

CARE OF NORMAL NEONATE

The module is designed to complement in-service/pre-service education orientation and continuing education of nursing personnel involved in care of newborns.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- **Demonstrate evidence based every day care of the newborn baby**
- **Teach the mother how to look after her baby and what to do if her baby has any health problems**
- **Identify and manage at-risk and sick neonates**

MODULE CONTENTS

The module includes following elements:

- **Text material:** Easy to read format for quick reproduction and essential reference material for the participants. Key messages are highlighted in the boxes.
- **Webinar :** You will learn through a virtual classroom lecture.
- **Self-evaluation:** At the end of lesson you will be evaluated by MCQ examination.

I. CARE OF NORMAL NEONATES

1. INTRODUCTION

All mothers need help, support, and advice in the initial few days after delivery to ensure proper care of their newly born babies. The care and help given to mothers and babies in the first few days after birth are critical in maintaining the normality and preventing any complications in them.

2. WHY DO MOTHERS NEED HELP IN THE INITIAL FEW DAYS OF DELIVERY?

Ideally, all pregnant women should be counseled regarding the care of the baby during the antenatal period itself. This would help them to be mentally prepared to take care of their babies after birth.

After delivery, majority of mothers usually stay for a very short time in the hospital. During this short period, they

- need time to get to know their babies
- need time to rest (since they are often tired and exhausted after delivery)
- In addition, they need to know what care has to be given to their baby and how to carry out the care; they also need to know what to do if their baby is not well

Therefore, it is very important for the health care providers to help the mothers (whether at a health facility or at home) in this crucial time period. First time mothers often need more help and support for the proper care of their infants.

3. ROUTINE CARE AFTER BIRTH

The care a mother and her baby need in the initial few days after delivery can be broadly grouped under the following headings:

1. The postnatal environment
2. Every day care of the baby
3. Looking for danger signs and giving treatment
4. Preparation for discharge

3.1 The postnatal environment

A postnatal room should be kept warm with no draughts from open doors or windows. A temperature of atleast 25°C is required to keep a baby warm. Often, a radiant heater, blower or other devices for providing warmth are necessary to maintain the correct room temperature especially in winter months.

A mother and her baby should be kept together from birth (in bed or very near to each other). This helps the mother to get to know her baby and form an early close loving relationship (bonding); she can also respond quickly when her baby wants to feed, which helps establish breastfeeding.

In hot country, a bed net prevents a mother and baby becoming ill from diseases spread by mosquitoes and other insects (e.g. malaria).

Postnatal environment

- Ensure that the room is warm with no draught
- Keep mother and baby close together in same room and same bed
- Provide bed nets to sleep

3.2 Every day care of the baby

Here, we shall discuss the every day care needed by ALL newborn babies until the time of discharge from the health facility. The needs are the same even for babies born at home; it is the duty of the health care provider to ensure that each baby receives appropriate care irrespective of the place of delivery.

The key areas of every day care include:

- **Breastfeeding**
- **Warmth**
- **Cord care**
- **Hygiene**

Breastfeeding and warmth (thermal protection) are covered in detail in separate modules; similarly, cord care is explained in the module on 'Care at birth'. In this module, only the salient features are discussed.

The key areas of every day care of a newborn baby include: breastfeeding, warmth, cord care, and hygiene.

3.2.1. Breastfeeding

To support mothers in breast feeding their babies, health workers must be both skilled and knowledgeable. They should know the key points of correct positioning and attachment of the baby to the breast. In addition to teaching about positioning and attachment, health workers must also be able to give mothers the correct information about infant feeding.

Mothers should be informed that in the first few days after birth, only a small amount of thick yellow milk (*Colostrum*) is secreted (if she needs to express at this time, only a teaspoonful can be expressed). They should be reassured that even this much is sufficient for a normal baby in the first 2 days and that the amount of milk secreted will gradually increase. The importance of giving colostrum should be emphasized and any doubts or false beliefs should be clarified.

The steps of breastfeeding counseling and support are covered in detail in the module on 'Feeding of normal and low birth weight babies.' Some important points are summarized below:

Every day care: Breastfeeding

1. Support exclusive breastfeeding **on demand** day and night.
2. Ask the mother to **get help** if there is a breastfeeding difficulty.
3. **Assess** breastfeeding in every baby **before** planning for **discharge**.
4. If the mother reports a breastfeeding difficulty, assess breastfeeding and help her with attachment and positioning.
5. **DO NOT** discharge the baby if breastfeeding is not established.

