

Glossary of Terms for New Parents

A

Acid Reflux: When stomach contents come back up into a baby's throat or mouth, causing spit-up, discomfort, or fussiness—common in newborns and often improves with age.

APGAR Score: A quick assessment of a newborn's health performed at 1 and 5 minutes after birth, measuring Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity, and Respiration.

Attachment Parenting: A parenting philosophy that emphasizes physical closeness and responsiveness to strengthen the bond between parent and child.

Areola: The darker skin surrounding the nipple.

B

Baby Acne: Tiny red or white bumps that appear on a newborn's face, usually in the first few weeks—caused by hormones and typically clears up without treatment.

Babywearing: The practice of carrying a baby in a sling, wrap, or carrier.

Baby-Led Weaning (BLW): An approach to introducing solids where babies self-feed appropriate finger foods rather than being spoon-fed purées.

Birth Plan: A document outlining preferences for labor and delivery.

Bilirubin: A yellow substance produced during the normal breakdown of red blood cells, elevated levels cause jaundice.

Blocked milk Duct: A clogged milk duct that can cause pain and swelling in breastfeeding mothers.

Blocked Tear Duct: When tears can't drain properly from a baby's eye, causing watery eyes or mild discharge—common in newborns and usually clears up on its own within the first year.

Burping: Helping baby release swallowed air during or after feeding.

C

Colic: Excessive, unexplained crying in an otherwise healthy baby, often defined as crying for more than 3 hours a day, 3+ days a week.

Colostrum: The first milk produced during pregnancy and immediately after birth, rich in antibodies and nutrients.

Cradle Cap: A harmless skin condition characterized by scaly patches on a baby's scalp.

Cluster Feeding: When a baby feeds frequently in a short period, often in the evening.

D

Diaper Rash: Skin irritation in the diaper area, caused by moisture, friction, or other factors.

Dream Feed: Feeding a sleeping baby before parents go to bed to potentially extend nighttime sleep.

Diastasis Recti: Separation of the abdominal muscles that can occur during pregnancy.

E

Ear Tubes: Tiny tubes placed in a child's eardrums to help drain fluid and prevent frequent ear infections—usually a quick procedure done when infections keep coming back or affect hearing.

Engorgement: Painful overfilling of the breasts with milk.

Erythema Toxicum: A common, harmless newborn rash consisting of small white or yellow bumps surrounded by red skin.

Exclusive Breastfeeding: Feeding a baby only breast milk, with no other food or drink.

F

Fontanelle: Soft spots on a baby's head where bones haven't fused yet.

Foremilk: The thinner milk that comes first during breastfeeding.

Fourth Trimester: The first three months of a baby's life, considered a transition period from womb to world.

G

Growth Spurt: Periods of rapid growth when babies may be hungrier and fussier than usual.

GERD (Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease): A digestive disorder that affects the muscle between the esophagus and stomach, causing acid reflux.

H

Hernia: A small bulge or lump (often near the belly button or groin) that happens when part of the intestine pushes through a weak spot in a baby's muscles—usually harmless and often goes away on its own.

Hindmilk: The fattier milk that comes later in a feeding session.

Hip Dysplasia: A condition where the hip socket doesn't fully cover the ball portion of the upper thigh bone.

I

IBCLC: International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, a healthcare professional specializing in breastfeeding.

Immunizations: Vaccines given to protect against specific diseases.

J

Jaundice: A yellowing of a baby's skin and eyes due to excess bilirubin in the blood.

K

Kangaroo Care: Skin-to-skin contact between baby and parent.

Kegel Exercises: Pelvic floor exercises that strengthen muscles supporting the uterus, bladder, and bowels.

L

Latch: How a baby attaches to the breast during feeding.

Letdown: The release of milk from the breast during breastfeeding.

Lochia: Vaginal discharge after childbirth consisting of blood, mucus, and tissue.

M

Mastitis: Inflammation of breast tissue, often caused by infection.

Meconium: A baby's first stool, greenish-black and tarry in consistency.

Milia: Small white bumps often appearing on a newborn's nose, chin, or cheeks.

Milestones: Significant developmental achievements like rolling over, sitting up, or first words.

Mollera: Spanish term for fontanelle (soft spot).

N

Nasal Aspirator: A device used to clear mucus from a baby's nose.

Neonatal: Relating to newborns in the first 28 days of life.

NICU: Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, specialized care for premature or ill newborns.

Nipple Confusion: When a baby has difficulty switching between breast and bottle.

O

Oxytocin: Hormone that stimulates milk letdown and uterine contractions.

Object Permanence: Understanding that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be seen, typically developing around 8 months.

P

Pacifier: A rubber, plastic, or silicone nipple given to a baby to suck on.

Pediatrician: A doctor specializing in children's health.

Perineum: The area between the vagina and anus, which may tear or be cut (episiotomy) during childbirth.

Postpartum: The period after childbirth (typically considered the first 6-8 weeks).

Postpartum Depression (PPD): Depression that occurs after childbirth.

Prolactin: Hormone responsible for milk production.

PURPLE Crying: An acronym describing normal infant crying (Peak, Unpredictable, Resistant to soothing, Pain-like face, Long-lasting, Evening-clustering).

R

Rooting Reflex: When a baby turns toward touch on their cheek, searching for a nipple.

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus): A common respiratory virus that can be serious in infants.

S

Sleep Regression: Periods when babies who were sleeping well suddenly start waking more frequently.

Sleep Training: Various methods to help babies learn to fall asleep independently.

SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome): The unexplained death of a seemingly healthy baby during sleep.

Spit-Up: Small amounts of milk that come back up after feeding, different from vomiting.

Startle (Moro) Reflex: An involuntary response where a baby spreads out their arms and legs, then pulls them back in, often when startled.

Swaddle: Wrapping a baby snugly in a blanket to provide comfort and security.

T

Teething: The process of teeth emerging through the gums.

Thrush: A yeast infection that can affect both a baby's mouth and a mother's nipples.

Tummy Time: Placing a baby on their stomach while awake to strengthen neck and shoulder muscles.

U

Umbilical Cord: The cord connecting the baby to the placenta in the womb, leaving a stump after birth that dries and falls off.

UTI: Urinary Tract Infection, which can occur in babies and cause irritability and fever.

V

Vernix: The white, waxy substance that coats a baby's skin in the womb.

Vitamin K Shot: An injection given to newborns to prevent bleeding problems.

W

Wonder Weeks: A theory suggesting babies go through predictable mental developmental leaps that can cause fussiness.

Wean: The process of gradually stopping breastfeeding or bottle feeding.

X-Y-Z

Yellow Days: Term referring to days 3-5 postpartum when mature milk comes in and babies may develop jaundice.

Zombie Feed: A middle-of-the-night feeding done while you're barely awake—think minimal lights, no talking, and maximum sleep preservation for both baby and parent.