

When Can My Baby Go Out?

My first response to this question is to ask where does he want to go. Keep in mind that these are my guidelines based upon some science, some experience, and mostly my opinion. The first trip he will want is the journey home from the hospital. Make sure that you have a car seat that fits your baby and fits your car. Read the instructions. Yes, *read the instructions!!*

For the first month all trips away from the house should be for essential and important visits. You will be making some visits to the doctor's office and perhaps the hospital lab for some blood tests if she is jaundiced. There may even be some indispensable visits to important relatives or friends that are a must. After two months, you should be able to take her anywhere she wants to go.

The first health issue regarding travel with a newborn is temperature control. By two weeks of age his feedings should be adequate to provide both growth and energy stores. Also by that time the mechanisms that regulate body temperature should be working well enough to allow for slight, short term variations in environmental temperature. The house or car should be 60 - 70 F, and he should have one more layer of clothing than a comfortable adult. Be sure to remember a cap for his head during these early trips.

The second health issue is exposure to infectious or contagious disease. Most normal newborns can tolerate a cold without any complications, but true influenza may be another story. Although I would certainly not recommend that a household member who comes down with a "bad bug" during a winter outbreak be sent away, I would try to keep a

newborn fairly protected from infection. The best way to do that is to ***wash hands before handling her*** and ask any visitor obviously ill to come back at a later date when they are recovered.

One of the biggest dilemmas in pediatric medical care is what to do with a young baby who has a fever. In babies under six months of age it can sometimes be hard to tell if an illness is serious or not. The symptoms and physical exam may not be helpful, but lab tests could possibly aid in deciding how sick a baby is. Because of this, some doctors will automatically order blood and urine tests on febrile babies less than four months old. Most pediatricians also have an age below which they will automatically hospitalize an infant with a fever and after obtaining blood, urine and spinal fluid cultures, begin IV antibiotics for 2-3 days pending the results of the lab work and the hospital course. This may sound drastic, but lives have been saved and complications avoided by over-reacting to these young febrile infants. So a four week old baby with a fever will end up being treated as if he is seriously ill even if it is just a cold.

So what's the short answer?	There isn't one.
Where does the baby want to go?	How old should she be?
Doctor's Office	1 - 2 Days
Grand Ma's House	4 - 5 Days
A walk outside on a nice day in a sling or Snuggli	2 Weeks
A visit to your workplace to show her off (8-10 people)	1 Month
A trip to the store, church, or across the country	2 Months

Remember, the single most important thing is that anyone who touches the baby should wash his or her hands!