

baby checkup

by stephanie wood



eye openers

From crusting to redness, baby peeper problems can plague nervous new parents. Fortunately, most are no big deal. Here's what to watch for: **clogged tear ducts:** It's common for newborn tear ducts to clog and for tears to overflow onto a baby's cheeks. The remedy: **Apply a warm compress** to the inner corner of the eye and massage it gently. If you see crusting when your baby wakes up, just wipe it away with a damp cotton ball. But if pus drainage and crusting last throughout the day, call your doctor. **crossed eyes:** Many babies cross their eyes because the muscles that control them are still weak. If your child is 4 months or older and frequently cross-eyed, however, or if it occurs at the same time each day or during the same activity, **an eye exam is warranted.** **infection:** If the whites of one or both of your tot's eyes are very red, and perhaps crusty or draining pus, he may have conjunctivitis (pinkeye), a contagious bacterial infection. **Call the doc ASAP.**

size matters

Infant growth can be a confusing topic for new parents, says Harvard pediatrician Claire McCarthy, M.D. Here, her common-sense guidelines to how much, and how fast, your baby should be growing:

- **try not to get hung up on weight gain.** The basic expectations: A newborn will lose up to 10 percent of his body weight in the first week or so after birth, but then quickly gain it back. From there, pediatricians expect infants to double their birth weight by the 4-month checkup and triple it by their first birthday.
- **take heart in the charts.** The pediatrician will monitor your baby's growth on height and weight charts. Each chart should show an upward curve throughout the year with no sudden jump (say, from the 40th percentile to the 60th) at any one checkup.
- **but don't get obsessed with them.** While height and weight percentiles are usually in the same ballpark, genetics plays a big role. A baby in the 90th percentile in height and only the 50th in weight won't surprise your pediatrician if Dad or you are also tall and lanky.

fact or fable?

You have to wash your baby's clothes separately.

Fable. There's no need to make more work for yourself, says Manhattan dermatologist Jody Levine, M.D. For most babies, she says, you can use a standard detergent that's perfume- and dye-free, and thus wash the family's clothes together. You may want to be more careful if your baby is a premie or if sensitive skin runs in your family.



grain of truth How can you tell if your baby is overstimulated by too much noise and/or activity? She may blink a lot and turn away from the action before she actually begins to whine and cry.