

Elimination

Every infant will have his own pattern of elimination but most newborns will urinate six to twelve times and have one to six bowel movements a day. Newborns should have at least four wet diapers a day but may go several days without a bowel movement. Breast fed infants tend to have more frequent and looser bowel movements than formula fed infants and will often have a bowel movement every time they nurse. Newborns may have a pink or rust-colored stain in the diaper after urinating. This may be mistaken for blood but is a normal result of concentrated urine and will resolve within a few weeks. Call your doctor if it persists beyond a few weeks. Newborns will have black, tarry stools during the first two days after birth. After that, stools become yellow or green, seedy and loose. Some babies will not have a bowel movement every day and that may be normal as long as the stools are soft (like softserve ice cream). Stools normally will vary in color or consistency, sometimes from day to day. If stools are hard, “ball-like” or large and firm (like “Play-doh”), let your doctor know.

Often when having a bowel movement, infants will draw their arms and legs together and behave as if they are having difficulty passing stools. They may also turn red in the face and grunt. This is a normal pattern for newborns and does not mean that they are constipated. As long as the stools are of normal consistency, no intervention is necessary.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell when a newborn has diarrhea because the stools are already watery or loose. Helpful signs that your newborn has diarrhea are a sudden change in frequency of stools, fussiness, other ill family members, increased spitting up or vomiting. Fever greater than 100.4 may be associated with diarrhea but should be a reason to call your doctor immediately if your infant is less than 2 months old.

Call your doctor immediately if:

- Your baby has a rectal temperature greater than 100.4 degrees.
- Your baby has a distended abdomen or has inconsolable crying.
- You find bright red blood in the urine or stool.
- Your newborn has less than four urine voids in a 24 hour period.
- Diarrhea lasts longer than 7 days, your infant is less than 2 months old, or you find blood or mucous in the stools.



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