

## **THE POSTNATAL CHECK**

### **What happens at your postnatal check**

- You will be asked how you are feeling as part of a general discussion about your mental health and wellbeing.
- You will be asked if you still have any vaginal discharge and whether you have had a period since the birth.
- Your blood pressure will be checked if you had problems during pregnancy or immediately after the birth.
- You may be offered an examination to see if your stitches have healed if you had an episiotomy or caesarean section.
- If you were due for a cervical screening test while pregnant, this should be rescheduled for 12 weeks after the birth.
- You will be asked about contraception.
- If you are overweight or obese, with a BMI of 30 or more, you may be weighed. Your doctor should give you weight loss advice and guidance on healthy eating and physical activity.

### ***Tell your doctor if...***

- you are feeling sad or anxious – looking after a baby can sometimes feel overwhelming. Don't feel you have to struggle alone or put on a brave face. It's not a sign that you are a bad mother. You need to get help, as you may have postnatal depression. Your doctor or health visitor can provide help and support.
- you are having trouble holding urine or wind, or you are soiling yourself
- having sex is painful
- you're not sure if you have had 2 doses of the MMR vaccination – if you have not had these, your practice nurse will offer them, with a gap of at least 1 month between doses. You should avoid becoming pregnant for 1 month after having the MMR vaccination.

## **THE 6 WEEK CHECK**

### **How is the child's physical examination done?**

The health professional will give your baby a thorough physical examination including various measurements and a hearing check. They'll also ask you questions about how your baby is feeding, how alert they are, and about their general wellbeing.

Your baby will need to be undressed for part of the examination.

During the examination, the health professional will also:

- look into your baby's eyes with a special torch to check how their eyes look and move
- listen to your baby's heart to check their heart sounds
- examine their hips to check the joints
- examine baby boys to see if their testicles have descended into the scrotum
- examine genitalia
- examine femoral arteries in baby's groin

### ***What does the newborn physical examination check for?***

The examination includes an overall physical check specific screening tests.

#### **Eyes**

The health professional will check the appearance and movement of your baby's eyes. They're looking for cataracts, which is a clouding of the transparent lens inside the eye, and other conditions.

About 2 or 3 in 10,000 babies are born with problems with their eyes that need treatment. But the examination can't tell you how well your baby can see.

#### **Heart**

The health professional will check your baby's heart. This is done by observing your baby, feeling your baby's pulses, and listening to their heart with a stethoscope.

Sometimes heart murmurs are picked up. A heart murmur is where the heartbeat has an extra or unusual sound caused by a disturbed blood flow through the heart.

Heart murmurs are common in babies. The heart is normal in almost all cases where a

murmur is heard. But about 1 in 200 babies has a heart problem that needs treatment.

#### **Hips**

Some newborns have hip joints that aren't formed properly. This is known as developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH). Left untreated, this can cause a limp or joint problems. About 1 or 2 in 1,000 babies have DDH that needs treating.

#### **Testicles**

Baby boys are checked to make sure their testicles are in the right place. During pregnancy, the testicles form inside the baby's body. They may not drop down into the scrotum until a few months after birth.

In about 1 in 100 baby boys, the testicles only descend partially or not at all. This needs treating to prevent possible problems later in life, such as reduced fertility.

### ***Does my baby have to have the examination?***

The aim of the examination is to identify any of the problems early so treatment can be started as soon as possible. It's strongly recommended for your baby, but not compulsory.

You can decide to have your baby examined and screened for any or all of the conditions.

If you have any concerns, you should talk to your midwife or the health professional offering the examination.