



Homebirth Services in Central Vermont

Signs of Illness in a Newborn.

Many parents doubt whether they will recognize if the baby is sick. When you have no experience with babies, being told that a sick baby behaves differently from a well baby is of little comfort. If everything about your baby seems unfamiliar, it is hard to have confidence that you can and will recognize changes that indicate your baby is ill. Besides, healthy babies can cry for a couple of hours each day. Crying does not tell you as much in the first weeks as it will when your baby is older. So how will you know if your baby is sick? Asking yourself these questions may help:

- Is there a change in the baby's behavior? Is the baby crying more than usual? Has the tone of the cry changed? Is the crying at a different time of day than usual? Is the baby more irritable than usual? Is the baby sleeping more or less than usual? Does the baby seem lethargic or listless?
- Has the baby's appetite or digestion changed? Is the baby eating less than usual? Has the baby vomited more than once? If the baby is vomiting, is the vomiting forceful? (This is called projectile vomiting.) Are there signs of constipation? That is, are the stools hard or more solid than usual? Are there signs of diarrhea? That is, are the stools watery, or more runny than usual? Are they more frequent than usual? Is the baby urinating less frequently than usual? Has the color of the urine changed?
- Has there been a change in the baby's breathing? Does the baby seem to have trouble breathing? Does the baby sound congested? Does the baby have a runny or stuffy nose? Is the baby coughing?
- How does the baby look? Is the baby's skin pale or flushed? Is there a rash anywhere on the baby's body? Do the baby's eyes look glassy or dull? Is there any discharge from the eyes?
- Does the baby have a fever?

Any of these changes could indicate illness. If you notice any of them, or other worrisome changes in your baby, call your baby's caregiver. When you call the office, be prepared to describe:

- The signs of illness about which you are concerned.
- How long the signs have been present.
- What you need: to have the caregiver return your call; to speak to the caregiver immediately, if you feel this is an emergency; or to arrange for the baby to be seen as soon as possible.