national safety standards and is in good condition. Look for a certification and safety seal. Older cribs may not meet standards. Crib slats should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart, and the mattress should fit snugly to prevent suffocation.
- Be sure that no pillows, soft bedding or comforters are used when baby is put to sleep. According to the March of Dimes, your baby should be put to sleep on his or her back in a crib with a firm, flat mattress. Babies who are put to sleep on their stomachs are at the highest risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- To help protect against injuries and falls, be sure that safety gates are used to keep children away from potentially dangerous areas, especially stairs.
- Mini and venetian blinds should not have looped cords. Check that vertical blinds, continuous looped blinds and drapery cords have tension tie-down devices to hold the cord tight in order to prevent strangulation.
- Never leave your baby alone on a changing table, a counter or any surface that is above floor level. In fact, don't even turn your back. In only an instant, a baby can roll off a counter and fall.
- Try changing your baby's diapers on the floor. Put the baby on a changing mat or a small blanket. This way, you will have plenty of space and your baby can't fall.

## Car Seat Safety

**Have a car safety seat waiting when you are ready to bring your baby home.**

**Make sure the car seat meets federal safety guidelines.**

- The seat and baby must face the back of the car. Car seats are safest when placed facing backward in the back seat.
- It is against the law for a baby to ride in the front passenger seat. If your vehicle has an air bag for the front passenger seat, it is especially dangerous. A deploying air bag could seriously injure your baby.
- Put your baby in a sleeper so that the car seat harness straps can go between the legs. Then cover the baby with a blanket.
- When installing a child safety seat, please follow instructions in your vehicle owner's manual and those accompanying the child safety seat. If you need help, fitting stations are available. Please visit the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles website at <http://dmv.ny.gov/more-info/safety-restraints>. For additional information about the proper use of child safety seats, please visit the following websites: [safeny.ny.gov/seat-per.htm](http://safeny.ny.gov/seat-per.htm), [nhtsa.dot.gov](http://nhtsa.dot.gov) and [safekids.org](http://safekids.org).



<sup>1</sup> Adopted from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. For more information about children's safety, as well as toy and product recalls, contact the commission's toll-free hotline at 800-638-2772.

## Keeping Children at a Healthy Weight

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 17 percent of children in the US between the ages of 2 and 19 years are obese.<sup>1</sup> There are several factors that can put a child at increased risk for becoming overweight. These include:



**BEHAVIORS** — Foods eaten and level of physical activity have a direct affect on your child's weight. Personal likes and dislikes, culture and family income all affect behaviors.



**GENETICS** — Heredity can affect how the body stores fat and burns calories.

Being overweight as a child or teen can negatively affect future health. Children who are overweight are more likely to develop serious health problems and become obese as adults.

**You can help prevent your child from becoming overweight by preparing healthy meals with the correct calories needed for growth. You should also make sure your child is active and try to reduce the amount of time he or she sits still. Here are some other tips:**

- Breastfeeding your newborn will help you know that your baby is getting the food that is meant for him or her. Your baby should consistently gain weight when checked at doctor's visits and have at least six wet diapers a day.
- Help your child develop good eating habits by serving healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish and lentils. Pay attention to portion sizes. Also try to get your child to drink water and limit sweetened drinks.
- Limit salty and calorie-rich, high-fat or high-sugar snacks. Instead, offer your child fruits and cut-up vegetables as snacks. If you start this at an early age, your child will reach for these foods when hungry as he or she gets older. Then, a high-fat or high-sugar snack every once in a while will really be a treat!
- Try to get your child to take part in at least 60 minutes of activity on most days. This can include walking, playing tag, jumping rope, playing sports, swimming and dancing. And the best part is that you can do these activities with your child!
- Experts do not recommend television watching for children less than two years old. As your child gets older, quiet time is needed for reading and homework, but TV watching, video games and surfing the Internet should be limited to less than two hours a day.

By helping your child develop good habits from the beginning, you will help your child maintain a healthy weight and have a healthier life.

For more information about your child's weight gain, speak with his or her doctor.

## Lead Exposure and Testing

Lead poisoning can be very harmful to your baby. It is usually caused by months or years of exposure to small amounts of lead in the home, work or day-care environment. The most common source of lead exposure for children is dust from old lead-based paint.

