

The Baby Times

MERTON LODGE SURGERY

PARENT NEWSLETTER - POST-BIRTH

BREAKING NEWS

♡ YOUR BABY ♡ HAS ARRIVED!

Welcoming a new baby brings a whirlwind of emotions, joy, excitement and love, but it can also come with moments of tiredness, worry and uncertainty as families adjust to life with a newborn.

Caring for You and Your New Baby

The arrival of a new baby is one of life's most special moments. It can bring immense joy, excitement and love as families begin this new chapter together. However, we also recognise that the early weeks and months after birth can sometimes feel overwhelming. Many parents experience tiredness, uncertainty, and worry as they adjust to caring for a newborn.

Merton Lodge Surgery has produced this newsletter to offer guidance, reassurance and signposting to support for parents who have recently given birth or welcomed a new baby into their family.

Within these pages you will find useful information about your baby's health checks and immunisations, support for your own wellbeing, advice on common concerns, and details of local services and groups that may be helpful.

Our aim is to ensure you know where to turn for advice and support during this important time. If you ever feel unsure or worried about your baby or your own wellbeing, please remember that help is available and you are not alone.



Looking After Yourself After Birth



After welcoming a new baby, it is very common for much of the attention to focus on the baby's needs. However, your own recovery and wellbeing are just as important. Whether you had a vaginal birth or a caesarean section, your body has been through a major physical event and it is normal to need time to heal.

The first few weeks or even months after birth can involve a mixture of physical recovery, hormonal changes, tiredness and emotional adjustment. Try to rest when you can, accept help from family and friends, and remember that recovery takes time.

Common Physical Symptoms After Birth

Many women experience some physical symptoms in the weeks after giving birth. These are usually normal and improve as your body heals.

Common symptoms may include:

- Vaginal bleeding (lochia) for several weeks after birth
- Soreness or stitches after a vaginal birth
- Pain or tenderness around a caesarean section wound
- Afterpains (cramping) as the womb returns to its normal size
- Breast tenderness or engorgement as feeding becomes established
- Tiredness and general body aches



Most of these symptoms will gradually improve over the first few weeks. Gentle movement, keeping wounds clean, and taking pain relief recommended by your healthcare professional can help.

When to Seek Medical Advice: It is important to seek medical advice if you experience:

- Heavy bleeding (soaking a pad in an hour and/or passing large clots)
- Fever, chills or feeling generally unwell
- Increasing pain, redness, swelling or discharge from stitches or a caesarean wound
- Severe headaches or visual disturbance
- Pain or swelling in your legs
- Low mood, anxiety, or feeling unable to cope

If you are worried about any symptoms, please contact the surgery, your midwife, your health visitor, or NHS 111 for advice.

You Matter Too!

It is very common for parents to focus entirely on their baby and forget to check in with themselves. Taking care of your own health helps you care for your baby.

If you are struggling physically or emotionally, please reach out.

Support is available and you do not have to manage everything alone.

Further information on postnatal recovery can be found on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/labour-and-birth/after-the-birth



Your Baby's Health in the First Few Months

The first few weeks with your new baby are a time of adjustment for the whole family. Newborn babies sleep frequently, feed often and need lots of close contact and care. It is normal to have questions or worries during this time. Your GP practice, midwife and health visitor are all here to support you.

Further information on caring for your newborn can be found at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby



REGISTER NOW

Registering Your Baby with the GP



Please register your baby with the practice as soon as possible after birth so that their medical record can be created and appointments arranged when needed. You can register online via the practice website or by paper form available from reception.

Booking Your Baby's First Appointments



You and your baby will have a 6–8 week postnatal check together with a GP, and their first immunisations are given from 8 weeks of age.

As appointments can fill up quickly, we recommend booking these around 2–3 weeks in advance. A good time to arrange these is when your **baby is around 3 weeks old**.

This allows time to book:

- Baby's 6–8 week postnatal check
- Mother's postnatal check
- Baby's 8-week immunisations

Protecting Your Baby from Illness

Newborn babies have developing immune systems, so it is important to help reduce the risk of infection.

You can help by:

- Washing hands before handling your baby
- Asking visitors to wash their hands
- Sterilising equipment
- Avoiding contact with people who have coughs or colds where possible
- Ensuring good ventilation indoors
- Keeping vaccinations up to date



Safe Sleep

To reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS):

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep
- Use a firm, flat mattress
- Keep the cot clear of pillows, toys and loose bedding
- Keep your baby in the same room as you for the first 6 months



When to Seek Medical Advice

Contact the practice or NHS 111 if your baby:

- Has a temperature above 38°C if under 3 months
- Is feeding poorly or very sleepy
- Has breathing difficulties
- Appears unwell or you are concerned for any reason



Protecting Your Baby: Childhood Immunisations

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect babies and children from serious illness.

