

Independent Living Skills Module V

PHYSICAL CARE

In addition to addressing medical needs, you also have to learn how to take care of your baby's physical needs.

Changing Diapers

It is important to change a baby regularly for his/her comfort, health, and to avoid diaper rash. A baby's skin is very delicate and needs to be clean and dry. Therefore, you should change your baby as soon as he/she wets or soils the diaper. A newborn baby needs to be changed approximately 10 to 12 times a day. After the baby is born, his/her first bowel movement will consist of a black-green substance called Meconium. After that it will change to regular bowel movements that are yellow/brown. Most caregivers use wipes to clean the baby and ointment, such as Desitin or Balmex, to prevent diaper rash.

Note to fathers: Changing a baby's diaper is as much your responsibility as it is the mother's. By helping to change the baby, you contribute to your child's health and well being. It is a misconception that changing a baby is a woman's task. Most fathers these days share that responsibility.

Choosing the Right Kind of Diaper

There are two kinds of diapers available: cloth and disposable. Let's look at the pros and cons of both so you can decide which kind best meets your preferences and needs.

	Cloth	Disposable
+	They are reusable, therefore, cheaper and good for the environment.	They are easy to use, practical, and great for travel.
-	They need to be washed and are not as practical, particularly when you travel.	They are expensive and not good for the environment.

ACTIVITY

Evaluate the information above and choose which kind of diaper will best meet your needs.

My choice is _____ diapers because _____

Independent Living Skills Module V

ACTIVITY

Visit your local drug/department store and research the prices and brands for wipes, ointment, and diapers. Then fill out the chart below:

MY CHOICE	BRAND	PRICE PER UNIT	PRICE PER MONTH
DIAPERS			
OINTMENT			
WIPES			
TOTAL			

Include the total expense in your budget.



BATHING YOUR BABY

Most parents bathe their babies daily by either giving them a sponge bath or a bath in a small baby tub. It is important for the baby to be clean, particularly in the diaper area, to avoid health problems and rashes.

THE SPONGE BATH

Most parents bathe their newborn babies by giving them a sponge bath because the umbilical cord is still healing. It will take about 2-3 weeks after your baby is born for it to fall off and the navel to heal. To avoid infection it is best to give the baby a sponge bath and keep the navel dry. (You may clean the navel with rubbing alcohol and/or put antiseptic on it. If the navel gets infected, you must call your doctor right away.)

Independent Living Skills Module V

You give a baby a sponge bath by placing him/her on a padded surface. Make sure that it is safe and that the baby cannot slip, roll, or fall. Then use a soft wash cloth to wipe the baby with clean, warm water before adding gentle baby soap (also called “baby bath”) to the water. Rinse the baby by using clean, warm water and a wash cloth. You usually have to wipe the soap off at least twice to make sure there are no residues.

Many people do not wash the baby’s scalp more than 2-3 times a week. When you wash the baby’s head, it is important to wash thoroughly to prevent cradle cap. Cradle cap is similar to heavy dandruff. Shampoo your baby’s head by massaging it gently with your fingertips. Just be careful of the soft spot!

**Remember, never leave your baby alone. Be sure you have all the items you’ll need for the bath before you begin!*

ACTIVITY

Practice giving a sponge bath to a doll. Also, make sure to ask the nurses in the hospital to show you how to wash your baby.

THE TUB BATH

You can give your older baby a bath in a regular tub, a baby tub or the kitchen sink. Parents usually prefer a smaller tub because it is easier. Whatever type of bath, remember to be prepared ahead of time.

You will need:

- Towel
- Washcloth
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Pajamas
- Diaper
- Ointment

Never leave your baby unattended in any kind of tub, not even for a few seconds!

Independent Living Skills Module V

TIPS ON PHYSICAL CARE

Never leave your baby unattended. If you leave him or her alone even for just one minute, you may put your baby at risk for getting hurt.

Anticipate any danger or risky situations your baby may get into, such as rolling over and falling off a bed.

Make sure that your baby does not put any items in his/her mouth that are dangerous and will cause him/her to choke.

Never leave your child with inappropriate or unknown caretakers.

Remember; put your baby on his or her back to sleep.

Always place your child in an age appropriate car seat when riding in a car.

Always pick up your baby gently and put him/her down gently.

Make sure that you support the baby's head when picking him or her up and putting him/her down.

Keep the baby's skin and scalp clean. Use gentle baby soap and shampoo.

Use gentle baby laundry detergent to wash baby's clothes in order to avoid rashes and allergies.

Never put cereal in your baby's bottle.

Do not overfeed. Listen to your doctor.

If you feel tired, take a nap when the baby does.

Make sure to always dress the baby comfortably. Remember, clothing that is too tight can constrict the blood flow. Also, just as we do, babies like to be warm or cool depending on the season.

INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

When babies are about six months old, parents can begin to introduce solid foods, usually by giving their child rice cereal. This in addition to breast milk or formula the baby is taking. Solid foods cannot replace breast milk or formula as a major source of nutrition until the baby is at least one year old. At one year of age children can begin to drink whole milk. Skim milk will not provide the nutrients and calories a child needs.

Independent Living Skills Module V

It may take your baby a little while to get used to spoon-feeding. Sometimes it is helpful to use a small spoon with rubber coating to make it easier and more comfortable for the baby to eat.

