

Care of the Newborn / Moses

Tammy: What a joy a newborn baby is! There is so much excitement and celebration. We all have different traditions don't we? What do you do in your culture when someone has a new baby?

Carol: One of my favourites is the Lebanese culture where all visitors get a chocolate to take home!

Tammy: Mmm, sounds good to me! We all share the joy of a new birth. And we all share the concern of raising healthy and happy children.

Carol: The newborn time is wonderful, but these precious little beings are helpless aren't they? They totally depend on us. Today we're going to talk about some things we can all do to keep them as healthy and happy as possible.

Tammy: We are *Women of Hope*...welcome! Every culture has a unique way of looking after babies. Today we're going to think about some things we can all do to help look after their health.

Carol: Today Dr Kerry, who has a small baby and a toddler, has come to answer our questions on caring for newborns.

Tammy: Welcome, Dr Kerry. We're looking forward to learning some new things today, in our roles as mothers, grandmothers, aunts, cousins, sisters and carers for the little ones. First, can you tell us something about yourself.

Dr K: Sure – well as you heard already I'm a mum first. But I'm also a family medical doctor, so I help people with all kinds of illnesses.

Carol: So, as a doctor, what do you think is the most important thing to do to keep a baby healthy?

Dr K: The most important *gift* you can give to your baby is breast milk. This provides all the nutrition - and fluid - that he or she needs to grow healthy and strong. And it means your baby gets lots of cuddles!

Tammy: Well that's easy isn't it! So what advice do you have for first time mothers?

Dr K: Your baby needs lots of skin to skin contact with you, the mother, as soon as possible after birth. This stimulates the hormones that help to produce the milk. And as the baby attaches and sucks, this helps the *placenta* (or afterbirth) to come away. Babies are incredible! Most can find where to attach on with very little help. Often, it's best to let the baby learn to attach itself. Sometimes, though, there are problems. Getting as much help from those around you is very important. If there is any pain, get someone to check that you're doing it right.

Carol: So, how long should we give the baby just breast milk?

Dr K: The World Health Organization recommends only breast milk - nothing else - for the first 6 months. Even in hot weather, there is no need to add water and definitely not any other drinks! In fact, adding other food too soon can cause problems.

Each culture suggests different ways of starting soft foods, but it's very important to wait until your baby is at least 4 months old.

And breast milk also contains things to help the baby fight off infections. The colostrum, the sticky, yellow first milk that is produced in the first few days is especially important.

Tammy: Would you ever give the baby formula as well as breast milk?

Dr K: Well...if the mother is sick or not producing enough milk, you may need to do this. But if you give the baby formula often and the breast is not emptied, it will not fill up again so well...and you will start to produce less milk. And formula can increase the risk of a baby having diarrhoea.

If you *are* going to give your baby formula, find formula that is right for a young baby, and mix it with clean, boiled water. And it's very important to sterilise the bottles...so your baby doesn't get sick.

Carol: And of course breast-feeding is much cheaper than bottle-feeding...and it's very convenient...it's always there with you!

Tammy: ...And you don't need to wash and sterilise bottles. Dr Kerryn, tell us more about why breast feeding is so good...

Dr K: Well...when you breast-feed, it stops ovulation – the usual producing of the female egg, once a month – so it acts as a contraceptive. If you add some formula you may lower the effect of this and you might have a surprise pregnancy!

Carol: I was nervous about the umbilical stump...where the baby's cord was.

Dr K: Yes...lots of first time mothers are. Most babies have no problems, but it's really important to keep it clean. Use a clean washer and wash it with cooled boiled water. Don't put anything else on it or cover it as it needs to have air on it to dry. Usually the dead tissue from the cord separates by the end of the first week.

If it becomes a bit red, your baby health provider can treat this. But if it gets quite red and has some pus coming out, see your doctor or health care worker for treatment.

Tammy: I used to worry that I would make my baby sick - so I became very careful about washing my hands.

