

Glossary of useful terms

Term	Meaning
Additives	Substances added to food to improve flavour, colour, texture or stability. Some additives can cause allergic reactions. Check the labels on food packaging before you buy.
Allergies	<p>Disorders of the immune system often also referred to as atopy. Certain substances (called allergens) trigger bad reactions in some people. There are many different types of allergens, but three of the most common are pollen, dust mites and nuts.</p> <p>Common allergic reactions include eczema, hives, hayfever, asthma, food allergies, and reactions to the venom of stinging insects such as wasps and bees. Mild allergies like hayfever are very common and cause symptoms such as allergic conjunctivitis, itchiness, and a runny nose.</p> <p>Allergic reactions can cause a range of symptoms. Some can be quite mild, and some are more serious, and even life-threatening. Some of the most common symptoms include the following: sneezing, wheezing, sinus pain (feelings of pressure or pain high up in the nose, around the eyes and at the front of the skull), runny nose, coughing, nettle rash/hives, swelling, itchiness (of the eyes, ears, lips, throat and roof of mouth), shortness of breath, and sickness, vomiting and diarrhoea.</p> <p>A variety of tests now exist to diagnose allergies. Treatments include: avoiding the allergen that you are allergic to, antihistamines, steroids or other oral medications, immunotherapy and targeted therapy. Make sure you contact a doctor or health professional before you take or give your children any drugs.</p>
Asthma	<p>An allergy that causes the airways of the lungs (the bronchi) to become inflamed and swollen. This results in respiratory symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and a feeling of tightness within the chest or bronchial airways.</p> <p>The symptoms of asthma vary from person to person, from mild to severe. A severe onset of symptoms is known as an asthma attack, or 'acute asthma exacerbation'. Asthma attacks can be life-threatening and may require hospital treatment.</p>
Baby blues	Feeling sad or mildly depressed a few days after your baby is born. The baby blues are very common – eight out of 10 new mothers feel like this. They can be caused by hormone changes, tiredness or discomfort and usually only last a week. More severe depression or anxiety that lasts longer than a week could be postnatal depression (page 18).
Balanced diet	A diet that provides a good balance of nutrients.
Colic	Frequent crying in a child, usually from weeks two to 12. Although colic is common, no one knows exactly what causes it. It can be very distressing for parents.
Colostrum	This extra-special breastmilk is full of germfighting antibodies that will help protect your baby against infections that you have had in the past.

Term	Meaning
Contraception (also known as birth control)	Contraception prevents or reduces your chances of getting pregnant. See page 15 for the different types of contraception that are available.
Croup	Croup is caused by an infection of the voice box and windpipe. This causes a child to produce a cough that sounds like a bark as well as a rasping sound when they breathe in.
Diarrhoea	Frequent and watery bowel movements. Diarrhoea in babies and very young children can cause them to become dehydrated.
Eczema	A chronic skin condition that causes the skin to become itchy, reddened, dry and cracked. Atopic eczema is the most common form of eczema, and mainly affects children.
Fontanelle	A diamond-shaped patch at the front and top of a baby's head where the skull bones have not yet fused together. During birth, the fontanelle allows the bony plates of the skull to flex so that the baby's head can pass through the birth canal. The bones usually fuse together and close over by a child's second birthday.
Formula milk	Cows' milk that has been processed and treated so that babies can digest it. It comes in powder or liquid form.
Immunisation (also known as vaccination)	A way of protecting your child against serious disease. Vaccines stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies without the child having to become infected with the actual disease. Once children have been immunised, their bodies can fight those diseases if they come into contact with them.
Jaundice	The development of a yellow colour on a baby's skin and a yellowness in the whites of their eyes. It is caused by an excess of the pigment bilirubin in the blood. Jaundice is common in newborn babies and usually occurs approximately three days after birth. It can last for up to two weeks after birth or up to three weeks in premature babies. See page 96 for more information.
Lice	Tiny insects that are parasites. They have flat, colourless bodies and can be difficult to see. Lots of children get head lice, regardless of whether their hair is clean or dirty. They catch them just by coming into contact with someone who is already infested.
Local health services	A range of medical, mental health and social care services in a particular area that meet the needs of the local population.
Mastitis	An infection in the breasts caused by blocked milk ducts. Symptoms include hot and tender breasts and flu-like symptoms. See page 30 for how to treat it.

Term	Meaning
Meconium	The first stools that a baby passes. Meconium is made up of what a baby has ingested during their time in the uterus, including mucus and bile. It is sticky like tar and has no odour.
Paediatrician	A doctor specialising in the care of babies and children.
Perinatal	The time shortly before and after the birth of a baby.
Perineum	The area between the anus and the scrotum in the male and between the anus and the vulva (the opening to the vagina) in the female.
Personal child health record (PCHR) (also known as the 'red book')	Given to parents when a child is born. When you visit a clinic, your GP or a hospital, your healthcare professional will use the red book to record your child's weight, other measurements, immunisations and other important health information. You can also add information yourself.
Plagiocephaly	A persistent flat spot, either at the back or on one side of the head. It is cosmetic and will not affect your baby's brain.
Postnatal	The period beginning immediately after the birth of a baby until they are about six weeks old.
Postnatal care	The professional care provided to you and your baby, from the birth until your baby is about six to eight weeks old. It usually involves home visits by midwives to check that both mother and baby are well. Classes may also be available.
Postnatal depression	Feelings of depression and hopelessness after the birth of a baby. These feelings are more severe than the 'baby blues' (see above). Postnatal depression affects one in 10 women and can be serious if left untreated. See page 18 for more information.
Sudden infant death (also known as cot death)	The sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant during their sleep. For information on what you can do to avoid sudden infant death, go to page 80.