What’s in a nappy?

Meconium is a black, sticky, tar-like substance which has no odour. Its appearance is a good sign that your baby’s bowels are working properly. After a day or two, as feeding is establishing and the last of the meconium passes out, the stools will turn a browny-green colour. They will be looser and have a grainy texture. After about three days, once feeding is being established, your baby’s stools will change from a mustard yellow colour to grainy texture. It is not unusual for breastfed babies to have several mustard-coloured, loosely formed, or even watery, stools a day, sometimes after every feed.

Your baby should first pass urine within 24 hours of birth. The amount and frequency of urine passed gradually increases with the quantity of milk taken during the first week and the bladder may empty up to 20 times a day during the second week. You may notice an orange or red, brick-dust coloured stain in your baby’s nappy in the first couple of days after birth. Often mistaken for blood, this stain is from urate crystals; a sign of over concentrated urine which is normal at this time. As your baby increases his or her feeds the urine will become less concentrated and the staining will disappear.

It is also common for little girls to have a vaginal discharge in the first few days after birth. At times this may be slightly blood stained and is due to the presence of your hormones in your daughter’s body; this is entirely normal but if in doubt please check with your midwife.