

the first SIX weeks

FROM GETTING SOME SLEEP TO MASTERING THE BABY-CARE

BASICS, THE 10 THINGS YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW TO SUCCEED AS A NEW MOM

WHILE YOU WERE PREGNANT, YOU MAY HAVE READ ENOUGH BABY-CARE MANUALS

that you fancied yourself going head-to-head with Supernanny. But now that a newborn has entered the scene, you've undoubtedly found that babies don't always go by the book, and your days are a bit more ... hectic ... than you'd imagined.

"It's a huge gift to yourself to accept that this early period is going to be total chaos," says Vivian Glyck, author of the 2008 book *The Tao of Poop: Keeping Your Sanity (and Your Soul) While Raising a Baby*. "Let go of expectations such as where the baby will sleep or how much you'll get done—and know that eventually order will emerge."

Another gift you can—and should—give yourself is the right to listen to your own instincts. "If you think something just doesn't seem right with your baby, call your pediatrician's office," says Amy Guiot, M.D., a pediatrician at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. "And don't be afraid to call again."

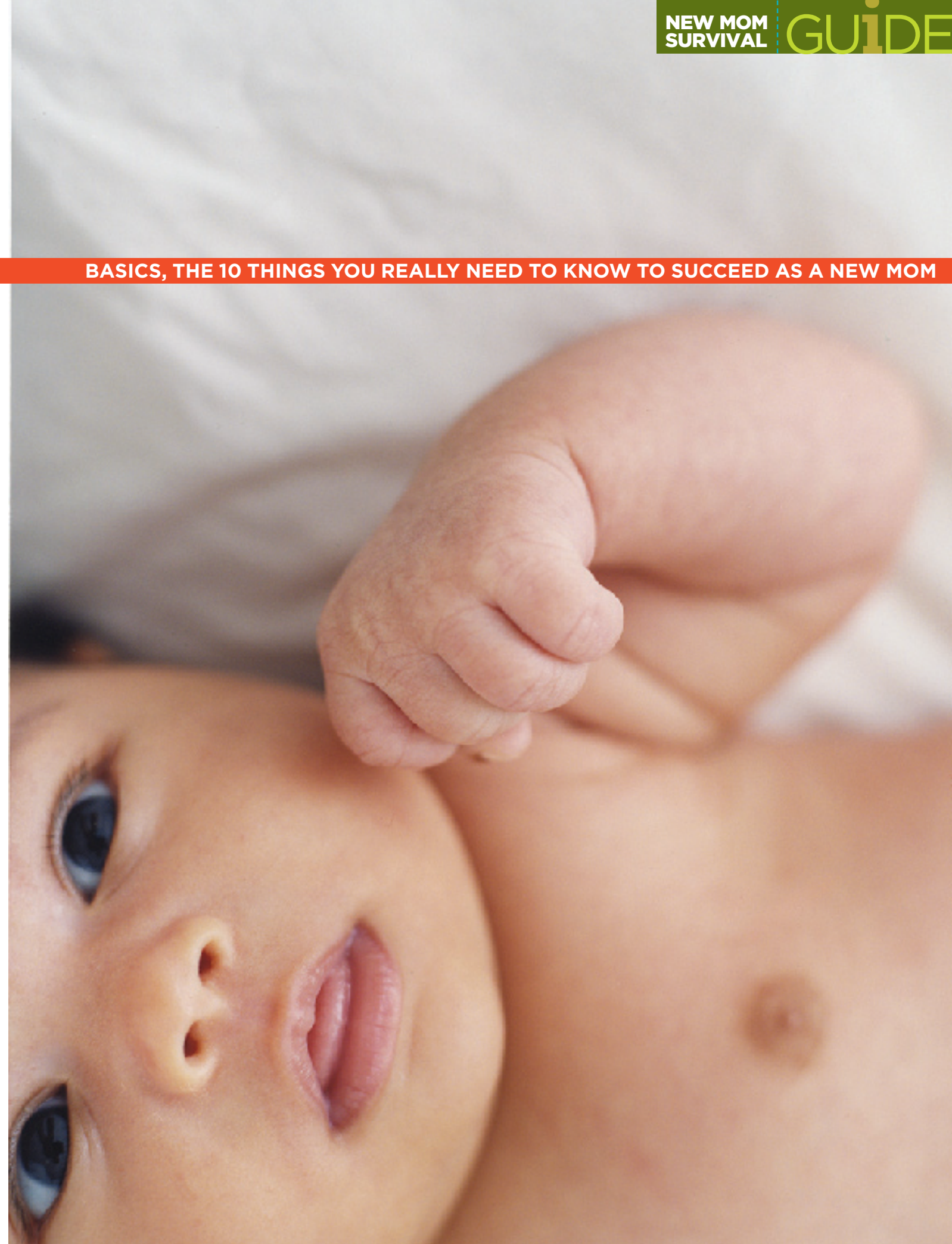
But because mother's intuition sometimes needs a boost, we've compiled the 10 most important things you'll need to do to care for your newborn (and yourself!) during this exhilarating, exhausting time.

one **CALM A CRYING BABY** Mothers of difficult-to-console babies may be more likely to be depressed, according to a study from Brown University Medical School and the Rhode Island Department of Health. It's no wonder—those piercing cries can drive even the coolest mom to tears.

To calm your baby, first make sure she's not hot or cold (she should be dressed as warmly or as coolly as you), hungry (try nursing or offering a bottle), sick (take her temperature rectally and call the pediatrician if it's above 100.4° F) or wearing a dirty diaper. Next, wash your hands and offer her your pinky to suck. It's also OK to give a pacifier if breastfeeding is going well. If she's still wailing, put her in a sling or carrier and walk around with her. "When you 'wear' a baby, the closeness and motion make her feel one with mom again," says Vicky York, I.B.C.L.C., a lactation consultant and certified postpartum doula in Portland, Ore. If she's still frantic, try taking her outside; a change of scenery and temperature often does the trick.

Finally, many parents attest to the swaddling, shushing and other soothing techniques illustrated in *The Happiest Baby on the Block* book or DVD by Harvey Karp, M.D. (thehappiestbaby.com). Still others swear by the *Sounds for Silence* CD by Harry Zehnirith, M.D. (soundsforsilence.com), which re-creates the womb environment with a composition of household noises such as vacuum cleaners, coffee grinders and electric toothbrushes blended with sounds your baby heard in utero.

➤ By Kim Schworm Acosta Photography by Ted & Debbie



Order will eventually emerge.

NO MATTER HOW SLOWLY YOUR DAYS SEEM TO PASS, THE NEWBORN PHASE IS GONE IN A BLINK.

two **BATHE YOUR BABY LIKE A PRO** The kitchen sink is the ideal spot to scrub your sprout, says York. "If you use a bathtub, you have to get on your knees and bend over the tub," she points out. "Plus, the top half of her body gets cold fast." Before you take the plunge, make sure you have all the necessities assembled: two towels, baby soap (this doubles as shampoo), cotton swabs, a diaper and a clean outfit. Now for the bath: Lay your baby on one of the towels spread out on the kitchen counter, soap her, then rinse her under the tap with warm water, holding her by the ankles and around the shoulders. Quickly wrap her in that towel and shampoo her head, then rinse; wash her face with the corner of the towel. Dry her head and face with the second towel, and inside her ears and between her toes with the cotton swabs, then dress her.

three

INVOLVE YOUR PARTNER If you think you're having a rough time figuring out your new role, your mate is probably even more baffled. "Dads want to help, but they don't always know what's most needed," says York. True, much of the early caregiving falls on you, especially if he's back at work and/or you're nursing, but try adopting the "help him help you" motto: Tell your partner how much you'd appreciate it if he took care of grocery shopping or other household chores—and be specific. Encourage him to change or bathe the baby, reserving criticisms for safety issues only. After a month, when breastfeeding is well established, pump your milk so he can do a nighttime feeding. (Nothing grates on a new mom's nerves more than having her partner ask how the night went!)

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PERFECT THE BREASTFEEDING LATCH Having your baby latch on correctly can help mitigate many potential breastfeeding difficulties. To make sure she's "docked" correctly, first position the baby on her side, with her belly touching yours. When you put her to your breast, make sure she takes the entire nipple and a good portion of the areola in her mouth. If she doesn't, insert your finger in the corner of her mouth to break the suction, then try again. (For more on the latch and other issues related to breastfeeding, see "Ages & Stages" on pg. 32.)

