



Newborn Care Series

Basic Skills

There are basic skills that are performed often when caring for a newborn. They give us valuable information to understand the health of a young baby and need to be done correctly.

This video will review the basic skills of taking a temperature, counting breathing and weighing the baby.

First wash your hands; then clean the thermometer and stethoscope with antiseptic.

Here's how to determine the baby's temperature.

If you don't have a thermometer, compare the temperature of the baby's trunk with your own body temperature, using the back of your hands. Then feel his feet. The baby's temperature should be similar to yours.

As a rough guide: If the feet are warm, the baby is warm. If the feet are cold and the trunk is warm, the baby is cold and needs to be warmed right away. If the feet and the trunk are cold, the baby is very cold, may be even quite sick and needs urgent warming and care.

To take the temperature using a thermometer, shake it down. Read it to be sure it's below 35° Centigrade.

In very hot regions, the thermometer will read higher than a fever if you forget to shake it down.

Place it deep under the arm and hold the baby's arm against his body. Wait 3 minutes. Read the number at the top of the line. Some thermometers need to be rolled until you see the line.

To use a digital thermometer, turn it on, and place it deep under the arm. When it beeps, read the temperature in the little window.

The normal temperature range is between 36.5° to 37.5° C.

The baby is too warm if the temperature is above 37.5° and too cold if it is below 36.5°.

Here's how to Count the Baby's Breaths

Newborns are abdominal breathers. One way to count is by feeling the rise of breaths with your hand on the abdomen. Or count by watching the number of rises. Hold a time piece in view. Count the number of times the abdomen rises over one minute.

It's important to count the breaths over a full minute because a baby's breathing is naturally irregular. He may stop for a few seconds and then breathe fast.



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Count the breaths only when the baby is resting quietly. The normal rate is 30-60 breaths per minute.

If you count more than 60 breaths, count again to see if the fast breathing continues. If he's breathing more than 60 breaths per minute on the second count, he is breathing too fast and will need special care.

Here's how to take the Baby's Weight: An accurate weight is important for calculating drug doses and to monitor the baby's weight. But it's also important to keep the baby warm while you weigh him.

Here's how. First place the baby's cloth on the scale pan. Set the scale to zero to include the weight of the blanket you will wrap him in.

Completely undress the baby. Wrap him snugly in the cloth to keep him warm and to reduce his movements.

Place him on the scale -- but balance only when the baby and the pan are not moving.

Record the weight.

Normal birth weight is from 2.5 to 4 kilos, low birth weight is below 2.5 kilos, and very low birth weight is less than 1.5 kilos.

Low birth weight babies need special care and possibly referral to a higher level facility.

Remember:

- Shake the thermometer down before using
- Zero the scale with the baby's cloth
- Check breathing rate over a full minute.