

Tips for hospitalized babies (birth to 1 year old)



Children react to and cope with being in the hospital based on their age. The information below includes babies' fears and reactions to being in the hospital. There are ways to help your baby cope with medical experiences.

Your baby may show behavior changes during and after their hospital stay. They may regress. This means they do things they have outgrown. Or, a behavior may happen more often than normal. This may be how your baby reacts to stress. These changes may concern you. Some of these changes are normal and most often go away with time.

This age group fears:

- Separation from parents or caregivers
- Stranger anxiety
- Lack of stimulation or too much stimulation
- New spaces
- Change in routine
- Pain

What changes could I see in my baby?

Your baby may have 1 or more of these behaviors:

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in feeding or eating
- Gets upset when parents leave
- Gets upset when they feel you are stressed
- Gets clingy

What can I do to help my baby?

Here are some tips that may help you and your baby during and after being in the hospital:

- You are the best person to comfort your baby. Hug, cuddle and hold your baby when possible.
- Lower stimulation during procedures or when your baby is stressed. Turn off the TV or other noises. Talk softly or sing quietly.
- Keep your baby's routines the same when possible. Put them to sleep, feed and bathe them at their normal times if you can.
- Be present and care for your baby as much as possible.
- Ask staff to group or cluster procedures. This gives your baby more time for rest and healing.
- Explain what is happening in simple words. This helps to soothe them. Say "all done" or "all finished" to help your baby calm down after a procedure.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Tips for hospitalized babies (birth to 1 year old), continued

- Your baby may get upset when a stranger comes in their room. They may be scared of pain or discomfort. Ask for tasks to be done outside of the crib. This allows for their crib to be a place for rest.
- Limit bedside visitors. Babies need time to adjust to each new person.
- Give them familiar items from home such as a blanket, pacifier, stuffed animal or family picture.
- Be calm and relaxed when possible. This helps your baby to remain calm too.
- Play with your baby. Allow your baby to safely see, hear and touch things. This helps with normal development.

Remember that behavior changes are common and most often go away. This is how your baby copes with their hospital stay. If you have concerns or questions before you leave the hospital, please talk with a nurse, doctor or child life specialist.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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