HOW TO
Choose a Car Seat

Every year, car crashes kill more children than any other type of injury. To protect your kids, follow California law, which requires them to ride in the car’s backseat in the appropriate child safety seat until they are at least 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall, whichever comes first.

To choose the right car seat for your child, follow these new guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

Rear-Facing Seats
Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat until they reach age 2 or the maximum height and weight suggested for their car seat. There are two kinds of rear-facing seats:

- Infant-only seats have a baby carrier that clicks in and out of a base that can stay in the car. Depending on the model, the seats may be used for babies weighing up to 22 to 30 pounds.
- Convertible seats can be used rear-facing for children up to 35 pounds or more, depending on the model. Later they can be transitioned to forward-facing seats.

Forward-Facing Toddler Seats
Children who are older than age 2 or have outgrown rear-facing height or weight limits should ride in a forward-facing car seat with a harness for as long as possible. Convertible car seats can be used forward-facing up to 45 to 70 pounds, depending on the model.

Booster Seats
These seats, which can come with a high back or no back at all, are used once a child’s height or weight exceeds the limit for a forward-facing car seat. Use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle’s lap-and-shoulder seat belts fit your child properly.

CHECK YOUR SEAT
Even with the appropriate restraint, your child is not protected if the seat is not installed properly. To learn where you can get a free car seat inspection, visit www.seatcheck.org or call 866-SEATCHECK (732-8243).
From the child’s name to the color of the nursery, expectant moms face a lot of choices. Perhaps the most important is whether to breastfeed.

According to a new national report card on breastfeeding, more U.S. mothers than ever—about three in four—choose nursing, at least in the beginning. That’s good news, since breast milk contains the perfect nutrition for babies. Breast-fed infants have a lower risk for allergies, infections, and other illnesses. They’re also less likely to be overweight as children. And nursing has perks for moms, too, including:

- Easier weight loss
- Less risk for breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and postpartum depression
- A closer bond with baby

Facing Breastfeeding Challenges
There’s a flip side to the new report. The American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups recommend feeding your baby breast milk alone for six months and continuing to nurse for at least one year. But the number of babies still breastfeeding at these points has reached a plateau.

Experts say not all new moms get the support they need to keep nursing. The process can be physically challenging. In addition, some women struggle with postpartum depression, jealousy from their partners, or challenges in the workplace.

Starting Right
It’s important to start breastfeeding as soon as possible after your baby’s birth. In the beginning, you may need to breastfeed every two hours or so. After a few days or weeks, healthy babies will develop their own feeding schedule. Follow your infant’s lead.

HERE FOR YOU: New Mothers’ Resources

**New Mother’s Support Group:** Join new moms in an open discussion about infant needs, breastfeeding, sleeping, and many other topics. Facilitated by a lactation specialist. **Meets every Tuesday, 10 to 11:30 a.m.**

**Back To Work and Breastfeeding:** Two-hour class for moms preparing to return to work and want to continue breastfeeding. Class covers pump use, offers strategies to deal with emotions in leaving your infant, and more.

For information about these classes and other lactation support, please call ValleyCare Lactation Services at 925-416-3598.

LACTATION SERVICES EASE NURSING TROUBLES
To make nursing work for you, start preparing during pregnancy with a breastfeeding class through ValleyCare’s Lactation Services. Here, nurses who are skilled lactation specialists will give you the education and support you need to start off right. ValleyCare Lactation Services also offers in-hospital assistance, private consultations, phone advice, breast pumps, and supplies. To speak with a lactation specialist, call 925-416-3598.
“Does your baby sleep through the night?” is one of the questions new parents hear most. And the bleary-eyed moms and dads of newborns almost always answer, “No.”

Newborn babies don’t know the difference between day and night yet—and their tiny stomachs don’t hold enough breast milk or formula to keep them satisfied for very long. They need food every few hours, no matter what time of day or night it is.

Nighttime Feeding
At first, the need to feed your infant will outweigh the need to sleep. Many pediatricians recommend that a parent not let a newborn sleep too long without nourishment. In practical terms, that means offering a feeding to your baby every three to four hours, and possibly more often for smaller or premature babies. Breastfed infants may get hungry more frequently than bottle-fed babies and need to nurse every two hours in the first few weeks.