The UK childhood immunisation programme is carefully designed using extensive scientific research and safety monitoring to ensure vaccines are both safe and effective.

Vaccines used in the NHS have been studied for many years and continue to be monitored by organisations such as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Millions of children receive these vaccines safely every year.

Following the recommended schedule helps protect your baby at the time they are most vulnerable to infection.

Further information can be found at:

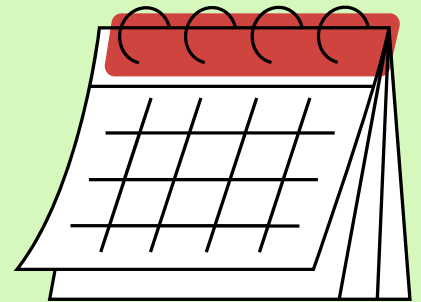
www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

When Your Baby Will Receive Vaccines

Your baby will usually receive their first vaccinations at 8 weeks of age, followed by further doses at 12 weeks and 16 weeks.

These appointments protect babies against serious diseases including:

- Diphtheria
- Tetanus
- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- Polio
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Hepatitis B
- Pneumococcal infection
- Rotavirus (which causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting)
- Meningococcal B (MenB)



These infections can be particularly dangerous for young babies, which is why vaccination begins early in life.

Why Timing Is Important

Vaccines are scheduled at specific ages to provide protection as early as possible, when babies are most at risk.

Attending your baby's vaccination appointments on time helps to:

- Protect your baby from serious illness
- Reduce the spread of infections in the community
- Ensure your baby develops the strongest possible immunity

If you are unable to attend an appointment, please contact the practice to rearrange it as soon as possible.

Are Vaccines Safe?

Vaccines used in the UK are rigorously tested and continually monitored for safety. The benefits of vaccination in preventing serious illness greatly outweigh the small risk of side effects.

Most babies experience no problems, although some may develop mild side effects such as:

- A slight temperature
- Redness or swelling at the injection site
- Being unsettled for a short time

These symptoms are usually mild and settle quickly.

We Are Here to Help

If you have any questions or concerns about your baby's vaccinations, please speak to a member of the practice team. We are always happy to discuss this with you.

When Things Feel Overwhelming

Welcoming a new baby is a wonderful experience, but it can also be exhausting and emotionally challenging. Many parents experience a wide range of feelings in the early weeks and months after birth. Alongside joy and excitement, it is also common to feel tired, anxious, low, frustrated or overwhelmed at times.

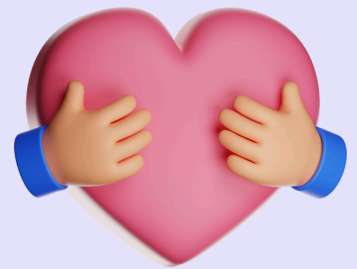
These feelings are more common than many people realise. It is not something to feel ashamed of or something you need to hide, and you are not alone.

Postnatal Mental Health

Some parents experience postnatal depression (PND) or other emotional difficulties after having a baby. This can affect mothers, partners and other caregivers.

Symptoms can include:

- Feeling persistently low or tearful
- Feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope
- Difficulty sleeping even when the baby sleeps
- Loss of enjoyment in things you normally enjoy
- Feeling anxious, irritable or detached
- Feeling you are struggling to bond with your baby



If you recognise these feelings in yourself, please know that help and support are available, and speaking to someone early can make a real difference.

You may find it helpful to talk to:

- A trusted friend or family member
- Your midwife
- Your health visitor
- Your GP practice



Healthcare professionals understand that the early weeks or months with a baby can be difficult at times. They will not judge you and are there to support you. Talking openly about how you feel can help you get the support you need.

Further support can be found at:

NHS Postnatal Depression Support:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-natal-depression
PANDAS Foundation (Perinatal Mental Health Support):
www.pandasfoundation.org.uk

If Stress and Exhaustion Build Up:

Caring for a newborn can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Lack of sleep, constant crying, worry and the pressure of caring for a baby can sometimes feel overwhelming, even for the most prepared and loving parents.

