

Mother and baby



It is an exciting time when a baby is born. Your pharmacist can offer you practical advice and reassurance on how to look after you and your baby's health.

Lifestyle options

As you care for and bond with your baby in the initial few months, it is also important to look after your own health and wellbeing. Getting enough sleep as you adjust to your baby's sleeping patterns, establishing a feeding routine and caring for your own health can be a balancing act.

Research suggests that breastfeeding is the best nutrition for your baby but at times you can face some common problems such as the baby not latching on properly, dry sore nipples or mastitis, which is when a blocked milk duct causes inflammation of breast tissue usually due to a bacterial infection. The common symptoms of mastitis are pain, swelling, redness around the breast area, fever, muscle aches and pains. Your pharmacist can advise you on how to reduce the likelihood of getting mastitis through, for example, feeding regularly, completely emptying one breast before moving onto the next, or expressing your breast milk regularly, particularly if your breasts are engorged.

If you need to take any medicines whilst breastfeeding your baby, always tell your pharmacist. They can advise you on what is safe for you and your baby.

New mums should aim to eat healthy nutritious food. It is also important to drink plenty of water and rest well to help with breastmilk supply. Try to make daily exercise part of your routine by going for a walk whilst your baby sleeps in the pram. Regular exercise and catching up with friends may assist with managing the 'baby blues' (post-natal depression), for example consider joining a parent's group in your local area.

Talk to your pharmacist about contraception options to assist you with family planning whilst you are breastfeeding.

Pharmacy options

Your baby can get head colds or viral infections causing pain and fever which may require medicines. Your pharmacist can advise you on the appropriate pain and fever medicines and the correct dose to give. They can also suggest suitable saline drops for blocked noses, vaporisers or chest rubs.

Babies may experience feeding problems or other digestive issues like colic or reflux. Reflux can be a normal part of your baby adjusting to feeding and usually does not require medicines, but if it continues to be a problem, talk to your pharmacist. Some babies suffer from wind or colic and your pharmacist can discuss any serious signs that suggest you should see a doctor.

Sometimes digestive problems such as vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation can also occur in babies. Breastfeeding babies don't often get constipation, but your pharmacist can advise you what foods may be best avoided by you during breastfeeding. Babies under 6 months of age only need breastmilk or infant formula, but they can be given boiled and cooled water from about the age of 6 months.

With formula fed babies your pharmacist can explain how to make formula correctly, which formula is most suitable and what to do if your baby develops constipation or allergic reactions.

If your baby has vomiting or diarrhoea, your pharmacist can also advise you about feeding frequency and the best oral rehydration fluids. Dehydration in babies can occur quickly and is a serious risk, so seek advice early from your health professional if your baby is vomiting and/or has diarrhoea.

Babies may also experience skin irritations such as nappy rash and eczema. Some babies get cradle cap where large, greasy, yellow or brown scales appear on the scalp. Your pharmacist can advise you on the best skin care creams, ointments, washes and shampoos to use for your baby to keep their skin healthy. They may refer you to a doctor if required.

Teething problems are also common in babies. Although teething is a normal part of your baby's development it can cause some drooling, pain or discomfort. Your pharmacist can advise you about cool teething rings, gels or powders that can provide some relief.

Croup is a viral infection where your baby develops a barking cough and may make a high-pitched sound when breathing. It can get worse suddenly so be aware and get medical help quickly if your baby's breathing becomes worse.

Your pharmacist can also:

- Book an appointment for a baby clinic where a nurse can advise you about your baby's weight and height, feeding and sleeping patterns and immunisation schedule.
- Discuss what is appropriate if you have been advised to try formula feeding.
- Explain how to use a breast pump.

Always inform pharmacy staff if you are breastfeeding or planning a pregnancy when seeking advice regarding medication.

More information

Australian Breastfeeding Association:
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Poisons Information Service:
Phone 13 11 26 from all states

The website of your local state's children's hospital

Australian government: www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/having-baby/when-your-baby-arrives

Health Direct: www.healthdirect.gov.au

Disclaimer: The information provided is a guide only, is current at time of publishing, and is not intended to replace the advice of your pharmacist or doctor.

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