For the first weeks of life, many parents place their child’s crib or bassinet in their own bedroom. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends against bringing your infant to sleep in bed with you for safety reasons. The AAP also recommends that healthy infants be placed on their backs to sleep, not on their stomachs. This has reduced the incidence of SIDS by more than 50 percent.

Newborn Sleep Patterns
A newborn may sleep as much as 16 hours a day (or more), often in stretches of three to four hours at a time. As babies grow, their periods of wakefulness increase. By 2 months of age, most babies are sleeping six to eight hours at night.

Always putting your baby in the crib for sleeping will help signal to the infant that this is the place for sleep. Keep in mind, though, it may take a few weeks for your baby’s brain to recognize the difference between night and day. You can help your baby’s body clock adjust toward sleeping at night by avoiding stimulation during nighttime feedings and diaper changes. Try to keep the lights low and resist the urge to play or talk with your baby. This will reinforce the message that nighttime is for sleeping.

Yatin Shah, MD, is a board certified pediatrician affiliated with ValleyCare Medical Foundation. To make an appointment with Dr. Shah, call 925-416-6767.
Avoiding Sleep Problems
Overly tired infants often have more trouble sleeping than those who’ve had an appropriate amount of sleep during the day. So keeping your baby up in hopes that he or she will sleep better at night will not necessarily work.

Consider establishing a bedtime routine (bathing, reading, and singing, for example) to help your baby relax at night. Even though your newborn may be too young to get the signals, setting up the bedtime drill early can keep you on the right track in the coming months.

What if your baby is fussy? It’s OK to rock, cuddle, and sing as your baby is settling down. For the first months of your baby’s life, “spoiling” is definitely not a problem. In fact, studies have shown that babies who are carried around during the day have less colic and fussiness.

Care for Yourself
While Caring for Your Little One

While you get used to taking care of your new baby, don’t forget to pamper yourself. Here’s how:

1. Since you’re bound to be up with feedings at night, try to grab a nap during the day, while your baby is sleeping.

2. Let friends and family members help you with chores. And lower your housekeeping standards to concentrate on the basics: eating, sleeping, and tending to your baby.

3. To conquer constipation—a common after-pregnancy complaint—drink plenty of water and other noncaffeinated fluids. In addition, choose high-fiber, whole-grain breads and cereals, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and get some daily exercise.

4. Return to your exercise routine as soon as your doctor gives the green light. In addition to relieving constipation, aerobic exercise, such as walking or biking, can melt away those pregnancy pounds, boost your energy level, and brighten your mood. But remember to begin slowly if you’ve recently been inactive. If you’re nursing, nurse or pump your breasts before you exercise, and be sure to drink enough water to avoid dehydration. If one sports bra doesn’t offer sufficient support, try wearing two.

5. Be patient with breastfeeding, especially if it’s your first baby. You also might need extra time getting started if you had a difficult labor or cesarean section birth. Always nurse with both the nipple and areola—the colored part surrounding the nipple—in the baby’s mouth. And avoid using soap, which dries the nipples. Plain water keeps them clean enough.

6. Be aware of your mood. As many as four out of five new moms normally feel a little blue for as long as two weeks after they give birth. If you experience extreme sadness, anxiety, or irritability that interferes with your day-to-day activities, call your doctor. You could have a treatable problem, such as postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, or a thyroid condition.
Reach Out and Touch Your Baby

In several studies, premature infants who received regular massages for seven to 10 days gained more weight and were hospitalized for fewer days than nonmassaged infants.

Full-term babies also profit from massage’s calming effects. In one study, 40 full-term infants were either massaged or rocked for 15 minutes twice a week for six weeks. The babies who enjoyed massages gained more weight and were easier to soothe, more sociable, and better sleepers.

Consider taking a class to learn many ways to soothe your infant with touch. In the meantime, get started by following these tips:

- Choose a peaceful time of day when interruptions are unlikely.
- Postpone the massage if your baby shows signs of being upset.
- Make sure the room is warm enough for your baby.
- Set the mood by playing soft music or singing lullabies.
- Use a small amount of oil. Since babies may mouth their hands, choose a cold-pressed vegetable oil such as olive, peanut, safflower, or sunflower oil. Warm it by rubbing your oiled hands together.
- Begin with the legs and feet, then work up to the tummy, chest, arms and hands, and face. Finally, turn the baby over to stroke his or her back.

