

When to call a doctor

Identifying the red flags

Every infant grows and develops differently, and it has been rightly said that infant growth is not an exact science. The first year is surely very critical in the life of an infant, with the development of so many skills like motor, hearing, vision, and communication. During the first year of life, infants require exceptional care, thus there is a greater need to hold and play with the baby more often, change positions of the baby while a child is sleeping, and respond quickly to the tears. Most importantly, you need to identify the red flags on time and call a doctor.

So, the question is what are those red flags or danger signs and when should one call a doctor.

- **Fever** – fever is not always bad, in most cases, it just shows that the immune system is doing its job. But if fever is high, it can be bad for the brain and other organs; further it could be an early sign of serious infection. If it goes above 100.4°F, it may be a reason for concern.

When you do call a doctor, be prepared to answer questions like: when did you last check the body temperature, what is your child's temperature, when did you first notice it, are there any other symptoms, etc.

- **Drowsiness and unresponsiveness** – It is fine for a child to feel bit drowsy, especially after a child has been fed. But if you feel the sharp change in responsiveness or difficulty in waking the child, it could well be a sign of infection like meningitis.
- **Cold, cough, and other respiratory problems**- though they are quite common, they could be a reason for concern in a child of age below 3 months, as in that age group even simple things can worsen very quickly. Call a doctor if:
 - The child is having difficulty getting air into the lungs.
 - The child has a persistent cough and stuffy nose for more than a week.
 - You can see that muscles between the ribs are being pulled while breathing.
 - The child does not make much noise.
- **Fits and seizures**- even if they are brief, they are reason for serious concern. During the fit or seizure, don't try to put your finger or anything inside the child's mouth. Roll the child on his or her side and keep the top leg bent; this is called recovery position.
- **Rash**- especially the rashes that will not fade after pressing the skin with a finger are reason for concern and calling a doctor.
- **Frequent vomiting and diarrhea**- the content of water in child's body is higher as compared to the adults, and they also tend to become dehydrated quickly. Though one or two episodes of vomiting or diarrhea may not be a reason for concern, if they repeat more often or for a few hours, then call your pediatrician immediately.

Each child is different, so be guided by the knowledge and your instincts, and never hesitate to call a doctor. If such a thought has come to your mind, don't neglect it. There must be some serious reason for such a thought, moreover, no one has ever suffered by calling a doctor too early or too often. The risk is just the opposite.

About the author:

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Dr. Preet is a family physician, and he has been practicing medicine for last 15 years and often sees children with various illnesses in his day-to-day practice. He understands the importance of identifying the serious symptoms on time and keeping the environment safe for toddlers. He is also a passionate writer.

*Our experts are constantly writing some amazing health and safety tips for you and your children. They love sharing their knowledge, and we hope you find it useful as well. However, you should always consult with your doctor first. Be sure to leave a comment and share your thoughts with other parents in our community. For more amazing articles visit **www.LeighaMarina.com***