**If lead gets into your baby, it will travel through the blood stream and collect in the soft tissues of the body, such as the liver, kidneys and the brain. If too much lead gets into your child's body, it can cause:**

- Growth and development problems
- Anemia
- Behavior disorders
- Impaired hearing
- Kidney damage

Because lead poisoning can be so harmful to your baby, New York State requires that all children be tested for lead exposure at 1 year of age and again at age 2. Your pediatrician will arrange for this test to be performed. For more information go to [health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/](http://health.ny.gov/environmental/lead/) or speak with your baby's pediatrician.



## Steps Parents Can Take to Prevent Children From Getting Lead Poisoning

- Remove sources of lead in and around your home. Wash your child's toys (especially teething toys), windowsills, door frames and floors with a damp cloth or mop with warm, soapy water twice a week.
- Keep children away from chipped paint or broken plaster.
- Keep children away from remodeling and renovation sites.
- Wash your child's hands frequently to rinse off any lead dust or dirt.
- Use cold water, not hot, for infant formula preparation and cooking. Let the cold water tap run for at least a minute before using to flush any lead that may be picked up from pipes.
- Use lead-free dishes, pottery and glass.
- Avoid hobbies that may involve contact with lead.
- Wash work clothes separately. People who work in lead-related industries (e.g., construction, plumbing, painting, auto repair) may bring home lead dust on their skin or clothing. Shower and change into fresh clothes before entering your home to prevent bringing home lead dust.
- Avoid using health remedies, foods and spices from other countries.
- Contact your local or state health department for information about lead paint testing and lead paint removal.

## Keeping Your Baby Well

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that babies see a pediatrician for checkups six times in the first fifteen months of life. These visits usually occur at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12 and 15 months. Checkups do not include the times when you visit the doctor because your child is sick. During these checkups the doctor will:

- Examine your child.
- Ask questions about childhood milestones and lead exposure.
- Answer questions and review safety measures.
- Give your child immunizations (shots) necessary to prevent disease and test for lead exposure.

Shots are an important part of your baby's life. Babies should be immunized against diseases like Hepatitis B, measles, chicken pox, flu and more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that each of these shots be given when your child is at a certain age. These shots help to keep your child healthy.

In this kit, we have included a copy of EmblemHealth's Preventive Health Guidelines, which is based on the CDC recommendations. Also you can use the enclosed *Your Baby's Personal Health Record* to record the date that your baby receives each shot.

## Dental Care

There is evidence that young children can get the bacteria that causes dental decay from their mothers. As a result, improving the health of your mouth may also improve your child's dental health.

### There are things you can do to improve your dental health:

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and floss daily.
- Drink water or low-fat milk and avoid carbonated beverages.
- Eat fruit instead of drinking juice to meet your daily nutrition requirement.
- Do not eat sugary foods except during mealtime.
- Go to your dentist for a checkup and receive any necessary treatment.

### You can also improve the dental health of your children by following these suggestions:

- Use a soft cloth to wipe your infant's teeth and gums after eating.
- Watch your young children brush their teeth and offer suggestions.
- Do not put your child to bed with a bottle or sippy cup unless it contains water.
- Limit sugary foods to meals only.
- Do not put your child's spoon, pacifier or toy in your mouth and then give it to your child.
- Take your child for his or her first dental visit between 6 and 12 months of age.

Having a healthy mouth can improve your overall health and the health of your young children. Start practicing good dental hygiene today!



## About Sun Exposure

The sun is at its strongest between 10 am and 4 pm in the northern hemisphere. You should avoid exposing yourself and your child to the sun for long periods during these hours. If your child is playing outside between these hours, be sure to apply protective sunscreen. Sun damage occurs as a result of day-to-day exposure during routine activities, not only at the beach. Even on cloudy days, UV rays travel through the clouds and reflect off sand, water and even concrete.

**Keep your family safe in the sun by following these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):**



### Babies Under Six Months

Avoiding sun exposure and dressing infants in lightweight, long pants, long-sleeved shirts and brimmed hats that shade the neck are still the top recommendations from the AAP to prevent sunburn. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen with at least 15 SPF (sun protection factor) to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands. If an infant gets sunburn, apply cold compresses to the affected area. Always check with your doctor before applying sunscreen to a baby under six months of age.



### For Young Children

Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 15 and protect against UVA and UVB rays.



### For Older Children

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of ultraviolet rays) and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and limit sun exposure during the peak intensity hours — between 10 am and 4 pm.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen — about one ounce per sitting for a young adult.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.
- Use extra caution near water, snow and sand as they reflect UV rays and may result in sunburn more quickly.