Dr K: That was wise. Our hands carry lots of germs, so washing your hands before you touch a newborn is very important. It's very easy for them to get sick, especially in the first month.

Any fever in the first 3 months could mean that they have a very bad infection. So if they your baby has a fever, *a/ways* take them to your health care worker or doctor.

Tammy: How can a mother know if her baby is sick?

Dr K: Most mothers seem to know when something is wrong. But if you're not sure about anything always see your baby health DR K, or your health care worker.

Tammy: So Dr K, tell us how a normal, healthy baby should be...

Dr K: A well baby is alert. It has warm, soft "full" skin, a moist tongue and mouth and lots of wet nappies, or diapers. The bowel motions will be soft and a bit green at first, but then becoming a nice bright yellow. Your baby will feed and sleep often, and have a loud cry...but not *all* the time.

Carol: Sometimes a new baby looks a bit yellow...

Dr K: Yes - it can be normal for a baby to have some jaundice or yellowing of the skin in the first month. But...there are times when it is *not* normal. Here are 4 things to look out for:

You need to see your doctor or health care worker if...

- it becomes yellow in the first day...
- if it's a very yellow colour all the way down to the legs...
- if the jaundice lasts more than a week for a baby born on time; ...or more than two weeks for a baby born early.
- and, if the baby is unwell in other ways.

Tammy: Mmm – you need to take your baby to the doctor if its skin is yellow in the first day...if the yellow goes right down the baby's legs...if it lasts for more than a week, or two weeks...and if the baby is unwell in other ways.

Dr K: That's right.

Tammy: It's good having Dr Kerryn on *Women of Hope* today to tell us about caring for our newborn baby – especially if it's our first baby isn't it?

I sometimes had trouble getting my babies to sleep...do you have any advice for new mothers?

Dr K: Every person will find what suits their baby best...some will cuddle them to sleep and others will put them straight into their baby cot.

Something very important for us to talk about here is SIDS – or *sudden infant death syndrome*...where a baby can die suddenly, even when they are not sick.

Carol: What can we do to reduce the risk of SIDS?

Dr K:

- Don't over heat the baby – you can check its temperature by feeling on the back of its neck.
- Keep the baby away from pillows or heavy blankets to prevent it from being suffocated. If the baby sleeps in a cot, have a firm mattress with no gaps down the side. Put its feet at the end of the cot...and tuck in any bedding. Keep any pillows and soft toys out of the cot. Make sure there is plenty of air-flow around the baby.

Carol: We've discussed a lot of things about newborn babies today haven't we! Let's see if we can remember these Tammy...

Tammy: Breast feeding is best.

Carol: Wash your hands.

Tammy: Be alert for any fever or sickness.

Carol: Keep the umbilical stump clean...with clean boiled water.

Tammy: Make sure they sleep safe!

Dr K: Sounds right! Most of all, our babies need our love and care. And Mum knows the baby best.

Tammy: Thank you so much Dr Kerryn for your good advice today.

We've been talking about how to care for a newborn baby, and now we're going to hear from Ros, about a newborn whose life was in great danger. It's good to have you here again Ros.

Ros: Thanks Tammy, I'm very happy to be here. Dr Kerryn made me realize how tough babies are, yet how many things *could* go wrong! Well, today I want to tell you another story about a special little baby...

You might remember that we talked recently about how God called Abraham, thousands of years ago, and promised to give him a land to live in, and many descendants.

Carol: Yes, I do remember that; and God's promise that all nations would be blessed through him. (Exodus Ch. 1-12)

Ros: That's right Carol. Well, this story involves Abraham's family. Here is the account from God's word.

After four generations Abraham's descendants were a growing clan, and they found themselves in Egypt. They settled down, and over the years they grew in numbers there. There were so many of them that the native Egyptians began to resent and fear these Israelite migrants.

Carol: I can imagine that...it often happens today. Groups of migrants and refugees can still be treated badly sometimes because of their race.