LEARN INFANT MASSAGE BEFORE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

After your baby is born, ValleyCare nurses can teach you infant massage techniques while you are still in the hospital. It’s completely voluntary and takes place right in the Maternity Unit. Sessions are limited to two adults per baby. Ask your lactation consultant or nurse for details.
Calm Your Child’s Fever

Like a sneeze or a yawn, a fever is a normal response for the body. It’s a sign that the immune system is fighting an infection. But for many parents, a childhood fever may seem anything but natural. Your first reaction might be to try to immediately lower your child’s body temperature. However, experts recommend more of a wait-and-see approach.

Behavior Trumps Temperature
A fever is one of the body’s best defenses against illness. When bacteria or a virus attacks the body, an increase in temperature helps stop germs from thriving. In children, most fevers are harmless and won’t cause long-term problems. A fever may even be beneficial by shortening the duration of an illness.

So what should parents do when their child has a fever? Pediatricians recommend that parents not focus solely on lowering a child’s body temperature to a normal level. Instead, the best tactic is keeping the child comfortable.

A child has a fever if his or her oral temperature is 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit or above (100.4 rectally). Children with a fever who are still active and eating and drinking well may benefit best from plenty of fluids and rest. If a child is visibly uncomfortable—achy, fussy, not sleeping well—parents can take steps to lower the fever.

At-Home Care
When your child has a fever, follow this advice:

• Provide plenty of fluids for hydration. Good choices include water, Popsicles, clear soup, and gelatin, as well as breast milk or formula for babies. Avoid too much fruit juice or apple juice.

• Be smart about bundling. Too many layers may prevent a child’s fever from decreasing, even if he or she has chills. One lightweight layer of clothing and one lightweight blanket are sufficient.

• Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen, but only if your child is older than 6 months. Check package instructions for the appropriate dose or call your child’s doctor for assistance. Never give your child aspirin for a fever.

• Try a lukewarm bath, especially after giving fever-reducing medicine. Avoid cold or ice baths; they can cause a child to shiver, raising body temperature.

When should you call the pediatrician? It depends on your child’s age. Call immediately if the fever climbs above 100.4 degrees (taken rectally) for children younger than 3 months, 101 degrees for children between 3 and 6 months, and 103 degrees for children 6 months and older, recommends the American Academy of Family Physicians. Also call if there are signs of a more serious illness, such as sore throat, earache, skin rash, or severe headache.
When you’re pregnant, joint pain, pinched nerves, weight gain, and fluid retention can all make it hard to exercise regularly. In one study of 10,000 pregnant American women, almost 60 percent were found to be sedentary. So if you’re feeling too pooped to hit the treadmill, you’re not alone.

But it’s important to exercise moderately during pregnancy and also to resume an exercise routine after the baby is born. A 20 percent weight gain during pregnancy can increase the force on a joint by as much as 100 percent, causing joint pain. Also, if you’re overweight entering your next pregnancy, it can be harder to lose that weight afterward.

There’s no set guideline for when to start working out again. Start when your doctor says it’s safe and go at the pace he or she recommends. Here are some other tips:

• Commit to a weekly diet-and-exercise class. You’ll be more likely to keep weight off.
• Remember that exercise after pregnancy can help you sleep better and may help you cope with depression.
• If you feel too tired or achy to exercise, keep in mind that many women report that exercising after pregnancy helps relieve cramps, soreness, and swelling.

New Mom Wellness

Having a baby can cause changes to your body and lifestyle. New Mom Wellness, offered by LifeStyleRx, is a four-week program designed to help you regain your energy, live healthier, and stay motivated to take care of your family. Class sizes are small to optimize learning and include nutrition, relaxation, and stress management instruction, as well as exercise ideas and coping skills specific to being a new mom. The program also includes two physical evaluations with a certified personal trainer, a 50-minute massage, and a one-month membership to LifeStyleRx.

For more information on the New Mom Wellness Program, or for help getting back to exercise after having a baby, call 925-454-6342 or visit www.LifeStyleRx.com.