

What to Consider Before Taking Your Baby Home Early from the Hospital

Your Baby's Hospital Stay

It is recommended that babies stay in the hospital for at least 24 hours after birth. This allows health care providers to:

- check your baby's vital signs often (temperature, heart rate and breathing rate)
- make sure your baby is feeding well
- watch your baby for early signs of illness
- make sure that there are no other concerns before going home.

Health problems, such as an infection or a problem with the heart or lungs, can develop quickly after birth. This is especially common in the first 24 to 48 hours.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies have normal vital signs for at least 12 hours before going home.

After Your Baby is Born

After your baby is born, his or her body goes through many changes. In most cases, all of these changes happen without any problems. However, in rare cases, serious problems can happen.

Breathing

Your baby goes from getting oxygen from the placenta to breathing air. When the lungs fill with air, changes happen in the heart and blood circulation. These changes start at birth and take 1 to 2 days to finish.

Regulating

Your baby's body has to learn how to regulate its temperature and blood glucose.

Feeding

Your baby has to learn how to feed. Even an experienced parent can be surprised by unexpected challenges of feeding a new baby.

Before you and your baby leave the hospital, your health care team wants to make sure your baby has had at least two successful feedings and has had both wet and soiled diapers.

Newborn Screening

According to state law, every baby born in Minnesota and Wisconsin will receive newborn screening unless a parent refuses in writing.

Newborn screening is a set of three tests that check babies for serious, rare disorders. Even if your baby seems healthy, he or she needs to be tested.

- **Blood spot screening** checks for more than 50 disorders. Finding these disorders early can help prevent serious health problems, disability, and even death.
 - The blood spot screening is done 24 hours after birth.
 - The blood draw can be done earlier, but it will have to be done again after 24 hours because of Minnesota and Wisconsin state law. If you do not want to stay in the hospital until 24 hours, you will need to take your baby to the clinic to have it done.

(over)

- **Hearing screening** checks for hearing loss in the range where speech is heard.
 - Identifying hearing loss early helps babies stay on track with speech, language and communication skills.
 - This screening can be completed 12 hours after your baby's birth.
- **Pulse oximetry screening** checks for a set of serious, life-threatening heart defects known as critical congenital heart disease (CCHD). If found early, babies with CCHD can often be treated with surgery or other interventions.
 - The CCHD screening is typically done 24 hours after your baby's birth when the results are more accurate.
 - If you do not want to stay in the hospital until 24 hours, the test can be done earlier, but it may not be as accurate.

Hepatitis B Vaccination

The Minnesota Department of Health recommends that all infants receive a hepatitis B vaccination before they leave the hospital. This vaccination will be offered to your baby before you go home. It can be given at any time regardless of when you leave the hospital.

Follow-up Care

If you do not want to stay in the hospital until 24 hours, please take your baby to see a health care provider as soon as possible after leaving the hospital.

Other Things to Consider

If you do not want to stay in the hospital until 24 hours, please consider the following risks:

- Your baby may have to come back to the hospital if he or she develops any health problems.
- You may have to take your baby to the Emergency Department if your baby has a severe illness.
- Your baby could have a higher level of illness.

You have a right to refuse care for your baby and leave the hospital before 24 hours. It is important for you to understand the risks to your baby if you leave the hospital too early.

To help keep your baby safe, you are encouraged to work with your health care team to decide when your baby is ready to leave the hospital.

Your Hospital Stay: A Beginning to Your Recovery

Think of your hospital stay as the beginning of your recovery and a time to learn about your baby and being a parent. You will get a chance to rest and have nutritious food.

You will be spending this time with your baby supported by professionals who can answer your questions.