



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Príomhúil

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20th April 2022

Deputy Sean Fleming,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 18129/22 – To ask the Minister for Health the procedure with regard to check-ups on new-born babies when they return home; if this is a matter for the general practitioner or the public health nurse; the timescale for such check-ups; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Sean Fleming

Dear Deputy Fleming,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 18129/22) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Delivery of Check-ups to New-born Babies

Public Health Nurses (PHN), Community Health Doctors and General Practitioners deliver a programme of child health screening, immunisations and developmental surveillance to children from birth. Access to the service commences through notification of birth from the hospital to the PHN.

Primary Visit (within 72 hours of discharge)

The registered public health nurse visits the baby within 72 hours of discharge from the maternity hospital or the community midwife as part of the primary visit. The maternity unit or the community midwife notifies the PHN services when the mother and baby have been discharged.

If the mother and baby are on a Domino scheme (midwife-led antenatal care), the first at-home visits will be from a midwife. The community midwife will notify the PHN of a home birth provided by the HSE. The mother and baby will be visited by the PHN after they have been discharged from the midwife's care.

Components of the Primary Visit (within 72 hours of discharge)

Physical Assessment

The PHN will carry out a neonatal examination (examination of the new-born baby), and also a maternal health assessment for the mother. During the clinical examination, the PHN will weigh and examine the baby, observing the baby's general appearance and their state of alertness. The assessment is completed and documented contemporaneously, as part of a structured child health record. The PHN takes the baby's history from the parent, with reference to the birth notification and other information provided by the hospital. Further examination and/or referral may be carried out following assessment by the PHN.

Health Promotion and Education

The PHN's role is to support the mother and the family. The PHN engages in health promotion to empower parents to implement positive behaviours that will protect the health and quality of life of their baby and the



whole family. The PHN will give advice on feeding, parenting and safe sleep for the baby. They will also give general tips about child safety. They will answer any queries that may arise. Below are key messages that may be addressed at the primary visit:

- Positive parenting
- Sibling management
- Breastfeeding
- Nutrition
- Child safety
- Safe sleep
- Immunisations
- Sun safety
- Physical activity
- Recognition of illness
- Passive smoking
- Dental
- Screen time
- Infant mental health

The PHN may visit the mother and baby again if further assessment or support is needed. The PHN is available at the local health centre and will continue to see the mother and baby at intervals over the next four years at the following contact points:

- 3 months
- 9-11 months
- 21-24 months
- 46-48 months

The PHN may engage directly with the GP for continuity of care in addressing concerns identified.

General Practitioner Contacts

The mother and baby attend the GP when the baby is 2 and 6 weeks old. These visits are covered under the Maternity and Infant Scheme.

GPs deliver the Primary Immunisation Programme (up to 13 months) and there is free GP care to all children up to six years of age, including growth monitoring at two and five years as part of the GP Under 6 contract. Access to the Primary Immunisation Programme is via automatic notification to the mother from the HSE when notification of birth is received. Parents can go online and register to receive a GP Visit Card for their child in order to receive free GP care for all children under six years.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Seán McArt'.

Seán McArt
General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations