

When a baby is *first* born, their *immune* system is not very strong. So, if your child gets sick within the first *few* months of life, it is more dangerous than if they get sick later on.

Ways to prevent sickness in your child

- **Attend your well-baby visits:** By attending all of your well-baby visits, your medical provider can keep tabs on your baby's health and growth and will alert you to the seasonal illnesses that pop up in your area.
- **Stay home if possible:** Staying home for the first few months can really protect them, and any visitor who comes into the house should clean their hands. Keep hand sanitizer by the door and encourage your friends and family members who come in to clean their hands before touching your newborn baby
- **Wash your hands:** Teach your family to wash their hands and to cover their mouths and noses before *sneezing* or coughing. Also, train them to cough and sneeze into their elbows or into facial tissues instead of their *hands*. ^{1,2}
- **Keep your home as germ free as possible:** When someone else is sick, wipe down all surfaces and door handles.
- **Get a flu shot:** Always keep your child away from anyone who is sick with the flu. ³

How to boost your baby's immune system ⁴

- Not *smoking*
- Taking naps: Help your baby get plenty of rest
- Breastfeeding
- Limiting exposure: Keep your baby home the first three months after birth

Getting sick is part of *life*. The only upside is that each illness helps make our immune system stronger. Take some preventative measures by *supervising* your baby, by keeping them as *comfortable* as possible when they're sick or hurt, by watching for dehydration and fever, and by seeing your medical provider anytime you are concerned. ⁴

Resources include:

1. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases. CDC Features - Healthy Living - Wash Your Hands. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/features/handwashing/index.html>, accessed 8/27/2018, updated April 2, 2018.
2. Williams, Glenda MD-Pediatrician. Interview.
3. Centers for Disease Control, Seasonal Influenza (Flu), About Flu, What Parents Need to Know, Protecting Against Influenza (Flu): Advice for Caregivers of Young Children. Found at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/infantcare.htm>, accessed 8/27/2018, updated February 8, 2018.
4. Sears, William MD, Sears, Martha, RN, The Baby Book, Revised and updated, Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby from Birth to Age Two, Little Brown and Company, copyright 1992, 2003, 2013, Chapter 26, Keeping Your Baby Healthy
5. Caplan, Arthur Ph.D. Department of Medical Ethics and Health Policy at the University of Pennsylvania. "In praise of germs: Why common bugs are necessary for kids", NBC News, Vitals, Mar 26, 2012. Found at http://vitals.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/03/26/10857376-in-praise-of-germs-why-common-bugs-are-necessary-for-kids accessed 8/27/2018.