

Going home with your baby after being admitted to the children's ward

Your baby is admitted to the children's ward in Ziekenhuis Amstelland and will be going home soon. This folder provides tips and advice over baby care and feeding during the first period.

Building a bond and learning to enjoy.

During the first period at home your baby has to get used to the new situation, and will need a lot of rest. Take the time for your baby. Focus on the pleasant and relaxing moments. Where possible, involve siblings in the baby care.

Try not to have too many visitors during the first days; you can do this later. It's nice to keep the first few days just within your family to find a rhythm. Don't let your baby be handed around. When the baby is asleep in the crib, leave him or her to sleep, even if you have visitors who have come to see your baby. Disturbance during sleep causes stress.

Rooming- in

Rooming -in is an option primarily for parents of babies who have been admitted for some length of time. In preparation for discharge, you take care of your baby yourself for 24 hours. If necessary, you can call on the nurse. Rooming -in usually makes the transition between hospital and home easier.

Maternity care at home and midwife

If your baby is discharged from hospital within 8 days after the birth, you have a right to kraamzorg (maternity care at home) Call your kraamzorg organisation as soon as you know the discharge date. After a long admission to the neonatal baby unit, it's still sometimes possible to get this care at home. Contact your care insurance company to enquire about this.

It's your own responsibility to contact your maternity care organisation as soon as you know the date of discharge.

Feeding

Make sure you have everything at hand for a feed, and that you can take your time in a peaceful space. A normal feeding time takes up to 30 minutes. Your child may vomit a mouthful after the feed, but if this is more or frequent then contact your G.P.

Breastfeeding

If you breast feed your baby, we have separate information for you to take home.

Feeding times

Your baby is fed at set times on the ward. It's not necessary to copy these times precisely, certainly not if you breast feed on demand.

Formula feed.

You can choose the same formula feed as your baby got in hospital, but you may also choose another formula feed. All brands of formula are just as good. In the Netherlands, the requirements for full infant formula feed have to be met in line with European legislation. How to prepare the feed is described clearly on the package. You can use tap water for this. You don't have to boil the water

Going home with your baby after being admitted to the children's ward

first. Always check the temperature of the feed before you give it to your baby. You can do this by letting a drop fall onto the inside of your wrist. You must not save or reheat left over remains of feed.

Some babies need special feeds. Should this apply to your baby, then we will notify you.

Cleaning the bottle

After using the bottle, all parts can be cleaned under cold running water, and left upside down to air dry. You may also put the parts in the dishwasher at a minimum of 55 degrees C.

You need to sterilise the bottle once a day for the first 6 months. Immerse the parts in boiling water for at least 3 minutes, or use a sterilising unit.

Dummy

Your baby may need to satisfy the sucking reflex. Your baby may have already been introduced to a dummy in hospital, feel free to continue this at home. It's sometimes better to satisfy breast fed babies by letting them suck on the breast.

For cleaning the dummy please refer to the enclosed cleaning instructions. If your child has a dummy from the hospital, this should be sterilised daily. Teats and dummies should be replaced every 6 weeks, or sooner if any cracks appear.

Vitamins

Vitamin K is important for blood clotting. Supplements start after 1 week and continue for 3 months. If your baby gets more than 500ml of formula feed a day, in that case you don't have to give a vitamin K supplement.

Vitamin D is necessary for good bone development. Supplements start when your baby is 1 week old. Every baby has vitamin D supplements up to and including the fourth year.

You can buy the vitamins in droplet form at the chemist or pharmacy. The required dose is on the package. You can give your baby the drops on a small spoon.

Defecation

The pattern of defecation differs for each baby. Babies who are only breast fed can have a frequentation which varies between many times a day to once a week. Formula fed babies generally pass stools daily to once every 2 days. The stools are usually soft/thinnish and a yellow/light brown colour.

If your baby has a nappy rash, try to avoid using baby wipes as much as possible, use a gauze pad with water and an ointment advised for nappy rash. If the nappy rash is a problem for longer than 3 days, contact your G.P. There is a chance it could be thrush.

Tips for baby colic.

All babies get colic (intestinal cramps) which can continue for 3 to 4 months. The peak is often around 6 weeks, after which the colic will lessen gradually. Colic can be recognised when your baby

Going home with your baby after being admitted to the children's ward

cries suddenly, is difficult to comfort, pulls their knees up to their tummy and strains. Clenching of the fists and arching of the back can also be signs of colic.

What can you do?

- Comfort your baby by holding him/her against you.
- Rub over the tummy gently, maybe using a warm cloth.
- Lay your baby on their back on the changing cushion, pull the knees up and let them rest on the tummy, keeping baby in this position for a few minutes.
- Let your baby burp more often.
- Feed in a peaceful environment.
- Move the legs in a cycling movement.
- Lay your baby on your arm on their tummy and rock gently to and fro (DO NOT shake)
- Bathing can sometimes help.

Crying

All babies cry and this is normal behaviour during the development. For babies, crying is an important means of communication with their parents and carers in the first few months. Crying often peaks at around the sixth week, and often lessens after the third month of its own accord, to a level which remains stable for the first year.

Babies often cry more in the evening hours which goes together with the maturation and development of the baby. Offering rest and regularity has a positive effect on the degree of crying. Try first to find out the cause of the crying, and if possible get rid of the cause.

Babies are nearly always calmed by attention and touch. If your baby cries excessively, contact your baby clinic.

Rest and regularity

It is important to develop regularity in the sleep rhythm and feeding times. Young babies have to cope with many new impressions in a short time. Some babies become over stimulated from this, causing them to cry more and hindering sleep. Most of the crying which causes sleep problems can be prevented by a clear rhythm and regularity, suited to your baby.

The baby room

The temperature of the baby room doesn't have to be especially high; 18-20 degrees is fine for the first months. Make sure that the room is well ventilated, but don't leave the baby in a draught. Leave the curtains open during the day, so that your baby can get used to a day and night rhythm. You don't have to do things extra quietly, your baby can get used to all the noises at home.

The baby's temperature.

For the first few days at home, it's a good idea to take your baby's temperature a few times a day when you take him/her out of bed. A normal body temperature is between 36,5- 37,5 degrees C. If your baby has a fever contact your G.P.

Going home with your baby after being admitted to the children's ward

If the temperature is 36,6 degrees C or lower, then we advise you to dress your baby in warmer clothes and a bonnet. If this doesn't work, then our advice is to use a hot water bottle which has been approved by safety regulations. Fill the bottle according to instructions, and check for leakage. Put the bottle in a cover. Always place the bottle in the crib with the opening facing downwards. Never lay the bottle directly against your baby, but on top of the blanket and covered with a cloth. It's nice to pre-warm the bed by placing the bottle in the crib before your baby goes to sleep.

Going outside

You may go outside with your baby straight out of hospital, unless you are advised otherwise. We do however, recommend against taking your baby outside in the wind, rain or cold. Slowly increase the time that you take your baby for a walk. Dress your baby depending on the season. Put a bonnet on in the winter, and make sure that your baby is protected against the sun in the summer.

Safety in the car

It is not permitted to place the baby car seat (Maxi-Cosi) near an airbag. Have a look how you can secure the baby car seat in your car before your baby is discharged. We recommend against clothing your baby in a thick coat while he/she is in the Maxi-Cosi.

Laying your baby in bed.

Lay your baby on their back from the start. Turn the head switching from left to right, unless you are advised otherwise by the hospital. Never lay your baby to sleep on their tummy. However it is good for the motor development to lay your baby on their tummy while he/she is awake and you are with him/her. If an older, healthy baby can roll themselves from side to side easily and prefers lying on the tummy to sleep, there's no point in going against this. Do make extra sure that the bed is safe. Tuck the baby in well, so that he/she feels safe, secure and supported and the uncontrolled movements of their own arms and legs don't disturb them. For more sleeping tips see; www.veiligheid.nl.

Crying while falling asleep is okay, a quarter of an hour is normal. Some babies take longer. Always go and have a look at your baby if you are worried.

Don't take the baby out of bed repeatedly during sleep time. Try to comfort the baby in bed with a calm voice, stroking the head, or offer a dummy. To keep picking up the baby can hinder their sleep pattern. Keep night feeds short and calm.

Bath time.

During admission you will probably have been shown how to bathe your baby. If this is not the case, then your maternity home carer (kraamzorg) will show you. You can determine the time for a bath yourself, but try to do it before a feed to prevent vomiting. Make sure you lay everything ready and that the room is not too cold. It's not necessary to bathe your baby daily, 2 to 3 times a week is enough. On the other days you can wash your baby with a facecloth.

The bathwater should be between 37-38 degrees C. You can check this using a bath thermometer, but always check with your elbow too. Don't use soap on the face. In the winter it's handy to lay the clothes on the heating, or roll around a hot water bottle to warm through.

Going home with your baby after being admitted to the children's ward

You can also shower with the baby. Be careful because your baby can feel slippery with soap and water on their skin. Pay extra attention that it's not too cold in the shower.

Caring for the umbilical cord.

The umbilical cord will fall off within 14 days. No extra care is necessary. If the cord smells unpleasant or is red, then you can clean it with some alcohol on a gauze pad. If this doesn't help, contact your baby clinic for advice.

Eye care

Almost every baby has dirty eyes now and then. You can clean them using a gauze pad and lukewarm running water. Wipe the eye clean in the direction of the nose, using each pad of gauze only once.

Nail care

The nails can be cut after about 6 weeks. Before that time you can file the nails with a cardboard nail file.

Hygiene

When either you or your partner has got a cold, take extra care in washing your hands before you take care of your baby. It is better to keep visitors who have a cold away from your baby. It's better not to allow young children who have been in contact with childhood diseases to visit.

Smoking.

Smoking during and after pregnancy is bad for both mother and baby. It increases the risks of life long health damage and death. A smoke free house is the best for your baby. If this is not possible, you can limit the risk by smoking as little as you can, and not indoors or in the car. This also applies to visitors. Smoke can linger for up to 8 hours in a closed room.

Questions

When you are at home and have doubts about a situation or you still have a question; before your first appointment in the children's out patients clinic, then you can always telephone the children's ward on 020 – 755 6668. In the evenings and at night you can call the general practitioner.

Enjoy this time together!