

Newborn Illness: How to Recognize

As a parent you need to know that newborns (birth through 30 days) are at increased risk for infections, especially during the first 7 days of life. Newborns need to be observed carefully.

The symptoms of serious illness in newborns can be subtle and atypical. That is why the statement “Age < 1 month old (newborn) and starts to look or act sick in any way” is found in the “Call Your Doctor Now” section of at least 10 guidelines.

Symptoms of illness on a newborn include vomiting, diarrhea, cough, and other signs of infection. Symptoms also can be subtle and include the following:

- Sleeping excessively
- A sudden change in feeding behavior (has to be repeatedly awakened to nurse or can't stay awake for feedings)
- Inability to sustain sucking or nursing
- Sweating during feedings
- Change in muscle tone (decreased or limp)
- Decreased activity or movement
- Change in color (i.e. pale, bluish, or gray arms and legs)
- Fever > 100.4° F (38.0° C) rectally
- Unusual crying, moaning, grunting

If your newborn's appearance or behavior changes and you think it's abnormal, call your baby's doctor now for expert advice.

Parent Care for Pediatric Symptoms. Copyright 2000-2008. Barton D. Schmitt, MD