3.2.2. Warmth

The essential steps in preventing heat loss and maintaining the normal temperature in a newborn baby are discussed in detail in the module on 'Temperature regulation.' Some important steps are summarized in the box below:

Every day care: Ensuring warmth

1. Explain to the mother that keeping baby warm is important for the baby to remain healthy.
2. Dress the baby or wrap in soft dry clean cloth.
3. Cover the head with a cap especially if baby is small.
4. Keep the baby within easy reach of the mother. Do not separate them.
5. If mother and baby need to be separated, ensure the baby is dressed or wrapped and covered with a blanket.
6. Assess warmth every 4 hours by touching baby's feet; if feet are cold, use skin-to-skin contact, add extra blanket and reassess.
7. Keep the room for the mother and baby warm.

3.2.3. Cord care

Care of the umbilical cord at the time of birth has been explained in the module on 'Care at birth'.

Routine cord care in the first few days of life (until the cord dries and falls off) is summarized below:

Every day care: Keeping the cord healthy

1. Wash hands before and after cord care.
2. Put NOTHING on the stump.
3. Fold nappy (diaper) below the level of the stump.
4. Keep cord stump loosely covered with clean clothes.
5. If stump is soiled, wash it with clean water and soap. Dry it thoroughly with clean cloth.
- 6. Look for signs of infection (daily)**
 - Pus discharge from the cord stump
 - Redness around the cord especially if there is swelling
 - High temperature (more than 37.5°C) or other signs of infection
7. Explain to the mother that she should seek care if the umbilicus is red or draining pus or blood.

It is important to teach the mothers that the umbilical stump should be left dry; they SHOULD NOT APPLY ANYTHING on the stump. Health care providers should look for any possible sign(s) of infection of the umbilical stump (see above). Mother should be explained about these signs and advised to report if they are present.

3.2.4. Hygiene

The important aspects of personal hygiene such as washing, bathing are given in the box below:

Every day care: Ensuring hygiene

1. Wash the face, neck, and underarms of the baby daily.
2. Do not bathe the baby before 24 hours of age or if the baby is cold. In case of small babies, bathe only after the baby reaches a weight of 2000g.
3. If bath is given
 - Ensure room is warm and there is no draught while changing clothes, washing and bathing
 - Use warm water for bathing
 - Thoroughly dry the baby, dress and cover after bath
 - Take extra precautions if the baby is small
4. Wash the buttocks when soiled. Dry thoroughly.
5. Use cloth diaper on baby's bottom to collect stool. Dispose off the stool as for woman's pads. Wash hands after disposing.
6. Do not apply 'Kajal' on eyes

3.3 Looking for danger signs and giving treatment

It is important that mothers, care givers and health workers are able to recognise the signs and symptoms which indicate that the baby is not well ('DANGER SIGNS'). Early recognition of the danger signs will help in identifying those babies who need urgent care and treatment.

The important danger signs are given in the box below:

DANGER SIGNS

1. Not feeding well
2. Less active than before
3. Fast breathing (more than 60 breaths per minute)
4. Slow breathing (less than 30 breaths per minute)
5. Moderate or severe chest in-drawing
6. Grunting/ moaning
7. Convulsions
8. Floppy or stiff
9. Fever (temperature $>37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$)
10. Temperature $<35.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ or not rising after re-warming
11. Umbilicus draining pus or umbilical redness extending to skin
12. More than 10 skin pustules or bullae, or swelling, redness, hardness of skin
13. Bleeding from umbilical stump
14. Pallor

3.4 Normal neonate: Preparing for discharge

3.4.1 Ensure immunization

All babies should receive the following 3 vaccines within the first week of life and preferably before discharge from the health facility:

- BCG,
- OPV-0,
- Hepatitis B (HB-0)

It is the duty of the health workers to ensure that the baby gets immunized before discharge. Mothers should also be given an 'Immunization card' (if available) and advised regarding the immunization schedule.

3.4.2 Check if the baby is fit for discharge

A baby can be discharged if the following criteria are fulfilled (see box):

Criteria for discharge from a health facility

1. Feeding well (suckling effectively) at least 8 times in 24 hours
2. No danger signs
3. No need for any medication except vitamins
4. For small baby: feeding well and gaining weight adequately (see module on 'Feeding of normal and low birth weight babies')