Caring for your 4-month-old baby

Name _____ Weight _____ Height _____ Date _____

Keep Your Baby Safe

Use a Car Seat

Install the car seat properly in the back seat, rear-facing until your baby reaches the seat manufacturer's maximum rear-facing height or weight limit.

Use a Safe Crib

- Crib slats must be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart.
- Don't use a crib with sharp edges that your baby can hit.

Prevent Suffocation

- Place your baby on your baby's back to sleep.
- A string can choke your baby. Keep strings and necklaces away from your baby.
- Some toys are small enough or have parts small enough that your baby could choke on them. Don't give your baby toys like these. Give your baby toys made for your baby's age.

Prevent Injuries

- Don't leave your baby alone - ever. Use extra care when your baby is in water, near young children or pets, or on any surface that your baby can fall from.
- Don't use a walker that will let your baby move across the floor.
- Set the water heater thermostat so that the water is not hotter than 120ºF.
- Make sure you have smoke detectors on your ceiling. Test alarms monthly.
- Keep your baby away from hot things (like cigarettes or an iron). Don't hold your baby when you are drinking something hot (like coffee).
- Never shake, toss or hit your baby.

Provide Healthy Nutrition

- Continue breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula. No juice before 12 months.
- Breastfed or partly breastfed infants need vitamin D 400 IU daily. Formula-fed infants need it if taking less than 32 oz of formula daily; confirm with the clinician.
- Start complementary foods around 6 months when ready, not before 4 months.
- Follow hunger and fullness cues. Discuss feeding or growth concerns with the clinician.
- Never prop a bottle or put your baby in bed with a bottle.

Practice Healthy Parenting and Care-giving

Encourage Healthy Development

- Smile at and gently touch your baby as much as possible.
- Create a schedule for your baby's day and try to keep to it.
- Excite your baby's sense of sight. Show your baby a sturdy, brightly colored picture book.
- Excite your baby's sense of touch. Let your baby touch objects with different textures (like soft, hard, glossy or furry).
- Excite your baby's sense of hearing. Talk and sing to your baby and give your baby objects that make noise (like a bell or rattle)
- Strengthen your baby and your baby's coordination. Help your baby push up on your baby's arms while on your baby's belly; help your baby sit up in the corner of a couch; offer your baby something to pull on.
- Never yell at your baby. You can keep your baby safe by moving your baby or removing the object that makes you worried.

Deal with Crying

- When your baby cries, ask yourself, "Is my baby hungry? Does your baby want to be changed? Does your baby want to be held? Is your baby too stimulated (from too much touch, noise or light)? Is your baby in pain (like from teething)? Does your baby have a fever?"
- Don't feed your baby every time your baby cries. Don't use a pacifier every time your baby cries. Use it when you think your baby needs to calm down.
- For teething, gently massage gums or use a cool, not frozen, teether. Avoid numbing gels; ask the clinician before medicine.

Sleep

- Place your baby on your baby's back in the crib when your baby is drowsy but still awake.
- Your baby needs naps and a regular bedtime.
- Don't change your baby's diaper in the middle of the night unless your baby has pooped or has a rash.

Clean Your Baby

- If your baby boy is uncircumcised, don't try to pull back your baby's foreskin.
- Don't bathe your baby every day. When you do, use warm water and mild baby soap.

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Prevent Sickness - Identify It Early

- Keep your baby away from cigarette smoke. Do not smoke with the baby in the car; do not smoke in the home.
- Don’t let someone touch your baby without first washing their hands.
- Call the clinic right away if your baby has a fever, is coughing a lot or may be dehydrated. A fever is a rectal temperature of 100.4°F or higher. A dehydrated baby has fewer than five wet diapers a day, cries without making tears, or has dry lips and a pasty mouth.

Development

All babies develop at their own rate. At this age you may notice that your baby:

- Smiles and laughs
- Initiates interaction with others
- Starts to babble
- Drools (not always a sign of teething)
- Brings hands together and to mouth
- Lifts head and chest while lying on tummy
- Shows good head control
- Rolls over and reaches for objects

Next visit: about 6 months. Bring the immunization record and review vaccine information. Do not give fever medicine before shots unless the clinician directs it. Ask for a weight-based dose if medicine is needed afterward.