Ros: I'm afraid you're right about that. Well, the Bible says that the rulers made laws that forced them to be the workers of the country. These Israelites became the Egyptian's slaves. There were cruel overseers who forced them to do back-breaking, dirty work, building cities for the king, or Pharaoh.

Things were very bad for the Israelites. Then they remembered their agreement with the God of their ancestors, and they cried out to him for help. God heard their cry and was full of compassion for them. He acted on the promise he had made. God keeps his promises.

In spite of the cruelty, still the Israelites grew in numbers. So the Pharaoh made a terrible decision. He ordered his soldiers to kill the Israelite baby boys by throwing them into the river Nile, the great river that watered the land of Egypt.

One Israelite family had a daughter, Miriam, who was growing up fast. Then the mother became pregnant again. When her baby was born her heart sank - a baby boy. He was such a sturdy, beautiful baby, she just loved him, and she knew she could not hand him over to the soldiers. What was she to do?... She hid him in their house, but by the time he was three months old she knew she couldn't hide him forever. So this mother made a little waterproof boat, a basket made of reeds with a lid, and she put her baby in it. She placed the boat among the reeds that grew on the river's edge.

Carol: That was pretty clever...I suppose in one way she actually *had* obeyed the king and thrown her baby into the Nile! But it seems pretty risky as well. I think she must have prayed a lot to God to keep her baby safe.

Ros: I'm sure she did. The Bible tells us next that she sent his big sister Miriam to play nearby, to keep watch over the baby.

Then something unexpected happened... Pharaoh had a grown-up daughter, and on this day she came down to the river with her servant women to wash. She saw the little boat and she was curious, so she sent her maid to get it. When she opened it she saw the baby; and the baby started to cry. Now she may have been Pharaoh's daughter, but she was a woman too, and her heart melted. She felt so sorry for the poor little thing, even though she could see he was an Israelite baby. She was wondering what to do.

Now remember...his sister was nearby. Miriam was as clever and bold as her mother, I think. She came up to the princess and said, 'Shall I go and find a wet DR K from the Israelite women, who could breast feed the baby for you? The princess agreed quickly, and who do you think Miriam called? Her mother, of course! She had plenty of breast milk, and the princess even *paid* her to care for the baby. And when he was weaned, the princess adopted him as her own son. She called him Moses.

Carol: That's an amazing story from God's word, isn't it? God made sure that Moses was kept safe. He answered the prayer of his mother in a remarkable way.

Tammy: I think God understands a mother's heart and a mother's prayers, don't you? Do you pray for your children? We can hardly help it, can we? And we don't need special words to pray. We don't need to be in a special place or to bring offerings to get God's attention. We just need to tell him the concerns we feel and the hopes we have. We can put them into *his* hands, and trust him to do what is best. The Bible tells us often that God hears our cries.

We should never give up praying for our children, whether they are new born or quite grown up. It is as important as feeding them and getting their injections!

Ros: I'm sure God had compassion on the mother and the baby, even more than the princess did. But God had another, very particular reason for keeping Moses safe. He had a purpose for Moses, as he has a purpose for you. That baby, Moses, grew up in the king's household, safe and

healthy, and well educated. And one day God spoke to him. He was going to use Moses to answer the cry of the slaves. But that's another story.

Carol: And we'll have to ask Ros to come back and tell us what happened next. But right now, I would like to pray for you, my friend, if you are caring for little ones.

Dear God our Father in heaven, I want to pray for my sisters. Thank you for giving them life. Help them to carry out the purposes you have for them. And thank you for the precious little ones that you have given to them to take care of. May they be good carers for them, and trust their children to you. We ask you to keep these children safe. May they grow up to know you and follow you. I pray in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Tammy: It's time for us to go now. If you would like to contact us... visit our website at TWRWomenofHope.org. You can also email us. The address: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. Or visit our Facebook page.

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