If you just can't seem to get it right, or if you have other problems such as pain, call a lactation consultant ASAP. The International Lactation Consultant Association offers referrals at ilca.org.

six **ACCEPT HELP** Whether volunteer or paid, help with everything from making meals to burping your baby to mailing your thank-you notes is essential. Cleaning and cooking will likely prompt you to crash and burn by your third or fourth week, so lean on your friends or relatives or hire a housekeeper or postpartum doula. "Many moms think they can muscle through it, but allowing others to run errands, cook meals or give you some time alone is important," Glyck says.

And remember that guests are there to see the baby and bestow gifts, not judge your hostessing skills. "With my first baby, I was baking something every day for all the visitors," says Kim Duk-Soon Olivieri, a mother of two in Bellaire, Texas. "For the second baby, I bought cookies and that was it."

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GET YOUR FRUSTRATIONS OUT Whether it's your friend, mother or neighbor, you need someone in your life who can be a sounding board who vows not to pass judgment on anything you say or do in the first six weeks. "You want someone you can be topless around," says Glyck, "or who you can joke with about where the return counter for your baby is!"

On a more serious note, your confidant should also know the difference between normal baby blues and more serious postpartum depression. While many new moms feel overwhelmed, tired and a bit "down," symptoms that last longer than two weeks and include deep sadness or anxiety, lack of interest in or discomfort around the baby, and/or lack of appetite need medical attention.

Have faith

Like baby acne and bowed legs, that incredibly frightening new-parent feeling won't last long. "The only thing that would calm my baby was driving around town for hours," says author Vivian Glyck. "I pictured myself doing this until he was 20; I didn't realize how fast things would change." So when you're in the thick of it, remember this: **Your nipples won't hurt forever; your stomach will flatten; you'll soon get four, five, even six hours of uninterrupted sleep; and your love is enough to see you—and your baby—through.**



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SLEEP WHENEVER YOU CAN Rest isn't a luxury—it's necessary for your physical and emotional recovery. Try whatever works: napping when the baby sleeps, using a bedside bassinet or sharing your bed with the baby. "We had the nursery and crib all ready to go, but my baby ended up sleeping with us the first six weeks," says Glyck. If you do choose to co-sleep, make sure your sleeping arrangement is safe; for guidelines, visit the University of Notre Dame's Mother-Baby Behavioral Sleep Laboratory at nd.edu/~jmc kenn1/lab/pamphlets/milwaukee.html.

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GO FROM BREAST TO BOTTLE (AND BACK!) Experts agree that giving a breastfed baby a bottle at about 4 weeks of age won't cause "nipple confusion." Start pumping between feeding sessions to store your breast milk; it can be kept in the refrigerator for up to three days and in the freezer for three to four months.

Your baby may reject the bottle at first, but trying different nipples and staying out of the room while someone else gives the bottle should help. If the idea of pumping several times a day when you return to work is overwhelming, consider expressing once a day and supplementing with formula.

However, if you don't continue breastfeeding—or never get the hang of it—toss your guilt out right along with the nursing pads. "I tell moms it's OK if the breastfeeding just isn't working, and their relief is evident," says pediatrician Guiot. "The moms are happier, and that means the babies are happier."

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GET YOUR CAR SEAT INSPECTED While vehicle accidents are a leading cause of infant death, babies who are in child-safety seats have an 80 percent lower risk of fatality, according to Safe Kids USA. Unfortunately, estimates are that 4 out of 5 seats are installed or used incorrectly.

To avoid this pitfall, read both your car seat's and your vehicle's owner manuals carefully, and take the time to have your handiwork inspected. Visit nhtsa.gov (click on "locate a child seat fitting station") for an online ZIP code directory of police stations, car dealers and individuals qualified to provide free child-passenger safety checkups.

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MAKE LOTS OF MEMORIES

Sooner than you think, it will be hard to imagine that your baby was ever this small. So you don't forget (and for a fun way to chart her growth), have someone take a weekly photo of you and your newborn in a favorite chair. As the months go by, you'll see less of the chair and more of her.

Thanks to digital cameras, some for less than \$100, and free online photo-sharing sites (such as snapfish.com or shutterfly.com), relatives can order (and pay for!) photos of your little one themselves.

Also, hang a calendar in the nursery for jotting down developmental notes, such as "reached for rattle."

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Survival tips For more on making it through your newborn's first weeks home, visit fitpregnancy.com/babyessentials.