

# The Six Week Check

## BACKGROUND

- All infants should have a postnatal examination at 6-8 weeks of age
- The purpose of the visit is to address parental concerns and assess the general health of the infant
- **Detailed guidance available for many findings in The Newborn Clinical Examination Handbook Version 1 HSE Oct 2018, National Healthy Child Programme (Appendix 7)**

## ADVICE

- No solids until 4-6 months
- If breastfeeding issues, refer to a lactation consultant
- Avoid soya milk, goats milk, cows milk and honey
- Reflux and loose stools are common - reassure if adequate weight gain with an otherwise normal exam

## HEALTH PROMOTION

- The six week check is an opportunity to advise parents on the following:
  - Immunization
  - Breast feeding
  - Nutrition and weaning
  - Sudden unexpected death in infants prevention
  - Prevention of accidents and injuries
  - Recognition of illness
  - Risk from tobacco

## HISTORY

- Birth history
- Feeding history
- Development
  - Smiling
  - Fixing and following
  - Responding to loud noises
- Screen for potential post-natal depression

## EXAMINATION

- Weight, length and head circumference need to be plotted on a centile chart
- General appearance including breathing behavior and skin (birthmarks/rashes)
- Cardiovascular and respiratory exam including femoral pulses
- Examine eyes for red reflex and opacities and fixing/following
- Palpate palate
- Hips (Barlow & Ortolani)
- Genitalia and anus must be examined
- Palpate spine and fontanelles
- Assess tone, posture and reflexes

## INVESTIGATIONS

- None required if examination is normal and baby is well

## REFERRAL

- Prolonged jaundice, particularly if pale stools or dark urine
- Poor weight gain
- Severe infant distress
- Parental concerns regarding hearing, vision, lack of smile
- Rapid head growth
- Positive exam findings

## SCREENING POINT ACTIONS

### Heart

- If the baby is symptomatic refer urgently to Paeds on Call. Otherwise discuss the findings with a Consultant Paediatrician

### Eyes

- If absent red reflex or not fixing/following refer to Paediatric Ophthalmology

### Testes

- If bilateral undescended testes refer to paediatric urology or general paediatrics
- If unilateral review at 4-5 months if still undescended refer to a surgeon

### Hips

- If positive Ortolani or Barlow refer to Ultrasound scan/orthopaedics

## TAKE HOME MESSAGES

- The 6 week check is an important milestone for parents and an opportunity both for reassurance and advice
- Ensure recording of findings
- Ensure appropriate specific maternal care support and follow up