It is important to recognise that most parents and carers do not intend to harm their baby. In rare situations, shaking can occur as a reaction to extreme stress, frustration or exhaustion when a baby will not stop crying.

Recognising when stress is building and taking steps early can help prevent these situations from happening.

Crying Babies and Coping

All babies cry. Some babies cry for longer periods than others, particularly in the first few months of life. This can be incredibly difficult and even distressing for parents, especially when you are tired or feeling low. Sleep deprivation can be very distressing and have an impact on your physical and mental health.

If you feel overwhelmed:

- Place your baby somewhere safe, such as their cot or Moses basket
- Take a few minutes to step away and calm yourself
- Ask a partner, friend or family member for help if possible
- Reach out to your health visitor, midwife or GP practice if you are struggling



Taking a short break when your baby is safe is sometimes the best way to protect both you and your baby.

Never Shake a Baby

Shaking a baby can cause serious injury to a baby's brain and can be life-threatening. This is why health services provide information and support to parents about coping with crying.

Supporting Parents

If you know a parent who seems overwhelmed, exhausted or struggling, offering support can make a real difference.

Simple things can help, such as:

- Listening without judgement
- Offering practical help where possible
- Encouraging them to speak with their health visitor, GP or midwife
- Reassuring them that needing support is normal



Parents should feel able to talk openly about how they are feeling without fear of blame or judgement.

Early support helps families cope and keeps babies safe.

Remember

The early months with a baby can be intense and tiring, but support is available. Talking to someone and asking for help early can make these difficult moments easier to manage.

If you are struggling, please reach out to your health visitor, midwife or GP practice. They are there to help and support you.

The PANDAS Foundation offers a free confidential text support service where parents can message for help if they are struggling with perinatal mental health.

Parents can text “PANDAS” to 85258 at any time, day or night, to start a conversation with a trained volunteer who can provide immediate support.

They also offer other support such as:

- Helpline: 0808 1961 776
- WhatsApp messaging support
- Online support groups
- Peer support for dads and partners

The text service is particularly helpful because many parents struggle late at night when they are tired, alone or feeding a baby, and it provides instant, confidential support.

Need someone to talk to at night?

The PANDAS Foundation offers free, confidential support for parents experiencing postnatal depression or emotional difficulties.

- Text PANDAS to 85258 for support at any time
- Call 0808 1961 776
- Visit www.pandasfoundation.org.uk

You can speak to someone who understands what you are going through.



Meeting other parents can help reduce feelings of isolation and provide valuable support during the early months with your baby.

Alford Children's Centre (Family Hub)

A key local service for families with children from pregnancy to 5 years old. They offer a range of free support and activities including:

- Baby and toddler sessions
- Baby massage groups
- Health visitor appointments
- Parenting advice and early years support

Families can attend sessions at any children's centre across Lincolnshire.

☎ 01522 843000

Find sessions and information: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/62583/alford-children-s-centre



Useful Contacts and Support

If you need advice or support during the early weeks with your baby, there are a number of services available locally and nationally.

Merton Lodge Surgery

Your GP practice can provide advice, postnatal checks, baby health advice and support.

By phone: 01507 463218

Contact the practice via our website: www.alforddocs.co.uk

Health Visiting Team (Lincolnshire)

Health visitors provide support with:

- Baby feeding
- Child development
- Sleep and settling
- Parenting advice
- Emotional wellbeing

01522 843000

PANDAS Foundation (Perinatal Mental Health Support)

Support for parents experiencing postnatal depression, anxiety or emotional difficulties.

0808 1961 776

Text PANDAS to 85258 (available day or night)

www.pandasfoundation.org.uk

ICON – Coping with Crying Babies

Advice and support for parents managing crying babies.

www.iconcope.org

NHS 111

If you need medical advice outside of GP hours or are unsure what to do.

111

www.111.nhs.uk



A Final Word

Welcoming a new baby into your family is a special and exciting time. Many parents find the early weeks full of love, discovery and unforgettable moments as you begin to get to know your baby. It is also normal for there to be times when things feel tiring, uncertain, overwhelming or maybe it's just not how you imagined feeling or how you felt with previous pregnancies. Every family's experience is different and so is every pregnancy and birth, and there is no "perfect" way to do things.

For most parents, confidence grows quickly as you learn what works for you and your baby. However, if you ever do find things difficult, please remember that support is always available and reaching out for help is completely okay. Be kind to yourself during this time.

From everyone at Merton Lodge Surgery, we wish you and your family happiness as you begin this new chapter together.