**BABY CARE QUICK FACTS**



**For individuals having frequent or infrequent caregiving responsibilities for infants, some important things to remember about caring for infants are:**

* The infants head is disproportionately larger than the rest of their body and their neck muscles take time to develop. It is important to remember to hold the infants head until their neck muscles can develop to the point that they can control their head themselves.
* Understanding and developing consistent schedules and routines to develop predictability and social emotional regulation for the child.
* Babies will often indicate hunger by the *hunger posture*of hands clenched up by the neck and by rooting with their mouth. Infants and babies may also gesture their wanting solid foods by looking at solid foods or maybe reaching for you as you eat.
* Babies eat breast milk (breastfeeding) and /or formula (bottle) for the first few months with introduction of solid foods generally beginning at about 6 months. It is a good idea to work with your pediatrician and keep them informed about your baby’s eating habits.
* Infants generally should not be fed water, juice or regular milk. Water or milk products should not replace Breast milk or formula for young infants, this does not provide the baby enough nutrition.
* Follow their lead and feed infants when they are hungry, on average every 2 hours. In time they will eat a greater amount but eat less frequently.
* Clothing, in general, should be one layer more than what an adult would be comfortable wearing. It is possible for a baby to overheat easily so overdressing, over layering, or putting on too many blankets should be avoided.
* Infants are ready to interact very early in life and do so by mimicking, tracking you with their head turning and being handled as well as moving their limbs. This builds connection when the caregiver initiates interaction and provides a response to the child's cues.
* Regular/frequent medical checkups are important (recommended frequency is set by the pediatrician, but is generally - Day 2-3 after birth, 1-2 weeks of age, then the first, second, fourth, sixth, ninth and twelfth months of age, then each year thereafter. Please follow the recommendations of your pediatrician as they will adjust the well child exam schedule to meet your child’s specific needs.
* Diaper changes are needed approximately 6-10 times per day, about every 2-3 hours or as frequently as they are soiled. A baby who is left for long periods of time in a soiled diaper can develop diaper rash. Overtime, they can also learn that their caregiver is not responsive to their needs, and this can have an impact on how they attach and form relationships throughout their life.
* Baby skin is very sensitive and can develop a skin rash on hot days or due to detergents. Seek medical advice if a rash does not go away.
* In cold weather, the baby’s head should be covered as heat will escape and can reduce the baby’s body temperature rapidly.
* Infants will have longer periods of sleep and wake time as they get older. It is important to ask caregivers about the sleep/wake cycle to determine if there is a set pattern for these states.
* Infants need holding, rubbing, patting, kissing, soothing at a pace that is slow as the world is all new to them. Babies have ways of showing when they are ready to engage in affectionate touch.
* Babies often show they are overstimulated or have had enough by turning their heads away, crying, or putting their hands in front of their face or eyes.
* Supervision of a baby is critically and vitally important - especially when in a bathtub, any form of water, near animals, in unfamiliar places and when the baby becomes mobile.