When introducing solid foods, make sure that you give your baby just one new food at a time. By giving babies just one new food, for a period of one week, you can detect any food allergies your child may have that could have uncomfortable and potentially dangerous side effects. Food allergies can cause a variety of symptoms ranging from stomachaches to severe allergic reactions, such as hives and shortness of breath.

Parents may want their babies to try different kinds of vegetables so that babies learn to appreciate those before beginning to eat fruit. Babies often prefer fruit because it is sweeter than vegetables. Subsequently, babies who are introduced to fruit first may reject vegetables.

You can buy individual vegetable and fruit jars that just need to be heated up. You also can prepare these foods yourself by cleaning, cutting, and cooking vegetables prior to pureeing them. The healthiest foods are the ones that do not have any preservatives or additives.

After giving your child fruits and vegetables, you can introduce chicken, fish and meat if you like. You also can begin to mix foods.

Please describe when, how and in which order you plan to introduce solid foods to your baby.

Do you plan to buy your baby food prepared or do you want to cook it yourself? Explain your choice.

Independent Living Skills Module V

Can you develop a sample menu for your child at age 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months, including the feeding times and average amounts?

6 months	12 months	18 months

Independent Living Skills Module V

CARETAKING

ACTIVITIES

I. Myth or Fact? Test your knowledge of Physical Care Skills by answering True or False to the following statements.

1. Almost all babies, regardless of ethnic/racial origin, are not born with their permanent coloring.
2. Even if your baby develops cradle cap, you should not shampoo his head because you'll injure the soft spot.
3. Much of the activity (sucking, yawning, fist clenching) your newborn baby exhibits is reflex action.
4. Your baby's skull will close over the soft spot when s/he is about 18 months old.
5. You should always provide head support for a young baby when you are lifting or holding him/her.
6. You and your pediatrician shouldn't worry if your baby doesn't gain weight during the first 4 weeks of life.
7. When you need to take your baby's temperature, you should place the thermometer under his/her arm.
8. You should always put your baby to sleep on his or her back.

ANSWERS:

1. TRUE. Most babies, regardless of ethnic origin, are born with smoky-blue eyes and light-colored skin because of lack of pigment (coloring matter). Gradually, eyes and skin will turn to their permanent color. (Of course, if the baby genetically inherited blue eyes, the color will remain the same.)
2. FALSE. It is very important to wash the baby's head thoroughly to prevent cradle cap. Cradle cap is similar to heavy dandruff. Shampoo your baby's head by massaging it with your fingertips and don't be afraid to touch the soft spot. Touching it will not hurt.
3. TRUE. Your baby's clenched fists, blinking, sneezing, yawning, grasping, sucking and jumping are all examples of reflex action. This means that babies are born with these abilities; they don't need to learn them. They're automatic.
4. TRUE. All babies have six soft spots but most people only think of the one found in the front of the head. This main spot is covered with a tough membrane, which protects it until about 18 months of age, when the bone structure grows and closes it.
5. TRUE. Since the newborn's neck muscles are weak and the head is relatively heavy, the newborn will need a little bit of support from you for at least the first few months.
6. FALSE. After the initial weight loss period (2 or 3 days after birth), the baby's weight gain and increase in length will be rapid during the 1st 4 weeks. The average weight gain is about one ounce each day.

Independent Living Skills Module V

7. TRUE. It is less disturbing to a baby than putting a thermometer into his/her rectum.
8. TRUE. Placing a baby on his or her back to sleep or rest will reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

II. *Babies need comfort. To a baby, comfort means having his/her needs met. When babies cry, they need something and parents, by answering their cries, can teach them a basic sense of trust. A sense of trust is the most important thing babies can learn.*

How many of the following questions can you answer correctly?

A. True or False.

1. Research shows that babies who are held and cuddled often during their first months don't cry as much at age one as children who weren't held and cuddled when they cried as infants.
2. You should give your baby a sponge bath rather than a full bath until his/her cord falls off.
3. You cannot spoil a baby by picking her/him up when s/he cries in the early months.

B. Multiple Choice.

1. A baby cries because she may be
 - a. Hungry
 - b. Cold
 - c. Hot
 - d. Wet
 - e. Uncomfortable for some other reason
 - f. Lonely
2. Which is the best way to hold a baby when you're trying to comfort her?
 - a. Holding the baby upright with his head near your shoulder
 - b. Bouncing her
 - c. Holding the baby under your arm
3. Propping bottles is bad for your baby because
 - a. Baby does not make eye contact with you while he's eating
 - b. Baby can choke
 - c. Baby doesn't get the emotional support and love he feels from being in your arms
 - d. Baby can develop an ear infection
 - e. Baby doesn't get enough to eat

Independent Living Skills Module V

ANSWERS:

A. True or False

1. True.
2. True. A baby's skin needs to be kept fresh and clean. However you have to make sure to keep the cord dry so that it will heal better. Put isopropyl alcohol around the baby's belly button to help it dry and heal.
3. True. Experts agree that babies don't develop a memory until late in the 1st year, so they're not crying because they're spoiled.

B. Multiple Choice

1. All of the answers given
2. a
3. All of the answers except e

Independent Living Skills Module V

ACTIVITY

Please list below all the skills you have obtained while working on the *Care Taking* section (feeding and bathing your baby).

I have learned about:

--

Are there any tasks/skills you have worked on but would like to obtain more information on? If so, list them below and develop strategies as to how you will obtain such information, e.g., nurse, library, parent aid, etc.

Additional Information	Source